

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **HOLLAND PARK SCHOOL**

London W8

LEA area: Kensington and Chelsea

Unique reference number: 100501

Head teacher: Colin Hall

Reporting inspector: Grace Marriott  
3674

Dates of inspection: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2003 – 4<sup>th</sup> April 2003

Inspection number: 254392

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Airlie Gardens Campden Hill Road London
Postcode:	W8 7AF
Telephone number:	020 7727 5631
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Sarah Macdonald
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997



## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3674	Grace Marriott	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion	The school's results and students' achievements. How well are students taught?
9053	Vivienne Phillips	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22423	Jon Lovgreen	Team inspector	English 11-16 and 6 <sup>th</sup> form. Drama 11-16	
27719	Paul Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics 11-16 and 6 <sup>th</sup> form	
30433	Chris Corp	Team inspector	Science 11-16 Chemistry 6 <sup>th</sup> form	
10817	George Rayner	Team inspector	Information and communication technology 11-16 and 6 <sup>th</sup> form	
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art 11-16	How well is the school led and managed?
8076	Terry Bendall	Team inspector	Design and technology 11-16	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
17808	Susan Orpin	Team inspector	Geography 11-16	How well does the school care for its students?
24453	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	Physics 6 <sup>th</sup> form GNVQ Science 6 <sup>th</sup> form	
2496	Tony O'Sullivan	Team inspector	Modern Languages 11-16 English as an additional language	
11746	Robin Coulthard	Team inspector	Music 11-16	
30800	Betty Colley	Team inspector	Physical education 11-16	
10761	Pat Willan	Team inspector	History 11-16 and 6 <sup>th</sup> form	
2653	Robin Lomas	Team inspector	Psychology 6 <sup>th</sup> form Special educational needs	
14633	Jean Bannister	Team inspector	Religious education 11-16, Politics 6 <sup>th</sup> form	
2447	Faysal Mikdadi	Team inspector	Arabic 6 <sup>th</sup> form	
8159	Kevin Wright	Team inspector	Art 6 <sup>th</sup> form	
10060	David Guttman	Team inspector	Business studies 6 <sup>th</sup> form	
30563	Jackie Pentlow	Team inspector	Biology 6 <sup>th</sup> form Citizenship	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Holland Park School is a large, mixed comprehensive in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. It has 1434 students on roll, including 244 students in the sixth form. It has similar numbers of boys and girls overall, though with an imbalance in some year groups. Students come from a wide area of west London and from a large number of primary schools. It has a very diverse ethnic mix; about a fifth of the school are known to be from white UK backgrounds, a fifth are from Black British, African and Caribbean backgrounds, and about a tenth are Asian or Asian British. About one student in six is from a refugee family, mostly from Somalia with some from the former Yugoslavia. About one in eight joined the school after the start of Year 7. Just over half the students have English as an additional language and about a tenth are at an early stage of learning English. The main languages other than English are Arabic, Somali and Albanian. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds with a much higher than average proportion being entitled to free school meals. About a fifth of students have special educational needs, mainly emotional and behavioural difficulties and severe or moderate learning difficulties. Attainment on entry is below average.

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

Holland Park is an improving school which, overall, is providing a satisfactory education. Though standards are well below average in Year 9, they improve as students move through the school. They are below average at GCSE and average or better at A Level. Teaching is satisfactory, with particular strengths in the arts, and it is good in the sixth form. The contribution of students from different cultures and faiths is a strong feature of the school. The head teacher and leadership group have a very clear view of the action needed to ensure that the school continues to improve. Most governors, staff and parents share their vision. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- The school has a good sixth form where students achieve well in terms of their previous standards of work.
- The arts make a significant contribution to the life of the school. The teaching and students' achievement in art, music and drama are all good.
- The head teacher provides strong and inspirational leadership.
- Pastoral care of students is very good and supports their personal development very well.
- The school provides an exceptionally attractive and stimulating environment for learning.
- The involvement of the school with the community is very good.

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

- Standards are not high enough, particularly in English and in Years 7 to 9 and students do not always achieve as well as they should.
- A stronger learning culture and more consistently good attitudes to learning would help students to make better progress.
- The role of curriculum team leaders in raising standards is not well enough developed.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in November 1997. Improvement since then has been satisfactory overall, although initially it was slow. In the last two years it has been more rapid. Standards have improved at GCSE and A Level, but not yet enough at the end of Year 9. Attendance has improved, but considerable concerns remain and the school is working hard on this issue. There is little evidence of the unruly behaviour mentioned in the last report. The school has sustained its strong commitment to all students and to its multi-cultural nature. The school environment has improved dramatically. It is an attractive and stimulating place in which to work. The school development plan now focuses very clearly on high all round standards, in work, behaviour, attendance, and students' attitudes. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching by senior management have improved, though this is not yet the case in all departments. A forward-looking sixth form development plan that relates to 14-19 education has much that is in common with whole school issues and areas for improvement.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A Level/AS-level examinations. Comparative grades for A/AS levels are not available for 2002

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

Results in the Year 9 national tests in 2002 were below average overall. They were well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. This was better than previous years when they were well below average overall. The 2002 results were much better than schools with a similar proportion of students entitled to free school meals, but well below schools whose students had achieved similar results in Year 6 tests. The results indicate that students did not make enough progress. Achievement overall was unsatisfactory.

The proportion of students achieving 5 A\* to C grades at GCSE and the overall point score for GCSE are much higher than they were and better than similar schools. They are now below, not well below, the national average. The 2002 results were the best the school has achieved and exceeded the target. This is satisfactory achievement overall. The girls did better overall than the boys. Students did better in drama than in their other subjects and worse in mathematics, media studies and Spanish, but boys also did worse in English. The results in Arabic and history were very good, but a high proportion of students starting these courses did not take GCSE.

The standards of current students are well below average overall in Year 9 though better in Years 7 and 8. Standards vary considerably between subjects. They are average in drama, art, music, religious education (RE), design and technology and ICT, below average in science and physical education (PE), and well below average in English, mathematics, geography and history. In terms of students' starting point in the different subjects, achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. It is very good in drama, good in art, music and RE and satisfactory in science, design and technology, ICT and PE. In mathematics standards are improving and students in Years 7 and 8 are doing better than students in Year 9. Achievement is unsatisfactory in English, history and geography mainly because expectations are not high enough. In Years 10 and 11 standards have risen, most notably in art, mathematics and history, though below average overall. Achievement is at least satisfactory, and better than in Years 7 to 9. It is very good in art and drama, but remains unsatisfactory in English and geography. Across the school, students use their satisfactory reading skills well, but weak writing skills limit achievement. Satisfactory numeracy skills are used well in science, geography and ICT. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language make satisfactory progress overall, and good progress when well-supported by specialist staff or where teachers plan specifically for their needs. Many students with English as an additional language are completely fluent in English and are amongst the school's highest achievers.

In 2002 the average A Level point score rose significantly from 11.8 to 16.9. The girls did better than the boys, but both did much better than previously. The A-E pass rate was slightly above the national which represents good achievement overall. Current standards in the sixth form are very similar. They are high in Arabic where most students have Arabic as their first language, well above average in art, above average in other modern languages, chemistry, physics, biology, GNVQ science, history, psychology, and in mathematics where they have improved from average to above average. They are average in business studies, government and politics and below average in English. Students on the Access Course in Year 12 make good progress.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory overall. Most students have good attitudes and are well motivated, particularly when well taught. The attitudes of a minority, mostly in Years 8 and 9, are not well focused on learning. This can impede the learning of others and the standards achieved.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory overall, and much of it is good, particularly when teaching is effective.
Personal development and	Relationships are good and are reflected in the good racial and social harmony



relationships	apparent in the school.
Attendance	Despite the school's best efforts, absence rates, including term time holidays and some truancy, are still too high. Punctuality to lessons is unsatisfactory.

#### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching has improved since the last inspection. In more than nine out of every ten lessons it was satisfactory or better and in just over half it was good. In general, relationships are good and teachers are sensitive to students' cultural heritage and ethnic diversity, and are keen to use what students have to offer. Teaching is very good in art and drama and excellent in Arabic. It is satisfactory in most subjects and good overall in RE and music. There was some good teaching in most subjects, including English, history and geography, where overall the teaching is not satisfactory. The teaching of older students is better than that of younger students.

In the good and very good lessons, teachers were enthusiastic and keen to share their good subject knowledge. They managed behaviour skilfully and had high expectations for both quality and quantity of work. Teachers assessed work well and matched work successfully to students' needs. Explanations and questioning effectively extended and developed their knowledge and understanding. Lessons started promptly and little time was wasted. Satisfactory lessons had some of these features but the assessment of, and planning for, the range of needs in the class was less effective. There was less consolidation of basic learning and lessons often did not start punctually. Teachers were not doing enough to ensure that all students learn as well as expected. The unsatisfactory teaching came from both experienced and temporary teachers. These lessons lacked clear objectives, were not challenging, and the assessment of students' work was not helping them to improve. Classroom control was sometimes precarious, and at times some students who were not interested in learning, disrupted the work of others.

The teaching of English is unsatisfactory overall, despite some that is very good, because expectations are not consistently high enough. Students have too much unfinished work and marking is not focused tightly enough on what they need to do to improve. In mathematics and science, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Mathematics teachers use a variety of starter activities well to focus students' attention quickly on their work though there is some over-use of repetitive worksheets. In science, the short, focused activities throughout the lessons help students maintain their interest. In all three subjects, the data from assessment is not yet being analysed rigorously enough to help plan teaching. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory and improving. In literacy, there is good work in science, art, drama and RE, but not enough emphasis in mathematics and geography. ICT is used effectively in art, RE and music to help students to learn, but overall it is not a strong enough feature of teaching. The teaching in withdrawal groups of students with special educational needs and English as an additional language is generally good and sometimes very good. Support in lessons is good, particularly where subject teacher and support staff plan together. Where students have no support in class the teaching is more mixed, though satisfactory overall, because subject teachers are not always fully aware of the needs of particular groups of students.

The teaching in the sixth form is good overall, showing all the strengths apparent in the main school. In addition teachers are particularly good at raising students' own expectations for what they can achieve and developing skills as independent learners. There are fewer weaknesses in teaching and virtually no unsatisfactory teaching. In a few lessons, teachers tended to dominate the discussion because they wanted to be sure that students had all the information they needed. Occasionally the difficulties of lower-attainers were not picked up quickly enough.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The curriculum offers an appropriate range of courses with particular strengths in the arts. Community links are very strong.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The provision is satisfactory and the Inclusion Project provides good support for students vulnerable to exclusion.
Provision for students with	Satisfactory. The specialist teachers provide good support in class and in

English as an additional language	withdrawal sessions but subject teachers are not sufficiently aware of targets and have not had enough training.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good overall. Assemblies promote spiritual awareness particularly well. Provision for moral and social development has a very clear emphasis on personal and collective responsibility for behaviour that supports learning. Provision for developing cultural awareness is very strong.
How well the school cares for its students	The school makes good provision for the care of its students. It looks after its students as individuals, and their personal development is managed very well.

Overall, the partnership with parents is satisfactory. Most respond well to the school's encouragement to become involved in their children's learning. The school has good strategies to encourage parents of students with difficulties to work positively with the school. Some parents are confused by the volumes of information they receive and are not clear about how they can best help their children. The curriculum has some weaknesses. The school is not meeting requirements for collective worship, nor for ICT in some subjects. Sixth form students do not all have access to key skills course, particularly in ICT. Schemes of work do not support teaching effectively in some subjects. This is having a greater impact on standards than changes of teacher. Changes to the curriculum planned for September 2003 are very appropriate. They will significantly increase vocational education in Years 10 and 11 and make it possible for more students to study Arabic by introducing it from Year 7. Assessment is satisfactory in terms of providing support for individual students, but is not used enough to plan the curriculum.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher has shown excellent skills in identifying and putting in place very clear priorities and a very good plan of action. The leadership group is very effective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its statutory duties, with satisfactory involvement in strategic planning, but some governors are too involved in day-to-day matters.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school monitors and evaluates its performance well. This has provided the basis for the development plan. The leadership group's emphasis on teaching and learning has led to improvements across the school.
The strategic use of resources	Strategic planning and use of resources are good and make very clear links between the priorities for whole school improvement and spending decisions.

Pastoral team leaders monitor students' academic and personal development effectively. Some curriculum team leaders have a clear view of their role in raising standards and supporting teaching and learning, but others do not. This inconsistency helps to explain some of the variation in standards between subjects. The school is adequately staffed and recruitment issues have not had a detrimental effect on standards in most subjects. Recruitment is a constant source of anxiety to senior managers and governors but the imaginative approach has succeeded in attracting a number of good, well-qualified staff. The accommodation is very well maintained and the programme of refurbishment is rapidly providing a very good working environment. Resources are satisfactory overall. Computer resources are good in terms of the ratio of computers to students, but heavily used and not always available when subjects need access.

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

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school</li> <li>• The school has high expectations</li> <li>• They feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework</li> <li>• Behaviour</li> <li>• Information for parents</li> </ul>

Most parents are positive about the school, expressing the view that the strengths outweigh weaknesses. Inspectors agree that the school has high expectations overall, though not in all subjects, and is approachable. Homework set is usually suitable and manageable. Reports are good, and in most subjects they identify very

clearly what steps students need to take to improve. As in many schools, parents are concerned about the impact of staff turnover on standards and teaching. The turnover is similar to that in other London secondary schools and much the same as it was following the last inspection. The school is working hard to improve the staffing situation and ensure that any impact on standards is minimised. The inspection team found that behaviour and academic standards are better than they were at the last inspection. A minority of parents is very unhappy about the school's leadership; however the response to the questionnaire indicates that these views are not shared by the majority.

## ANNEX: SIXTH FORM

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

## HOLLAND PARK SCHOOL

The sixth form has 244 students and is larger than most school sixth forms. Most of the students have come from Year 11, though every year a number of students join the sixth form from other schools. The backgrounds and the ethnic mix of students in the sixth form are very similar to the main school. The school offers an appropriate range of courses with 17 A Level subjects, vocational courses in business education, science, leisure and tourism. The Access Course in Year 12 is providing very good support for students who need to improve or consolidate their performance at GCSE or who have particular special educational or language needs. The numbers of male and female students on AS and A2 courses are almost equal, though on the vocational courses, male students outnumber females. Around three-quarters of Year 13 students go on to higher or further education. Students are expected to have achieved at least 5 A\* to C passes at GCSE to start an AS course or an advanced vocational course. Many students join the sixth form with the minimum qualifications.

### HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Holland Park has a good sixth form. Standards are at least average and above average in a number of subjects. Students achieve well in terms of their previous standards of work. The teaching is good and much of it is very good. Students have a good range of opportunities for extra-curricular activities and community service. The sixth form is well managed and cost effective. The plans for improvement are clear and the priorities are appropriate to the needs of the students.

#### Strengths

The strengths apparent in the main school are also apparent in the sixth form and in addition:

- Students achieve very well in the sciences, art, business studies and modern foreign languages and standards are good in these subjects.
- Most teaching is good. It is very good in art, Arabic, business studies and the Year 12 Access Course.

#### What could be improved

- The role of curriculum team leaders in raising standards is not strong enough.
- The provision for key skills, such as ICT, in the sixth form needs to be extended to meet the needs of all students.

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

### THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are above average. Teaching is good overall and very good in further mathematics. The management of the department has improved significantly though further improvement is still needed in the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching. The use of ICT is unsatisfactory.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> The good teaching and high motivation of the students are resulting in high levels of achievement.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Teachers are a well-qualified and enthusiastic team. As a result of good teaching, standards are above average and students' achievement is good.
Physics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results were above average in 2002. More able students achieved very well, but some lower-attainers underachieved. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and some is good. Standards are above average in Year 13 and average in Year 12.
GNVQ Science	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results are average or better than the national average and students' achievement is satisfactory. Current standards are above the national average at intermediate and advanced levels. The teaching is satisfactory.
ICT	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are below average but students' achievement is satisfactory given their starting point. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Most teachers have good subject knowledge, but do not always make sure that students fully understand key terms.
Business studies	<b>Good.</b> Current standards are average and students are achieving well. Teaching and learning are good. Very good subject knowledge and very good relationships with

	students enable teachers to monitor progress effectively.
Art	<b>Very good.</b> Students are reaching well above the national expectations and are achieving very well. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to support a broad range of creative work including using ICT.
History	<b>Good.</b> Results for the small group taking A2 examination in 2002 were above national averages. The standards of work in Year 13 are above national expectations and students are achieving well. Teaching is good.
Government and Politics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards currently meet national expectations. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students from all backgrounds are well supported.
Psychology	<b>Good.</b> Attainment and students' achievement are good. The teaching is generally good. Students' attitudes are good though some find it hard to come to terms with the intellectual demands of the subject.
English	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are below average but improving. Teaching is satisfactory and staff have good knowledge of their subject and enthusiasm for it. Students show good attitudes to work.
Arabic	<b>Excellent.</b> Examination results have been consistently high. Students start the course with considerable prior attainment. They are highly motivated and excellent teaching gives them the support they need to achieve high standards.

A number of other subjects were sampled in the sixth form. In some subjects, for example economics, music, and other modern languages, A Level results were above average. They were below average in geography, but students achieved well given their starting point. In design and technology they were below average and affected by lack of resources. The students on the Access course are achieving well.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The school has a strongly inclusive philosophy and values all students equally. Students receive very good individual support and guidance, for example when applying to universities and by having access to revision and extension activities. Students' work is assessed well and this promotes good achievement.
Effectiveness of leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are good overall and excellent in some aspects. Central to the sixth form is the enrolment of students onto courses which are educationally viable and match their aptitudes and aspirations. The development plan effectively highlights issues specific to the sixth form such as the development of the vocational curriculum. As in the main school, some curriculum team leaders have a clear view of their role in raising standards and supporting teaching and learning, but others do not. This inconsistency helps to explain some of the variation in standards between subjects.

#### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers have good subject knowledge</li> <li>Teachers are approachable and give good help</li> <li>Courses meet their needs and aspirations</li> <li>Their work is well assessed</li> <li>They are helped to become independent learners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They do not always feel well-enough informed about their progress</li> <li>They would like more advice about future options</li> <li>They would like to be treated rather more as young adults</li> </ul>

The response to the questionnaire was more positive than in many schools and students were considerably more positive in discussion than in the questionnaires. In general Year 12 students were more positive than Year 13. Students appreciate the wide range of opportunities and recognise that staff work hard to support them and enable them to achieve to the best of their ability. The inspection team broadly supported students' positive views and felt that the staff were aware of the more negative perceptions and working hard to overcome these.

#### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were below the national average overall, and well below average in English and mathematics. They were below average in science. This was, however, an improvement over the two previous years when results had been well below average overall. The 2002 results were much better than those of schools with a similar proportion of students entitled to free school meals, but well below those of schools whose students had achieved similar results in the national tests in Year 6. The results indicate that many students had not made enough progress and therefore that their achievement overall was unsatisfactory.
2. The proportion of students achieving 5 A\* to C grades at GCSE and the overall point score for GCSE have risen significantly since the last inspection and are now below, rather than well below, the national average. The 2002 results were the best the school has achieved and exceeded the target the school had set with the local education authority. This represents satisfactory achievement overall with girls achieving better than boys. Forty five percent of girls achieved five or more A\* to C grades, compared with twenty eight per cent of boys. Girls' results were much better in English, and broadly the same in mathematics. Both boys and girls did better in drama and worse in mathematics, media studies and Spanish than in their other subjects, but boys also did worse in English. Boys' results were significantly below average in all subjects except art, drama and science, whereas girls' results were significantly below average only in English literature and Spanish. The A\* to C pass rate was well above average in art and drama. It was also well above average in Arabic and history, but a high proportion of students who started each of these course were not entered for GCSE. Results were well below average in business studies, media studies, geography and English.
3. The standards of current students in Years 7 to 9 show considerable variation between subjects. Standards are average in drama, art, music, RE, design and technology and ICT. In science and PE they are below average and in English, mathematics, geography and history they are well below average. When standards are compared with students' starting point in the different subjects, their achievement is satisfactory overall. Students are achieving very well in drama, and well in art, music and RE. In art, for example, the use of work journals reminds pupils of what they have achieved so far and helps them to see how they can improve. In drama, a Year 9 class studying a Willy Russell script showed considerable care in their thoughtful and constructive criticism of each other's group performances. Their achievement is satisfactory in science, design and technology, modern languages, ICT and PE. In mathematics students' achievement is satisfactory overall, though not as good in Year 9 as in Years 7 and 8. They achieve well in number and data handling work, but are not doing enough investigative or drawing and construction work to ensure that they achieve well overall.
4. Students' achievement is unsatisfactory in English, history and geography. This is most apparent for boys, but also affects girls. This is mainly because expectations for what students can achieve have not been high enough. For example, in English too much work is careless and incomplete and in geography, students' work shows that they have not been able to develop their skills of research, their use of maps, and their ability to ask geographical questions.

5. In Years 10 and 11 standards have risen in a number of subjects, most notably in art, mathematics and history. Students' achievement is better overall than in Years 7 to 9 and the differences between boys and girls are not as great. It is satisfactory in most subjects, very good in art and drama and good in history and music. In Year 11 art classes pupils have learned to think imaginatively, develop ideas and experiment with different techniques when preparing work on given themes. In history when using contemporary evidence, higher-attaining Year 11 students were making sophisticated observations about the reliability and usefulness of various source materials. Middle and lower-attaining students in this group shared their understanding, although their responses were not as well written and organised. Achievement remains unsatisfactory in English and geography. Though higher-attaining pupils in English write well-structured and phrased essays, average and lower-attaining pupils are much less good at explaining or extending the points they are making. In geography, pupils in Year 11 knew little more about renewable and non-renewable resources than had been taught to pupils in Year 9. Much of their work is incomplete and their limited fieldwork experience has contributed little to their geographical understanding and the development of their skills.
6. Students have satisfactory reading skills and use these well, but in many subjects weak writing skills limit achievement. Numeracy skills are also satisfactory and are used to good effect in some subjects, including science, geography and ICT.
7. ICT is used effectively in a number of subjects. Year 9 pupils made good progress in learning to use computer skills in composing and performing. They selected sounds and combined them, sometimes very skilfully, for example when composing variations on Pachelbel's 'Canon'. In art they were using digital cameras, scanners and computers to manipulate images. In a Year 8 RE lesson, pupils went on a 'virtual tour of a Hindu Temple' which developed their literacy and ICT skills as well as extending their knowledge of the religion.
8. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards meeting the targets set for them but the progress is not as good as it could be because their individual education plans do not help teachers plan appropriate work. However, students make very good progress in developing their literacy skills because some of the teaching they receive in withdrawal groups is very good, both from teaching and support staff.
9. Many students who have English as an additional language are completely fluent in English and some are amongst the school's highest achievers. The school's own monitoring of students' performance by ethnicity and fluency in English shows that at the end of Year 9 most students with English as an additional language performed broadly in line with school standards in English and above in mathematics and science. In the GCSE in 2002, students at English stages 2 and 4 exceeded the school average of 5 or more A\* - C grade passes. Those at stage 3 were somewhat below the school average. In the support lessons seen, and on the evidence of inspectors' judgements in a wide range of lessons, students make satisfactory progress. There were some particularly good examples in lessons in English, mathematics, science, history and art, of effective support which was helping students to make good and sometimes very good progress.

#### **Sixth form**

10. In 2002, the average point score for A level rose significantly from 11.8 to 16.9 Girls performed better than the boys but both did much better than in previous years. The 96 per cent A-E pass rate was slightly above the national pass rate. This represents good achievement overall. In the subjects which were inspected fully, current standards and students' achievement are very similar to the examination results. They are high in Arabic where most students are native speakers, well above average in art, above average in other modern languages, chemistry, physics, biology, GNVQ science, history, psychology and in mathematics where they have improved from average



to above average. They are average in business studies, government and politics and below average in English. A number of other subjects were sampled in the sixth form. In some of these for example, economics, music, and other modern languages, A Level results were above average. They were below average in geography, but students achieved well given their starting point. In design and technology they were below average and affected by lack of resources.

11. Students' ICT skills are good in subjects where they use it regularly but in several subjects they do not have enough opportunities to use their skills. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are generally more than adequate to cope with the demands of their chosen courses. Students with English as an additional language who take the Access course in the Sixth Form and students with special educational needs are well-supported. They are making good progress and achieving well.

