

INSPECTION REPORT

PHOENIX HIGH SCHOOL

Shepherds Bush, London

LEA area: Hammersmith and Fulham

Unique reference number: 100359

Headteacher: Mr W Atkinson

Reporting inspector: Mr M Pavey
17650

Dates of inspection: 12–15 May 2003

Inspection number: 255104

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 pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: The Curve
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs V Bird

Date of previous inspection: January 2001

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9981	Saleem Hussain	Lay inspector	Educational Inclusion	Students' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
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11190	Winifred Burke	Team inspector	Art and design	
32166	Nasim Butt	Team inspector	Religious education	
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
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6432	Mick Sewter	Team inspector	Science	
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Phoenix High School is a mixed comprehensive school of 759 students, 429 boys and 330 girls. There are more boys than girls in each year; there is a particularly high proportion of boys in the present Year 11. The school serves a housing area of high density in Shepherd's Bush, London. There are 50 nationalities and 47 languages in the school. Of those whose heritage background has been declared, there are 309 of Black background, 269 students of White and 61 of Asian. There are 104 students whose families are refugees, with Somalia the predominant country of origin; 14 students are from traveller families. A very high proportion of students, 40 per cent, speak English as an additional language (EAL); of these 306 students, 90 are at an early stage in learning English. Over half the students, 423, are entitled to free school meals, a proportion well above the national average. There are 392 students, 52 per cent, with special educational needs (SEN), mostly for emotional and behavioural difficulties and for difficulties in literacy and numeracy. The proportion of students with SEN is well above average. Of those with SEN, 22 students (2.9 per cent) have statements, an average figure. The socio-economic background of students and their families is generally well below the national average. The school's area contains a complex range of social deprivation, including poverty, health problems, and considerable instability in the membership of family groups. Last school year, a very high number of students – 124 – joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission, and a very high number – 104 – left other than at the normal time. Of those who sat GCSE in 2002, only some 50 per cent had been in this school for the whole of their secondary education. The school faces great difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff. In an establishment of 49 teachers, 26 have joined in the last two years and 25 have left. Twenty new teachers have joined the school since September 2002.

Combined, these factors create a complex pattern of difficulty and a challenging background against which to achieve educational progress. From the outset, students' levels of educational attainment are overall well below average. Most students entering the school in Year 7 are two or more years behind the expected level in reading ability. The school has set challenging targets for GCSE achievement, which it met in 2002.

At the last inspection, the school was judged to have serious weaknesses, caused largely by circumstances beyond its immediate control. Since then, the school has been declared as one of eight in the country to face exceptionally challenging circumstances. The number of students has fallen by some 55.

Note: Year 10 students were away on work experience during the inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is now an improving school, which provides a satisfactory standard of education, with some very good features. The headteacher and governors provide very strong, effective leadership which leads to very positive relationships and good behaviour. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and many individual lessons are good. Results are well below the national average, but students make satisfactory progress in their work, both in lessons and over their time in the school, and when compared with the progress made by pupils in similar schools. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Relationships are very good. Students from all racial backgrounds get on very well together.
- The school cares for its students very well. It has excellent procedures for promoting good behaviour and very good procedures for assessing students' work and progress.
- The headteacher continues to give excellent leadership. Governors are very well informed and effective, and lead the school very well. The leadership of the headteacher and governors has resulted in considerable, recent improvements.
- The school has a wide range of effective programmes for supporting individual pupils, particularly the many students with special educational needs or learning English as an additional language, those with behaviour problems and students who are gifted or talented.
- The curriculum is good. It gives all students the chance to develop their potential. The school's links with the community are excellent. Provision for students' personal development is very good.
- The quality of information given to parents is very good. Parents are pleased with the school.

What could be improved

- Teachers' overall planning of lessons in Years 7 to 9 needs improvement, with better use of information on the attainment of their students with particular learning needs. Teaching of key skills needs further improvement. The training of students as good learners needs attention.
- Attendance remains poor, despite very good efforts to improve it.
- Levels of attainment remain low. The performance of boys and girls varies between subjects and in the tests and examinations they take.

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 January 2001. Since then, improvement has been good. Results have improved, and there have been significant improvements in the curriculum, arrangements for the assessment of students' work and the special programmes for their support. Links with the community have greatly improved. The school has made good progress in improving all key issues for action in the last report, with the exception of attendance.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	E	E*	E	C

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

When students join the school, their average attainment is well below the expected level. Because there is a wide choice of secondary schools for girls in this area, the attainment of girls joining the school is overall below that of boys. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, achievement in all three subjects – English, mathematics and science – was very low when compared with the national average. These results were in the lowest five per cent of results nationally, but include those of a fifth of students who joined during these three years, many with lower scores than those who began the course at the usual time. In recent years, boys have performed more strongly overall than girls in the tests. Compared with the performance of students in similar schools, the overall attainment of students is below average, though results in mathematics and science were broadly in line with those in comparable schools in 2002. Able students make good progress at this stage. Overall, students' progress over the three years from Year 7 to Year 9 is satisfactory, moving from well below average on joining to below average when compared with similar schools in the National Curriculum tests for fourteen-year-olds. The position improves further when results are not included for those joining during these years. Over recent years, the trend in Year 9 test results has been rising at a rate above the national trend.

Results in GCSE examinations have also been improving in recent years at a rate above the national trend. In 2002, with refugee and other recently arrived pupils excluded from the tables, 25 per cent of students gained five or more passes at grades A*-C, a great improvement on previous years, though still well below average for all schools. The proportion gaining five or more A*-G passes also improved, to 94 per cent, a result above that achieved nationally. GCSE results were overall in line with those in similar schools, and very high for the proportion achieving five or more, and one or more passes at grades A*-G. The proportion of students gaining at least one GCSE grade rose to 98 per cent, a very high result compared to all schools nationally. Overall, students in 2002 made satisfactory progress in reaching these results over the two years of the GCSE course, when the school achieved the targets it had set itself.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are generally enthusiastic in their work. They like school and most want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good around school and generally good in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. All students get on well together and generally work very well together when required. Pupils hold positive views and have strong feelings about issues such as honesty, justice and fairness.
Attendance	Poor, despite very good efforts to improve it.

Very good relationships are a strength of the school. Students are keen to be involved in the many activities provided and show very high levels of respect for others. Many pupils with SEN have very positive attitudes. Students learning EAL rapidly gain in confidence and are eager to succeed.

Behaviour varies considerably, and some lessons in Years 7 to 9 were affected by unsatisfactory behaviour. Behaviour among older students is more reliable and positive, confirming that the school makes progress in improving students' outlook and willingness to learn. The school has a very high turnover of pupils. Settling into good habits of attendance becomes much more difficult in these circumstances, despite very good systems to promote

them.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	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.