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

12. Overall, students' attitudes to learning are satisfactory. When teaching is better, so are students' attitudes and the effort they make. Regardless of their abilities, all students show enthusiasm and involvement in work that is matched very carefully to their existing knowledge and challenges or even inspires them to take the next significant step in their learning. Students' motivation is not strong enough to carry them through weak lessons, particularly those in Years 8 and 9. Until recently not enough had been done to deal with the issues raised by the last inspection, so the emphasis on learning, as the heart of the school's work, is new. The school is determined to foster a culture where everyone wants to try hard to learn as much as possible, whatever their past experience. It has begun to make strenuous efforts to ensure that all students, not only those helped by stimulating experiences outside school, have a very clear idea of the value of effort and achievement. As a result, efforts to teach students how to learn successfully are beginning to motivate less confident or less mature students. In the best lessons, they respond as well as other students to activities planned carefully to promote successful learning for everyone in the group.
13. A significant core of students in the main school, those who have already learned to value education and have a good idea of what it takes to make a success of their studies, shows great commitment to doing well. Other students join the school with limited understanding of how to learn. In the better lessons, teachers give good attention to students' different starting points and ways of learning, because they recognise the need to foster good habits, such as listening. Well-chosen activities motivate students well. Students are willing to do what is asked in lessons that interest them and in which they experience success. In the best examples of these, students are very keen and make the most of opportunities to make real progress, as in a Year 8 French lesson where their response to very good teaching was lively and very enthusiastic. In less successful lessons, teachers do not do enough to ensure that all students learn as well as expected, which is quite discouraging for those who already have little interest and sense of achievement in the subject. This was particularly noticeable in some English lessons when teachers allowed confident students to engage in topical discussions that were not immediately relevant to the lesson. Quieter classmates gained little from this and looked bored. It did not help those who were already struggling to make sense of their studies.
14. The attitudes and behaviour of students with special educational needs are satisfactory overall. Almost all the students are highly appreciative of the support they receive both in class and in withdrawal sessions. They are keen to overcome their learning difficulties. Their behaviour in subject lessons reflects the extent to which their needs have been addressed in the teacher's planning. In the best planned lessons, the behaviour can be very good, even in the absence of support staff.
15. Students are happy to come to school to enjoy the opportunities to meet and mix with a lively, diverse community of young people. The school offers a rich range of learning experiences outside the classroom to which participants respond very well. These are where students learn

about the dedication, hard work and self-discipline required for success, for example in sport, the performing arts, or the world of work.

16. Students at an early stage of learning English show positive attitudes in both withdrawal and supported lessons. Relationships with support teachers, who know their students well and have often worked with them over a period of years, are good. Students apply themselves well to their work and respond well to constructive tuition. One example of disruptive and attention-seeking behaviour was seen in a Year 7/8 withdrawal lesson where behavioural rather than purely language needs were evident
17. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is generally satisfactory and much like that observed in any bustling, lively secondary school. With students of this age with such a rich range of different background experiences, isolated instances of young people getting things wrong are part of growing up. Most of the time students behave reasonably well, in line with the very clear, high expectations that the school now has. Sometimes, individual teachers lack strategies to involve everyone productively in the lesson, or tolerate unruliness in class too readily. In a few cases, students have little idea of basic rules of the classroom that ensure everyone gets something worthwhile from each lesson. They do not listen to the teacher or get on with their own work.
18. The vast majority of students get on with their school lives purposefully and behave well consistently, with consideration for others' rights and needs. The exclusion rate for a school of this size and with the proportion of students with known behavioural difficulties is relatively low and is not the highest in the borough. This is due in no small measure to the school's passionate commitment to inclusion and very clear stand on unacceptable behaviour and all the steps it takes to support young people who have difficulty in learning self-discipline and self-control. A small number of students with specific emotional and behavioural difficulties respond well to all the help they are given to show self-control and behave appropriately so they can get on with their work, though there are occasional lapses.
19. The school is less tolerant of wilful misbehaviour than it was at the last inspection when policy and procedures were ill defined and less rigorous. At that time, concern was expressed about standards of behaviour and the link between quality of teaching and students' responses. Yet it is only relatively recently that a concerted effort has been made to put in place structures designed to improve teaching and raise standards academically and in behaviour. As a result, many students in the school have not been used to trying to meet these higher expectations of their behaviour. For the majority, this is not a problem and they conduct themselves well and in Years 10 and 11, there are many very mature and responsible individuals who are helpful, considerate, sensitive to others' rights and needs, and who think before they act. Others are less mature and do not always set a good example for younger students. They are less able to consider other points of view, or think of other people's rights, particularly their right to learn. As a result, they do not consider the impact of their actions on others before disrupting lessons or behaving in anti-social ways. Some are surprised that people mind about their attitudes, language and lack of motivation and in a few cases, resent the school's efforts to encourage everyone to do their best to make sure that all students can learn, work and play together constructively.
20. Students value and appreciate each other's similarities and differences, regardless of cultural heritage and background circumstances. The degree of cultural understanding and tolerance in the school is impressive. Most students enjoy and make good use of opportunities to work with others and share ideas. Many students represent the school with pride and take part enthusiastically in school teams and productions. They are very concerned about justice and fairness in all walks of life, though occasionally too tolerant of those who disrupt lessons. Students use initiative and take responsibility well within the life of the school, relishing the chance to have a meaningful voice on

year and school councils. Mostly they are well aware of what they can or cannot change within the bounds of national legislation and the school's published aims but sometimes students do not understand that, just because they do not get their own way, it does not mean that they have not been listened to or that their opinions are not valued.

21. Relationships within the school community are good. In most cases they are very good. At present a small number of adults and students find it hard to relate well to others with whom they have political and ideological differences about educational policy and practice. Inspectors found that, in most cases, the professionalism of staff and great goodwill of students ensured that the school's characteristic social harmony and vibrant relationships were to the fore and not compromised by any rift in ideology. The leadership group works tirelessly to minimise the effects of this rift on the school as a whole.
22. Attendance in the school is well below that found nationally. However, it has improved over the last eighteen months and is better than it was at the time of the last inspection. The school is very clear about the significance of regular, punctual attendance for effective learning and reasonable progress. Until fairly recently, attendance procedures were too relaxed and attendance rates were very low. Far too many students took holidays in term time or were absent without good reason. Within the last two years, the school has introduced far more rigorous checks, designed to show who is on site at any time and to check on absences promptly. For students and parents used to a more laissez-faire approach, tighter controls on attendance, punctuality, and coming and going have not always been welcomed. Given the impact of absence and lateness on learning and progress, together with the school's duty of care to students, these checks are entirely appropriate. All the measures used to keep a record of who is on site at any time are those used by any responsible and caring school and are designed to ensure the safety and well-being of students.
23. The rigour with which attendance officers check on absentees, for example, using telephone and text messages to contact parents on the first day of absence, is impressive. As yet, this is not matched fully by checks on truancy from lessons because not all staff take the register in every lesson. Punctuality to lessons is unsatisfactory. This is partly because of the distances pupils have to travel between rooms and the time it takes to get, for example from one room in the East block to a room in the West block. No time is allowed in the timetable for movement. In many lessons students arrived up to ten minutes late and the time for effective teaching was drastically reduced, particularly if the teacher also arrived late. Inspectors noticed a significant difference between highly motivated students who moved briskly to their next lesson and others who could take twice as long. Where teaching is of high quality, most students move with a greater sense of urgency. However the school is still in the early stage of creating a culture where learning is exciting, students are avid workers and do not want to waste lesson time because teachers inspire them.

### **Sixth form**

24. Students in the sixth form are very well motivated because they are studying subjects that interest them and in which they have good chances of doing well. Most of them are very keen to succeed and more than willing to put in the effort needed to achieve the grades they want. They are particularly willing to go the extra mile in mathematics, chemistry, biology, modern languages, business studies and art. Their attendance is good enough to support their achievement and much better than that of students in the main school because of their drive to do well. It has improved significantly with the school's efforts to ensure that students who start on sixth form courses are more likely to complete them than was the case in the past.
25. Students get on very well together in and out of lessons, showing high levels of respect for each other's feelings and traditions. They benefit from an extensive network of opportunities to meet

with scientists, writers, politicians and intellectuals who stimulate students and help them feel confident in their own talents. They are very happy to volunteer for community service in and out of school, for example helping younger students to settle in, acting as numeracy and literacy mentors, contributing to the sixth form council and working with local residents. As a result, their personal development is very good, not least because it is rooted in a rich range of learning experiences within and beyond school. Not all students are as ready and able to use initiative with their learning as are those students who benefit from lively discussion and critical thinking outside school. This is partly because the school's focus on nurturing a culture of learning where everyone can develop independent study skills is recent. Nevertheless, students have a positive view of education and a sound grasp of what is involved in successful learning throughout adult life. They enjoy school and are proud of their achievements.

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

26. The teaching has improved since the last inspection. In well over nine out of every ten lessons the teaching was satisfactory or better and just over half were good. In general, the teaching in Years 10 and 11 is slightly better than in Years 7 to 9. Teachers are generally enthusiastic and very committed to helping their students to learn and make good progress.
27. Teaching is consistently very good in art and drama and excellent in Arabic. It is good in RE, music and some aspects of most other subjects, including English, history and geography where overall the teaching is not satisfactory. It is satisfactory in all other subjects. In virtually all lessons relationships were good and teachers were sensitive to students' cultural heritage and ethnic diversity. They were keen to use what the students had to offer. In one history lesson, for example, a student's knowledge of Russian was used to translate the information on posters. In RE, students' knowledge and understanding of different religions is used effectively in discussion and when choosing topics. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson on transformations, pupils were fully engaged in the work by the teacher's use of an oriental rug to demonstrate reflections, rotations and translations.
28. Where the teaching was good, staff showed good subject knowledge which they were keen to share with students. Lessons started promptly and little time was wasted. Teachers managed behaviour skilfully and had high expectations for both the quality and quantity of work which students should accomplish. In a very good RE lesson, the teacher linked the Stephen Lawrence case to a video of Racism in Football and set a homework which required students to think deeply about other people's attitudes and values. Explanations, discussion and questioning were used effectively to extend and develop students' knowledge and understanding. In a Year 9 English lesson, the teacher managed discussion well so that students understood and could apply the skills they were being taught when analysing the text. Teachers assess and mark work regularly and in the best teaching the clear guidance helps students to improve their standards.
29. In the satisfactory lessons some of the good features were present but planning for the range of needs in the class was less effective. For example, teachers were not aware enough of the needs of students at an early stage of learning English. In some lessons students were allowed to move on rather too quickly to the next topic before they had a secure grasp of what they were learning. Work is marked regularly, but the information is not always used to plan new work which will deal with common errors or individual difficulties. Time was often wasted because lessons did not start punctually. Teachers were not doing enough to ensure that all students learn as well as expected.
30. There was unsatisfactory teaching from both experienced and temporary teachers. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory, classroom control was sometimes precarious and the behaviour of some students who were not interested in learning, was allowed to disrupt the work of others.

Lessons did not have clear objectives and were not challenging and the assessment of students' work was not helping them to improve. In a number of subjects, for example modern languages and geography, the lack, until recently, of an effective scheme of work or assessment records was hindering newly appointed teachers in their efforts to provide work which matches the needs of students.

31. In the core subjects, the teaching of English is unsatisfactory overall, though there were some good and very good lessons, because expectations are not high enough. Students have too much unfinished work and marking is not focused tightly enough on what they need to do to improve. In mathematics and science, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Mathematics lessons make good use of a variety of starter activities which quickly focus students' attention on their work, though there is some overuse of repetitive worksheets. In science, the use of short focused activities throughout the lessons helps students maintain their interest, though the use of practical activities is not as extensive as it might be. In all three subjects, the use of data from assessment is not yet being analysed rigorously enough to help plan teaching.
32. The teaching of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory, although the whole-school numeracy policy is still under development. The teaching of literacy is improving and there is good work in science, art, drama and religious education. Teachers give students very specific guidance on vocabulary using key words and writing frames which show them how to structure an essay or a report. In art, teachers' questioning encouraged students to develop their ideas more fully and write at greater length. In mathematics, geography and history not enough emphasis is placed on the teaching and use of literacy skills, though in history, GCSE students are given opportunities to develop their skills in extended writing. The development of numeracy skills is satisfactory overall. In science a similar structured approach to the one used for literacy is used in developing numeracy skills. Line graphs, pie charts and histograms are used well. In PE number skills are used in fitness sessions to calculate and record pulse rates.
33. ICT is used effectively in some subjects, for example art, RE and music, to help students to learn. There were also examples in science, geography and Spanish, but overall this is not a strong enough feature of teaching. The teaching of personal social and health education (PSHE) is also unsatisfactory, especially in Years 10 and 11, again due to inconsistencies. Learning is good where staff manage the students well and motivate them to take an active part in the lesson however a lack of strategies to meet the needs of the weaker students leads to unsatisfactory or even poor learning.
34. The teaching of students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The school has a very dedicated team of support teachers and teacher assistants. Teaching in withdrawal groups was never less than satisfactory, often very good and sometimes excellent. The careful planning and very good relationships reduce the anxiety which underlies students' learning difficulties and enables them to take risks in their learning without fear of losing face. The comment 'But you've got the first part right!' to a Year 11 student enabled the latter to see that the teacher fully understood the student's lack of confidence and fear of failure. The support given in lessons was almost always good. It was most effective when subject teachers and support staff plan together. In a Year 11 English lesson, this led to precisely targeted support, so that the students with special educational needs were able to achieve the lesson objectives. In other lessons, support staff were usually effective in providing general support, by reassuring students or giving explanations of new technical vocabulary or concepts, which enables students to achieve some of the objectives, but not to the same extent as when there is joint planning. Teaching in lessons where support staff are not present varied in quality with some examples of good practice, particularly in science, art and music. It is not as effective as it could be because teachers have not had enough training in using

the good special needs assessment information available or in understanding and using students' individual education plans.

35. The teaching of those students who are at a relatively early stage of learning English is satisfactory overall. The teaching by the specialist teachers ranged from very good to satisfactory. The best examples were seen in English, mathematics and science in Year 11. Here, teachers showed good awareness of students' needs and capabilities and had planned appropriate materials to support them and move them forward. Teachers engaged their students through good questioning and classroom dialogue. They had very good command of their material and set clear objectives for the lessons. Although strengths outweighed weaknesses in other lessons, there were instances of teachers' expecting too little of students by asking questions which they themselves immediately answered, or by weak management of disruptive behaviour to the detriment of other students.
36. In other lessons, the support for these students was more mixed. In the best examples in Year 10 and 11 history lessons and a Year 10 art lesson, teachers had assessed students' needs carefully, gave clear explanations to help students develop understanding of underlying concepts and engaged them actively in lessons. In a number of other lessons, teachers were not aware enough of the students' specific needs and lacked strategies to involve them and enable them to progress. Activities were planned at too high a level and teachers did not appreciate the value of giving good models of language to students.

#### **Sixth form**

37. The teaching in the sixth form is good overall with the strengths apparent in the main school clearly present in the sixth form. In virtually all lessons the level of rapport between teacher and students and the motivation for learning were good. In addition teachers are particularly good at raising the level of students' own expectations for what they can achieve and developing their skills as independent learners. The marking of work is thorough in most subjects, but particularly in art, chemistry and business studies, and gives the students clear guidance on how to improve. The support teachers give to individual students outside formal lessons is much appreciated.
38. In art, the teachers' use of critical reviews of students' work stimulated independence and creativity as well as assisting students to achieve high-level technical skills. Excellent questioning and discussion in a Year 12 Arabic lesson extended students' vocabulary and their ability to respond in complex sentences. The very good teaching of further mathematics gave students the confidence to raise their own questions. Similarly, in a good Year 12 English lesson on *Death of a Salesman* the teaching helped students to explore the precise meaning of the text and relate it to wider issues in the play. The teacher's own knowledge and enthusiasm in a lesson on a difficult astro-physics topic engaged the students' interest and they worked very hard to achieve understanding. The Year 12 access course for students who are at an early stage of learning is well-taught. In one lesson the setting of clear goals enabled students to understand what they had to do. The work was carefully matched to the needs of individual students. Those who were more confident were expected to work independently and those who needed more support were given a series of prompts to help them write. Students with special educational needs are given sensitive support in lessons which enables them to make good progress.
39. There were fewer weaknesses in teaching than in the main school, and virtually no unsatisfactory teaching. In a few lessons in several subjects, teachers tended to dominate the discussion, giving more direction than was necessary and not encouraging enough independent work because they were anxious to ensure that students had all the information they needed. On a few occasions in satisfactory lessons, the match of work to the range of attainment in the class was not as accurate as it could have been and difficulties were not always picked up and dealt with quickly enough.

Some marking, for example in mathematics and physics, is not giving students enough guidance or being used effectively enough by teachers to identify areas where more work is needed.

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

40. In the main school, the curriculum is broad and balanced and offers an appropriate range of courses. It is very good in art, drama and music, and good in religious education where there has been a significant improvement since the last inspection. The history curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because it does not provide a wide enough range of experiences. For example students have few opportunities to learn outside the classroom, for example through visits to historical sites. The single periods for art are unsatisfactory since they do not allow sufficient time for work to be developed. The double periods for PE are not effectively used, except where students make use of off-site provision. Schemes of work in several subjects, including English and modern foreign languages, are insufficiently developed. They do not contain the level of detail needed to provide good support for teaching and to ensure continuity for students. The content of the PSHE course is suitable in the range of topics covered but the inconsistencies in teaching caused by incomplete schemes of work and a lack of staff overseeing some year groups make it unsatisfactory overall. However, appropriate action has been taken to develop citizenship. The school has reviewed the curriculum provision during the last few months. The proposed changes for September 2003, which will considerably expand the provision for vocational education, are very appropriate and will significantly improve the curriculum, especially in Years 10 and 11. The introduction of Arabic in Year 7 is also an appropriate development.
41. Strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy have only been recently introduced and though satisfactory have not yet had a significant influence. Provision for literacy is good in science, art, drama and RE; it is unsatisfactory in mathematics, geography and history. Provision for numeracy is good in science and PE and unsatisfactory in history and modern languages. Most aspects of the National Curriculum are met, except in respect of ICT. The use of ICT is very good in art and religious education and is good in music. In other subjects such as mathematics, science, design and technology and history the use of ICT is unsatisfactory.
42. The curriculum for students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The school takes particular care to ensure that all students have equal access to curricular opportunities. Its arrangements for students with special educational needs are effective in support of this aim. It ensures that provision in statements of special educational needs is fully implemented. Ineffective use of individual education plans very significantly lessens the impact of the school's provision. The community reading volunteer scheme is exceptionally good provision. It helps students to make very good progress and gain significantly in confidence.
43. The provision for students with English as an additional language is also satisfactory overall. Members of the support team are attached to various curriculum areas and much of their support work is targeted within these. This is a good feature. However, although good resources have been produced for focused support lessons, there is no general pattern or expectation of specialist team teachers' producing resources for mainstream class teachers. This is not consistent with good practice and is a weakness in provision.
44. Overall, the quality of careers education and guidance is satisfactory. Provision is well planned by the school's careers co-ordinator to support students' option choices at the end of Year 9. At the time of the inspection, as Year 9 students prepared to choose their options for Years 10 and 11, all had received considerable information and advice. In a Year 9 assembly, the school had introduced its option system. This was subsequently talked through with Year 9 tutors, in the

timetabled personal and social education sessions. Earlier, there had been a well-attended parents' evening, to discuss issues arising from the school's provision.

45. In Year 10 the school careers co-ordinator ensures students have access to work experience. In Year 11 a range of texts and other resources are available to inform their choices for future study or employment. This is supplemented by specialist careers advice from the school's partnership provider, through the autumn and spring terms. In the academic year of the inspection, not all Year 11 students were seen as planned. The school's careers co-ordinator has, however, ensured that all students in need of specialist advice have received relevant guidance and support, by prioritising their needs. As a result, students have continued to receive satisfactory guidance.
46. The school has very good links with the community, which make a significant difference to students' personal development, and, in many cases, to their academic goals and aspirations. For example, Master Classes with the London Philharmonic, Imperial College, the British Library and University College's French Department, among others, have inspired those who took part. Community links have included meetings between the School Council and local residents and shopkeepers to share ideas and exchange views. This led to donations from local organisations that have enabled students with limited means to visit universities for open days and interviews and others to go to galleries, theatres and concerts. In addition, donations funded prizes for different kinds of outstanding achievement and a state-of-the art digital recording studio. Local residents work with the special educational needs department as reading partners. The Year and School Councils raise funds for charities such as the Red Cross, Oxfam and Children in Need, which raises awareness of other people's needs. The school is actively involved in raising funds for an educational resource centre in Ghana, which involves Year 8 students in particular. The Royal Court Young Writers' Scheme has allowed four students to write plays for performance on stage, which has fostered enthusiasm for creative writing. Mentoring programmes involving major businesses make a significant difference to the commitment and performance of participants. The school invites members of the community to spend the evening with students to celebrate their wide-ranging achievements at the annual 'Perfect Tense' celebration, which helps raise awareness of the school's commitment to learning and personal achievement.
47. The last inspection was broadly positive about provision for students' personal development, while outlining gaps in its consistency and in what was offered for spiritual and moral development. Now this area of work is a considerable strength of the school. It is based on a determined effort to ensure that the core values of equality of opportunity, a sense of personal worth and respect for others are evident in its life. It believes in finding something special in everyone: 'seeking genius in people'.
48. The school fosters spiritual awareness well. Its assemblies make a significant contribution to personal development but in lessons, the quality of teaching rarely matches the capacity of the best assemblies to move and inspire students. Assemblies are planned meticulously with careful and sensitive choices of poetry, music and images to help students reflect on their own and other people's experiences. In the deputy head's assembly, the impact of images of different children, including 'Africa's street kids' as seen in Comic Relief, stayed with students who shared feelings and responses throughout the day. The very best of these have the power to make students think deeply and move them to tears. This was the case with Year 10, when the head teacher's inspirational presentation, using quotations, music and a video clip about birth and death, to explore the gift of life and what we do with it, held the audience spellbound.
49. The contribution of the curriculum to spiritual development is more variable, but religious education lessons lead by example. For instance, in a Year 10 lesson, students imagined the course of a personal journey as the teacher played music to set the mood and read a description of places on



the route. They had a wonderful opportunity for personal reflection that enthralled most of the class. In other subjects chances are missed for students to be inspired and to think in depth about what they learn. Sometimes this is because teachers do not take enough care to draw everyone into discussion to share personal responses to pieces of writing, but only give articulate students a chance to express themselves. Where lessons are planned with care to foster empathy and reflection, this adds to spiritual awareness. For example, in a Year 10 drama lesson about abduction and 'the Disappeared', students were helped impressively to explore and act out the feelings of a distressed character, in spite of their inhibitions. Although the assemblies provide a very positive experience for students, the school does not comply with the requirement to provide collective worship for all students.

50. The school gives a high priority to students' moral development and makes very good provision for it, particularly through high expectations of personal and social conduct. It offers a genuinely warm and positive welcome to all students whatever their personal circumstances and cultural backgrounds, based on very clear principles of tolerance and fairness. It teaches students the principles of human rights, moral, social and personal responsibility, and fair play. This means that students are given a very clear idea of the right thing to do and are able to make moral decisions even though, like others of their age, they do not always weigh evidence and apply reason with problems in which they are emotionally involved. The school works hard to reinforce the difference between right and wrong and to enforce the rules relevant to achieving good behaviour and discouraging anti-social action in and out of school. Supervision at break and lunchtime is designed to achieve a consistency in this that was lacking when the school was last inspected. As at that time, the school takes in students with poorly developed social skills and understanding of the everyday courtesies that many people take for granted. As a result, the school has to work particularly hard to curb the rudeness and lack of manners that are apparent among a few students who, for one reason or another, do not know any better. Most teachers and sixth form students set an impressive example of the behaviour expected in different social contexts. For example, in an after-school debate, older students modelled perfectly the way in which people take turns to speak, which was a great help to Year 7 students new to debate.
51. The school's provision for social development is very good. Students have a wide range of opportunities to use initiative and to take responsibility in school life, including responsibility for ensuring that everyone is able to learn successfully. In spite of very clear guidelines, not all students find it easy to accept that disrupting lessons and the smooth running of the school denies others the right to achieve their personal and academic potential. The school encourages formal debate and many opportunities for expressing diverse views on world and local events. In some instances during the inspection, individual teachers spent too much time on incidental debate and not enough on measured discussion of the relevant subject matter. Outside lessons, students have very good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. These include helping at open days, taking part in the gospel choir, sports teams, drama and dance productions and helping actively with tutor group appeals such as that for Afghan refugees and working with the local over sixties club.
52. The school fosters cultural development very well. It offers students a rich daily experience of mixing with other young people from diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds, including those separated from their roots by war and tragedy. The school values its students' exceptional range of personal history and traditions very highly. It draws on this wealth of experiences very well by asking students to share beliefs and ideas and learn to see things from other perspectives, as when students of different faiths shared concern about the warring factions in the Middle East. In a simulated debate in a Year 9 history lesson about Munich and the danger of encouraging Hitler's ambition, a cross section of students from different ethnic backgrounds argued convincingly for British interests because they understood the context. Religious education lessons

draw on students' diverse beliefs without prejudice and with every effort to encourage tolerance and understanding. In all year groups, students have very good opportunities to talk about what faith means to them so that others can understand.

53. The school's very privileged position in the heart of a prominent multicultural community enables it to draw on a range of very high profile, stimulating visiting speakers. Its close proximity to London's major cultural centres enables it to offer regular trips to top galleries, museums and theatres. Much of what it does to encourage cultural awareness and understanding is excellent. It has yet to find a way of drawing in all its less confident, articulate and privileged families, to ensure that all young people, not just the most assured students, seize the wonderful opportunities available. In lessons, opportunities are missed to extend cultural awareness when it is given token attention, as evident in design technology, for instance. The lack of regular trips, exchanges and other links in modern languages detracts from the overall provision for cultural development.

### **Sixth form**

54. In the sixth form, the curriculum is satisfactory overall, though currently with a slight imbalance towards the more academic courses. The range of AS and A2 subjects is, however, appropriate overall, with very good provision in art, excellent provision in Arabic, and good provision in business studies, history, psychology and the science subjects. Suitable vocational courses are offered in ICT, science, business studies and additional vocational courses are planned. Key skills courses are provided, but are not available for all students who would benefit from them. The school is reviewing and rationalising its sixth form provision to ensure that courses meet students' needs and that the numbers are viable in educational as well as financial terms. A number of courses which attracted very few students are no longer offered.
55. Although funding for English as an additional language does not cover support at sixth form level, the school has invested in provision through a very good "access" programme for sixth formers who have need to improve their English to follow advanced courses. Samples of students' work showed a rich and varied diet of personal, social and cultural topics. Support for students in mainstream courses was also good, notably in mathematics, biology and business education.
56. The strengths evident in the main school in the provision for personal, spiritual, social, moral and cultural education are also evident in the sixth form. The provision for enrichment activities in the sixth form is particularly good and sixth formers have a very wide range of opportunities. Community links and the opportunities for community service are very good.

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

57. The school makes good provision for the care of its students and has maintained this position since the last inspection. It looks after its students as individuals and their personal development is managed very well.
58. The school has strong pastoral care systems, in which pastoral staff and form tutors are very well informed and knowledgeable about their year groups. The comprehensive range of data about students is used well to provide a wide range of support, advice, and guidance, including the services of a school counsellor. The school has an integrated approach to pastoral care and the wide range of agencies involved work directly through the pastoral care structures of the school. The procedures for ensuring the safety of students are very good, as are the arrangements for the supervision of students around the school. Child protection policies are clear and staff have had appropriate training. The school has a good system for monitoring and promoting good behaviour including a wide range of rewards and sanctions with clear steps leading to their use. Parents are involved at an early stage and are informed about both good and bad behaviour. There is a good anti-bullying policy, which is implemented well. The procedures involve a range of strategies

according to the severity of the situation. The school has very good procedures for monitoring attendance. Checks and follow up are now more rigorous and are having the effect of improving attendance, though there is still considerable room for improvement.

59. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory, except in English, history and geography, where they are unsatisfactory, and art, ICT in Years 10 and 11, PE, RE, music and business studies, where they are good. The wide range of comprehensive data collected and analysed at whole-school level provides a good picture of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. The 'Target Days' provide opportunities for students and their parents to discuss progress and future performance with their teachers in all subjects. There is variation between subjects in the way that assessment data is used. In weaker subjects, the data are insufficiently analysed to support individual students, and in most subjects, the information is not used enough to plan the curriculum for students. Similarly, although teachers know which students have English as an additional language, their assessments are not used effectively or recorded sufficiently to ensure that their progress is being monitored.
60. The care provided for students with special educational needs is good overall. The provision outlined in statements of special educational needs is fully implemented. Staff are effectively deployed to provide a good balance of in-class support and withdrawal lessons. A notable feature of the latter is the use of work in the subject from which the pupil is withdrawn, for example technical subject language or concepts. All withdrawal lessons also provide for specific intervention to improve students' literacy skills. This model of provision is a very good example of how the school ensures equality of access to curricular opportunities for students with a statement of special educational need, including those in the sixth form. It also provides equality of access for students on the other levels of the special educational needs register.
61. The assessment of special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The school has a good system for identifying students who may have special educational needs through a range of assessment strategies. This ranges from the use of Year 6 test results, consultations with feeder primary schools, group and individual testing, and observation. The weekly meetings held by heads of year include members of the special educational needs department, as well as other teams linked to the Inclusion Project. All potential factors such as learning difficulties, emotional and behaviour difficulties; personal or social circumstances which may be contributing to the concern are considered together. In this way, 'disruptive' behaviour, for example, is considered in terms of the total context affecting the individual's learning. This system is very effective in ensuring that concerns raised by staff are tackled consistently.
62. The main weakness in provision and assessment is in the content and use of individual education plans though not all students will need individual education plans. They are much less effective in support of students' progress than they should be because subject teachers do not regularly use them in classes. The targets set are not usually precise enough for subject teachers to use in planning or to use as a baseline against which they measure students' progress. The students themselves are usually not aware of their targets, and, since they have not been involved in setting them, cannot take responsibility for monitoring and assessing their own progress or improving. A significant number of subject teachers do not understand how to use the assessment information or how to plan lessons and use teaching strategies which will take account of identified special educational needs and enable students to make good progress in their subject.
63. Students with English as an additional language are assessed annually and their levels of English are recorded using the standard four-point scale. Their outcomes in reading, writing and language are entered on the school database and given to staff but they do not receive any supporting explanatory documentation, nor are the outcomes of the assessment translated into individual

targets or action plans for students. A considerable proportion of students with English as an additional language do not require any additional support. For those students who do, support teachers keep records of varying degrees of quality and rigour. Some are good, others imprecise. There is little formative assessment and, although procedures are in place to keep records of students' performance in key pieces of work or assessments across the curriculum, there was no evidence that these had been used. Students themselves are unaware of their progress and have no sense of progression in what they do. In two significant instances, assessment of students had not discriminated between language needs and special educational needs, and the support was not sufficiently focused.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

64. Procedures are good for assessing students' attainment, and monitoring and supporting their academic progress. Every half term, all their teachers grade students, which provides information to enable students' progress to be tracked. These assessments are timed to coincide with Review Days when targets are set and then carefully monitored. Assessment is very good in ICT, history and art, good in business studies and satisfactory in English and mathematics. Although assessment information is being used well to support and advise individual students about their progress, it is not yet fully used to plan the future curriculum for students.

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

65. The school makes good provision for the care of its sixth form students, and their academic and personal development are managed very well. The strongly inclusive philosophy and very good systems for advice and support help to promote good achievement. Students are known well by their teachers, who are aware of their individual needs and use the information well to support them. Teachers give generously of their time to provide support. Arrangements for careers advice and education are good despite some difficulties this year with an external contract.

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

66. At the time of the last inspection, the level of response to the chance to share views with inspectors was disappointing. Parents who did respond had concerns about the exchange of information and homework. This time, the inspection produced a reasonable rate of response from parents, comparable with other secondary schools. Responses to the questionnaire were significantly more positive than the views expressed in meetings for parents. It is not possible to say whether the questionnaire returns represent the ethnic mix of the school. Those present at the meetings were not representative of the ethnic composition of the school. The few parents from ethnic minorities said very little. It is clear that deep divisions exist between a minority of parents and the majority who are generally happy with what the school offers and believe that the school's strengths outweigh weaknesses.
67. In general, responses to the questionnaire show that parents' views of the school are positive. Parents are satisfied because their children like school, the school has high expectations and because they feel comfortable about approaching it with questions or problems. They have some concerns about students' behaviour and, as in most schools, about the setting of homework. Inspectors agree that the school has high expectations and is approachable. Homework is usually set appropriately and is manageable.
68. At parents' meetings, people expressed concern about staff turnover, students' behaviour, the introduction of uniform, setting, and assessment measures for tracking achievement. As in many schools, parents are concerned about the impact of staff turnover on standards. Staff turnover is similar to that in other London secondary schools and much the same as it was five years ago.

following the last inspection. Behaviour and academic performance are now better than they were then. Most secondary schools use the same or similar systems of assessment testing to check that students achieve as well as they should. The inspection found no evidence that grouping students on the basis of prior attainment is having a detrimental effect either socially or academically. In one or two lessons, when teachers were faced with a very wide spread of ability, for instance with students working across levels 1 to 5 of the National Curriculum, students were clearly uncomfortable because the teacher could not manage to meet everyone's different needs effectively. Older students say that, as they are not used to wearing uniform, they would not choose to introduce it but Year 7 students accept uniform as part of their school life. Students from all years noted that uniform might make everyone feel an equal part of the school community. They seem to have less of a problem with its gradual introduction than some of their parents do.

69. The school works effectively with most parents because it does all it can to keep them well informed and to encourage their involvement with their children's education. It sends home a stream of lively, informative newsletters and high quality publications regularly. If anything, in its efforts to try to ensure that parents know, value and feel involved in what is happening in school, it comes close to overwhelming them with too much information. Reports on students' progress are of good quality and, in most subjects, particularly good at identifying what steps students need to take to improve. Parents of students with special educational needs are fully involved in regard to the processes of assessment, for example in regard to annual reviews, and in relation to the provision made by the school.
70. The majority of students get enough support and encouragement from home to achieve reasonably well. Their parents attend meetings to discuss progress and are willing to work with the school if things go wrong. Parental involvement with children's learning is satisfactory, overall. A key group of studious students receive very good support from home and do very well at school. Others are not so fortunate and depend heavily on the quality of the school's support systems and learning opportunities for their achievements. A few families fail to give the support that children need to make something of their chances to learn. They do not ensure that their children come to school regularly and arrive on time.

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

71. The head teacher is a very good leader and has shown outstanding skills in identifying areas of weakness and in putting in place a very clear set of priorities and an excellent plan of action. Changes have been swift and extremely effective in a number of instances. There have been significant improvements, notably in examination results, in the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of the school buildings and the learning environment. The head teacher and deputy head teacher share a vision for the school that is underpinned by powerful educational principles.
72. Ensuring equality of opportunity and raising the achievements of all students lies at the heart of the school development plan. There is explicit reference to the steps that staff and governors will take to enable these key targets to be met. The plan clearly communicates key roles and responsibilities for overseeing improvements whilst at the same time suggesting the importance of teamwork and a shared responsibility for the outcomes. It provides an excellent basis for improvement.
73. A number of key appointments have recently been made at all levels including, teaching staff, middle and senior management posts and associate staff positions. These appointments place the school and the governors in a very strong position to realise the targets that they have set. The leadership group deals very effectively with the day-to-day running of the school and shares a commitment and determination to see through the agreed plans and meet the targets. They bring different strengths, experiences and expertise to their work and fulfil their delegated roles well.

The team of staff who share responsibilities for administration, face-to-face contacts with parents and members of the public and for the up-keep of the accommodation, provides an excellent service. The public spaces are dynamic and visually exciting, and promote the school's core beliefs of raising achievement.

74. The leadership group is totally committed to the school, its academic and personal development of the students and the stated aims and values as outlined by the governors and head teacher in school documents. Staff value the social and ethnic mix and, through their work, foster learning, and create an environment where there is mutual respect and a desire to help students succeed. The majority of staff are fully committed to ensuring the school builds on its past successes and meets the challenges of the future. The majority of parents hold what the school is doing in high regard and are keen for their children to play a part in it.
75. A suitable line management structure has been established that has effectively overseen the introduction of performance management and curriculum reviews. The strategy is good. It has led to a more rigorous system of classroom observations and regular diagnostic observations of teaching by curriculum team leaders and others with management responsibilities. Some subject leaders have taken this work further than others. Some have barely begun because they are newly appointed. A minority have been in the school for many years but have resisted the changes and are out of step with their colleagues. Senior staff have squarely addressed some long-standing weaknesses but have had only limited success.
76. The management of subjects is satisfactory overall, with strong leadership and management in art, the performing arts and RE. In these subjects an imaginative approach and clear long-term plans ensure good deployment of resources and the development of staff. In a minority of subjects, notably English, history and geography, management is unsatisfactory. Standards are not as high as they could be and the planning and schemes of work in these, and in some other subjects, are not helping teachers plan suitable work that meet students' learning needs. In the past, not enough has been done to address students' limited progress in these subjects.
77. The line management for the English as an additional language team is sound and has led to the work of the team being better integrated into the overall student support system and the preparation of a suitable development plan. The attachment of the specialist teachers to each of Years 7 to 11 provides a forum for discussion and effective allocation of support. Support teachers move up with their year groups, maintaining continuity. Part of their time allocation is available for flexible response to need, for example in the "induction" lessons for new students or those just starting to learn English. However, the significant weaknesses in the management structure make leadership and management unsatisfactory overall. The support for students, in particular those at an early stage of learning English, is not as good as it could be. The lack of a specialist curriculum team leader means that support teachers tend to pursue their individual interests and the overall profile of their work in a key area of the school is not high enough. There is no definitive whole-school register of the students targeted for support with an outline of their key specific needs. Subject teachers have not had enough training and useful information has not been effectively shared. There has not been significant improvement since the last inspection and the new leadership group recognises that there is a fundamental need to review the job descriptions of teachers in the light of the issues emerging from the inspection.
78. In relation to special educational needs, the improvement since the last inspection has been good. Though there are still weaknesses in provision, but the balance between the support for students provided through withdrawal lessons and that provided in subject lessons is much better. It is much more in keeping with the school's aim to ensure that students with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum and all the school offers.

79. The approach to managing special educational needs provision is very clear and very much in keeping with the vision of inclusive education espoused by the school management. However weaknesses in the management of special educational needs are having an effect on the quality of the overall provision. There are no regular planned meetings between the staff responsible for each key stage and no effective system of passing on assessment information between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in support of continuity. Some potentially effective strategies have been put in place, such as the weekly timetabled departmental meeting, but these are not yet bringing about enough improvement. The senior management of the school has not yet succeeded in remedying this situation, which is having a damaging effect on other very good aspects of provision the school makes.
80. The governing body fulfils most statutory duties satisfactorily but not in regard to a daily act of collective worship or to ensuring that curriculum requirements are met in design technology and ICT across the curriculum. Some governors, who have specific responsibilities, provide a very good steer to school development priorities and monitor the progress to meet targets. They visit the school at regular intervals, for example to discuss finance, committee documents and agree courses of action for students who have been, or are likely to be, excluded. These visits are appreciated by staff and provide governors with useful insights to inform future spending and development priorities. In this respect the skills of governors and the time they give to the school are used very effectively and directly or indirectly provide great benefits to students. The community volunteer scheme to hear students read is a particularly good example of the practical involvement of governors which makes a very positive contribution to students' progress in literacy development. However most governors have not taken advantage of the governor training programmes to help them gain a clearer picture of their roles and responsibilities.
81. The governors' monitoring of special educational needs is good. It shows a good grasp of what is required at a strategic level to improve provision and provides good support for the co-ordinators. In this area the balance between strategic awareness and support, and day-to-day involvement within agreed limits is good. In other areas, some governors are less clear about their statutory obligations and responsibility for governance and their role in strategic planning and some are over-involved in day-to-day issues. Governors ask too few searching questions that relate to students' achievements, for example whether, based on their interpretation of performance data, certain groups of students are doing as well as expected and whether the money that has been allocated is having enough of an impact.
82. Overall, the school monitors and evaluates its performance well. In some areas monitoring is extremely effective and has provided the basis for the school development plan. The focus on teaching and learning has led to improvements across the school. One of these is the way in which staff have effectively adapted their teaching to implement the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. Another is the monitoring of students' behaviour and attendance. The leadership group regularly observe teaching and learning, and monitor the work of year and subject leaders. There are also formal and informal meetings with students and parents and in this way the team gathers useful feedback on how priorities are being perceived in the school and wider community.
83. In subject areas monitoring of teaching, learning, students' achievements and standards is very patchy. In some subjects, where modifications to the curriculum (such as the use of ICT, the development of literacy and opportunities for the development of students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development) have been mapped and introduced into subject schemes of work, it naturally follows that the work that results from these developments is reviewed and the curriculum is adapted to reflect this. In others there is insufficient follow-up.

84. Since the last inspection, effective arrangements for appraisal and performance management have been put in place. Subject leaders regularly meet with their line manager to discuss their analysis of examination results and to set new targets and development priorities. Training has been provided to help them in their analysis of performance data. Subject leaders receive a lot of information about students' prior attainment, levels of language acquisition and special education needs. Overall too little use is made of this material either to monitor the progress of individuals and groups of students or as a mechanism for improving and fine-tuning teaching and learning. The quality of leadership in subjects remains too variable, as at the time of the last inspection, although the senior team has taken firm action in an attempt to resolve long-standing differences in expectations of accountability.
85. The school collects a lot of information about students' prior attainment and uses it to group students in the core subjects and to identify students who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. In theory, the information is used to direct resources and expertise to where it is most needed. In practice, there is not enough systematic use of this information either by teachers, curriculum leaders or by heads of year in their management and review of resources. This aspect of monitoring is unsatisfactory.
86. Classroom observation is a relatively recent development and has been effective in encouraging teachers to become increasingly analytical about the impact of their teaching on students' learning. This awareness is reflected in the higher proportion of good and very good teaching seen in this inspection and discussions with curriculum leaders about their management role. A training programme, in the skills of classroom observation, has helped teachers to focus on the outcomes of learning - what is working well and what needs to be improved. A significant number now make this explicit at the beginning of lessons. There are however, too few opportunities for teachers with particular skills to share or model them and be observed by other teachers.
87. The strategic planning and use of resources are good overall and the links between the priorities for whole school improvement and spending decisions are very clear. The money spent on the refurbishment of the building has transformed it. Classrooms have been decorated and refurbished and old and worn furniture has been replaced. Much has been achieved. The visual environment, the values it promotes through learning and the celebration of success, reminds all those who work in it what the school stands for and is aiming to achieve for its students. It is generally accepted amongst students and visitors to the school that the improvements contribute in no small measure to improving standards of behaviour and raised expectations. The upkeep of the building is extremely well managed and all students have benefited from this.
88. Financial planning and management are excellent. The recently created finance team supports the head teacher and the governors' Finance and General Purposes Committee, which also has responsibility for premises, with regular clear summaries of the school's finances. The very effective leadership and management of this team have resulted in new and very comprehensive financial management systems being put into place in a short time. These enable the staff involved with finance to perform their roles efficiently.
89. The issues highlighted in both the last Ofsted report and the annual auditor's report have been successfully addressed. The recent interim 'Health Report' from the auditors indicates that the accounting and monitoring systems now in place, fully meet their requirements. At the end of the 2002 financial year, the school will have a small surplus, indicating the success of the school's financial systems, monitoring and planning arrangements.
90. The very good day-to-day management of the school's finances has played a substantial part in achieving the aims indicated by the various development plans and towards the continued



development of the school as a centre of learning excellence. In the last year, substantial funds have been used from the reserves to tackle vigorously various outstanding issues. These have included improving the fabric and general appearance of the school, a major refurbishment of the majority of the teaching areas and radical improvement in the school's ICT systems infrastructure and computer provision. Good financial provision enables the premises to be particularly well maintained. Substantial funding is being allocated to curriculum development and the provision of additional and improved learning areas in the school in 2003-2004. The result is that the school is an attractive environment that supports successful teaching and learning and so meets the needs of the students. The principles of 'best value' are thoroughly applied in contracts awarded and purchases made.

91. Funds from national initiatives have been used very effectively and imaginatively to target support for specific activities, subjects and students. These include the Excellence in Cities funding and community computer facilities. Both have broadened the curriculum and supported visitors, discussion groups, and school council activities. The school's use of IT is well managed despite staffing difficulties. Computers are accessible to students and to teachers and administrative staff in their daily work. The school generates high levels of income to provide the large proportion of students with special educational needs and students with English as an additional language. The use of these funds has been satisfactory, but spending in these areas has not previously been as rigorously monitored as other spending, to ensure it is meeting the needs of the students it is designed to support.
92. Overall, the level of staffing is satisfactory in terms of both the number of staff and their effectiveness. The turnover of teachers in the last two years, at twenty per cent each year, is similar to many other inner city schools. The school employs a good proportion of well-qualified, long-serving staff. Currently, difficulties are being experienced particularly in mathematics and science, where not all of the teachers have a specialist qualification. In design and technology, the department lacks a specialist in food technology. Short-term problems are being encountered in the humanities and the school is finding it difficult to make appropriate temporary appointments. The school is discerning in its use of supply teachers, setting rigorous criteria with the agencies to secure staff of good quality. The school recently organised a successful initiative in the form of two open days as a means of recruiting teachers. From these, five appointments were made.
93. A thorough analysis of staffing needs at all levels has enabled the school to make excellent use of resources to recruit and retain teachers and to provide suitable continuity and quality of teaching for students. To retain teachers, and particularly those who are newly qualified, and those in their second or third year of teaching, very carefully targeted support is provided. The school's very good induction system is supportive at whole-school and departmental level. Line management is strong and departmental monitoring well established. Teachers receive very good additional support through the work of educational consultants.
94. Teachers' continuing professional development is very well organised. The school uses generous resources to provide suitable support for teachers according to their need. Groups of teachers needing particular development are identified, such as curriculum team leaders new to the school. The assistant head teachers consider each week the suitability of applications for courses. These are judged in relation to subject needs, whole-school development needs and the professional development of individual teachers. In-service courses must be relevant to the targets of individual teachers. Teachers are encouraged to apply for research opportunities for which funding is offered from outside. Much staff training is provided by external consultants, including input from a local Beacon School. The training provides support from the practical to the inspirational. Though the overall provision is well-managed and very well organised, the school is aware of the need to update training in teaching students with English as an additional language.

95. The school employs adequate numbers of associate staff such as learning support assistants and laboratory technicians, who give very good support. The media resources department continues to provide a good service. Other associate staff, such as office and site personnel, are very dedicated. They are kept well informed about the school's priorities, share the school's values and aspirations, undertake regular in-service training and are very much part of the school. Their value is readily acknowledged by all colleagues. Their effectiveness is made clear by the smooth running of the school and the very high standards of maintenance of the site.
96. The buildings and site are not easy to maintain and do not provide ideal accommodation. The school is working very hard to overcome the difficulties and the accommodation provided for subjects is good overall. Redecoration, upgrading, refurbishment and improvement have created a pleasant environment for students, staff and visitors. Where rooms for a subject are grouped together, such as in English and music, accommodation is very good and in most subjects it is good. Arrangements in art and design and technology are satisfactory, but both areas are in need of refurbishment. A planned rolling programme of improvements, redecoration and refurbishment will address these issues. The school utilizes its accommodation very well and managers of the site follow routines which maintain facilities in prime condition. The site security is very good, and the management of premises is excellent because of exceptional staffing and teamwork. A joint commitment to succeed whatever the task earns the respect of teaching staff. The school is aware of the need to improve access for disabled people. The nature of the site makes this extremely difficult and expensive but possibilities have been discussed.
97. Resources are satisfactory overall. They are very good in music and religious education especially in the provision of ICT. In English, drama, dance and special educational needs resources are good. In all other subjects resources are satisfactory apart from design and technology where they are unsatisfactory and standards are affected. The two libraries provide good facilities to support learning. The school is well resourced in terms of the ratio of computers to students. These resources are well managed but because of the heavy demands of the taught courses some departments find it difficult to gain access as and when they would wish.

## **Sixth form**

### **Leadership and management**

98. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good overall and some aspects are excellent. Aims and values are made explicit. Central to the sixth form is the belief that students are enrolled only if there are courses that match their aptitudes and aspirations. 'Enrolment with integrity' is the message for students hoping to stay in the school or join from other establishments. The development plan builds appropriately on whole-school priorities and identifies other issues that are specific to the sixth form. Targets have been set and progress towards meeting them is regularly reviewed. The leadership of the sixth form is excellent and the strong management team and team of tutors provide very good support for students. However, as in the main school, some curriculum team leaders have a clear view of their role in raising standards and supporting teaching and learning, but others do not. This inconsistency helps to explain some of the variation in standards between subjects.
99. Strategic management is good. Decisions by governors to cut courses were unpopular but necessary, to ensure the sixth form courses were not being subsidised by other year groups. Governors and senior staff were rightly keen to ensure courses ran with viable numbers, that students were taught in groups that offered opportunities for a range of teaching and learning styles and where an exchange of different ideas and viewpoints were possible. The sixth form runs within the budget it generates. Governors fulfil the majority of their statutory responsibilities

with the exception of ensuring that students take part in a daily act of collective worship. The provision of religious education has improved though not yet fully meeting the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

100. A weaker aspect of the management structure is the extent to which the Director is able to contribute to and influence policy decisions at the highest level. The Director has a responsibility for students' achievements but observations of teaching and learning are the responsibility of subject curriculum team leaders. Since some are new in post and others have not yet observed lessons in the sixth form, some weaker teaching and learning has not been followed up. The Director is not able to contribute directly to formulating the strategic plan and overall shape of the curriculum, nor to ensure the needs of the students progressing from the main school can be fully met. Currently there is an imbalance of courses for higher and lower-attainers and some deficiencies in the provision for key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT.
101. Monitoring is good overall. The learning needs of individual students are well documented and action is rigorously followed up through team meetings, discussions with students, parents and outside agencies. Students receive very good personal support and guidance, for example when selecting courses, applying to universities and by having access to revision and extension activities. Students with particular gifts and talents benefit from a rich programme of courses and related work with mentors. The progress of students for whom English is an additional language is very well tracked and documented.