Overall, the quality of the teaching seen was satisfactory. This is a good result for a school in which 20 new teachers have joined this academic year, of whom 10 are qualified overseas. Teaching was good in English and science, and satisfactory in mathematics. Parents are pleased with the quality of teaching. Students' learning, overall, is satisfactory also. It is good in Year 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Sometimes, though teachers give a sound lead, students do not always respond as well as they might. Positive factors in teaching include teachers' good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, which gives students confidence to gain the skills and understanding they need. Teachers' management of students is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Year 11. Areas for improvement include the better use of the very good data teachers receive on students' attainment, SEN and EAL needs in Years 7 to 9; further improving the teaching of literacy, numeracy and information technology (ICT) across the curriculum; and training younger students to be good learners.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a good range of experiences for its students.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. The leadership and teaching in the learning support department are very good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The subject is well led and specialist teachers provide well for the needs of the many students who are EAL learners.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good in all respects. The school provides students with every encouragement to develop well, particularly as good social and moral young people.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well.

The school works well in partnership with its parents. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a good range of subjects. The choice of vocational subjects in Years 10 and 11 is now good. The school's provision for teaching the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT is satisfactory. Strengths of the curriculum include the very good equality of access it provides to all students, a very good programme of personal, health and social education, very good relationships with other educational institutions and excellent links with the community.

The school cares very well for its students. There are excellent procedures for promoting good behaviour and very good procedures for assessing students' work and looking after their personal development. This is a school which makes sure its students can do well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives excellent, totally committed leadership. Leadership and management by key staff, including deputy and assistant heads and heads of faculty and years, are good overall.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors are very well led. They are very well informed of how the school is doing, and monitor its activities carefully.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school monitors the quality of teaching well. It checks very carefully on the progress of its students and its development plan.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school plans its use of resources well and makes particularly good use of the many special grants it receives.

Staffing resources are adequate. Accommodation and learning resources are good. The school succeeds in achieving the best value in ordering goods and services and in providing good service to its students and their families. Particular strengths in leadership and management include the leadership of several programmes, including that for staff training, the gifted and talented programme, assessment, the teaching and learning initiative, provision for SEN and EAL students, and for those needing support with their behaviour.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible. • They receive good information about their children's progress. • They have a good partnership with the school, which they find open and approachable. • Teaching, leadership and management are good. • Their children like school and work hard there. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minority feels that their children do not get the right amount of homework. • A minority feels that their children are not making enough progress. • A minority feels that there are shortcomings in behaviour. • A minority does not feel that there is a wide enough range of activities.

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. They find homework satisfactory. They agree that some students do not make enough progress or behave well. The large majority, though, works hard and behaves well. Inspectors find the range of activities good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. When students join the school, their levels of attainment are, overall, well below average. The school sets a series of nationally recognised tests, in which students' verbal reasoning scores are particularly low, confirming a restricted ability to handle language when they join the school. The attainment of students joining in 2002 was higher than in previous years, though still below average. A variety of social factors makes it difficult for students to reach average levels of attainment. Most marked are the number of students from refugee families; the number at an early stage in learning English; the high number on the school's register of students with SEN; and the considerable mobility of the local population, with a high number of students joining or leaving at other than the usual times.
2. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, achievement in all three subjects – English, mathematics and science – was very low when compared with the national average. However, these results included those of a fifth of students (32 students out of the total of 152) who joined during these three years, many with significant language difficulties and with lower scores than those who began the course at the usual time. They also include results for refugee students: without these, overall achievement is higher. In recent years, boys have performed more strongly overall than girls in these tests.
3. When test results for the end of Year 9 in 2002 are compared with those of students in similar schools, the performance of Phoenix students is overall below average. In individual subjects, results in English were well below average, but those in mathematics and science were broadly in line with average results in comparable schools. Looking at test results for those abler students scoring Level 5 or higher, boys and girls achieve equally well, and make good progress. However, the school's analysis of results, based on students' achievement in the tests they took at the end of Year 6, confirms that around a fifth of all students make no particular improvement in their work (35 in English, 22 in mathematics and 31 in science). Overall, however, students' progress over the three years from Year 7 to Year 9 is satisfactory, moving from well below average on joining to below average in the tests for fourteen-year-olds. The position improves further when results are not included for those joining during these years. Over recent years, the trend in Year 9 test results has been rising at a rate above the national trend. Within this overall result, the trend in English has been erratic, and falling in the last two years, while those in mathematics and science have been rising, particularly strongly in science.
4. Results in GCSE examinations have been improving in recent years at a rate above the national trend. In 2002, with refugee students excluded from the tables, 25 per cent of students gained five or more passes at grades A*-C, a great improvement on previous years, though still well below average for all schools. The proportion gaining five or more A*-G passes also improved, to 94 per cent, a result above that achieved nationally. The proportion of students gaining at least one GCSE grade rose to 98 per cent, a very high result compared to all schools nationally. The total points scored were, however, well below average compared with all schools. In 2002 and over the last three years, the performance of boys was well below average, but that of girls was very low. The main reason for the improvement in GCSE results in 2002 is the

increased stability and expertise of the teaching staff during the school year 2001-02. In most subjects, students were able to benefit from continuity of teaching. The school was able to introduce more effective patterns of training for staff and to make headway in the teaching of key skills and the national strategy for teaching younger students.

5. Compared with similar schools, overall results were in line with all other schools for five or more A*-C grades, and for the average points scored. However, results were very high, both for five or more and one or more A*-G grades. When GCSE results for 2002 are compared with the grades which the school predicted for these students, based on previous scores, girls have made more progress than predicted, and boys less. In other words, girls have achieved well and boys have under-achieved. Overall, in achieving these results, students in 2002 made satisfactory progress over the two years of the GCSE course.
6. The achievement and progress of the various groups of students over their time in the school is discussed in paragraphs 7-20 below. These paragraphs confirm that progress is overall satisfactory. It is satisfactory in subjects, the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, and for SEN students in mainstream classes. Boys and girls make overall satisfactory progress, though progress is better for girls than boys. For individual groups, progress is often good. EAL learners, students on the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course and higher-attaining students all make good progress, while those receiving specialist help in the learning support department often make very good progress. Though the progress of students is overall satisfactory, this is a very positive result in the social context of the school. The good progress of particular groups confirms that the school now has the potential to raise students' overall satisfactory progress to good. Another promising factor is students' better progress in the GCSE course than the earlier years, reflected in the improved quality of their learning at this stage. Good special programmes, a more stable staff, very determined leadership, and good behaviour and attitudes to learning, are having an increasingly positive effect.
7. The school's records of students' attainment when they enter the school confirms that girls score less highly than boys. This pattern is maintained throughout the school and is seen in the results of tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations in Year 11. However, the school's analysis of the progress made by boys and girls reveals that boys have not made the progress they might over the GCSE course. The increasingly strong performance of girls is reflected in their results in the core subjects in 2002. In English, girls were somewhat ahead of boys in the tests at the end of Year 9, but clearly ahead in GCSE. In mathematics, though boys were ahead in the tests, girls were ahead in GCSE. In science, girls were below boys in the Year 9 tests, but there was no clear difference between boys and girls in GCSE. In several other subjects, for example geography, modern languages, ICT, religious education (RE) and physical education (PE), there are no marked differences in performance; in history, boys are ahead in both key stages; in design and technology (DT), girls are ahead in the first three years.
8. In lessons seen during the inspection, and from a scrutiny of the students' work, their achievement is satisfactory. They make steady progress, gaining knowledge and skills at a satisfactory rate. In no subject is progress unsatisfactory, and progress in PE for younger students and for EAL learners is good.