### ***Resources***

102. As in the main school, resources in the sixth form are satisfactory overall and good in several subjects, though unsatisfactory in design and technology. Resources, including those for ICT, are good in art. In other subjects, but particularly mathematics and business studies, access to ICT is limited. In addition, in physics the age of the equipment limits its usefulness. The library is a good resource in most subjects. In science, for example, the library resources enable the students to undertake research for their projects. However, in contrast, library resources need updating in mathematics and government and politics.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

103. Building on recent improvements and the good practice already evident in much of the school's work, the head teacher, staff and governors should work together to raise standards, particularly in English and in Years 7 to 9, by ensuring:

1. that teachers

- have high expectations for what students, particularly boys, can achieve, and prepare suitably challenging work,
- plan more systematically for literacy and numeracy,
- have the skills and techniques to meet more effectively the needs of those students at an early stage of learning English and use the information about students with special educational needs more effectively in planning work;

*Paragraphs 4, 5, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 40, 60, 61, 62, 63, 112, 113, 115, 126, 166*

and

2. that teachers

- have the techniques needed to manage and motivate students to improve their attitudes to learning, particularly in Years 8 and 9,
- raise students' awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctual arrival at lessons;

*Paragraphs 16, 18, 22, 28, 33*

3. greater consistency and effectiveness in the work of curriculum team leaders to promote higher standards through

- more effective use of data to develop the curriculum and improve the match of work to students' needs,
- systematic monitoring of teaching and learning to improve quality through sharing good practice,
- developing schemes of work which support teaching and learning,
- a clearer and more effective management structure for both special educational needs and English as an additional language.

*Paragraphs 29, 31, 39, 58, 75, 76, 78, 82, 84, 85, 111, 131, 149, 167, 171, 188*

### **Sixth form:**

1. Ensuring greater consistency in the work of curriculum team leaders to promote higher standards through

- more effective use of data to develop the curriculum and improve the match of work to students' needs,
- systematic monitoring of teaching and learning to improve quality through sharing good practice,
- developing schemes of work which support teaching and learning;

*Paragraph 63, 99, 224, 227, 234, 240, 245, 253, 279, 292*

2. Extending the provision of key skills to all students.

*Paragraph 53*

In addition the governors should include the following minor issues in their action plan:

1. Ensure that governors are more focused on strategic issues relating to students' achievement and less on the day-to-day management of the school;

*Paragraph 80*

2. Meet statutory requirements for collective worship and ensure that all aspects of ICT and design and technology are taught.

Paragraph 40, 79,98

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	155
	Sixth form	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		85

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7– 11</b>							
Number	3	26	50	65	10	1	0
Percentage	2	17	32	42	6	1	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	4	14	19	13	1	0	0
Percentage	9	27	37	25	2	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's students*

<b>Students on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1190	244
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	569	24

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	36	2
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	274	26

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	782

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	183
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	104

### *Attendance*

#### Authorised absence

2002/02
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#### Unauthorised absence

2001/02
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School data	6.8
National comparative data	7.8

School data	4.2
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
2002	134	100	234

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	48	72	79
	Girls	62	58	63
	Total	110	130	142
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	48 (40)	56 (48)	61 (52)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (15)	32 (28)	28 (25)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	38	81	60
	Girls	54	78	62
	Total	92	159	122
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (43)	69 (59)	89 (47)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	(18)	37 (28)	0 (22)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
2002	139	100	239

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	39	109	122
	Girls	45	86	92
	Total	84	195	214
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	35 (34)	82 (78)	90 (87)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)
GCSE results				GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil		School		30.3
		National		39.8

Percentages or figures in brackets refer to 2001

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

### ***Ethnic background of students in Y 7 – Y11***

	No of students
White British	304
White Irish	16
White – any other White background	139
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	73
Mixed – White and Black African	30
Mixed – White and Asian	19
Mixed – any other mixed background	72
Asian or Asian British - Indian	22
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	44
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	37
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	27
Black or Black British– Caribbean	92
Black or Black British – African	108
Black – or Black British any other Black background	27
Chinese	13
Any other ethnic group	387
Parent/pupil preferred not to say	24
Information not obtained	0

***Teachers and classes*** (FTE means full-time equivalent).

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	84
Number of students per qualified teacher	17

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	665

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.9
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
White British	5	0
White Irish	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0
Black or Black British– Caribbean	7	1
Black or Black British – African	3	0
Black or Black British - any other Black background	5	1
Chinese	0	0
Any other ethnic group	12	2
Parent/pupil preferred not to say	0	0
Information not obtained	0	0

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

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001 -2002
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	£
Total income	7338870
Total expenditure	6981840
Expenditure per pupil	4759
Balance brought forward from previous year	96120
Balance carried forward to next year	453150

Key Stage 3	23.9
Key Stage 4	21

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	47
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	42
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	7
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

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

#### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

1434

Number of questionnaires returned

247

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	38	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	41	11	4	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	31	16	10	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	38	24	9	2
The teaching is good.	31	45	15	5	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	33	16	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	33	5	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	35	4	3	2
The school works closely with parents.	48	35	11	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	45	36	7	6	6



The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

43	40	7	5	5
38	35	12	4	11

### **Other issues raised by parents**

Changes to the organisation of the curriculum

The introduction of school uniform

The impact of staffing changes on teaching and standards.

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

### **ENGLISH**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Some good and very good teaching takes place in well-managed classrooms.
- The proportion of students gaining grades A\* or A in English literature in 2002 equalled that nationally.
- Some very recent developments show considerable potential to raise standards.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Raising standards at GCSE where results are too low. In 2002 English language and media studies results showed underachievement, especially by boys.
- Students, especially boys, do not make enough progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Too much teaching is unsatisfactory.
- The department has not improved enough since the previous inspection.
- Some marking of written work is inconsistent and infrequent.

104. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 improved in 2002 after a two year decline. They were well below national average but above those achieved in schools with a similar intake. They represented under-achievement from students' starting points in Year 7. Students did a little better in mathematics and much better in science than they did in English, as was the case the previous year. For the first time the performance of boys was significantly below that of girls.

105. The standard of work of students currently in Year 9 is well below national average and shows under-achievement. Higher attaining students redraft work carefully but its presentation can be variable and spelling is a relative weakness. Analysis is a strength in their work. This includes effective pieces on poetry and Shakespeare, and the writing of poetry. The work of average-attainers shows varied effort and quality. First drafts can be quite careless and too much extended writing is short or uncompleted. Lower attaining students can work neatly, but books are sometimes messy and disorganised. Work tends to brevity and rushed endings, but the use of simple sentences is effective in making meaning clear. Their spelling is better than expected.

106. GCSE results have risen since the last inspection, but remain well below the national average. In 2002, students did better in English literature: the proportion of students entered matched that nationally, as did the proportion gaining the highest A\*/A passes. Entry to English language was lower than typically found and there were fewer higher grades. Boys made less progress than girls in both subjects. In media studies, the entry was three times the national average but results were low: students made less progress than in many other subjects and a relatively high proportion did not achieve a pass grade.

107. The evidence of students' work and lessons observed showed that attainment in Year 11 is well below national average. Achievement is satisfactory given the test results gained by these students in their end of Year 9 tests, and the attainment of some students with English as an additional language is good. Essays are well-structured and phrased, and quotation is well integrated into literature work, but the work of some higher-attaining students is over-brief. Most can write in detail about themes and how a writer's style contributes to them. Average-attaining students are adept at including appropriate quotation in essays, but often fail to use them to explain or extend the points which they are making. They show a good willingness to write at length but

the flow and clarity of expression can show limitations. Essays always show sound understanding of texts or issues but in literature they tend to merely re-tell plot in detail. Lower-attaining students show a basic ability to communicate through simple paragraphing and linking and extending ideas, but they rarely write at length.

108. The progress of students with special educational needs mirrors that of other students. Teachers are generally aware of their needs and sometimes plan alternative tasks or approaches. They make good progress when support assistants are available. The same is true of the many students with English as an additional language. There are examples of their making significant progress when teachers and support workers liaise, and when teachers are careful to explain not only what to do but how it may best be tackled.
109. Some of the teaching is good and very good, but the overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. During the week of the inspection there were a number of unsatisfactory lessons, invariably from experienced teachers. Further, the scrutiny of work showed that teaching over time in Years 7 to 9 has been variable in quality and in the amounts and type of work expected. Some students have too much uncompleted work in their books and files. Generally, students do too little extended writing and are not learning to write in a sufficient range of styles. Marking, too, is variable with little evidence of consistency over levels of correction, or the nature and usefulness of targets for improvement. Many students would benefit from more regular reference in marking to the skill descriptors which the department has agreed on. Where such descriptors are used and exactly what students are to learn (rather than merely do) is discussed with them, students learn well. A Year 9 class preparing for examination worked very effectively at deciding on key phrases in a question and finding appropriate evidence in a text to answer it. They recognised the skills they were using in the process because the teacher allowed focused discussion.
110. There has been some improvement in teaching since the last inspection. In the best lessons teachers fully understand the importance of using the literacy strategy, and plan lessons which are thoughtfully geared to students' abilities. A Year 9 class of lower-attaining students made very good progress in writing a persuasive letter about a museum ("If you like blood and gore then visit the 1800's doctor's room" wrote one). The teacher gave them a framework, discussed the persuasive effects of alternative vocabulary choices, and gave students with English as an additional language extra verbal clues to help them answer questions. The best teaching uses knowledge, enthusiasm and confidence to create an atmosphere where students want to work hard and cooperate. Good question and answer sessions are used not just to check understanding but to extend and challenge students' ideas. This was the case with a Year 10 class who were preparing group presentations on a meeting between two characters from Oscar Wilde's *A Picture of Dorian Gray*. Students learned that imaginative approaches, such as the *voice of conscience* or *meeting at the gates of heaven*, nonetheless required detailed textual reference to justify and support interpretations.
111. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Most are conscientious and behave well; though in most classes a minority of students can become inattentive, chatty and unwilling to work if not corrected or interested by the teaching. On rare occasions single students verbally confront teachers. It is to the credit of the majority that such behaviour rarely influences other students. Relationships are generally good and students get on well in each other's company. Most have a satisfactory attitude to written work but the books of too many younger students are unkempt and show some reluctance to complete written tasks. Absence and lateness to lesson are too frequent.
112. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards have not risen sufficiently because teaching has not improved enough. Two issues highlighted previously – the need to increase time in Years 7 to 9 and to review pupil groupings – have been dealt with.

Staffing and resources are good; accommodation is very good. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Because there has not been enough analysis of students' performance and progress, how they learn best, and where the department's strengths and weaknesses lie, the rate of improvement is inadequate. The scheme of work for students in Years 7 to 9 is not yet being translated into a vehicle where both teachers and students can see a clear sequence of skills and experiences. Recent work on both the Year 7 to 9 curriculum and literacy, with the help of outside consultants, and supported by the school's line management system, provides a good foundation for future developments. There is a growing sense of order and purpose in many classrooms, often shown in the quality of display in and around the department. The potential for future improvement is good.

## **Literacy**

113. Students come to the school in Year 7 with literacy levels which are well below national average. The last report urged that the improvement of literacy be the explicit responsibility of each department as a means to stimulating learning and achievement. Good progress has been made, especially recently, and the school now has satisfactory strategies for developing students' literacy skills. In the teaching of mathematics, geography and history there is insufficient awareness of the need to have regard to literacy skills. Inspectors noted good literacy work in science, art, drama and religious education where, for instance, 'key words' were highlighted, used and revised in each lesson. The school has made good use of literacy progress units and booster materials and has had success in raising standards using these. Teachers from a wide range of subjects have been involved in teaching progress units with a view to encouraging awareness of strategies across departments. Practice, however, remains inconsistent.
114. Many teachers recognize the value of regular class discussion though they tend to accept too many colloquial answers without remodelling them and do not ask enough follow-up questions to check understanding or pursue interesting ideas. Good strategies in modern foreign languages enable all students to develop good speaking and listening skills. Technical terms are well used and explained in dance and maths. A general weakness in teaching is to have too little awareness of how students at an early stage of acquiring English, or those with special needs, have difficulty deciphering 'teacher code'. Thus 'Explain' and 'Give illustrations' can be daunting and misleading. This was also noted repeatedly in written comments in marking made by some teachers. Key words are displayed in many rooms but reference to them is spasmodic and students do not see such displays as a place to check spellings and meanings.
115. Reading skills such as skimming and scanning are being well taught and used, although many students still have difficulty in seeing finer or implied meanings in a text. The Internet is well used to encourage reading for research. All departments have information on the reading ages of students and in some, such as science, worksheets have been amended to improve their accessibility to students. In few classrooms is there the expectation that students should begin the lesson by reading quietly until the teacher is ready to begin the lesson.
116. Weak writing skills are limiting achievement in many subjects. There is insufficient extended personal writing in modern languages. No coherent strategy for supporting or encouraging literacy in students' written work in history was evident. In geography writing frames, which help students structure their answers, are not used and there is too little extended writing. In subjects such as mathematics teachers do not emphasise spelling sufficiently, nor do they highlight the part which careful presentation of written work has to play in improving students' literacy skills.
117. The library is spacious, bright, welcoming and attractive. It is open throughout the day and before and after school. It is well used and students show respect for it as a place for study. The stock of 18,000 books is good, and is supplemented by 16 computers. The library is a very good support to literacy. Under a new initiative, sets of fiction are being loaned to tutor groups to encourage the habit of quiet reading which, in the school as a whole, is under-developed.

## Drama

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results. Drama is a very popular option and in 2002 students made more progress in drama than in any other subject.
- Teaching is very good, enabling students to make significant progress.
- Very good leadership and management have led to expectations of high standards, and planned strategies to achieve them.
- Drama makes a major contribution to students' development as mature, confident yet sensitive young people.
- The department benefits from very good staffing and good accommodation.

### Areas for improvement

- Students would benefit from learning in groups how to evaluate and direct performance.
- Teachers could make better use of speaking and listening skills in class discussion.
- Younger students need a more secure understanding of the importance of sustaining character and physical position.

118. Drama is a separate subject in Years 7 to 9 and is a popular GCSE option with three times the national proportion of students taking it. Results in 2002 were higher than in any other GCSE subject, with girls making particularly good progress.

119. Standards attained by students in Year 9 are in line with those expected nationally. This is very good achievement from Year 7. Many students join the school with little experience of drama, and their lack of confidence was demonstrated in some by being hesitant to join in practical activity and in others by needing to show off. They gradually learn to accept the importance of circle discussion, working in mixed gender and sometimes random groups, and taking turns. Group performances become lively and confident, but teachers do not put sufficient emphasis on the importance of sustaining character, and maintaining physical position in still image. However, a major success is the way in which students of widely varying abilities and from very different backgrounds cooperate and respect each other's work. A Year 9 class studying a Willy Russell script showed considerable care in making helpful critical comments on each other's group performances to the class: "No offence, (name) but you were a bit bland because . . ."

120. Lesson observation confirms that Year 11 students' attainment is above national average and they continue to achieve very well. The limitations of some in practical work are balanced by extensive written work of good quality. Students learn to incorporate wider aspects into situations and characters, for example what they have experienced and how this has affected their attitudes. They learn to reflect on and use social and moral issues, and are encouraged to empathise and explore characters' feelings. A Year 10 class worked on the theme of abduction through a study of *The Disappeared* where powerful music and contemporary references to the Pinochet era had a strong impact on them, both as young citizens and drama students. Whilst class plenaries are good, students would benefit from being expected to incorporate evaluation and direction suggestions into their group rehearsals.

121. Overall, the teaching observed was very good. Lessons are carefully planned and taught with particularly good and sensitive knowledge of students' learning and social/emotional needs. For instance, in a Year 11 class, a team-building exercise to counter students' frustrations with each other in a previous lesson was successful in quickly re-establishing a supportive atmosphere. Classroom management, in demanding practical situations, is strong. Teachers set out their expectations of what can be achieved, routines to be used, and employ a good range of teaching

methods. Attention to literacy is good, not only in the use of specialist vocabulary but in the careful phrasing of questions and the level of language expected in answers. Pointed questioning enabled a Year 7 class studying extracts from 'The Tempest' to realise how shorter sentences and more imperatives increased pace and tension. At times teachers do not use good answers from students to extend and explore other students' ideas. Students respond well in lessons. Most work sensibly, and can work in groups without direct teacher supervision, allowing the teacher to give attention to specific groups or skills. At times the physical performance of a minority of younger students can lack discipline.

122. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Drama is fortunate to have specialist staff and three rooms which provide good accommodation. Continuing very good leadership and management have secured a strong team approach by teachers, a detailed yet imaginative scheme of work, and good and regular assessment procedures. Whilst pleased with its achievements the department has a detailed understanding of where and how further development can take place.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Improved documentation, communication and consultation within the department.
- The quality and detail of the developing schemes of work.
- Respectful and supportive relationships between staff and students.

### Areas for improvement

- Raising pupils' achievement.
- Catering for the spread of ability and challenging the most able.
- Developing students' ICT and literacy skills

123. In the 2002 national tests in mathematics, standards were well below national averages but well above schools with a similar proportion of students entitled to free school meals. On the basis of students' performance in the national tests in Year 6, achievement is below expectations. Girls did better than boys although the performance of girls and boys has been similar over the past five years. Standards in mathematics are above those in English and below those in science. Teacher assessments are rather generous. Results, over the last three years, have remained below national averages but improving at a rate similar to the national trend. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, standards were below national averages and well above similar schools. The number of A\* to C grades, has fluctuated over the last three years although the average point score, which takes account of all students, has remained stable. On the basis of these students' performance in the national tests in Year 9, their achievement is in line with expectations.

124. On the evidence of the students' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 9 remain well below national averages and, at the end of Year 11, below national averages. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are better than in Year 9. In Years 7 to 9, there is insufficient evidence of investigative work and on drawing and construction work, although number and data handling topics are covered well. By the end of Year 9, students can solve linear equations and identify angle properties in circles, while higher-attaining students can calculate probabilities and identify mutually exclusive and independent events. By the end of Year 11, students can draw time series and calculate moving averages, while higher-attaining students can use the sine and cosine rules to calculate the lengths and sides of any triangle.

125. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers demonstrate confident subject knowledge and enjoy respectful and supportive relationships with their students. Lessons make good use of a

variety of starter activities which quickly focus students' attention on their work. For example in a Year 8 lesson on transformations, students were fully engaged in the work by the teacher's interesting use of an oriental rug to demonstrate reflections, rotations and translations. Teachers make good use of praise and encouragement in their lessons and have a variety of strategies for dealing with the challenging behaviour of a small number of students. However, in too many lessons, too much use is made of repetitive work sheets such as an algebra worksheet with over 140 questions on a single page. In many lessons, little attention is given to the spread of ability and to challenging the most able students. In Year 7, students confirmed that the work is too easy and much of it has already been covered in the primary school.

126. Teachers have a good informal knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses. Marking in exercise books is regular and this information is recorded in mark books but is not always used to identify common errors or address individual difficulties. Central records are thorough and allow the department to identify under-achieving students but, to date, there is little rigorous analysis of external examination data to identify standards and raise issues for further investigation.
127. Provision for students with special educational needs and students with English as an additional language is satisfactory although literacy difficulties are not recognised and addressed in all classes. Additional classroom support, when provided, is very helpful so that in a Year 10 class, the teaching assistant's encouragement and enthusiasm supported students learning well. The provision for gifted and talented students is satisfactory because the department operates a well attended after school club for them, but able students are not sufficiently challenged in the classroom.
128. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall. They behave well and demonstrate determination, enthusiasm, and interest in their work. Students enjoy positive and productive relationships with the teacher and with each other. However, in a significant number of lessons, students demonstrate challenging behaviour and lack engagement and commitment to their work.
129. The provision for ICT within the department is unsatisfactory and the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in this respect. The department has made little progress, since the last inspection report, in developing students' ICT capability because of difficulties in accessing computer facilities. The provision for literacy within the department is unsatisfactory and students' literacy skills are not sufficiently supported and developed. Students' writing skills are marred by incorrect spellings and errors in vocabulary which are not always corrected. Presentation is variable and exercise books show a lack of effort or pride.
130. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and there is a good shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. The recently appointed curriculum team leader has a good awareness of the strengths of the department and an agenda for improvement. The department is now responding to recent curricular changes. Schemes of work reflecting the national strategy and changes at GCSE are being developed with the help of external consultants. Staffing is now adequate although there have been some difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified staff. Accommodation is good and resources appropriate but access to computers is difficult and the provision of books in the school library would benefit from further additions.
131. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and, although much work is still outstanding, there has been a recent determination to tackle a number of issues from the last inspection report. Standards of attainment and standards of teaching and learning remain as reported last time but schemes of work are now in development and the recently appointed

curriculum team leader has improved documentation, communication and consultation within the department.

## Numeracy

132. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory although the whole school policy is still under development. Number is used well in physical education for calculating pulse rates and heart beats while algebra work is developed in ICT for creating formulae for spreadsheets. Students make good use of measurement in textiles. Line and block charts are used for climate graphs in geography while fitness graphs are used in physical education. Graphs including line graphs, pie charts and histograms are used well in science.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- The teachers are well qualified, have good subject knowledge.
- Attainment has improved at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE since the last inspection.
- The achievement of the higher-attaining students is good with 14 per cent of students gaining the highest grades possible at GCSE.
- Good support for students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language.

### Areas for improvement

- Raising further the attainment of students in Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations.
- Increasing the range of teaching and learning styles especially the use of computers.
- Co-ordinating the teaching styles used and raising the expectations of the students.
- Using the assessment data produced for the analysis of the effectiveness of the courses.
- Formal monitoring of the teaching to evaluate the quality of learning by the students.

133. In tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 standards were below the national level but well above those of similar schools. The trend has been upwards over the past few years. When compared to the other core subjects, students do better in science than in English or mathematics.

134. The achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Overall the standards seen were below those expected nationally at the end of Year 9. This represents satisfactory progress as the data indicates that students join the school in Year 7 below the national expected level. Year 7 students are achieving standards below those expected and were only able to describe in simple terms the components of a simple electric circuit such as wires and bulbs. In Year 9 the higher-attaining students were producing work of standards above the expected levels and were able to recall the particle arrangements in gases and explain how they acted when compressed.

135. The proportion of students obtaining a GCSE grade of A\* to C is below the national level. At the end of Year 11 in 2002, most students took double certification GCSE while the remainder followed the certificate of achievement award. Overall the proportion of A\* to C grades in science examinations was forty four per cent compared to the national figure of fifty two per cent. The trend has been upwards over the past six years and results are now at their highest level ever. There was little difference between the attainment of boys or girls. The percentage of students gaining the highest grades of A and A\* is above the national level.

136. The achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall, but good for the most able students. The standard of work seen, in Year 11, was just below the expected national level. This represents satisfactory progress. The lower-attaining students were able to discuss such topics as



wavelength and frequency of sound waves. Higher-attaining students were able to explain inherited characteristics based on recessive and dominant genes in accurate detail.

137. The attitudes and behaviour of students are variable but overall, are satisfactory. Students behave well and work hard when there is good classroom control linked to well planned lessons. There was, in these lessons, a constructive and supportive approach by teachers leading to a very pleasant working atmosphere. This was especially true with the higher-attaining students who show the best attitude to the subject. A good example of this was in a Year 7 class where the teacher organised a well-structured lesson based on using computers to investigate the change in current within different circuits. The higher-attaining students have complete notes and overall a good standard of presentation. However, a significant number of students have poor writing skills and their notes do not provide a satisfactory revision source. Some teachers allow students to produce work of a poor quality and are not setting high enough standards. The department have identified this problem and have started to introduce plans to support their students further with extra resources and assistance linked to raising expectations.
138. The quality of teaching and learning in science is satisfactory overall. In half of the lessons observed the teaching was good or better. There were no instances of unsatisfactory teaching. The review of students' books indicated that teaching over time is of a similar standard. The best teaching was seen when the lessons were well planned, had good pace and classroom control was good. One very effective lesson in Year 7 on invertebrates involved the use of relevant and suitable resources linked to an enthusiastic manner from the teacher and a good review session which consolidated what students had learnt. Teachers plan their lessons with short focused activities that help students maintain their interest. Most teachers are skilled in managing classroom discussion to enable students to show their understanding of the topic being covered. The range of teaching styles used is limited and the department must investigate the possibility of planning more practical and computer-based learning. Homework is structured and as an integral part of the lesson plans is used as an effective means of reinforcing learning. Teachers mark books and add some narrative comments and praise. They set targets in a constructive manner but these are often not followed up. The stock of books in the library is adequate with most books being relatively new. The department use the library occasionally for independent learning and research work.
139. Students are aware of their progress from the assessments made on end of topic tests and are informed of their potential level or grades. Students with special educational needs are well supported in science and make satisfactory progress overall. Staff are aware of their needs and use this knowledge to plan suitable activities and resources. Students with English as a second language are also well supported and make satisfactory progress overall. In one Year 11 class the help for students with special and language needs was especially effective with two specialist teachers and the class teacher giving very good support. There is a wide range of opportunities for students to use their literacy and numeracy skills both in written work and class discussions. The department has introduced the literacy strategy using key words in a range of writing styles and other support materials well and this has been of benefit to students. This is of particular importance as a large number of students have weak literacy skills. A similar positive approach has been made with numeracy which has enabled students to make satisfactory progress. The use of computers is not widespread in science and is unsatisfactory. The use of data-logging in science is restricted by the lack of sufficient equipment. New units are required to allow whole class use and to ensure statutory regulations are being met.
140. The leadership and management of science are satisfactory. The new curriculum team leader has identified suitable priorities for the department and has started to devise and agree an action plan. The need to co-ordinate the sixteen well-qualified and enthusiastic members of staff to ensure that

common agreed strategies are followed is of particular importance given that most teachers are relatively new to the school. Monitoring closely all aspects of teaching and learning to identify both good practice and areas that need further support is recognised as a priority. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Attainment and the quality of teaching are now higher. The assessment of students' progress and attainment is being used to set targets for students and to monitor the progress of individual students, though not yet to evaluate the impact of the action plan.

141. The accommodation for science is good. There are thirteen laboratories for the sixteen members of staff. The department has sufficient resources except for data loggers. The five support staff are efficient, very well organised and ensure the equipment and resources ordered are present at the start of lessons.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- The very good teaching that enables students to achieve well and attain very good examination results.
- Leadership and the management, particularly the development of ICT and literacy.
- The very good range of extra curricular provision and the contribution to students' wider spiritual and cultural education.
- The strong teamwork and commitment to improvement.

### Areas for development

- Make clear the links between the planned learning and assessment objectives in the scheme of work and to students in Years 7 to 9.
- Extension activities that challenge higher-attaining students in Years 7 to 9.

142. When students enter the school in Year 7 the majority have limited experience of the subject, for example keeping a sketchbook and working with a range of art and design materials. Most have to be taught very basic work habits, as well as how to use work journals or sketchbooks and how work can be presented and annotated. From this low or very low starting point most make good progress. Teacher assessments in 2002 showed attainment in Year 9 to be in line with those reported nationally.

143. The work seen in lessons, and in the samples provided by the school, suggest standards in Year 9 are broadly in line with expected levels. Around three quarters of all Year 9 students, including some with English as an additional language and students with special learning needs, are working at Level 5. Overall, students are achieving well relative to their various starting points. However a significant minority of students who are predicted by teachers to attain the highest levels do not yet have enough work of the required depth and quality for the highest National Curriculum levels. In lessons where learning is well planned, where expectations about work and behaviour are made clear and firmly upheld, students achieve very well. The work journals serve as a constant reminder to students of what they have achieved so far and how they can improve. The planned opportunities for students to use digital cameras, scanners and computers to manipulate images, are now firmly established as part of the curriculum in all years. For example in Year 8, where students were studying pop art, they prepared portraits of themselves and then modified and selected appropriate colour combinations. In the same class, also applying their knowledge of colour theory, students printed portraits using cut stencils and different paint effects. In a Year 9 lesson the teacher asked some searching questions that effectively prompted students to recount

what they could remember from the previous lesson and in so doing to practise and develop their language and literacy skills. Very good use was made of a prepared drawing to demonstrate how light and dark areas could be added to create a sense of form. These examples set a high standard for students to aim for.

144. Several factors have a negative impact on the achievement of all students, including those whose previous standard of work is well above the average. The single lessons lasting fifty minutes do not allow sufficient time for students to refine, practise and extend recently learnt skills since only approximately twenty minutes is spent on practical work. In addition, learning time is eroded because students arrive late for lessons. Several classes are taught by two different teachers and some students are taught by non-specialist teachers for half of their curriculum time. Despite teachers' best efforts, students' work reflects this lack of continuity. Where students have only one teacher, behaviour and concentration are better and attitudes to work are very positive indeed.
145. For several years the GCSE results have been well above average. In 2002, the girls' results were close to average levels for girls and boys attained particularly well. They secured results that were considerably better than those in their other subjects and compared very well with boys' results nationally. The overall results for boys and girls compare very favourably with schools having a similar intake. Each year several students are not entered for the examination, mostly because they have a poor record of attendance and therefore insufficient coursework.
146. Standards of work seen in lessons are well above expectation. Higher-attaining students are generally able to organise and plan their time very well. One-to-one discussions with teachers help them set, and fulfil, personal targets. Students in Year 10 confidently make basic forms for their pots and then carefully refine and model the surface decoration. In Year 11 classes, students have learned to think imaginatively, develop ideas and experiment with different techniques when preparing work on given themes. Students read books, gather information from the Internet, draw from first hand observation and visit exhibitions. The quality of work in journals reflects some imaginative problem solving. The initial work, for a project based on buildings, led some students to photograph city office blocks and buildings of architectural interest, then later to experiment with different surface qualities and to create relief effects, using for example, metallic materials, plastics and wire mesh. Some students have advanced skills in painting and drawing, seen in their work of still life objects and artefacts. Mixed media is used skilfully to represent changes in surface quality, tinting some areas, strengthening edges and darkening the background spaces. Average and lower-attaining students, and those whose English language is at a relatively early stage of development, occasionally borrow too much from what other people have written without fully understanding or commenting on it themselves. Their practical skills are usually better developed than their written work and the work reflects these differences. To combat this, and because many have more advanced oral skills, teachers are planning to record students talking about their work. Overall achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
147. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The strengths of the teaching are teachers' enthusiasm, knowledge and understanding of the subject and the course requirements. These qualities are used to particularly good effect in examination classes to encourage and challenge students to achieve their full potential. In younger classes, teachers generally have to work very hard to instil appropriate standards of behaviour. Where they have taken a firm authoritative stand, students are developing responsible attitudes and learning appropriate work habits. Some very effective learning took place where teachers encouraged extended, rather than one-word, answers. Students demonstrated their developing understanding, through their accurate use of a subject specific language when describing their own work and work by Frida Kahlo. In Years 7 to 9, all students are set the same work and in many cases the work by higher-attaining students does not always reflect the expected standards, based on

information about prior attainment. Extension activities are needed that require students to tackle more advanced learning that can be applied to home and class work.

148. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Teachers work well as a team, are conscientious, and committed to improvement. The subject makes a strong contribution towards developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning. A very good range of extra curricular opportunities exist and include participation in local arts festivals and community events, bringing visiting artists into school and arranging trips to exhibitions. The curriculum is very strong and ICT and literacy are now firmly and effectively embedded within the scheme of work. Learning was most powerful in lessons where expectations were shared with students. Students were noticeably more focused as a result. Giving students in Years 7 to 9 clear information about the project assessment objectives would further help develop their skills as independent and responsible learners. The examination-marking criteria do this job well for older students. These and other developments, like the work journals, need careful monitoring to ensure progress is maintained year on year. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**

### Strengths

- The initial planning for the subject.
- The analysis of the contribution of all curriculum areas to citizenship.
- The whole school approach to the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- The completion of the schemes of work to give a clear structure for teaching the subject.
- Establish a monitoring system which will ensure that all students have equal opportunities to participate in citizenship activities.

149. As the subject was formally introduced into the school curriculum in September 2002 there is as yet no basis for national comparison of standards. The subject is taught partially in the PSHE course and partially through other subjects. No formal assessments have yet been undertaken and as the PSHE lessons seen were not directly related to citizenship, it is not possible to make a secure judgement about the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, a number of good examples of the teaching of citizenship were seen in other subjects. For example, in a religious education lesson, the consideration of racism was linked to the story of Stephen Lawrence. How people can deal with dog fouling was considered in English lessons and relevant ethics were covered in a business education lesson. A number of other subject areas, such as history and design technology, have identified areas within their schemes of work.

150. The attitudes of the pupils to social education and citizenship are mixed. When the students find the topics interesting and they become engrossed in the work, they learn well, though they do not always recognise work in other subjects as being part of citizenship. The school is still in the process of establishing citizenship and so far, planning has been satisfactory with the preparation of the outline programmes of study and the evaluation of the contribution of subjects to citizenship. There are plans to have citizenship weeks to give a focus for particular aspects of the course and to include assessment. However there is, as yet, no departmental handbook of guidance. The schemes of work do not give the structure needed to ensure that work in each year builds on what has been done previously, nor do they include guidance on incorporating literacy, numeracy and ICT where these are not covered within subjects.

151. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. The school's approach is imaginative and is intended to ensure that specific teaching and the contribution of different subjects are combined effectively to cover all aspects of citizenship. Whole-school training was provided last year, though new staff have not yet been trained. However monitoring and the evaluation of the teaching of the citizenship within PSHE are inconsistent and cannot guarantee that all students have equal opportunity to participate in citizenship activities. As this was not a subject when the school was last inspected, no comparisons can be made.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- In textiles examination results are good at GCSE as are standards in Years 10 and 11.
- Girls achieved above average GCSE results.
- Good standards in graphics in Year 10 and in food in Year 11.
- A committed team of staff who work well together.
- The amount of accommodation available to the department.

### Areas for improvement

- The attainment at GCSE in some specialist areas, and the attainment of boys in particular.
- Revising the scheme of work to include computer aided design and manufacture.
- Providing resources to teach computer control and computer aided designing and manufacturing.
- Ensuring arrangements for risk assessments and health and safety provision are satisfactory.

152. In 2002, results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were just below the national average. Many students enter the school with little previous experience of the subject and low levels of attainment. Results therefore represent satisfactory progress and achievement. Although the results are close to the national average they are based on incomplete coverage of the programme of study and are therefore not a totally accurate reflection of what students can do.

153. In 2002, overall GCSE results for design and technology were below the national average. This was mainly because the boys' results were very low compared with national results. The girls' results however, were above average. In textiles, results were very good, but were below the national average in electronics, food, graphics and resistant materials.

154. Standards in lessons and in work seen in Years 7 to 9 are close to national expectations but there are variations within year groups and across years. The standards of some Year 7 and 8 students are below that expected, but better work was seen with other groups in these years. Most students in Year 9, with effort, are in line to achieve average standards by the end of the year, though some are under-performing. There are few differences in the attainment of girls when compared to boys, although the design work of some girls is neater. The attainment of minority ethnic groups, and those with special educational needs, is similar to that of other students and some make good progress. In Years 10 and 11, standards vary considerably. They are good in food and textiles in Year 11 where there many examples of high quality work, and good in textiles and graphics in Year 10. Some very good work by Year 10 graphics students showed considerable maturity. Standards in electronics and resistant materials are improving, but are still below expected standards. Standards achieved by students in food and textiles should be well in line with national expectations at the end of Year 11. In graphics there is likely to be an improvement and most students should be close to the national expectation at the end of Year 11.

155. The achievement of students is usually satisfactory. Many students of quite limited attainment achieve well, as was evident in a Year 10 graphics lesson and a Year 11 food technology lesson where many students made good progress. The achievement of some students, especially in Year 9, is sometimes unsatisfactory, because of a lack of effort made to learn what has been taught.
156. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. There were examples of good and very good teaching. In the best lessons, the teachers engage well with students and encourage them to do their best. In Years 7 to 9, teaching was satisfactory in most of the lessons seen, with some good teaching. In Years 10 and 11 teaching was satisfactory in just over half of the lessons seen with some good and very good teaching. In a Year 10 graphics lesson, very good teaching and organisation enabled students to produce highly imaginative ideas for CD packaging, and in a Year 11 food technology, effective use was made of a quick question and answer session at the end of the lesson to reinforce students' learning.
157. The quality of learning matches that of teaching in most lessons. In a Year 10 graphics lesson, learning was good because students had good support from the teacher who encouraged them to use their natural talents in free hand sketching to produce a wide range of impressive work. There were several lessons where learning was unsatisfactory, because students have not yet developed a culture of learning. In these lessons students did not listen to instructions from the teacher, they did not learn what has been taught in previous lessons and their practical work lacked care. Examples of unsatisfactory learning occurred in Years 8, 9 and 10. In electronics lessons in Years 8 and 10, many students could not explain the function of the circuits which they had made, and some could not name basic components and explain how they should be connected in a circuit.
158. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 does not meet important requirements. Throughout Years 7 to 9 opportunities are limited for students to evaluate existing products and to work on open-ended design and make tasks as required by the National Curriculum. Although the scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 contains appropriate references to the use of ICT, examples of its use were rare in the work sample. There is no provision for work involving computer control because of a lack of resources. Except in textiles, where a computer controlled machine is used effectively, the department does not have facilities for computer aided manufacturing and cannot meet National Curriculum requirements in Years 7 to 9. Funds are being made available to remedy this. The use of ICT in examination course work is better. Schemes of work for Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory but lack references to modern materials and processes and computer aided manufacturing.
159. Leadership and management are satisfactory, though there are weaknesses, and progress since the last inspection has also been satisfactory. Action has been taken on many of the points raised in the last report, but these changes are not yet sufficiently embedded to raise standards to a high enough level. Staff work well together as a team and provide good advice and support to each other but they have not had enough staff development to ensure that everyone is conversant with current developments in the subject. Observation of teaching has started though it has not yet had enough impact on standards of teaching and learning. Health and safety arrangements are unsatisfactory. There have been no risk assessments of the processes which student carry out, as required by school policy and the Health and Safety at Work Act. Guards over drill chucks are missing from most drilling machines and this presents a major hazard to students.
160. Staff are well qualified, and are able to support the work of students. There is however a long-standing vacancy in food technology, which affects the standards of work, especially in Years 7 to 9. Resources in the department are limited. The range of materials available is limited with little work done which involves the use of metals, and a limited range of textiles materials. There has been a lack of investment in major equipment over many years. The equipment in workshops is

very basic, and this, together with the current lack of equipment for computer aided making, inhibits the work which students can do, especially in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, and depresses standards. Resources were further reduced by the recent removal of some equipment, much of it unused, but the department currently lacks machines for the sharpening of tools, for cutting and shaping metals, and for wood turning. The financial resources to replace equipment removed were made available, and the department needs to do this quickly to reduce the existing shortcomings

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall the quality of provision for geography is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Students make good progress and achieve well when given the opportunity to think for themselves and use source material.
- Geography makes a satisfactory contribution to numeracy, and ICT.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in all year groups are too low and students under-achieve.
- Expectations of students are too low and the pace of learning is unchallenging.
- Schemes of work do not provide an appropriate structure for teaching and learning.
- Assessment is not being used effectively to raise standards.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not providing information about strengths and weaknesses.

161. Students' knowledge, skills and understanding when they join the school are below national expectations. They have very limited grasp of different scales, maps, symbols and direction. They have very little comprehension of human processes or their interrelationships with physical processes.

162. The results in the 2002 Key Stage 3 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well below national expectations and below the school average. At GCSE in 2002 less than a third of those entered achieved an A\* to C grade, which was well below national averages, and below the school average in other subjects. The results at GCSE have remained low over recent years.

163. The attainment of the current Year 9 is well below national expectations, which matches the results from last year. Taking into account students' low levels of understanding in Year 7, this still represents unsatisfactory achievement for many students, and in particular, higher-attaining students. They understand the concepts of Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) and More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs), and they know about population growth and renewable and non-renewable resources. They have insufficient understanding of the importance of location and they have had few opportunities to learn about specific themes, such as LEDCs and MEDCs, through their study of different places. The amount of work completed shows that students have not worked as hard as they might, and the majority of their work is answering questions set by the teacher, rather than writing more extended pieces of work that they have thought about and developed for themselves. They have had few opportunities to develop their skills of questioning in geography or the chance to select and use a variety of information from a range of sources. Students' work shows that they have not had sufficient chance to study a range of different places, nor have they been able to develop their skills of research, their use of maps, and their ability to ask geographical questions.

164. The attainment of the current Year 11 is well below national averages and matches last year's results at GCSE. This again represents unsatisfactory achievement from Year 9 for most students and particularly the higher-attainers. Students in Year 11 know about renewable and non-renewable resources, but little more than has been taught to students in Year 9. They understand industrial systems and ecosystems, but much of their work is incomplete and there is limited depth in their understanding of locational and distributional factors. Their limited fieldwork experience has contributed little to their geographical understanding and the development of their skills.
165. In one Year 11 class, when students were learning about renewable and non-renewable resources, they showed little ability to think for themselves. They relied on the teacher to prompt them and although they were beginning to think about interrelationships and connections, it was at a very low level. The pace of learning was slow and the students had very little sense of where the places they were talking about are in the world. The work of the Year 11 students showed deterioration rather than an improvement in standards. Throughout the school, students' work shows too much time being devoted to some topics, such as volcanoes, and insufficient time being devoted to other areas, such as the skills of enquiry. Students' achievement also suffers through unnecessary repetition, for example, the topic of direction being taught in Years 7 and 11.
166. The achievement of students with special educational needs and English as an additional language is unsatisfactory. Although students' needs are clearly identified, these are insufficiently taken into account in teachers' planning and the rate of learning is slow. Gifted, talented and higher-attaining students achieve less well than the majority, as there is too little challenging or extended work for them.
167. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is unsatisfactory. Students learn best when they are given opportunities to think for themselves and use source material. In one Year 9 lesson, the class were organised into three groups looking at various aspects of the development of Antarctica. They were achieving very well at all levels and were benefiting from the careful planning and clarity of purpose to the lesson, combined with the teacher's very good pupil management skills. As a result, they were making very good progress in both their knowledge and understanding of Antarctica and the environment, together with the development of their researching and enquiry skills. By the end of the lesson, students were very keen to share what they had learned with others. In a Year 10 lesson, when students were given more open questions about river features and processes, they were able to reflect upon their responses, were interested and volunteered answers that were longer and more thoughtful. Geography makes a satisfactory contribution to numeracy, and ICT, but has an unsatisfactory impact on students' skills in literacy.
168. Although it was not possible to see every year group being taught geography in the school, the analysis of students' work, together with the lessons seen, show that frequently teachers' expectations of students are too low and the pace of learning is unchallenging, leading to a poor volume of work. As a result, students' work is repeatedly unfinished and poorly presented. Less effective teaching was characterised by the teacher doing too much talking and not enabling students to contribute sufficiently to the discussion. This was particularly apparent in one lesson where there were two teachers, one of whom was supporting students with special educational needs. The discussion was overly teacher dominated and, at times, insufficiently focused on lesson objectives. This led to slow progress and very little opportunity for students to think for themselves, so they remained passive and uninterested. The schemes of work have not provided sufficient support for new teachers or where a teacher's subject knowledge has been insecure. This has increased the impact of changes in staff and led to a lack of some important elements of the subject being learned, such as map work skills, and undue emphasis on other topics, such as volcanoes



169. Students' attitudes and behaviour in geography are satisfactory. They work compliantly, and when interested, are enthusiastic. Their pace of working is often too slow, and at times there is a lack of care in their work. This is often associated with insufficient feedback from their teachers. Where teachers are more demanding, students expect more of themselves and their work is more thoughtful.
170. Assessment of the subject is unsatisfactory throughout the school. Too much work is unmarked, and the work that has been marked often gives insufficient guidance to the students about how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve. Students in Years 10 and 11 are clearer about the grades they are likely to achieve at GCSE, although they are less sure about how to improve. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are less certain about the levels they have achieved. There is also no agreed system for recording, so that there is little opportunity for students' attainment and progress to be monitored and appropriate support or intervention offered. There is little use of targets for individual students, so the match of tasks to students' abilities and the extension and challenge of work given to them is seldom adequate.
171. The geography curriculum is satisfactory but with some weaknesses. Throughout the school there is insufficient focus on students' learning of geographical skills and their ability to research and think for themselves. This limits the achievement of most, and particularly, higher-attaining students, with the result that many students are under-achieving throughout the school. The programme of fieldwork and map work does not sufficiently develop students' skills of observation throughout the school.
172. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The department has not raised the very low standards and the subject has deteriorated since the last inspection. The schemes of work do not provide a structure to teaching in the subject, so the curriculum is not balanced throughout the year and there is little guidance about the pitch of work, through learning objectives set in the scheme of work. The impact of staff changes could have been minimised with better schemes of work. The monitoring and development of the subject is unsatisfactory, with insufficient use of the data available to focus on the attainment and progress of students. As a result, the department lacks information about strengths and weaknesses in the subject. Consequently, the plans for the subject are unclear about priorities for development and how they might be achieved. Resources for the subject are overall satisfactory, with a good range and quality of textbooks, but insufficient OS maps and aerial photographs.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Attainment in GCSE examinations.
- Some good teaching seen through the inspection.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve marking, monitoring, assessment and target setting practice, by using National Curriculum levels to guide teachers and students.
- Ensure planning for teaching and learning in schemes of work is appropriate for all students.
- Provide enrichment opportunities in history, including those to be gained through the use of information technology.

173. Teacher assessments in 2002 for students at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards were well below national expectations. As the department statistics show, this represents a trend extending back over four years. In the light of their attainment on entry to the school, by the end of Year 9

students' achievement is unsatisfactory. Results for the small cohort of students in the GCSE examination for 2002 were above national and school averages, which is good achievement for these students, though a significant number of students were not entered for GCSE because of poor attendance or lack of coursework.

174. The standards of work of students in Years 7 to 9 were below average. In general students are under-achieving, largely because they are not sufficiently challenged. Their knowledge of events is below expectations and their use of source materials is limited by weaknesses in their literacy skills. However there were examples of what students can achieve when given the opportunity. In a very good lesson with a higher-attaining set seen in Year 9, students conducted a passionate, well argued debate set in the House of Commons in 1938. Those who supported Prime Minister Chamberlain in his talks with Hitler demonstrated a sound understanding of the issues he faced. Those who supported Mr Churchill's reply warned of the dangers of breaking international treaties, and encouraging dangerous leaders in their ambitions. The speeches of the higher-attaining students demonstrated perceptive understanding of a complex political situation and all contributors to the debate provided carefully thought out and presented viewpoints.
175. Standards of work of students in Year 11 were above national expectations. In one lesson observed, on different interpretations of the role of the USA in the reconstruction of Europe after World War Two, all students showed a good understanding of the issues presented through a well chosen selection of political cartoons from the time. Higher-attaining students were able to draw on their past learning, to explain how the complexity of Cold War relations could give rise to different interpretations of events. Students in Year 10 were observed gaining a sound understanding of Stalin's policies in agriculture in the USSR in the 1930s. Higher-attaining students in this class offered informed evaluations of the success or failure of these policies.
176. Teaching seen through the inspection in Years 7 to 9 ranged from unsatisfactory to very good. In a very good Year 7 class observed, studying the rise of Islam, the teacher and her support teacher ensured successful outcomes through careful planning and support for all the students in this mixed class. This included a high proportion of students with English as an additional language. Good relationships and high expectations contributed to the successful outcomes, allowing the teachers to ensure pace and challenge for all students. However, not all teaching reaches this high standard, and, that is why teaching and students' learning are unsatisfactory overall. For example, in one unsatisfactory lesson observed in a mixed class in Year 9, the teacher's planning paid insufficient attention to the broad range of students in the class. As a result, too many students were unable to perform the expected tasks without constantly requesting support from the teacher. Also, in this class a significant number of students were reluctant to learn, and by the end of the lesson had completed very little work. A similar picture emerged from the work seen over time in students' exercise books. Teachers do not always plan for the full known range of attainment, and those who are not yet fluent in English. As a result, not all students complete the set work. For those who do, there is too little guidance as to what they have achieved, and how they might improve. Work is not routinely assessed in line with the National Curriculum expectations, although these make clear what students are expected to achieve in history. Students are not aware of these and cannot use them in assessing their own work, and setting targets for improvement. Nor are they prominently displayed throughout teachers' classrooms.
177. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are good. In the work of the GCSE class in Year 11, the teacher was seen to promote successful outcomes through detailed and pertinent marking of students' work. This combines with a clear classroom emphasis on ensuring a good understanding of the expected outcomes of history, and the examination process. Students' self-awareness of this can be seen in the progress they make. For example, in their use of contemporary evidence, higher-attaining students in the Year 11 group were seen to be making sophisticated observations

about the reliability and usefulness of various source materials, based on careful evaluation of their provenance, message and purpose. It was clear that middle and lower-attaining students in this group shared this understanding, although their responses were not as well written and organised. Many opportunities are provided for practising responses against examination requirements, and developing the skill of extended writing in history, and this enables students to be aware of and improve on their levels.