9. Students' progress in English, mathematics and science is satisfactory. In English, most students join the school with under-developed skills in literacy. Though many have a low vocabulary and lack confidence in their speaking skills, they listen well and make sound progress in the skills of speaking and listening. More able older students make good progress in their oral skills, though many average and lower-attaining students still have problems using formal language. Overall standards in speaking and listening skills at sixteen remain below average. Standards in reading at all ages remain well below average, but students generally make satisfactory progress. Though more able older students respond well to the GCSE literature, many students find it difficult to read and understand more than superficially. Standards in writing at all stages are also well below expected levels, but students make satisfactory progress. Well-motivated average and more able students make good progress, although average and lower-attaining students have problems in responding to concepts and still have difficulties with their basic English skills.
10. In mathematics, many students make sound progress over their time in the school and able students achieve well. Higher-attaining younger students are confident in their numerical skills and many achieve well across all aspects of mathematics, although some students' work shows an insecure understanding of basic concepts. Students in the middle groups make sound progress, though for many the understanding of mathematical concepts is not strong. Students in lower groups make steady progress in their number skills. By the end of Year 11, though standards in lessons remain well below average overall, some higher-attaining students reach above-average levels. Mathematically gifted students work well, for example in data-handling projects for GCSE coursework. Even so, several of this group have a hazy recall of earlier material. Students in the middle and lower groups have very limited numeracy skills, and some find difficulty with basic tables, while some students with SEN have little concept of number or grasp of basic operations such as division. Of the students who join the school with little command of English, many do well in their mathematics as their language skills improve. However, achievement for some is still hampered by a lack of command of technical and other vocabulary.
11. In science, attainment is well below average when students join the school. Over their five years, students make satisfactory progress overall, so that achievement in lessons is generally below, rather than well below, the expected levels. In lower years, many students have poorly developed basic skills, are unfamiliar with the concepts they need and do not see what relevance they have for them. So progress can be slow, while teachers are patiently overcoming a basic resistance to the rigour demanded by the subject. By Year 9, some students are keen to learn more, and so make good progress. By Year 11, most students have gained a reasonable understanding of the necessary topics, are making satisfactory progress and are contributing to the improving results which the subject is now achieving.
12. Students with SEN achieve very well in the specialist sessions provided for them, and make very good progress. In the 'Really Mastering Literacy' sessions, some students have made up to two years' worth of progress in a few months in their ability to read and spell. Progress by students with SEN in main school lessons is satisfactory, and in some subjects is much helped by the invaluable work of the learning support assistants, who work well in partnership with the class teachers, particularly in science.

13. Those who are travellers and who receive support make good progress and make an effective contribution. For example, in a lesson on the difference between fact and opinion in newspapers, three such students made very helpful comments, illustrating a thorough grasp of the point being discussed, and did much to explain this to other students. Students who follow the vocational ASDAN course in Year 11 make significant achievements. They sustain good progress in their studies, particularly as the subject matter relates directly to what interests them. They attend school regularly and so follow the course well. All have finished their coursework and are now confidently revising for examinations. This represents enormous progress for the great majority of these students.
14. Students in the student support centre, who have had difficulty in coping with the necessary requirements of daily school life, make very significant progress in their attitudes towards school work. They gain an ability to organise themselves for maximum progress, and to attain the examination success of which they are clearly capable.
15. Students who join the school with little English quickly learn enough to communicate with others. This is because staff immediately assess their language needs and plan the required support. Specialised teaching and support help most students to make good progress in learning the more structured English that they need at school. This helps them understand what they learn in class and make at least satisfactory progress in their general learning. Even so, many lack full understanding of the specialised terms they use, for example, in science. Despite this, the school's analysis of its performance data for tests and examinations shows that students having EAL make generally faster progress than any other group.
16. As well as the students with EAL, above-average progress is made by the higher-attaining students, including those who are gifted or talented, who make good progress in their work over both stages. These students are greatly helped by the wide and well planned variety of activities provided for them. Both groups are keen to learn and to take advantage of everything offered them. As one able and thoughtful student from a recently arrived family said, 'we're getting a good deal here and we're going to make the most of it'. Apart from these groups, there is no particular difference in the rate of progress made by students from the many racial and linguistic backgrounds which make up the school.
17. Students make satisfactory progress in acquiring the skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. When they join the school, these skills are generally very weak, and the rapidly changing school population means that in no year are all students confident enough in these skills. However, they gain sufficient expertise to cope with the curriculum and to make sound progress, while abler students often take good advantage of the skills they acquire, and make good progress in them. A noteworthy feature is the good progress of students with EAL, and those on the Year 11 ASDAN course, whose skills have always been weak, but who are improving them rapidly at this late stage. Further development of these skills is needed in particular subjects.
18. In literacy, progress is satisfactory, though opportunities to develop literacy are missed in some subjects. Students make use of the vocabulary and spelling books in Years 7 to 9, which identify specific words for different aspect of the curriculum. They learn the appropriate key words for subjects, which are regularly highlighted in lessons. Students are encouraged to make an active contribution to class discussions, while quieter students profit from the direct questions their teachers ask them. Students benefit from

the school's strategy of active reading, with regular opportunities to contribute to the reading of texts. Good examples of this were observed in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Students make satisfactory progress in developing their writing skills across the curriculum. They develop satisfactory note-taking skills, with teachers providing lower-attaining students with the chance to improve their writing through the use of writing frames. This was observed in both English and ICT. Though students benefit from chances to write in an extended manner in English, such chances are somewhat limited in other areas of the curriculum, so that students are not often well challenged to write at increasing length for different purposes.