178. Overall in Years 7 to 9, no evidence of a department strategy to encourage the development of writing of all students was seen in students' work. Simple advice over how to use paragraphs in extended writing, and to ensure correct spelling of key terms and common words, was inconsistently applied. There was no evidence of a contribution to the numeracy strategy, nor of the use of ICT to support students' learning. The library collection is currently seldom used. There are few opportunities for students to learn outside the classroom, for example through visits to historical sites, or a history club for those with a special enthusiasm for the subject.

179. Since the last report, standards have declined, and management is therefore unsatisfactory. Schemes of work do not identify clear strategies for meeting the needs of all students in all classes. Teachers and students do not always have a clear understanding of the objectives and expectations of each lesson, and series of lessons, and teachers do not routinely evaluate how far these are met. Students are not given clear targets for their own learning.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision for ICT is **satisfactory** in the taught courses, but unsatisfactory across the curriculum.

### Strengths

- Achievement has improved, so that it is now satisfactory.
- In some lessons, students respond with interest and effort.
- In most lessons, teachers balance assertiveness with sensitivity.
- The curriculum has improved in Years 7, 8, 10 and 11.
- Some subjects provide good and very good ICT opportunities.
- Resources are very well managed and technical support is very effective.

### Areas for improvement

- Below average standards in all years and well below average GCSE results.
- Procedures for assessing standards at the end of Year 9.
- Teaching styles sometimes limit creativity and independence.
- The ICT curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements and there are insufficient opportunities in some subjects.
- Inadequate provision for longer-term strategic leadership.

180. Teacher assessments of students' work at the end of Year 9 were well below average in 2002. The department is aware that the evidence that it used to make the assessments is not fully reliable and is already improving its procedures. Because there is currently no taught course in Year 9, there was insufficient evidence during the inspection to make a judgement on standards in that year. The standards of students currently in Year 8 are below average. All students can use software to carry out tasks such as using word processors to create text. Most can enhance their work by for example including bulleted lists or integrating scanned images with text. However, much work shows faults in formatting and failure to use tools such as spell checkers. A high proportion of students find it difficult to explain what they have done.

181. Overall GCSE results were well below average in 2002. No students gained grades A\* or A and the proportion securing A\* to C was very low. Generally, students gained lower grades in the information technology examination than in their other subjects. A major factor was that the standard of coursework, which counts for over half the marks, was weak. The department has made changes to its teaching strategies to help students to produce better coursework. Most current Year 11 students can use software for a range of purposes. Spreadsheets, for example, are used to make calculations, translate information from tables into graphs, and carry out modelling activities. Few however, show strong understanding by being able to explain confidently what modelling is, even though they can competently carry out modelling activities. There is a general weakness in students' ability to represent in writing what they are able to do with computers. This affects the standards that they are able to show in coursework and examinations. Although standards are below average, the achievement of students is satisfactory, as most students maintain those with which they enter the school. This is an improvement upon the last inspection.
182. The attitudes and behaviour of students during ICT lessons are satisfactory. They usually enjoy using computers and most generally show appropriate concentration and effort. In many GCSE lessons, students respond well by working quickly and quietly at individual tasks and showing interest by asking thoughtful questions. In a Year 7 lesson, in which students participated enthusiastically in activities, response was very good. Some students arrive late for lessons and take considerable time to settle down to work. In a few lessons, they work quite willingly, but without enthusiasm.
183. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with both strengths and points for development. In most lessons, teachers are aware of the individual needs of students and provide appropriately for these. In doing so, they maintain a good balance between sensitively encouraging students and asserting proper standards of behaviour and attitudes to work. In most lessons, teachers explain tasks clearly, so that students know what is required of them and individual work is appropriately monitored and guided. The best lessons are characterised by activities, questioning and management that succeed in ensuring that students think creatively and participate well in activities. While no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection, teaching styles limited learning in several lessons. Teachers' concern to guide and support students, which was usually helpful, occasionally restricted their opportunities for independent thought and activity. In some lessons, questioning styles encouraged only a small number of students to participate and did not give the teacher secure feedback on what students had learnt. Monitoring of individual work did not always ensure that all were working hard enough. In a few lessons, teaching lacked enthusiasm and this was reflected in the response of students. Quite often, several minutes were lost at the start of lessons when, although teachers and students arrive late, little urgency is shown in getting under way. There is an appropriate focus on helping students to improve their literacy standards. Vocabulary tests take place regularly. These are useful, but sometimes take up too much of the lesson. Students often have opportunities to practise numeracy skills when, for example, creating formulas to make spreadsheet calculations. Literacy and numeracy opportunities need to be more systematically planned, so that full use is made of all opportunities.
184. The taught courses are satisfactory and continuing to improve. A separate course has been introduced in Years 7 and 8 and the school plans to extend this to Year 9 in the next academic year. An improvement since the last inspection is that there is now a full GCSE course. The provision of opportunities to use computers in other subjects is inconsistent and unsatisfactory. While opportunities are very good in art and religious education and good in music, they are unsatisfactory in mathematics, science, design technology and history and in the special educational needs department. A weakness remaining from the last inspection is that the control and measuring aspects are not adequately provided for, either through the taught course, or in

suitable other subjects. The curricular deficiencies mean that the school is not meeting statutory requirements.

185. The improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Students' achievement and the curriculum are both better than they were, but further improvement is still needed. The stock of computers and other ICT resources has been systematically improved and is now very well managed, so that it now effectively meets the needs of the taught courses and many subjects. Considerable demands are placed upon the resources by the taught courses however and some subjects continue to find it difficult to gain the access that they require. There has been a significant increase in the provision of technical support and those responsible for this make an energetic, highly committed and very effective contribution to the work of the department.

186. In spite of its best efforts, the school has been unable to appoint a permanent co-ordinator for ICT. It is aware that this has resulted in inadequate provision for the longer-term strategic development and leadership of both the taught ICT courses and the provision of opportunities to use computers in the other subjects and continues to seek a permanent resolution of this issue. In the meantime, it has made satisfactory interim arrangements, by sharing managerial functions between several members of staff, who have shown commendable willingness and commitment in undertaking the additional burdens involved. There has, for example, been some good work in developing guidance to support teachers in making reference to National Curriculum level for assessing the progress of students in Years 7 and 8 and improving the GCSE course to help students produce better coursework.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Committed and often good teaching.
- The positive attitudes of students in Years 10 and 11.
- Improved curriculum planning, assessment and schemes of work.
- Very high standards in the GCSE Arabic course.

### Areas for Improvement

- Standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- The behaviour of a significant number of younger students.
- Planning for clearer progression in students' learning.
- Enriching students' experience through links, visits and more emphasis on the cultural dimension of language learning.

187. When they enter the school, students study either French or Spanish and most study the language to GCSE level. A small number discontinue language study in Year 10 to follow an alternative curriculum. A GCSE Arabic course is offered in Years 10 and 11. For most of the students following this course, Arabic is their heritage language.

188. The results of teachers' assessments of students at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well below the average reported nationally but the evidence of the inspection, notably the performance of students in the current Year 10, suggests that these assessments tended to underestimate what students achieved. Standards of work of students in the current Year 9 are below the national expectation. Students' written work is their strongest feature, though much of what they produce is vocabulary and sentence work rather than extended personal writing. Examples of written work from higher-attaining students show that they have the capacity to express themselves well on an appropriate range of topics such as their family and the weather. Students' listening skills are

satisfactory, but their speaking is not sufficiently developed – they do not have the confidence to speak fluently at any length. Although their reading comprehension skills develop through classwork, they do not read independently for information and pleasure. The department is unlikely to meet its target of 50 per cent of students achieving the national benchmark.

189. GCSE results have fallen since the last inspection, when they were just in line with national averages. In 2002, the French results were below the national average (though in line with the overall school performance). The proportion of girls attaining grades A\* to C was in line with the national average, but boys were well below. Results in Spanish were poor, the number of students attaining grades A\* to C being barely half the national average. Girls performed no better than boys and the results at grades A\* to G were well below the national average. Results in the GCSE Arabic course, however, were well above the national average, with the majority of students attaining grades A\* or A, though a significant proportion of students who started the course did not take GCSE. The attainment of students in the current Year 11 is below the nationally expected level in French and Spanish, but well above for most studying Arabic. In French, few of even the most able students are predicted to attain above grade C. The evidence of lessons seen and samples of students' work in French is that there is general underachievement, with only the most able performing at higher GCSE levels. Students' listening and speaking skills are satisfactory, but many have not developed their ability to produce extended writing and there is little evidence of productive reading. The position in Spanish has improved somewhat as a result of more consistent and better teaching. Higher-attaining students in particular have built a secure understanding of grammar with the help of revision programmes accessed via the Internet. Their overall skills are more in line with expectations for the course. In Arabic, most students' work is of higher GCSE standard, though the competence of a small group of beginners is below expectation. Students' overall attainment in languages over the past year has been affected by staffing difficulties which have not been fully overcome. The lack of schemes of work and assessment information have exacerbated these and made it much more difficult for new teachers to provide appropriate work.
190. Students generally make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9, though this is sometimes impeded by the poor attitudes and behaviour of a minority. The best achievements and progress were seen in both French and Spanish in Year 8, where students of a wide range of ability made good gains in knowledge and understanding on the topic of the body and health, which they consolidated through listening, speaking, reading and writing, used effectively in combination. The improving picture of achievement and progress is also seen in Year 10. In two French lessons, for example, with groups covering the full spectrum of ability, students were working in line with or above course expectations. One group made good progress with coursework preparing tourist information about London, while a lower-attaining group developed good dialogues about holiday plans. In an Arabic lesson, students of differing abilities worked effectively at appropriate levels – relative beginners learning key words and higher-attainers writing discursive essays. Students with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9, and good progress in Years 10 and 11. Teachers show good awareness of the range of students' needs, including, for example dyslexia, and plan effective strategies to support them.
191. Teaching is satisfactory overall, though the quality ranged from very good to poor. The best teaching was characterised by very good planning and resourcing to meet the full range of students' needs, lively, interactive approaches featuring extensive use of the target language and lessons which had good variety of task and activity conducted at a brisk pace. Teaching in Arabic is outstanding. Unsatisfactory or poor teaching, usually by teachers unfamiliar with the school, resulted from a failure to engage with groups or give students a clear and focused framework for learning. The poor attitudes of some students also militated against effective teaching and learning. However, teaching was good or better in more than half the lessons seen.

192. The quality of students' learning reflected the quality of teaching: when given engaging and challenging tasks, they responded well and showed a good capacity to learn, absorbing new knowledge, practising their skills in collaboration and showing good powers of concentration throughout lessons. Overall, however, they lack confidence as learners and are easily deterred or disaffected when teaching is not directive and supportive. They are not sufficiently aware of their own progress or of what their immediate goals should be. Many students, notably those in Years 10 and 11, have positive attitudes to language study. They respond enthusiastically to lively, communication-based teaching and work willingly on individual, group or paired tasks. Classes seen in both Years 10 and 11 showed a seriousness of purpose and desire to succeed.
193. The curriculum team leader is recently appointed. Much has been achieved in a short time to put schemes of work and a number of key policies into place and the curriculum now has a much improved structure. The main outstanding weaknesses are the lack of enrichment of students' experience through links or visits to either French or Spanish-speaking countries and insufficient emphasis on cultural features of language study. Information and communication technology has not been sufficiently exploited in this aspect and the library collection in modern languages is unsatisfactory. The lack of assessment means that staffing difficulties have had an impact on the progress of some students. The department has been working to improve systems for assessment and the recording of students' progress, but not enough use has been made of the National Curriculum as a framework for monitoring progress and goals are not sufficiently negotiated or shared with students.
194. The current department development plan identifies a number of key areas for improvement, many relating to issues unresolved since the last inspection. Improvement since that time has been unsatisfactory overall, but there is commitment, enthusiasm and quality in the current teaching team and, with ongoing staffing difficulties resolved, there is now a good capacity for improvement.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Music has become a very popular GCSE option, with no minimum entry requirement, and results greatly improved in 2002 to above average.
- The very good curriculum in Years 7 to 9 provides students with a wide range of interesting musical experiences.
- Accommodation and resources are very good, and resources for ICT are excellent.
- Students benefit from opportunities for attending workshops, courses and concerts in London, and the school makes a good contribution to music in the community.

### Areas for improvement

- GCSE students need clearer objectives when they are working independently.
- Where students use computers in Year 9, they spend too much time waiting for individual attention.

195. Students enter the school with levels of attainment in music that are below average. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, students' attainment was average. GCSE results in 2001 were below average but in 2002, results were above average, with three quarters of candidates gaining A\* to C grades.

196. Students achieve well during Years 7 to 9, and current standards are in line with national expectations. They gain a good grounding in the elements of music prescribed in the National Curriculum. They understand notation and other basic rudiments of music. They sing well and learn to play from notation pieces such as the South African national anthem. Higher-attaining students use the bass clef. Students understand how sound can reflect mood and suggest actions, and in small groups they compose descriptive pieces depicting events they have compiled on a story board. They sometimes write down their ideas using graphic scores. They listen to a good range of music in connection with the topics they study. During the inspection, Year 9 students made good progress in learning basic computer skills in connection with composing and performing. They selected sounds and combined them sometimes very skilfully, for example when composing variations on Pachelbel's 'Canon'.
197. GCSE music is a very popular option, which is open to all students, regardless of their level of musical accomplishment. Students are encouraged to develop their individual strengths and interests, and this leads to good achievement. Standards in work seen during the inspection were varied, but above average overall, in composing and performing. Most students choose modern, popular styles for their composing and performing. Some students have very well developed skills in composing with ICT. They confidently compose, arrange and notate their music on computers. Their knowledge of characteristics of different eras in classical music and of important works by major composers is below average.
198. Teaching is good overall throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers have very good musical knowledge and practical skills. They use these skills well for demonstration and accompaniment. Tasks are well matched to students' abilities, and students generally learn well. Students are keen to achieve good results and they concentrate hard. Teachers provide constructive individual support during independent work, enabling students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language to make good progress. The open-ended nature of practical tasks means that gifted and talented students make very good progress. Behaviour is generally good, but a few students in some lower school classes need firm direction to keep them on task. In Years 10 and 11, relationships are very friendly and productive as teachers and students share their enthusiasms. In lessons observed in Year 9, some students had to wait too long for help when using ICT, and this slowed their progress. In some GCSE lessons, students who were not being directly supervised worked too slowly because they had not been given suitable objectives and deadlines.
199. Music is well led and managed. Teachers teach to their strengths. Teaching is regularly monitored to increase its effectiveness and to share good practice. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is very good. It covers statutory requirements very well and provides a wide range of interesting experiences. In addition, students experience good opportunities for spiritual moral, social and cultural development. They encounter a wide range of music from different cultures, and they develop their understanding of citizenship well, for example through learning about the social background to 'blues' music. Accommodation and resources for music are very good. In particular, the department's computer resources have been substantially increased. Instrumental teaching is well established and visiting teachers make a good contribution to extra-curricular music. The school makes very good use of opportunities for widening students' musical experiences through visits to concerts, and events organised by London music colleges, orchestras and universities, and through projects involving visiting musicians. The school makes a good contribution to music locally, including useful contacts with feeder schools. Improvements in provision for music since the last inspection have been very good; almost all have taken place in the last two years.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**



Overall, the quality of provision in physical education and dance is **satisfactory**.

**Strengths**

- Teachers have good knowledge of the requirements of the GCSE examination course so teaching is good.
- Very good extra-curricular provision enhances learning opportunities.
- The good accommodation gives students access to a variety of activities.
- Achievement and teaching in dance are good.

**Areas for improvement**

- Attitudes towards learning to raise standards.
- Consistent targets to improve basic skills and to extend the learning of gifted and talented students.
- Better involvement of non-participants so they are included in lessons and learn.

**Physical education**

200. Students enter the school with skills and knowledge which are below average in physical education. In 2002 teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 in physical education were well above average compared with schools nationally but the inspection evidence indicates that teachers have been too generous in assessing standards. Standards attained by students at the end of Year 9 are at the below average level when compared with national expectations. Students achieve satisfactorily in comparison to their standard on entry into the school.

201. In 2002 GCSE results in physical education were well below average for grades A\* - C and below average for grades A\* - G when compared with national results. These results are below the results in 2001. At the time of the last inspection there were no results of examinations and GCSE and other courses have been introduced since then. More boys than girls chose to take physical education at GCSE level. Results in physical education indicate that the majority of students achieved well when compared with their previous standard of work.

202. The work seen during the inspection confirms that the standards on entry are below average. For example, students in Year 7 in physical education have little knowledge of gymnastics. Teachers work hard to build up students' skills in movement including awareness of extension and linking movements but students are too easily content with simply completing the task rather than with quality so work is below expected levels. In a Year 8 swimming lesson only the high attaining students used effective techniques. They gradually acquire the knowledge and understanding to improve their performance so that, by the end of Year 9, students in a basketball lesson grasped the essentials of the lay up shot. High attaining students, mainly boys, executed accurate, fluent passes whilst low attaining students, mainly girls, showed less spatial awareness and had weak hand/eye coordination.

203. The standards in the lessons seen in the GCSE physical education course are below average. The majority of students achieve satisfactorily when compared with their results at the end of Year 9. For example, in a Year 11 GCSE theory lesson students understood the physiological and psychological effects of alcohol abuse and smoking and their adverse affect. High-attaining students understood the poisoning effect of carbon monoxide on the body and how it combines with haemoglobin to form a stable compound. Low-attaining students understood the basic principles but did not understand the chemical nature of the exchange. In core curriculum physical education students' achievement is satisfactory with students working to below expected standards. For example, in a Year 11 fitness lesson students were in the initial stages of recording their results to demonstrate progress. High-attaining students were very aware of safety issues

including adjusting weights and maintaining correct body position. Low-attaining students were less aware of safety needs and effective skills and not sufficiently committed to learning to be as effective in their actions.

204. Students with special educational needs and those with English as a second language achieve as well as other students in the practical elements of most lessons. This is because teachers demonstrate well, call out key words and give clear explanations for good understanding. Opportunities to challenge gifted and talented students are not extensive, though these students are encouraged to participate with examination students in specially organised extra-curricular work in physical education where they provide good role models.
205. Teaching and learning are good in GCSE physical education and satisfactory overall in the rest of the PE curriculum. In GCSE lessons teaching and learning are particularly effective because teachers have a clear focus on the requirements of the GCSE course. For example, in a Year 10 GCSE theory lesson students enjoyed a practical research exercise where they investigated the nutrients in several different foods. They responded well to the challenging objectives and progressive good teaching which inspired them to analyse and enquire. In the best teaching students are frequently given demonstrations of good examples and strengths are praised during evaluation at the end of a lesson. Teachers are effective in including all students in questioning. Teachers usually review previous learning well to check understanding and consolidate before further progress is made.
206. Teaching and learning are not as good in physical education when students move on to another aspect before basic skills are properly embedded. In other lessons too few teaching points meant students were unaware of the systematic focus on different areas of the body in fitness. They tended to concentrate too heavily and unevenly on the same areas of the body and as a result they did not fully understand how to undertake exercise effectively. Learning is affected when students are not wholly aware of areas for improvement and work is not marked against national criteria. In lessons where class management was weak or the pace of lessons was too slow students did not progress and some students interrupted the learning of others. Literacy and numeracy, although a part of some lessons, are not emphasised enough so students may not recognise this as part of a learning strategy. There is little opportunity for students to access computer facilities apart from ICT in GCSE lessons. Opportunities for learning are enhanced by the very good provision of extra-curricular activities. Students are offered a wide range of activities including planned performances and team matches; external coaches are employed to add variety and expertise to the physical education programme.
207. Students' attitudes and behaviour overall are good in lessons though far too many students arrive late, curtailing learning opportunities. In most lessons, teachers insist on good behaviour. Students are usually considerate of one another; a few exhibit immature behaviour which affects the learning of others. The unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of students is a potential hazard in practical lessons and especially where apparatus and large equipment is being used. Non-participants are not effectively engaged in lessons; some talk and achieve little. Safety expectations are outlined in prominent posters in practical areas. Some students risk the safety of others and themselves as well as infringing the rules of some games, by wearing jewellery and chewing contravening this guidance and the constant requests made by teachers.
208. Leadership and management of the physical education department are satisfactory and there is strong vision for future success. All teachers provide good role models and there is strong teamwork and enthusiasm. Most teachers share expertise and can be very effective. Satisfactory organisation, planning and procedures are in place but some lessons in physical education lack pace and start late and few classes benefit from the planned one hundred minutes of teaching time

allowed for most groups on the timetable. Provision of resources overall is satisfactory. A good range of books for independent learning is available for examination courses in the library; these are complemented by videos and computer software. Accommodation is good in physical education and includes a swimming pool, fitness suite, a sports hall/gym and a further gymnasium as well as use of the hall. Teaching areas for theory work are found close to practical areas; this links practical and theory well. Outside there are courts and practice areas which are well used by students during lessons, breaks, lunchtimes and after school. Some groups have use of external facilities to widen the range of their experience of sporting activities. Teachers make the best use of the facilities available.

209. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Accommodation is now good. Extra-curricular activities are now very good. Good systems are in place for checking students' progress and this is shared with students. Curriculum choice at Year 9 does not restrict the selection of physical education courses. Examinations courses and other courses such as the Junior Sports Leadership Award have been introduced and action is being taken to improve examination performance. The department is taking effective action to support GCSE students; for example, revision and extra practical sessions have been introduced. Development plans link with the school improvement plan and most teachers use behaviour management strategies effectively. There is still a need for consistency in the use of basic skills and opportunities for the gifted and talented students in lesson time could be enhanced. Further links between practical and theoretical elements would improve examination prospects and full understanding of physical education. The school benefits from the prestigious Sportsmark distinction award. The physical education department is well placed for further development and improvement.

## **Dance**

210. Dance has only recently been introduced into the curriculum. Standards seen in dance overall are below average but achievement is good for all years because progress through year groups is already evident on the course. Students in Year 7 are building up their dance vocabulary and work to blend movement to music but timing is not as good as is seen in Year 9. In Year 9 rhythm is good and students are confident in remembering pathways but quality of movement in terms of gesture, expression and extension is in need of improvement. By Year 10 students in GCSE dance focus and concentrate on fluidity and sustained movement with quick changes in speed at a variety of levels. They understand the importance of gesture and wide movements needed in performance. The first cohort take the dance GCSE examination in 2003. Students respond well in dance lessons, though those not participating are not always involved enough in lessons. In some lessons teamwork was emphasised effectively and students worked well together; such lessons contribute well to citizenship.
211. In dance, teaching is good overall and very good in GCSE classes. For example, in a Year 10 GCSE class teachers worked very well to focus students' concentration on scenes including historic events so that students could include the feelings of exploitation and oppression experienced by slaves in depictions of human rights issues. Students appreciated the symbolism of sacrificed slaves being removed holding their bodies in cross like effigies. As in PE, specially organised extra-curricular provision helps gifted and talented students to improve their work. Similarly the skills apparent in the best PE lessons are very evident in dance lessons. Good demonstration, effective questioning and thorough evaluation at the end of lessons contribute strongly to the progress students are making. Teachers usually review previous learning well to check understanding and consolidate before further progress is made. The facilities, which include a studio, and the extra-curricular activities in dance are good. The teachers are satisfactorily promoting literacy and numeracy skills. The department is well placed to make further progress. The leadership and management of dance are both good which means that the subject is quickly establishing itself as an important part of the performing arts provision in the school.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **good**

### Strengths

- Very good leadership and management including pupil behaviour and resources for learning.
- Good curriculum and assessment especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching and learning are good, particularly in Years 8, 9 and 10.

### Areas for development

- Continue to work to raise standards for all in short course GCSE.

212. Results at the end of Year 9 in RE are broadly in line with national expectations. There are no significant differences between boys' and girls' performance. Until 2000 a full GCSE course in RE was taken by a minority of students. In 2001 and 2002 all students were offered GCSE short course. Three out of four students have taken the examination, with results in line with expectations for students in similar schools, but slightly below national standards. Girls' and boys' performance is similar among students of all abilities and attainment. Year 10 and 11 students who arrive in the UK during the two years of the course are encouraged to enter this examination, selecting the religion of their own choice they wish to research.

213. In Years 7 to 9, standards are in line with expectations and students' achievement is good. In Year 7, students can express their own views in writing, such as their experiences of the first day at Holland Park School. They find out about prayer in different religious traditions and give their own statement of belief. They study the major themes of Christianity and know about its symbols and festivals. In Years 8 and 9 they continue to study aspects of all major religions including values about the environment, wealth and poverty, discrimination and prejudice. Higher-attaining students write articulately and sensitively by the end of Year 9. Those with weaker literacy or in the beginning stages of learning English as an additional language understand the ideas and use key words to describe each religion's customs and traditions.

214. Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards in literacy below national expectations and make good progress in Years 7 to 9. Recording achievement uses levels linked to the local Agreed Syllabus, supporting students in understanding what they do well, and what they need to improve. In Years 8 and 9 students know how well they are doing and record in their exercise books the levels they have achieved in each topic. Students want to do well, and are rewarded with stickers, frequent praise and helpful comments on their written work. Students in Year 9 who reach Level 6 can contrast attitudes to work for example in at least two different religions. All are praised for effort and achievement even when presentation is weak.

215. Progress and achievement are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Students spend time on examination preparation in Year 11 and are helped to work towards GCSE grades. Their factual knowledge and understanding of the religions are generally better than their ability to explain views, either their own or those of their chosen religion on topics such as animal rights or ecology. In Year 10 one group have chosen to enter for the full course and attend a voluntary class after school. Some of their work shows considerable strengths. A link between the levels reached in Key Stage 3 and individual targets for the beginning of Year 10 would help build on progress made by students in Years 7 to 9.

216. Teaching and learning are good especially in Years 8, 9 and 10. Strengths include teachers' enthusiasm, expertise and commitment, and using a variety of stimuli to engage all students. Teachers relate learning to students' own experiences. In a Year 9 lesson students wrote their

own definitions of discrimination and prejudice, and learned more about modern British society. The teacher linked the findings of the Enquiry into the Stephen Lawrence case with a video of Racism in Football and set a homework requiring students to understand other people's views. Skills are developed using ICT for students of all abilities. In Year 8 one class of students went on a 'virtual tour of a Hindu Temple' developing their own literacy as well as ICT with an extension/homework to present findings in a computer generated poster. A Year 10 GCSE class were shown the extensive facilities of the Library Resources Centre and used both books and the internet to answer questions on knowledge and understanding on their individually chosen religion. Support is needed for the weakest in Year 10 and 11 to develop the capacity to understand abstract concepts and discuss opinion as well as fact.

217. Attitudes and behaviour are good in the majority of lessons. Students show respect for staff interest and expertise, and for the different traditions represented in this school. There is some boisterous behaviour especially in Year 7 which is controlled by staff, and a little low level disruption in revision classes for Year 11 in the last few weeks of the course. The contribution of religious education to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
218. The curriculum is good. It meets national requirements and the Agreed Syllabus in Key Stages 3 and 4. Schemes of work give a good background in Christianity as a major religion, and draw on all other major religions to emphasise respect and value for all faith backgrounds. Assessment is good especially in Years 7 to 9, not only allowing students to measure their success and improve their own skills, but also being used to adapt the curriculum to build on what they have already achieved, to prepare for the GCSE short course RE.
219. Leadership and management are very good, supporting staff and students to develop their skills and work in an attractive environment with very good resources. Improvement since the last Inspection has been good. Adequate time is now allocated to GCSE in Years 10 and 11.

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

In the inspection, fourteen subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001 which is the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
<b>GCE AS level courses</b>							
Mathematics	3	0	15	33	62	1	1.5
Music	2	0	29	50	84	0.5	2.4
<b>GCE A level and AVCE courses</b>							
Mathematics	19	37	43	79	87	5.5	5.8
Biology	8	75	34	88	88	7.3	5.3
Chemistry	6	0	43	100	90	5.3	5.9
Physics	10	40	40	90	88	6.2	5.8
Science – Advanced vocational	12	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.5	9.8
Design and technology	6	0	30	50	91	2	5.4
Business studies	11	27	32	91	92	5.1	5.5
Business studies Adv, vocational	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.8	10.4
Economics	2	50	36	50	89	4	5.5
Computer studies	10	0	23	80	86	2.8	4.6
Art	16	44	46	100	96	7.3	6.6
Music	1	100	35	100	93	10	5.7
Media studies	28	11	31	57	93	2.8	5.5
Geography	3	67	38	100	92	8.7	5.7
History	4	50	35	100	88	8	5.4
Psychology	7	14	34	86	87	4.6	5.3
English literature	23	26	37	87	95	5	5.9
Arabic	18	51	56	78	93	5.7	6.8
Spanish	6	67	39	100	89	8	5.7
French	6	100	38	100	89	8.7	5.6

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

220. The mathematics curriculum in the sixth form includes AS and A2 examinations in mathematics and further mathematics covering modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. The Year 12 access course also includes some mathematics. In the sciences the school offers biology, chemistry and physics at AS and A2 with GNVQ science at both intermediate and foundation level. All the subjects were inspected.

#### Mathematics

Overall the quality of provision in mathematics in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

##### Strengths

- Improved documentation, communication and consultation within the department.
- The very good teaching for students taking further mathematics.
- Students' positive enthusiasm and determination in their work.

##### Areas for improvement

- Improving the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching in the sixth form.
- Developing ICT to include greater use of videos and graphical calculators.
- Further developing staff competence to teach mathematics post 16.

221. Standards in the mathematics A Level examination in 2001 were in line with national averages and have been so over the past three years. The 2002 results were better than those in 2001 and standards are now above national averages. Students perform as well in mathematics as their other subjects. In 2001, girls performed better than boys but this was reversed in 2002, when boys did better. In relation to their performance at GCSE, students' achievement in mathematics is in line with expectations. Students in the sixth form were also entered for GCSE re-sit examinations, AS level mathematics and A Level further mathematics although numbers are too small to make any meaningful comparisons against national averages.

222. On the evidence of the students' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 13 are above national averages. The work is developmental and builds on their knowledge and understanding so that by the end of Year 13, students can differentiate and integrate using a variety of methods as well as confidently use the method of proof by induction. In mechanics they have a good understanding of vectors and, in statistics, they can apply their knowledge to statistical projects, such as looking at the effects of sugar levels in breakfast cereals.

223. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are satisfactory. Teachers demonstrate confident subject knowledge and a good understanding of the examination requirements which are shared with students. Teachers enjoy positive, supportive and good-humoured relationships with students which encourage their involvement and commitment. However, too little attention is given to the spread of ability and attainment in some classes and, too often, teacher talk dominates the lesson so that students do not have enough opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. The inspection confirms students' views about the inspirational teaching of further mathematics and their concerns over the quality of some teaching, which relies too heavily on reading and copying from the textbook.

224. Provision for students with English as an additional language is good and these students make satisfactory progress. The bilingual access lessons in Year 12 are very useful in helping students improve their language skills as well as usefully preparing them for their GCSE examinations. The

provision for literacy in the sixth form is satisfactory although a number of sixth form folders, especially in Year 12, are marred by poor presentation and work which provides little support for later revision. These weaknesses are not always recognised and addressed. Reading around the subject is not actively encouraged and the stock of available books in the library is insufficient to support this. The provision for ICT is unsatisfactory and students confirm little use of ICT to support their work.

225. Teachers have a good informal knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses but marking is inconsistent and some of this is too infrequent to properly monitor student work, check progress, identify misunderstandings and plan lessons. External examination data is not analysed rigorously enough to raise issues for further investigation.
226. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They enjoy positive relationships with each other and with the teacher. They show high levels of involvement, enthusiasm and determination. Students have high expectations of themselves and their own performance. In particular, students at an early stage of English acquisition show strong commitment and positive attitudes to their work.
227. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum in the sixth form is satisfactory. Number work is developed well in business education for calculating direct and indirect costs as well as producing break-even graphs. Numeracy skills are used in science to calculate rates of reaction and electrode potential but there is some over reliance on the use of calculators. Students make use of data response sheets as well as analysing and interpreting graphs in economics and business education. They design questionnaires and analyse these for research in psychology.
228. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and provide a clear direction for mathematics. The recently appointed curriculum team leader has a good awareness of the strengths of the department although there is no formal monitoring of lessons in the sixth form. The department has made suitable provision for changes in the curriculum post-16, but further training is needed to develop staff to teach the available courses. The accommodation for mathematics is good.
229. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and the improving A Level results are now above national averages. Schemes of work reflecting recent curriculum changes are now in place and documentation, communication and consultation within the department are also better.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- The very good teaching is based on the teachers' good subject knowledge and their high expectations of the students. This is leading to high standards.
- Good individual support is based on the strong relationships between students and teaching staff.
- The good depth in which topics are studied.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of data to focus on specific areas where students are under-performing.
- Devise a way of checking students' notes and assisting weaker students with their note taking and organisational skills.
- Co-ordinate greater access to enhancement activities.



230. Level results have been variable in recent years, but the small number of students taking the examinations makes statistical comparisons unreliable and the students do as well in biology as in their other A Level subjects. In 2002 all students passed, with half obtaining a grade of B. The majority of students make good progress and achieve well. Most obtain the grades predicted by their previous levels of attainment, with the higher-attaining students doing particularly well.
231. The standard of work seen in the folders of the current Year 13 students is above average and that of Year 12 is average. Students show good understanding of a range of topics and show the ability to apply the knowledge in a range of situations. In Year 13 students were looking at the variety of interactive factors in relation to the aging process and Year 12 students were summing up their work on genes and genetic engineering and the adaptations of plants to different environments.
232. Teaching is good overall, with a significant amount being very good, and this is resulting in the current students' making good progress. Particular strengths within teaching are the very good subject knowledge of teachers, evident in their answers to students' questions, which enables students to understand difficult concepts. Teachers have high expectations of the students with the emphasis on applying the knowledge learned in a variety of ways. They make very good links with previous work and make examination requirements very clear. Where the teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the teacher tended to develop the concepts rather than draw out the information from the students by asking further probing questions and allowing them to extend the answer. The teachers give freely of their time in supporting students with their work.
233. The students learn well. They rise to the challenge and support each other when discussing conceptual issues, using the discussion to clarify their understanding and using the correct technical vocabulary, though a few show a lack of clarity in developing ideas. They show excellent attitudes and behaviour, are attentive and respond well to the teaching that they receive. Students use a wide range of learning skills, for example highlighting, sub-titling and annotating examination questions, effectively. Some students organise their work well which provides a good basis for revision, but this is by no means always the case. The excellent relationships between the students and staff help to establish a stimulating learning environment. Students are also encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and extend their understanding of the topics through research.
234. The courses provided at AS and A2 are a suitable progression from the GCSE and GNVQ courses that the school offers and the majority of students achieve grades at, or close to, their target grade. Key skills of literacy and numeracy are included when appropriate and some ICT work is included, the students making good use of the Internet for additional information.
235. The commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards is clear. The day-to-day management of the subject is good because the staff meet regularly to share ideas and discuss students in need of support and take appropriate action. They use a variety of methods to assist the students. The weakness is in the lack of formal evaluation of data to identify common weaknesses and plan for development. The range of enhancement opportunities is limited.
236. A Level biology was not mentioned in the last report but since that inspection the number of students taking the subject has increased, new schemes of work have been written and the variety and quantity of resources improved. This represents good progress and provides a very good base from which to improve further.

## **Chemistry**

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

#### Strengths

- The attainment of students at A Level is above national average.
- The relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- The students have very good attitudes and behaviour very well.
- The teachers are experienced and well qualified and have very good subject knowledge.

#### Areas for improvement

- To provide further support to those students who are underachieving.
- To use assessment data more effectively to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and develop the course accordingly.

237. The data on individual students from 2002 demonstrates that most of the students reached their predicted grades and in many cases exceeded them. However, a group of mainly lower-attaining students did not do as well as they should. In 2002, the A Level results were close to the national average and were very similar to the 2001 results. Attainment at AS level is close to the national average but with a wide range. Results in Year 12 have fluctuated since the last inspection. Overall, achievement in Year 12 is satisfactory and in Year 13 is good.

238. The standard of work of current students is also average in Year 12 and above average in Year 13. Year 12 students showed a good understanding of the electron arrangements in organic compounds and were able to describe all the possible isomers of compounds from their chemical formula. Year 13 students were able to describe the oxidation and reduction processes in chemical reactions based on given theoretical data. They were also aware of the fact that there were other limiting factors that helped decide if these chemical reactions took place.

239. Teaching is good overall and very good in some lessons. This results in most students' learning the topics effectively and making good progress. The teachers are well qualified and have experience of the examination syllabus. They have very good subject knowledge and teach enthusiastically. The lessons have pace and a structure that maintains the interest and involvement of all students. Students were able to answer the questions asked of them with confidence and in detail thanks to the skill the teachers had in managing the class discussions. However, a few students were rather passive in the activities. Assessments and homework are marked in detail, with many constructive comments that help the students improve. Students are aware of their progress and potential final grades.

240. In both Year 12 and Year 13 the relationships between the teachers and students are very good, as are those between the students themselves. The very good attitudes and behaviour gives rise to a very pleasant co-operative working atmosphere in lessons. This was especially true in Year 13 where the group size was much smaller. The students produce notes of a very high quality that are monitored by teachers on a regular basis in a constructive manner. Teachers were supportive of all the students and ensured they all understood the work covered by asking well-structured specific questions throughout lessons. When students did not fully understand a topic the teachers offered further explanation with patience. In discussions, students appreciated the support and guidance given by the teachers and the fact that the teachers were prepared to help and assist.

241. The leadership and management of the department are effective. The chemistry teachers work in a collaborative manner and are determined to raise attainment to an even higher level by ensuring all students reach their potential. The progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory because the standards and quality of teaching have been largely maintained. The department is aware of the need to further improve the assessment of progress, especially of the lower-attaining students, so that those who start to fall below their potential grade can be given more effective support. Staff are not yet using the data from examination results to evaluate the quality of

teaching and modify the course where needed. The teachers are well supported by an experienced specialist technician and have sufficient resources to deliver the course.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- The above average standards at both A and AS Level.
- The good working relations between students and teachers.
- The willingness of the teachers to accept advice.

### Areas for improvement

- The leadership and management of the subject within the science department.
- The provision of more detailed schemes of work.
- Record keeping and use of student data for monitoring and evaluating student progress and its use for curriculum planning.
- Greater use of ICT in lessons.

242. Over the past four years the A Level results have fluctuated. However in 2001, the results obtained showed a significant improvement on the previous year, giving an above average rating when compared to all schools. These results placed the subject between those of biology and chemistry in terms of student attainment, compared to national standards. The 2002 results were of a similar above average standard, with almost half gaining A or B grades. In the AS examinations, the 2002 results were equally good, with 60 per cent of the students gaining A/B grades and a 100 per cent success rate. Overall, there is no significant difference in the performance of male or female students. The grades achieved by the more able students are broadly in line with those predicted from previous GCSE results, though for the weaker students there is a level of under-achievement.

243. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are above average and most students are achieving well. This includes students identified as having special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language because they receive additional help from the teachers. In a Year 13 class, students were stimulated well by the lesson on astro-physics. They were able to calculate and appreciate the enormity of the values calculated for the size of the universe and that of black holes. The work of students in the larger Year 12 class shows a broader range of attainment, indicating an average overall standard. In one lesson seen, these students were able to recognise the energy transfer process in a 'method of mixtures calculation' and the more able students could complete the calculation correctly without help. The sample of student files seen was generally disappointing. Files tended to be badly organised with little evidence of notes produced by the students themselves. Instead, notes were essentially those of commercially produced handouts. A lack of attention to detail is evident, especially in the use of units and labelling of axes on graphs. Although there is evidence of students tackling calculations for homework, such work appeared to be marked and corrected by the students themselves. This is achieved by following correct solutions produced by teachers in subsequent lessons. This suggests that the teachers may not always be aware of the areas where help is required by individual students, despite verbal checks on progress being made in lessons. There was little evidence of the use of ICT in lessons, apart from some pieces of word-processed work. A factor for this may relate to the few, rather old computers in the lab, and the age of the data-logging and sensing equipment in the department.

244. The quality of teaching was generally satisfactory with some that was good, although one lesson was less than satisfactory. The teachers are keen to improve their teaching skills and are willing to accept advice. Where teaching is good, this is due to the confident delivery by the teacher and the

wide ranging knowledge shown, enabling associated aspects to be included in the lesson. As a result, the students have confidence in the teaching and so their learning is more effective and better progress made. In less successful lessons, the questioning strategies are not used to test the students' knowledge and understanding. Students are also less involved in the development of the teaching points. In both year groups there are good working relations between the teachers and the students co-operate well with each other.

245. Students' learning had previously been affected by prolonged staff absence and this has increased their appreciation of the efforts of their teachers. Student comments indicate that they are happy with the styles of teaching and they feel secure in the progress they are making. The more able students are clearly interested in the subject. Student targets set for Year 13 are impressive and the teachers believe that they are achievable. Considering the staffing difficulties of last term, the recent set of module results for Year 12 is a credit to the staff and students. These results indicate learning is generally satisfactory. All students are on target for at least a pass grade, although some appear to be under-achieving. Students with English as an additional language are coping with the course, but language requirements are affecting their attainment and they require more support. All the current AS students indicate that they hope to continue with physics at A Level next year. This high retention rate is indicative of their interest in the subject and their confidence in the teaching.

246. Since the last report, progress has been satisfactory. The above average standards have been maintained. Students are encouraged to become more independent and to rely less on their teachers. Physics is managed within the science department but the scale of responsibilities of the curriculum team leader for science means that not enough time can be devoted to the management of physics. The leadership and management of physics are unsatisfactory because of the lack of overall co-ordination. Schemes of work do not provide adequate detail for teachers who may not have experience of the syllabus. Each module is the responsibility of one person and the teaching of both the A and AS Level courses is undertaken by a different pair of teachers. The monitoring of the teaching and of the students' progress across the various modules is ineffective. Where data is available, this is not used to guide curriculum planning. Apart from the incidental links occurring naturally within the syllabus, there is no planned contribution to the social, moral, spiritual or cultural development of the students.

247. The laboratory accommodation meets the requirements for physics, although the provision of a dedicated ICT suite for science, close to the laboratories, would be of benefit to both physics and to the whole science department. The physics area has its own experienced technician who serves the subject well, assisting with demonstrations and helping with practical work as required. All the science department technicians work well together and relate well to the teaching staff. Health and safety requirements, including radiological checks, are well covered.

## Science

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

#### Strengths

- The consistently sound standards obtained at both Intermediate and Advanced Level.
- The good working relations between students and teachers.
- The good use of ICT in coursework.

#### Areas for improvement

- The leadership and management of the vocational subject area within the science department.
- Record keeping and use of student data for monitoring and evaluating student progress and its use for curriculum planning.
- Students' attendance and time keeping.

248. In the past four years, results for GNVQ science at both intermediate and advanced level have varied, but have been either equal to or better than the national average and the 2002 results were an improvement on those for 2001. Overall, male students attain better results than female students. Most students achieve grades which are close to those predicted from previous GCSE results, indicating satisfactory progress. However, a significant number of students have attendance and punctuality problems and this reduced level of motivation means that they do not do as well as they should.

249. Students present are obtaining standards which are above the national average at both levels. In a Year 13 class, students were attempting calculations to find the purity of chemical samples. They completed a simple equation correctly and identified the chemical symbols used. They understood such terms as "moles" and "standard solutions" and at least half the class had a good understanding of the theory. Only the more able students could cope independently with the calculations, but with help they were all successful. In a Year 12 class, the students were investigating growth patterns of cress seeds, under different lighting conditions. Results of mass were collected and analysed. The students calculated average values and identified reasons for the results obtained, including those for any anomalous results. Students are achieving at least satisfactorily and some are achieving well given their GCSE attainment and their standards of literacy and numeracy. This is as a result of the supportive teaching.

250. Samples of student work seen were generally good. The students had clearly taken pride in their work and presentation was good overall with much of the work being word-processed. The more able students produced a greater volume of work in more detail for each assignment. The extent to which ICT skills contributed to the presentation also indicated the attainment levels of the students, for example those with higher ICT skills downloaded digital photographs. Tables of results, graphs and diagrams had been constructed and merged into the word documents, which included the use of colour printing. This coursework was the result of independent work by the students, although they had been well advised by their teachers in lessons. The students had acted on advice and through re-drafting their work were achieving a good standard. They enjoy practical work as this enables them to work with other students and here they are active learners and have time to think for themselves. For similar reasons, they also enjoy doing research using the library and the Internet.

251. The quality of teaching was satisfactory overall, with some good teaching. The teachers have good working relationships with the students, who appreciate the help provided. The students also co-operate well with each other. Where teaching is good, this can be attributed to the enthusiasm and confidence shown by the teacher and the varied activities provided in the lesson. This helps to maintain the students' interest and as a result they make good progress. Where lessons are less successful, though still satisfactory, students have fewer opportunities to be actively engaged in the development of the lesson and their interest is reduced. As a result, progress is less secure.

252. The students mentioned that they had concerns about the numerous teachers they have had since the courses started. This had been mainly caused by a prolonged staff absence in the autumn term followed by other staff changes within the science department. Staffing is now stable and the students are less worried about their progress. These students are especially appreciative of their four teachers who treat them as adults.
253. The laboratory accommodation meets the courses' requirements. The science department is very well supported by several laboratory technicians. They co-operate well with each other in order to meet the daily requirements of both the teaching staff and students doing coursework. Good library resources enable the students to undertake research for their projects.
254. Since the last report, satisfactory progress has been made. Sound standards have been maintained and students are gaining greater confidence in using independent learning strategies and are less reliant on their teachers. As a result they are becoming more self-assured young adults. The leadership and management of the vocational sciences section within the science department are satisfactory. The course is split up into various units and staff are well supported by a large file of detailed background material. Liaison between the large number of teachers involved in the two courses is adequate, though with some inconsistencies between teachers in the recording of the work completed. The monitoring of teaching and students' overall progress is not adequate mainly because the demands of managing the whole science department mean that little time is available for this or for further curriculum development.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

255. The school offers courses at AS and A Level in Design and Technology with specialist options in graphics and textiles. In 2002, five students took the examination, but only one gained a pass grade. The quality of teaching in lessons sampled was satisfactory. Some of the current students are producing imaginative work, but a lack of resources inhibits the range of work. No subjects in this curriculum area were inspected fully.

## **BUSINESS**

256. The school provides AS and A Level courses in business studies and economics and GNVQ courses in business studies. The main focus for the inspection was business studies but work in economics was also sampled. In a very good lesson standards in economics were above average. This is consistent with examination results and represents significant improvement since the last inspection where they were below average

### **Business studies**

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

#### Strengths

- Improved standards in A Level business studies and economics.
- Teachers' very good relationships with students help them achieve well.
- Positive working atmosphere ensures students stay on courses they start.
- Interesting, challenging activities, so students gain very good attitudes.
- AVCE students make very good progress.

#### Areas for improvement

- ICT (information and communications technology) is not available for use in lessons.
- Students' skills of working on their own are limited.
- The curriculum changes too much from year to year; longer term planning is difficult.

257. A Level and Advanced vocational business studies courses are run in Year 13, but there is currently no Year 12 advanced vocational course. The number of students remaining on courses started is high, and most A2 and advanced vocational students proceed to higher education.
258. In 2002, results on the vocational course were below the national average because none gained merit grades, but all students passed and achieved well from comparatively low points scores at GCSE. All students had English as an additional language and several presented special educational needs. Standards in A Level business studies show considerable improvement from the last inspection, where they were below average. In 2002, attainment in A2 business studies was in line with the national average, as in 2001. Students generally achieved satisfactorily, and sometimes well, from GCSE starting points. AS results were satisfactory, with nine of the 10 students entered passing, and half gaining top grades of A and B. This shows good achievement overall from students' GCSE points scores, and several made very good progress, sometimes from a high GCSE grade in business studies, though not all students took this course.
259. Current students on both the advanced vocational and A Level courses are making good progress overall. Attainment is in line with average expectations. Students gained good knowledge and understanding of firms' marketing strategies, and developed good research skills when using the Internet, for homework, to find information about multinational retailers. Students explored and analysed textbook case studies well, but seldom chose their own topical material from newspapers and magazines. They usually relied on teachers' photocopied pages from textbooks. Students' notes were sound, and they showed good study habits.
260. Teaching and learning are good overall and some was very good. Teachers had very good relationships with students and very good subject knowledge, which enabled them to monitor progress effectively. Teachers gave individual students very good support particularly on the advanced vocational course. This helped sustain very good attitudes and behaviour, and most achieved well.
261. Lessons were well planned with clear aims, shared with students at the start, and ending well when teachers reviewed whether lesson targets were met. Assessment was good and well geared to examining board requirements; marking was regular and constructive. Advanced vocational students were given very good writing guides to help their literacy.
262. Students' key communication and teamwork skills were given a good focus: in a very good AS lesson seen, students worked effectively in pairs to analyse successful and unsuccessful marketing strategies with the aid of a chocolate bar made by the company they were studying! Higher attaining students were encouraged to give pertinent examples of how marketing decisions could affect a business. Numeracy skills were well supported when teachers gave students exercises to calculate profit and break-even. However in an AS lesson which was satisfactory rather than good, higher-attaining students were not given enough opportunity to analyse the strengths and

weaknesses of break-even analysis, and they spent too much time on copying and basic calculations. The development of students' ICT key skills is limited to homework because computers are not available in lessons. This restricts the opportunity for students to improve skills of presenting and analysing financial data using computer databases and spreadsheets.