19. Students' standards in numeracy are generally well below average. Many students enter the school with very low number skills. They make steady progress in developing these skills in their mathematics lessons, although some recent arrivals to the school and some older students still have difficulty with basic number bonds and very simple calculations. Some Year 11 students, for example, struggled with identifying rows and columns in two-way tables. The gap between the more able students and the majority in most year groups is very marked. Estimation and approximation skills, as well as operations with numbers, are particular weaknesses. However, able students show confidence in using mental methods in calculations, and there is little over-reliance on calculators. Students' satisfactory progress comes largely from their work in mathematics. However, there has been well directed staff training in developing numeracy in all subjects; there is a clear whole school policy, and an audit of provision and practice within each department has been conducted. Despite all this, however, opportunities for students to use and enhance their numerical skills outside mathematics remain limited. Within science, students have sound opportunities to use their skills in a range of practical situations. In considering themes in literature, students illustrate their findings through set diagrams. In history, geography and religious education, there are missed opportunities to use and enhance number skills in the students' early years in the school. However, in Years 10 and 11 students' data-handling skills support their work on marriage and divorce, as well as in the history of medicine. The use of data also enhances the students' project work in geography. In the GNVQ course and in ICT, students use graphs and simple formulae well to illustrate work and carry out basic calculations.
20. Students' ICT skills, although well below expected levels, show signs of improving, and overall students are now making satisfactory progress in acquiring these skills. This is because of improved schemes of work, upgraded equipment and better teaching in the separate ICT lessons. All students in Years 7 to 9 now have a weekly lesson, which has helped to improve standards and allow students to make satisfactory progress. They are making satisfactory progress also in the vocational GNVQ course, now well established in Years 10 and 11. Students are also making sound progress in the newly introduced applied GCSE course in Year 10. National Curriculum statutory requirements are largely met, although in music, art and history, PE and RE, considerable further development is required to ensure all students achieve the standards required. Students show good interest in the subject, and the additional classes held after school and on Saturday mornings are helpful and popular. Students with EAL and SEN make satisfactory progress also. In modern languages, mathematics, English, science, and learning support, students make good progress in developing their ICT skills when undertaking tasks relevant to the subject.
21. The school sets realistic but demanding targets for its GCSE performance. In 2002, it set and reached a target of 25 per cent for five or more grades at A*-C. It exceeded its target of 90 per cent for one or more A*-G grades and of 25 points for its overall score.

22. Since the last inspection, the school has made satisfactory progress in raising its standards of achievement. Particular progress has been made in achievement at GCSE, and there have been improvements in tests at the end of Year 9 also. The evidence of this inspection and the careful estimates of the school suggest that the present level of results should be maintained or increased.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

23. Attitudes to the school are good. Students are enthusiastic in their work. They show high levels of interest and involvement in many lessons and school activities. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson on different forces and their effects, students listened carefully to their teacher and this was reflected in how well they were then able to explain issues. Students show much interest in year group assemblies. For example, they listened intently in a Year 9 assembly as the headteacher gave an inspirational talk about rising above disadvantage and discrimination in society to fulfill one's potential. Students are keen to take part in school activities and clubs, including dance, sports, debating and computers. Year 11 students make good use of the Saturday club in the run-up to their final examinations. Behaviour is generally good. The majority behaves well in lessons, though the effect of some unsatisfactory behaviour among younger students reduces the effectiveness of a minority of lessons. In Years 7 to 9, a wide range of behaviour was seen in lessons. In nearly half seen, behaviour was good, sometimes very good; in over a third it was satisfactory, while in a relatively large minority, one lesson in six, behaviour was unsatisfactory or, in three cases, poor. Behaviour is far more positive in Year 11. In these lessons, behaviour was very good, occasionally excellent, in a fifth of lessons seen. It was good in a further three fifths and satisfactory in a further fifth. It was unsatisfactory in two lessons only.
24. Behaviour therefore improves markedly when older students are being taught by experienced staff. Very good behaviour is marked by a real keenness to learn, ably encouraged by skilled teaching. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson on the language of Dickens, students worked very well in groups, behaving particularly well because the work had been expertly varied to meet their different needs, and responding very positively to the clear direction and support of the teacher. In a Year 9 EAL support lesson, the teacher's very good knowledge and first rate assessment of students' needs were rewarded by very good attitudes and a real desire to improve. Good behaviour is often seen, and is the norm in the Year 11 lessons inspected. For example, in a Year 11 geography revision lesson, students behaved very diligently, allowing everyone to make good progress in applying revision techniques. Satisfactory behaviour allows everyone to gain enough benefit from the lesson, but an overall satisfactory lesson can contain elements of unhelpful behaviour. For example, students in a Year 8 art lesson took a long time to settle, and five decided to waste as much time as they dared; the teacher's very good management skills and encouragement converted their sorry behaviour into a real attempt to do well, so that satisfactory attitudes and conduct prevailed. Not every teacher can achieve this, particularly with classes such as this, with many students of lower ability, special needs and EAL backgrounds. For example, in a Year 8 history lesson, half the class never settled to their task and were content to behave boorishly, declining to undertake the work set during the lesson. This was partly because they did not understand the subject matter, but they made little effort to do so.
25. Overall, then, behaviour in lessons is mostly good, but is not something which teachers can rely on. It is often conditional on good teaching, getting the level of work right for these students, and the creation of a positive working atmosphere. This has its effect as students begin to appreciate the advantages of good work habits, as can be seen by

the improvement in behaviour so evident in Year 11. The question of introducing students to these good habits is further discussed in the commentary on teaching and learning, below.

26. Behaviour is very good in assemblies and good at break and lunch times. Students move around the school in an orderly fashion, although a few do waste time moving between lessons. Personal and social education, through assemblies and personal and social development lessons, is successful in giving students a very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others. Although there was a considerable number of temporary exclusions in the last academic year for unacceptable behaviour, the number of permanent exclusions was very low.
27. Despite the problems described in a minority of lessons, relationships between adults and students, and also between students, are generally very good. The harmony between different groups of students, especially ethnic minorities, is a strength of the school. Students generally work very well together when required. For example, in a Year 7 personal and social development (PSD) lesson, large groups pooled their knowledge very well as they considered the positive and negative effects of many drugs on the body. The peer support scheme, in which older students help younger ones in their general work and reading, contributes well to the caring ethos of the school and demonstrates students' very strong social development. The students at this school show very high levels of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. For example, they say that people of different faiths, nationalities and cultures should all be treated equally and fairly. Such views illustrate their very good moral development. The diversity of nationalities and cultural backgrounds at the school is supporting personal development very well, since students are learning about many others in the community. This is a major factor in students' very good cultural development.
28. Personal development is very good overall. Students hold positive views and have strong feelings about issues such as honesty, justice and fairness. They can show wonder at what they learn. For example, a group of Year 8 students described how remarkable it was to find out how different forms of life, such as bacteria, reproduce. These factors demonstrate their very good spiritual development. Students respond very well to responsibility and can show good initiative in learning. Members of the student council meet frequently and liaise well with their peers in channelling suggestions to the school. Many suggestions have been adopted, for example, regarding the school environment, facilities, clubs and the lunch menu. School and library prefects show a very high level of maturity and responsibility for others. Several good examples of students using initiative in lessons were observed. For instance, during a DT lesson, students were very creative in their designs of paper ties using plastics to produce imaginative shapes. Many opportunities to take part in year group and whole school projects allow students to develop their research skills and compete for awards and prizes. For example, students are currently finding out about the lives of celebrities of their choice.
29. Attendance is poor and this is badly affecting the learning of many students. Unauthorised absence is also high, a little over twice the national average, but is at least partly the result of the school's good policy of not accepting as authorised an absence which has doubtful validity. Only Year 7 currently averages above 90 per cent attendance. Punctuality is unsatisfactory in many cases, especially at the start of the school day. A number of factors explain the high rate of absence. The school has to contend with a very high turnover of students, because many either start at school and leave quickly, or join at times other than the start of the school year. Inevitably, induction and settling into regular attendance patterns become much more difficult, despite the

school's very good systems to monitor and promote attendance. A considerable proportion of extended holidays are taken during term times, for cultural reasons. Workers having contact with recently arrived families explain that regular attendance at school is sometimes an unaccustomed requirement for them. The satisfactory attendance of the current Year 7 represents what the school can achieve with those who, mostly, began their secondary education in this school. Over the next four years, up to 70 extra students may join this year group. All will be newly arrived in the area, many from abroad. It will be a real achievement if the school is able to retain the current attendance rate for this year group.