263. In lessons, teachers often used topical case studies and newspapers well to consolidate students' knowledge and understanding of business concepts, and foster critical understanding. Resources used were sometimes limited to photocopies of sheets from textbooks, and computers were not available to help develop key skills. Teachers' good use of local links with business and industry helped students gain knowledge and experience of business practice, through local speakers from banks and companies, although there were no timetabled work placements for students to enrich their studies.

264. The curriculum has changed too much from year to year, partly because of staff changes, and partly because of insufficient long-term planning in the school to develop new initiatives. The subject is satisfactorily led, and well managed by a team of experienced specialist and temporary teachers who have worked hard to stabilise the department after the previous subject co-ordinator left. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, because standards are higher due to better, more consistent teaching. The subject has a good capacity to improve further.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

265. The school offers a range of courses in ICT which include vocational, AS and A Level courses. These were the main focus for the inspection but the ICT contribution to key skills in the sixth form was sampled. Here, the teaching and learning were good. The interest and effort of students, carrying out individual spreadsheet tasks, and the diligent, effective monitoring and support of the teacher secured a productive, purposeful working environment.

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Significantly improved A Level results in 2002.
- Teaching that is based well upon knowledge of subject and examination requirements and awareness of students' needs.
- Students have very positive views.
- A good choice of courses.

### Areas for improvement

- Weak literacy skills reduce the standards of many students.
- Some students have limited independence and require more supervision than usual in the sixth form.
- In a few lessons, management of students is not strong.
- Longer-term, strategic leadership is not currently adequately catered for.

266. The A Level results in 2002 were a significant improvement on the 2001 results which were well below average. All students passed, gaining at least an E grade. Standards on entry to the ICT courses are generally below average, but with considerable variation between the different courses. Those entering the AS Level course have standards that are close to, but slightly below, average. The standard of those entering the GNVQ courses is below average, with a significant minority being well below average. Students generally achieve satisfactorily, with entry standards being reflected in the work of students approaching the end of their courses.



267. In the Year 12 GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses, current standards are below average generally, but well below for a significant minority of students. Most students know the main computer-related laws, can discuss the impact of ICT on society, with particular reference to aspects such as crime and punishment, and understand many advantages and limitations of using computers for various tasks. All students are able to create a *Powerpoint* presentation. Many choose subjects that they have a real interest in, such as Lebanese cuisine or Arabic dancing, so that their presentations are distinctive and interesting. A significant proportion, however, find it difficult to represent their knowledge and understanding in writing. Explanations are generally accurate, but not always very detailed. In some cases, basic misunderstandings further reduce the standard of work. For example, when explaining the reason why incorrect bills might be sent to customers the cause was given as the computer adding costs up wrongly, rather than incorrect entering of data. In the Year 13 A Level course, most students have below average standards, but many are coming close to the average. All could identify problems and create systems to address these, for example a database to help a steel band organise its performances and manage bookings. However, the work of many students contains weaknesses. For example, specifications do not state which type of database will be best for a particular task, omit vital fields, or do not provide a system of validation.
268. The attitudes of students during ICT lessons are satisfactory. Most are interested in the subject and generally committed to their work. However, particularly in the GNVQ groups, many students have limited independence and require more supervision than is normally the case in the sixth form, requiring, for example, frequent reminders to listen to teachers and maintain pace in their individual work. In a discussion, a group of students expressed very positive views about their courses and the quality of teaching. All said that their courses were enjoyable and met their needs and aspirations well. They valued the strong subject knowledge and awareness of individual needs of their teachers and the way in which these were used to make the subject accessible and provide strong support for students.
269. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, though good in many lessons. Most teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and examination requirements and awareness of the individual needs of their students. They use this to provide helpful guidance on interpreting marks and identifying improvements that will lead to better performance in coursework and examinations. Strong guidance is given to students on how to organise their work and take useful notes. In a Year 12 lesson, students were given a useful checklist to help them evaluate how well they were carrying out a task. Teachers have good awareness of the limited literacy skills of many students and take steps to minimise the effects by, for example, explaining tasks clearly and ensuring key terms are understood. In a few lessons, teachers do not ensure that all students are paying full attention to explanations when, for example, basic management techniques, such as ensuring all are facing the front, are neglected. Full opportunity is not always taken from feedback to address misunderstandings. In one lesson it was clear from answers that some students were confusing some similar key terms. A few lessons start late due to lack of urgency in getting activities under way and students are left waiting while the teacher sets up equipment, instead of being given productive tasks while this is taking place.
270. The ICT curriculum in the sixth form is good and the range of courses meets the needs of the different groups. Students are able to choose between an AS/A Level course, or GNVQ foundation or intermediate options. However, the overall effectiveness of this provision is reduced because less than half of students who are enrolled were present in the lesson observed, or attending regularly. The contribution of ICT to the key skills course is good though not all students have access to this.

271. In the absence of a permanent overall co-ordinator for ICT, the school has set up satisfactory temporary arrangements for running the sixth form courses. These have provided committed and effective management in the short term, but the school is aware that in the long term this is not providing satisfactory strategic leadership and management. There was insufficient evidence specifically related to the sixth form in the last report to be able to make a judgement on improvement since then.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

272. The school offers courses in art and design, drama, media studies, music and PE. Other performing arts courses are offered when demand is sufficient for a viable group. The main inspection focus was art and design but drama, music, media studies and PE lessons were sampled. In the music technology lesson sampled in Year 13, students analysed incidental music from the film, 'Vertigo'. The teaching was very good, very well prepared and suitably challenging. Students achieved very well. They made very good gains in the technique of technical analysis, and showed a good grasp of suitable technical vocabulary. In the drama lesson seen in Year 12 students learnt well. The teacher's subject expertise and desire to see them succeed helped students to overcome some initial hesitation when considering how mannerisms and body language could be changed to give a better idea of character. In media studies, it was not possible to make a secure judgement about teaching because students were preparing individual video work. They were enthusiastic about the course and keen to explain what they were doing but did not learn as much as they might have done in the lesson observed because they spent too long waiting for guidance on what to do next. In PE, students' attitudes are good and most students achieved the objectives shared with them at the beginning of lessons, but others arrive late and work in files indicates insufficient commitment.

### Art & Design

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

#### Strengths

- Current achievement is very high.
- Students work confidently across a range of media and disciplines.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge effectively.
- The curriculum is broad and includes very good ICT provision.
- Students have a mature and positive attitude to their work.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students do not have sufficient opportunity to present and discuss their ideas and work with the class.
- Not enough use is made of examination data to determine added value and trends.

273. In recent years examination results have fluctuated between average and above average. But current attainment is well above and students' achievement is very good. The majority of Year 13 students are achieving at the highest levels. Year 12 students produce a range of very good quality work the core of which is contained in the students' work journals/sketchbooks. These are generally full of ideas and explorations. Students organise their journals to produce pages of high visual quality by the careful juxtaposition of text, sketches, gathered imagery, photographs, sketches and coloured drawings. The artwork extends to include good quality card relief, paintings, block prints, computer-based work, black and white photography and well-developed critical and personal studies. Higher performing students' written work and critical self-evaluation is fluent and mature, and much use made of appropriate specialist terminology. The work of the most talented students is of the very highest quality. Independent research is a strong element in each

student's work. Painting and colour-work generally are also strong aspects across all work and students combine media to produce sensitive explorations of visual qualities.

274. ICT work in art and design is embedded successfully into students' normal working practices and there is evidence of a broad range of techniques. Students scan their artwork into the computer to evolve a rich variety of digitally manipulated imagery. Digital photography and digital video animation are used successfully by the sixth formers.
275. Teaching and learning are very good. A well-planned course moves students from the tighter framework in Year 12 to increasing independence. Teachers use their very good knowledge of examination assessment objectives to ensure students cover all the requirements. Their very good subject knowledge enables them to support a broad range of creative work including ICT. Teachers successfully induct Year 12 students into working in a more mature and independent manner. The very effective individualised support for students creates an open atmosphere within the department. Teachers manage students very effectively. Classes sometimes spread out into as many as three or four different art rooms to give students access to particular facilities or equipment.
276. The very good rapport between teachers and students supports the very effective individualised teaching. Teachers interact well with students, guiding but not leading, and allowing students to develop personal focus in their work. Although teachers and students discuss their ideas and review their work on a one-to-one basis, not enough is done to structure opportunities to enable the whole class to participate through presentations or discussion. This would help to build on the literacy work developed elsewhere in the school and the department. Teachers have a good knowledge of the work of artists and designers. Students appreciate this breadth of knowledge and feel that much interesting work is introduced into lessons.
277. The curriculum is good. Students are taught to use a good range of media including large format oil painting, photography, computer-based work using image manipulation software and video image editing software, montage and assemblage and, to a lesser extent, 3D construction and relief. Process based work is less in evidence in Year 12 and Year 13. Extra-curricular opportunities in the subject include art study visits to galleries and museums and twilight art classes in life drawing. Art contributes strongly to the personal development of the students because the ethos of the department emphasises mature, independent, working practices. The course emphasises the students' research of art and artists from European and other cultures. Students routinely make visits to galleries and museums.
278. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Students are very focused and productive during lessons and work well independently. Students exhibit a confident approach in planning and executing their work and show a high level of interest and personal focus in their work. Students generally have a mature attitude to learning and the atmosphere in classrooms is one of co-operation with the teachers. They take criticism constructively and act upon advice given. They regularly work on their art during non-contact times and outside lesson times. Students are very positive in general about the AS and A Level courses and about the quality of teaching they receive. They value the good rapport with the art staff and the open atmosphere and supportive ethos of the art department. They also have a good understanding of the step from sixth form to further or higher education. Most of the Year 13 students have already received their offer of places at art foundation courses, including the more prestigious colleges.
279. The assessment and monitoring of individual students is efficient. Students are closely monitored and this is checked through one-to-one work reviews and critiques. Students' marks are moderated between teachers to ensure accuracy. Teachers' close knowledge of students'

individual progress enables them to plan the submission of work so as to maximise the students' attainment.

280. Art is well led and managed. The course is organised well and communication within the teaching team is very good. The day-to-day running of the sixth form is efficient. However, analysis of examination data to inform on aspects such as added value and trends over time is under-developed. The strengths of the teaching team are deployed effectively to provide a broad range of subject expertise to the students at both AS and A Level. For example, in Year 12 the teaching divides between three teachers who provide a separate focus on aspects of the course and examination. Resources are good in key areas such as painting and drawing, and also in ICT. Good use is made of an open studio where students can work independently. The subject has improved since the last inspection. The staff responded positively to the changes in the examination framework. The development of the use of ICT has been a major improvement as has the development of the use of sketchbooks and journals and the practice of students' writing commentaries and reflections on their own and others' visual work. All these aspects are having a very positive impact on attainment.

## HUMANITIES

281. The school offers AS and A Level courses in history, geography, government and politics, and psychology all of which were inspected.

### Government and politics

Overall, the quality of provision in government and politics in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Staff have good subject knowledge.
- Examination preparation is thorough and students are continuously assessed to help them improve their standards.
- Learning is supported well by the good range of visits, lectures, revision conferences, and political speakers invited to the school.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students need to read widely, including national newspapers to improve knowledge and interest in current political issues.
- Study skills should be systematically taught to develop confidence to articulate ideas and debate them in Year 12.

282. Recent results in AS and A Level have been satisfactory and current standards are average although there has been some turbulence caused by changes of staffing during that time. The standards reached are not quite as good as results in students' other subjects at A Level, but reflect the wide range of their previous knowledge and interest, and considerable variation in their ability to express abstract ideas in English. There are generally more boys than girls in the groups, but there is no significant difference between standards achieved.

283. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall, and all students make progress in knowledge and understanding of political processes, though some find handling argument and analysis more difficult. The quality of teaching and learning were satisfactory overall with some that was good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and in the good lessons students are given a variety of learning opportunities, interest is high and all make progress. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on nationalism, the teacher took Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech, which students had studied for homework in advance, and they analysed it together. The contrasts between the fear

of multiculturalism and an emphasis on tradition and homogeneity were rationally presented. All understood that bias and prejudice are reflected in concepts of nationality. Teachers also understand the requirements of the examination courses. They provide students with thorough examination preparation. The regular assessment of students' work helps them to improve their standards.

284. The curriculum includes the study of political ideology and current British political affairs. A significant amount of material is learned and absorbed by students. They find it more challenging to link concepts and to recognise changes over time in British politics. Study skills are not specifically included in the curriculum and students do not routinely highlight and annotate prepared handouts or learn to present ideas from individual research tasks. They are not using ICT as a tool to help them with research. They do not do enough wider reading either of books or newspapers to improve knowledge and interest in current political issues. The school exploits very effectively its position in central London and work in government and politics is well supported by a wide range of visits, lectures, revision conferences, and political speakers invited to the school. The course would benefit from a more up-to-date range of books in the sixth form library

285. Management and leadership of the subject are satisfactory despite the difficult transition that has recently been required of the staff teaching government and politics. Students talk enthusiastically about their interest in politics generally. The majority go on to higher education, many to study politics at university.

## History

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

### Strengths

- Very good relationships with committed students.
- Very good subject and syllabus knowledge of teacher.
- Recent successful examinations record.

### Areas for improvement

- Strategies to vary and enrich the curriculum.

286. Results for the small group taking the A Level examination in 2002 were above national averages. The standards of work of current students in Year 13 are also above national expectations. This represents good progress in the light of what they have achieved previously, and is reflected in their AS results in 2002, which were above national expectations. In the small cohorts taking history, there are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls, nor of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, nor those identified as having English as an additional language. There were no Year 12 students at the time of the inspection, as insufficient numbers had opted for history in the sixth form.

287. In one Year 13 lesson, students showed good understanding of the origins and development of the modern Welfare State. For example, having explained the rationale and principle behind its origins, they drew well on previous learning to evaluate the steps that had variously been taken towards it before the outbreak of World War Two. They were aware of, and applied, different interpretations of developments that have emerged in professional historical debate. Higher-attaining students rehearsed different evaluations of these interpretations.

288. The teaching is good, and this is one reason why students learn well and make good progress. For example, in another lesson seen, the students began with a discussion of the essential characteristics of a welfare state. This provided the foundation for a productive session in which,

questioned and guided by the teacher, the students jointly evaluated the successes and limitations of the post-war Labour Government's policies. This session concluded with the teacher's challenging each student to provide a short précis of the perspective they intended to pursue in their follow-up essay. Their responses indicated not only considerable understanding of events, but the ability to bring a critical perspective to historical enquiry. Very good relationships between staff and students also support good learning.

289. Sixth form history is competently managed. It is taught by experienced and knowledgeable staff who are confident and thoroughly familiar with all recent changes in examination requirements and expectations. This results in clearly focused teaching and constructive assessment of students' work. Accommodation for history is good. There are good core resources available from the teachers, with additional reading available. The current students have attended one history conference in their two year course but other opportunities to enrich the curriculum have not been fully exploited. The library has a small collection of appropriate texts related to the syllabus, and the subscription to Modern History Review provides a reference for students on contemporary history research and writing. Little use of information technology was seen in teaching, or in students' learning. The students jointly provided their inspector with an articulate and forceful explanation of their personal decisions to eschew both word processing of their current work, and any use of the world wide web as a research and study tool.

## Psychology

Overall, the quality of provision in psychology in the sixth form is **good**.

### Strengths

- Attainment overall is above average.
- Progress is very good.
- Teaching is good overall.
- Attitudes and behaviour are very good in Year 12 and excellent in Year 13.

### Areas for improvement

- Lack of a psychology subject leader is hindering the development of the subject.
- Marking is not rigorous enough.

290. Attainment is above average although the small numbers taking psychology A Level in the past make judgement on trends unsafe. Observation and analysis suggests that the majority of Year 13 students are on track to attain or exceed the grades predicted for them, representing very good progress and achievement.

291. Students all say they like the subject very much, as it is particularly meaningful and relevant to them. Year 13 students demonstrate excellent behaviour, very good independent learning skills and a very mature, responsible approach to study. Overall, progress is good, particularly in Year 13. Although good teaching strategies were observed, some Year 12 students were surprised by the higher intellectual demands of the subject and have yet to get to grips with these demands, seeming to believe that little effort is required. This may reflect under-developed skills both in critical thinking and personal study habits in Key Stage 4, as the experience of some current Year 13 students suggests. The marking system is not rigorous enough to ensure that all students understand why their work has been graded at a particular level and what precisely they must do to improve it. Opportunities to write extended essays should enable students to take greater responsibility for their learning, and support the progress of lower-attainers.

292. The teaching observed was never less than good. Well-planned lessons, good subject knowledge, very good direct teaching, including the use of challenging questioning, very good relationships with

the students, and a range of activities, are the key features of the best lessons. Students were encouraged to engage in debate, for example on the merits of the different psychological models of understanding, such as cognitive, behaviourist or psychodynamic. They prepared presentations on topics such as cognitive processes, which other members of the group then analysed critically. They respond very well to such learning opportunities and engage in lively debate, for example on amnesia and eye-witness testimony. They are encouraged to carry out personal research, often using the Internet to visit websites in order to access additional information about the topic being studied. These teaching strategies also have the positive effect of increasing students' understanding of the need to base their arguments on evidence rather than opinion. More opportunities to take part in practical research, even though this is not required in the examination syllabus, would further develop students' understanding of the rigour needed in the subject, as well as their interest.

293. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory, since standards have been maintained and the number of students taking psychology has increased. However current arrangements for the leadership and management of the subject are not satisfactory. Staff are clearly very committed to psychology and to their students who are doing well, but there is no clear plan to develop the subject and raise standards further. There is no scheme of work, although teachers are beginning to draft one, and no specialist monitoring of the teaching to ensure consistency. The lack of a subject leader for psychology is hindering its further development.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

294. The school offers courses in English literature, Spanish and Arabic. The courses in English literature and Arabic were inspected in depth and the work in French and Spanish was sampled. The work seen in French and Spanish was good and students were achieving very well because the teaching was lively and interesting. Discussions were very skilfully managed and students were challenged to think at a high level and express themselves confidently and very accurately in French or Spanish.

### English Literature

Overall, the quality of provision in English in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge: both students and teachers share a genuine interest in literature as a result.
- Standards are improving because teachers make students aware of the criteria for exam success.
- Students have a good understanding of social and cultural influences on literature, and a sound critical vocabulary.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards remain below the national average.
- The quality of group debate is variable, and does not involve all students sufficiently.
- Students are not sufficiently skilled in precise referencing within a text, or incisive cross references to exemplify or support opinion.

295. Over forty students are currently taking AS or A2 courses in English literature and most students will complete the course they have chosen. Good numbers of boys choose to take the course.

296. The overall standards achieved in AS and A Level examinations have been below national average, because the proportion attaining the higher grades is lower than nationally and each year

a few students do not gain a pass grade. Results have improved: in 2001, girls' performance matched that nationally, because of an improvement in the proportion gaining grades A or B. The progress of most students is satisfactory given the starting point GCSE grades on entry, the department allowing some of them to take the course with grade C passes. Students achieved significantly better in subjects other than English.

297. The standards of work of current students are below national average. Most take part in extended class discussion, though with differing levels of confidence and relevance. Year 13 students show some ability to offer alternative viewpoints to the orthodox, on occasion expressing intellectual uncertainty in sophisticated fashion. Some show more ability to talk in general terms about themes rather than using the text to support or illuminate their opinions. The students' personal response to texts is good; their analytical response less so because they have a less secure and precise understanding of how language effects are created. Year 12 students showed sound ability to link William Blake's ideas across poems, higher-attaining students recognizing symbolism and strands of ideas. In the group as a whole, there was a growing awareness of the value of using specialist vocabulary during literary criticism. In general, ideas are well developed in discussion but inference and significance are too often missed, leading to mundane or predictable ideas.
298. Students' satisfactory achievement stems from satisfactory teaching. Some good teaching was also observed. All teachers have good subject knowledge so that they can help students learn the relevance of the cultural and philosophical background to literature, and the influences on individual writers. A group studying *Death of a Salesman* were questioned so that they had to link 'The American Dream' to the social context and attitudes of 1950's America. They were also challenged to reflect on contemporary British attitudes to the manual worker, and whether they as students and the school generally, had sufficient respect for the contribution of such people to school life. Debate is of good quality but tends to be between teacher and individual students, there is too little discussion between students because some dominate, and teachers sometimes neglect opportunities to include the more reticent or those who have differing views. Whilst there are some imaginative approaches, some teaching styles are too predictable, with little variety in pace.
299. Students mostly work together well in groups and during class discussion. These qualities were seen when Year 12 students reported back to other groups their findings on a poem by William Blake. Some are reticent, even in small classes, whilst a minority in Year 12 drift into general chat if expected to work in groups for any length of time. Students are keen on the course and recognize the importance of wider reading and research, for instance using the Internet. Most are willing to work hard and written work shows evidence of their diligence. Teachers are careful to ensure that students understand examination and assessment criteria to give them a clearer focus for their work. The teacher of a Year 12 group studying *The Great Gatsby* followed a discussion about how Plato's concept of an ideal world was relevant to Jay Gatsby's mental creation of himself with a reminder that such matters would only be of value in examination or set essay if the title justified it. However, in all classes the rate of absence was high relative to that normally found.
300. Leadership and management of sixth form English are satisfactory as is the improvement since the last inspection. Each group is taught by two teachers to broaden students' experience and allow teachers to pursue their own specialisms. Students find this stimulating. The use of data analysis to identify and interpret student achievement and where the most successful teaching takes place is limited, but administrative procedures are clear and understood.

## Arabic



Overall, the quality of provision in Arabic in the sixth form is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Teaching is outstanding and, as a consequence, students' learning is equally outstanding.
- Attainment in examinations is well above the national averages for both AS and A2.
- The subject has made significant improvements since the last inspection.

Area for improvement

- There are relatively few opportunities for cultural visits that would enhance the students' knowledge and understanding of Arabic language and culture.

301. At the end of Year 12 in 2002, standards in the AS examinations were well above the national averages with all students entered attaining a pass grade. Almost all students entered attained the higher grades of A and B. The number entered for A Level was smaller, but all five students who were entered for the A Level examinations attained the higher grades of A and B. Examination results have been consistently high since the last inspection.

302. Students choosing to study Arabic in the sixth form start the course with considerable prior attainment. They are highly motivated and want to excel. By the end of Year 12, students are able to write continuously using fairly complex sentence structures. In one case, a student had written an excellent piece on Islam which he also word processed. Students are able to engage in discussions of a fairly complex kind, as was seen in one outstanding Year 12 lesson where they discussed the position of women in Arab societies. They were able to support their arguments with extracts from other works and to talk at length about the changes that are taking place in this area of Arab society. By the end of Year 13, all students write at length, talk confidently and with considerable passion. Through both years, students can read fluently and change their tone depending on their audience. All students make very good progress and current standards are very high.

303. Students show a very good attitude to their studies. As a result of this, and of the excellent teaching, their learning is excellent. They clearly enjoy their Arabic lessons and take a great pride in their cultural heritage. They are eager to understand more about both the language and about the Arab world. They work hard and co-operatively and are confident enough ask for help and advice as necessary. Students clearly feel at home using Arabic all the time and with considerable confidence. Students are also independent learners and enjoy extending their use of Arabic.

304. Teaching was invariably excellent. It was always well prepared with a wide variety of tasks that are suitable for the students' varying abilities. This ensures that all students join in, including the very few who might feel a trifle reluctant. Arabic is used through every lesson by teacher and students. Relationships are very good and the level of trust is outstanding. The support for individuals is excellent. Students are given very clear guidance on how to improve their work. The marking breaks down the students' work into several areas of assessment, e.g. knowledge and understanding, organisation, grammar. This way the student knows where the strengths are and what is required to improve on any weaknesses and enables the teacher to plan lessons accordingly.

305. The subject is very effectively managed, monitored and evaluated and as a result of this analysis, there has been a conscious decision to focus on grammatical accuracy and on the use of good English in translations. This has brought about a considerable improvement in the already high standards. Planning is excellent with a very clear vision of where Arabic should go in the future and numbers taking the subject are increasing. Although the subject received a good report at the last inspection where its provision was deemed to be good, it has made significant improvement since then. Accommodation and learning resources are adequate. Very good writing guides help

the students produce some high quality continuous writing. The room offers a warm learning environment with displays of students' work as well as useful language prompts. Students would benefit further in enhancing their language skills and in gaining a better understanding of Arab culture if further visits to London's many Arabic cultural events were to be made.