30. Students with SEN in the main school lessons display positive attitudes, and a remarkable independence of spirit in their specialist lessons. This is also the case for the Year 11 students who follow the ASDAN course, where the attendance rate is very good. Students who spend time in the student support centre are also developing, or re-discovering, positive attitudes to school. EAL learners rapidly gain in confidence and are eager to succeed.
31. The school has made good improvements in attitudes and relationships, and very good improvements in behaviour and personal development since the last inspection. However, attendance is still a major issue.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. The inspection took place at the time of the school year when all Year 10 students were away on work experience and Year 11 students were about to depart on GCSE study leave. The quality of teaching was assessed in 85 lessons in Years 7 to 9 and 39 in Year 11.
33. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, almost half the lessons seen were satisfactory, a further third were good and a further one in ten were very good or excellent. Seven lessons were unsatisfactory and none were poor. In Year 11, over half were good and a further quarter were satisfactory. Eight lessons were very good or excellent and none were unsatisfactory. Teaching is stronger in Year 11, where it is good overall, than in Years 7 to 9, where it is satisfactory. Taking all years together, the teaching seen was satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of lessons and at least good in well over half. Though more good lessons were seen overall than satisfactory ones, and teaching is raising standards, some aspects of teaching in Years 7 to 9 need further improvement, and its effect is overall satisfactory rather than good at present.
34. This is nevertheless a good result for a school in which 20 new teachers have joined this academic year, of whom 10 are qualified overseas. It is supported by the views of parents, 90 per cent of whom are pleased with the quality of teaching. The school has rightly made the quality of teaching and learning a priority, and the headteacher has appointed an assistant headteacher with responsibility for improving this. Good progress has already been made, but with so many teachers still new to the school, and country, there is much more to do in order to make all teaching really effective for these students.
35. Overall, students' learning is satisfactory also, being good in Year 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In the lessons seen, learning was not quite as sure in Years 7 to 9 as the teaching, and 11 lessons were seen in which it was unsatisfactory, compared with the seven lessons of unsatisfactory teaching. The result was similar for Year 11, where learning was good in fewer lessons than it was in teaching, and satisfactory in more. So teachers are giving their students a sound lead, but students are not always

responding as well as they might. There are two reasons for this. Students' behaviour is sometimes unsatisfactory, and even in satisfactory lessons, there can be a minority who reduce the quality of learning for everyone. The second reason is the large number of students with special needs or whose understanding of English is not yet secure, and who need work and support planned more directly for their needs. It takes some time for these students to acquire good habits of learning. Young students, often new to the country and facing considerable problems, are expected to know how to perform a host of activities as a class, in groups or individually, and they need more thorough training for these roles. They acquire the right habits, but often slowly, and in so doing a good deal of time is lost in some lessons. A further emphasis on this aspect of their study skills is needed in the school's good programmes of PSD lessons, and in the training it gives teachers in techniques of teaching and learning.

36. Teaching and learning are overall at least satisfactory in all subjects. Both are very good in the learning support centre. Teaching and learning are good in English, and in EAL when taught by specialist staff. In mainstream lessons, teachers need to become more proficient in helping students with EAL and in working productively with the learning assistants. In science, modern foreign languages and physical education, teaching is good and students' learning satisfactory.
37. When teaching is excellent or very good, teachers have a very good awareness of how their students can best learn, and set them relevant but challenging tasks. For example, in a Year 9 top set history lesson on Munich and appeasement, the teacher made maximum use of students' comments, writing up their views verbatim, so building an impressive overview, from which everyone could profit in their later work in pairs. Students went on to make very well informed predictions of what the results of appeasement would be. This lesson was so successful because students were wholly involved in the process of learning, and had been expertly trained in how to profit from it.
38. When teaching and learning are good, teachers have prepared carefully on the basis of good knowledge and have high expectations of what their students can do. For example, in a Year 11 lesson in PSD, visiting lecturers and school staff had prepared an informative session on university life and study, with plenty of factual information to inform and challenge these students of varying ability at an important time in their education. When teaching is satisfactory, planning is generally clear and management of the lesson secure, though sometimes students need more precise guidance on what is expected. For example, lower-ability students in Year 8 made sound progress in a DT lesson on a key ring project, as the result of the teacher's good class management. However, because the aims for the lesson had not been clearly explained to them in terms they could understand, students elected to work without enthusiasm and could have achieved more.
39. Unsatisfactory teaching, and some satisfactory lessons where progress is less rapid than it might be, is sometimes caused by a lack of planning to meet students' specific needs. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson on unit conversion, several students failed to make adequate progress because their needs had not been clearly provided for. Such teaching is sometimes also marked by the insecure management of behaviour. Students can be very challenging, and can quickly exploit any hesitancy in their teacher. Not all teachers can cope with these problems, but the great majority – well supported by the senior staff – manage to do so. A number of lessons in Years 7 to 9, though satisfactory overall, contained the features just described, which rendered progress slower than it might have been.
40. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, so that students

have the confidence to make sufficient effort to gain the skills and understanding they need. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson on the investigation of friction, the teacher's confident grasp of the subject led to clear explanations and good pace, so that students learnt well, consolidating their knowledge from previous lessons and making a good effort to predict what practical effects would happen. Teachers' expectations are good also, but in many lessons in Years 7 to 9, some students did not respond positively enough, being content to work at too slow a pace. By Year 11, this problem has largely disappeared, and students can respond well to the high expectations of many teachers. In a Year 8 French lesson, for example, the teacher had good expectations of the progress students should make in learning the language necessary for buying food. Pace was brisk and questioning good, so that most students learnt well and made good progress. Some, however, were quite untroubled by the need to get on briskly, took their own time, and would have been glad to waste time by disrupting the class, had they been able. By contrast, in a Year 11 English lesson, students revising for GCSE literature responded well to the teacher's high expectations, working quietly and contributing actively to the lesson.

41. Teachers' management of students is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Year 11. This is an essential characteristic of students' satisfactory progress over their time in school. Many students are not particularly minded to behave well, but the generally good behaviour in class and around the school originates in teachers' good professional management, often in very challenging circumstances. Teachers themselves respond well to the headteacher's insistence that all students are capable of making good progress, whatever their background or problem. Teachers feel well supported in this vital respect, and many therefore manage lessons with confidence and success. For example, in a Year 11 art lesson, a newly qualified teacher managed the final revision lesson of the year with confidence and skill. Students responded well to her clear, enthusiastic direction, maintaining their interest to the very last, and producing work of good quality. In a Year 9 geography lesson on development, the teacher managed all aspects of the lesson well, engaging students' interest and setting a firm pace. There was a very good working atmosphere, so that students behaved very co-operatively, making a good effort and taking pleasure in their achievements. Not all lessons are so successful, but teachers' good management and clear expectations are leading to real progress for many students.

42. In most other respects, teachers' skills are satisfactory. Their methods are appropriate and lead to sound learning of necessary information and skills. They use time and resources appropriately, and make sound use of the professional support given by learning assistants. Teachers' assessment of students' work and use of homework is satisfactory. As a result, students learn soundly and reinforce what they have learned in class with relevant extra study.
43. However, the school needs to help teachers further in improving some aspects of their practice. First, teachers' overall planning of lessons in Years 7 to 9 needs improvement, with better use of information on the attainment of their students, to ensure that the widely differing needs of these students are truly being met. Teachers face a complex problem in meeting learning needs in classes which have many students with SEN or are at an early stage in acquiring English, or both. Support staff cannot always be present, so that teachers need to know far more about how to help a student with limited English, or how to set work designed for the level of skill and concept the student has reached. In their planning, teachers need to make fuller use of the good assessment information they are given on students' levels of ability and particular needs, and then find ways to ensure that these needs are met. Generally, there is little evidence of work prepared for the differing needs of students in the class. For example, in a Year 8 top set mathematics lesson, the needs of abler students were not met, as the teaching concentrated on low-level measurement tasks for areas. By contrast, a Year 9 history lesson, with many students of low ability, was over-ambitious in its demands. Students could recall the events leading up to the Second World War, but to give reasons why Hitler should have been stopped before 1939 was beyond them. Several students therefore became resistant to the task, though most loyally pressed on.
44. Second, many lessons need clearer structure. Because aims were not always clearly displayed or explained, students were sometimes unclear what they had to do, and the teacher did not clearly use the final minutes of the lesson to check whether they had gained the relevant knowledge or skill. As a result, students were quite often not challenged to prove they had learned what had been proposed.
45. Third, the teaching of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT needs further development in particular subjects. There is some very good practice, for example in the use of ICT in modern foreign languages. In several subjects, key skills are not well enough developed. For example, though teachers give students good opportunities to practise their reading in English, mathematics, science and ICT, students do not generally have enough chances to write at length, except in English. Numeracy skills are generally not well enough developed in Years 7 to 9, except in mathematics and some science lessons. Though there has been much progress in introducing ICT across the curriculum, much more development is still needed in music, art, history, physical education and religious education.
46. Students with SEN learn very efficiently in their specialist literacy lessons, because they are taught rigorously, with skill and humour, and they are expected to apply themselves without stint. As a result, they make startlingly rapid progress. In the main school, students with SEN learn as well as others. Heads of faculties and departments are expected to ensure that all teachers use all the information available on students, including individual education plans (IEPs) at the course and lesson-planning stages. This practice is not yet widespread, and it is only in the science department that it is embedded in the teachers' practice and thinking.

47. Students in the student support centre are very carefully helped to manage their behaviour, and to understand that they always have an alternative behaviour if they choose it. As a result, they grow in confidence and become very efficient learners. Two examples illustrate the effects of very good teaching. One student in Year 9 is determined to regain his place in the top set for mathematics – his favourite subject – and has worked out how to improve his behaviour to achieve this. Another student (at serious risk of permanent exclusion until last year) has made a huge success of working two days a week in a local primary school, as extended work experience, and is regarded as mature, intelligent and very helpful.
48. Since the last inspection, improvement in the quality of teaching and learning has been satisfactory. In 2001, teaching was unsatisfactory in 17 per cent of lessons, though many of these were given by temporary or supply staff. The staffing situation is now more settled and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is less. Although fewer very good lessons were seen during this inspection, the overall quality is now sounder. In 2001, students' learning was unsatisfactory overall, but is now satisfactory, thanks to more secure teaching.

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

49. The curriculum, which is very well managed by the deputy headteacher, is good. Following the findings in the previous inspection report, the school has devoted much time and energy reviewing the content and management of the curriculum. Most of the points raised have been addressed and the curriculum has been much improved. The school has a clear commitment to give all students access to a curriculum that is appropriate to their age and abilities, and to a large extent this commitment is being met.
50. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 has good breadth and balance. The provision of ICT has improved since the previous inspection and students now receive one period of ICT per week. Statutory requirements for all subjects are now met. However, the requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not being met, a deficiency reported at the previous inspection.
51. The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 also meets statutory requirements in all subjects. A wide range of subjects is offered within a good and balanced common group of subjects, with three further optional subjects chosen from a range of 13 subjects. The provision of vocational GCSE courses in engineering, leisure and tourism, and ICT, and a GNVQ course in manufacturing, has considerably enhanced the breadth of choice for all students. The vocational ASDAN course for Year 11 students makes a very good alternative focus to academic work. The course has a significant number of students – 45 in Year 10 and 75 in Year 11. It provides a flexible range of practical experiences which motivates students who have not felt rewarded by academic study. For example, there is a very effective first aid course in Year 10. The flexible nature of the course means that it can help students to learn in other subjects. Year 11 students, preparing *Romeo and Juliet* for examination, gained familiarity with Shakespeare's language by taking part in an audition for a place in the masked ball. Their handling of the play's language, and their delight in its use, greatly increased.
52. Overall, the curriculum provides flexible, varied and relevant programmes of study for all students. As part of the government's 14-19 Increased Flexibility Project, a highly successful leisure and tourism vocational GCSE is being offered in partnership with a local college of further education.

53. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities which is available to all students, and which extends their learning well. Good opportunities for additional study are available at lunch times and after school. The highly successful Saturday school is also very well supported, and is helping students to raise their attainment levels.
54. The curriculum for gifted and talented students is very good. The enrichment of the curriculum with opportunities such as this programme is a strong feature of the school. Responsibility is in the capable hands of an assistant headteacher, giving the programme a good prominence in the curriculum. Every faculty and department has a policy to encourage these students, who are carefully identified on their arrival in the school. Provision for these students is partly made by the identification of their needs within departments and by enhancing courses and materials for them, and partly through initiatives such as the 'Aim Higher' project, which has provided a very good range of extra opportunities. For example, through this initiative, the school has secured extra funding for science. The headteacher's vision for the school includes the achievement of specialist status in science, with the aim of making this school particularly eminent in this area, so that local students can achieve as highly in science in this school as in any other. Funding has been secured to allow an organisation promoting the cause of university education to provide Saturday schools for gifted students, followed by an extended period of e-mentoring. The school has links with seven universities, including Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College and LSE. There is a good local link with Brunel University. A large number of students attend a residential course at the University of East Anglia. It was a pity that, during the inspection, a useful session with visiting university staff did not allow for the questions which students were keen to ask.
55. All students have very good access to all that the school has to offer. It makes very good provision for students with a very wide range of needs. For example, lower-attaining older students are greatly encouraged by the ASDAN course; those with EAL needs are supported well by well-qualified specialists; there is support for travellers; and those who have difficulties in coping with the good behaviour needed to remain in mainstream classes are very well served by the student support centre. In addition, there is a good specialist curriculum for students with SEN. Those on the SEN register have very specific IEPs, of high quality, with sensible and useful targets, carefully planned to help teachers in their planning. These plans almost always list the means by which the targets are to be achieved. Good provision for EAL learners helps these students gain access to the general curriculum and extends their learning in ways relevant for their various cultural heritage backgrounds. The school's very good links with community groups significantly enhance the range and quality of the curriculum for EAL students.
56. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. A very good range of themes and topics is covered. Assemblies and PSD lessons, taught by form tutors, play a major role in developing students' attitudes, values and personal skills. For example, much work develops the skills of listening, thinking, reasoning, decision-making and interacting with others. There is also considerable attention to raising self-esteem. PSD lessons include much work about relationships, family structures, sex and drugs education. These lessons are well supported by different external agencies and guest speakers. For example, in a good PSD lesson seen, a charity group made a presentation about drugs education, allowing students to learn about many different drugs.
57. The school makes good provision for work experience and careers advice and guidance. Staff have worked very hard to ensure that all current Year 10 students

obtained their chosen work experience for two weeks; students undertook a wide range of experiences in professional, technical, office, retail and other places. Staff visit all students during their experience to ensure that it matches expectations and needs. There are good arrangements to ensure students' health and safety. Regarding careers, the school has established a strong and helpful programme of information and work through PSD lessons and the Connexions careers service. Work is designed to help students to think about their skills and attributes, make good choices and develop basic skills for job applications and interviews.

58. The school has developed very good relationships with partner institutions. Links with the six main primary feeder schools are particularly well developed through the primary to secondary transition programme, which is part of the Phoenix Neighbourhood Renewal Project. The school works closely with a local secondary school through the gifted and talented initiative on project work and study skills. There is a joint project with a local college of further education in the teaching of a new vocational course in leisure and tourism. Very strong and well-developed links occur with further education colleges and sixth forms in the area. There are valuable links with local adult education provision. With the exception of science, there are limited links with initial teacher training colleges and universities in the training of teachers at the school. This is sound policy given the recent high mobility in staffing.

Community links

59. The quality of links with the community and the overall contribution this makes to students' learning is excellent. The school has been allocated, as part of a national initiative, £1.2 million over three years through the Phoenix Neighbourhood Renewal Project (PNRP) for a programme designed to support students and their families in dealing with issues that hold back academic achievement. The scheme operates a range of projects including primary to secondary school transition, after-school activities, family support social work, student counselling support, work-related learning and experience, family learning, adult education and multi-agency neighbourhood co-ordinating schemes including the health service and the police. The purpose of these community education developments fits excellently with the aims of the school. The project's direction and leadership are clear and supportive, while the range of provision is based on a very detailed and systematic analysis which involves students in helping to give priority to greatest need. The many projects in this exceptionally wide-ranging scheme are already providing students with considerable benefit, according to their individual and family needs. For example, the Youth Link intervention project, part of the provision through the student support centre, is highly successful in keeping students in touch with their classes and with school. The activities and experiences provided through this PNRP-funded work include anger management courses, and a series of workshops on a variety of topics, including one on crime-related issues, held in the local Riverside studios. Generally, though, it will take some time for the full benefits to be seen within the school.
60. Parents within the community are increasingly involved through open days, reporting days on student achievement and target setting, information evenings on the curriculum, drop-in sessions and through the development of skills such as in ICT. An annual cultural evening is held for parents and students. Social evenings, including visits for students and their parents to the South Bank, Sadler's Wells and Ballet Rambert workshop sessions are also arranged. Local musicians support students in various areas of the music curriculum, there is an artist in residence, and a video project enables students to produce short films of relevance to their curriculum. There is also an art education theatre school, which develops opportunities in the expressive

arts.

61. There are strong links with community schools and institutions. The range of work experience placements in local business and industry helps significantly to widen the curriculum. Local firms have given the school surplus computers for students to use at home. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Queens Park Rangers (QPR) football club contribute in many ways, such as mentoring schemes, as do African and Caribbean volunteers from the local community in Year 7. The BBC and QPR work together to provide an intensive summer programme for up to 90 students to learn about careers in sport. This includes inputs from BBC journalists and production staff, QPR fitness experts, local health advisers and the police. Staff from the QPR studies centre assist in various topics on project-based work and study skills. Players from the first team are used as graduate role models to help raise students' aspirations.
62. Significant community initiatives have helped establish new facilities within the school, such as the learning resource centre, a mini-media centre, and the new Phoenix Sports and Fitness Centre for joint use with the community. Working with an environmental charity, a landscaped environment area has been developed. In all, the school's links with the community are outstanding and provide a very significant asset to students' well being.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

63. Provision for students' spiritual development is very good. Since the previous inspection, it has been mapped across the curriculum and planned for in assemblies. Displays, throughout the school, offer students and visitors alike opportunities to look, read and reflect on the shared experiences of life in this school as well as on some of the bigger issues that concern us all. 'Phoenix in the snow' reminds visitors of how nature can raise the human spirit, whilst the history department's *Auschwitz* display clearly explains the depths of horror that humans are capable of inflicting on others. Assemblies do not meet the requirements of the daily act of collective worship, but nevertheless are worthwhile moral and social experiences, with the best offering intense spiritual and cultural messages as well. The ASDAN course makes an extremely positive contribution to the spiritual development of some of the most deprived and troubled older students in the school. The style and nature of the provision for EAL makes a considerable contribution to these students' personal development, not least because the students grow in self-esteem and identity, also gaining pride in their own cultural heritage.
64. Provision for students' moral and social development is very good. The headteacher's excellent commitment to raising young people's aspirations is evident in all aspects of the school's practice. Particularly successful is the well-attended ASDAN programme where previously disaffected youngsters now have a better understanding of the 'can do' messages offered to them by the school. A further testimony to the success of the school's initiatives to provide well for their development is the fact that 250 students, from differing ethnic groups and attainment levels, have signed up for the high achievers club. The junior and senior prefects play a major role in the successful running of the library and overseeing the locker rooms, whilst others serve on the year or school councils. Students' voices are listened to in this school. This is evident in the improvements to extra-curricular activities and the fact that uniformed policemen now regularly patrol outside the school, at the end of the day. This reassures students of their safety in an often hostile outside world. At a whole-school level, initiatives such as the 'gold card' system are excellent for motivating students to 'aim higher and not leave your future to chance'. The fact that attendance can still be poor, when so much is

offered and appreciated, is an issue that still confronts the school.

65. Cultural provision is very good. The displays use excellent photographs to present students, particularly from the black community, with role models of successful lawyers, writers and classical musicians as well as those who have gained prestige in popular culture. Suitable introductions to high culture are offered to students through visits to the Young Vic and the Sadlers Wells opera. Visits are organised to local museums and exhibitions, while one group of students recently visited Paris. The Globe players visit the school to present plays such as *Macbeth*. Artists in residence provide valuable opportunities to learn new skills, as with the current tile making initiative. This school is built on respect and this is evident in the way all cultures are celebrated and all talents are encouraged. The black gospel choir and African drumming are strong features of the multi-cultural celebration the school provides. This was very positively seen in the school's *Fusion Show*, described with other aspects of cultural provision in the report on expressive arts, in part D of this report.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

66. This is a school which cares deeply for its students. They are valued and supported well in developing their self-esteem and potential as learners. The educational and personal support and advice given to students is good. Staff, including the primary/secondary transition officer, teachers from the learning support centre, the speech and language therapist, student councillor, learning mentors and African Caribbean mentor give very strong support to students. This illustrates the school's inclusive approach through tackling individual barriers to learning. The school has also implemented a good race equality policy following recent legislation. Senior managers, including the headteacher and heads of learning, take part in comprehensive reviews of all the school's work through regular, very effective education and social inclusion meetings.
67. Arrangements for child protection and for ensuring students' welfare are very good. This represents very good improvement in this area since the last inspection. Two staff are fully trained in child protection and deal with any issues effectively. The designated officer is very well experienced and regularly carries out training and awareness sessions for staff, to help them become more familiar with the school's procedures. Accident and emergency procedures, including arrangements for first aid, are very well developed. Risk assessments are carried out on a regular basis, as are fire drills. The school works very closely with several agencies in raising awareness of health and safety matters. For example, the police service gives talks to students regularly on drugs education and personal safety. The school has implemented an appropriate policy for the use of computers, including safeguards for using the internet.
68. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are very good. Personal files are maintained on students' attendance, behaviour, personal and social development and any individual issues. Where necessary, referrals are made to other support staff based in school, or to external agencies. Personal action plans of very good quality are developed with clear targets to help address any problems. Issues and progress are very well reported in students' 'mini reports' and annual reports to parents. Specialised staff of students learning EAL identify their personal and social needs and meet them consistently well.
69. Procedures to monitor and improve attendance are very good. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. Home telephone calls are made promptly regarding any unexplained absence. The school does not accept a claim of authorised

absence without question, but requires proof. A high, but realistic, level of unauthorised absence is the result. A computer-based system of information is used very well to produce reports and is highly effective in identifying problems in year groups or with individuals. Communications with parents stress the importance of good attendance and punctuality. For example, students' annual reports highlight how much learning time has been lost over five years. Students value the 'gold award' system whereby they can earn rewards for good attendance and punctuality. Many students have been placed on 'amber' alert, whereby, if attendance does not improve, the student may not be promoted with his or her year group. These provisions are slowly but surely improving attendance and punctuality.

70. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are outstanding. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection, and the school has addressed the weakness identified. The headteacher and staff work extremely hard in supervising students during breaks and as they move around the school. Very detailed records are kept of any incidents. Where necessary, problems are very closely monitored to make sure that improvements take place. The rewards system includes 'points' for good behaviour, effort and achievement. Students respond very well and are keen to work towards the many treats and prizes that can be earned. Any student can join the high achievers club and qualify for many additional privileges, provided they are willing to make an agreement with the headteacher to attend fully, behave well and do their best in learning. This is a school which really intends all its students to work hard and achieve their best. To this end, the headteacher has recently introduced a new procedure, after close consultation, called 'Building on Success'. The 'amber' alert described above is part of this scheme, which aims to reward diligence, good attendance and behaviour and to deter the small minority of time-wasters who still fail to respond to all the school provides.
71. Procedures for assessing students' attainment, and for monitoring and supporting their progress, are very good. The school collects data on the students' performance in their primary schools, but supplements it with nationally recognised test information when they enter the school. There is a large number of entrants to all year groups, at different times of the school year, and many of these students bring little information on their previous academic achievement. Test results are shared with academic and pastoral staff and well used as the basis for future targets and progress reviews.

72. Students' progress is very well monitored and supported throughout their school career. Frequent reviews, at least three annually, provide an overview of all aspects of students' achievements in relation to their expected test levels and examination grades. Subject departments contribute the results of unit tests, following which they receive clear feedback on the progress of classes and groups. The school makes good efforts to ensure that departmental information is accurate, and provides targets, well related to the levels described in the National Curriculum, for students' future development. These assessments provide secure information for interim and annual reports, as well as for consultation days. Heads of learning identify underachievement regularly, and there is a strong focus on the groups of students who require support and guidance.
73. Data from examinations are carefully scrutinised and analysed within and across departments. Generally, departments have good centralised working records of their students' assessments, and overall assessment procedures are good. However, not all departments are yet proficient in linking grades and levels awarded for homework and classwork to students' predicted grades. Marking across and within departments varies in both quality and frequency, with comments sometimes difficult for students to follow. At classroom level, assessment information is not often used well to assist teachers' planning. For example, the good assessment information on EAL learners is not sufficiently used in planning lessons. Nevertheless, there are good examples of departments, such as science and design and technology, using assessment information well.
74. The learning support faculty provides very good analysis and diagnosis, and so plans carefully where best to target support for specific students. Each department or faculty has a list of all students' abilities in English, mathematics and science, together with precise information about other forms of attainment. This information also includes the students who have SEN or are EAL learners, those who have support from counsellors, individual support tutors, the speech, language and communication therapist, and the support provided for those students who are helped by the student support centre. Teachers have a summary of the statements of SEN made about students. Thus teachers are very well equipped with information about their students, though the monitoring of its use in planning is not yet securely in place.
75. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to make good progress in developing its welfare and assessment procedures and in using the comprehensive body of data it now holds to inform teachers, parents and students of the school's expectations of students' academic achievement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

76. Links with parents are highly effective and parental involvement has a good impact on the work of the school. The contribution of parents to children's learning, at school and at home, is also good.
77. Parents generally have a high opinion of the school. Levels of satisfaction about the school and its work have risen appreciably since the last inspection. Replies to the inspection questionnaire, and responses given at the parents' meeting show that parents have much confidence in the school and the quality of education provided. Parents are pleased with many aspects of the school. These include how the school helps their children to become mature and responsible; the information they receive about their children's progress; the approachable nature of the school; the teaching, leadership and management provided; and their close partnership with the school. The

majority of parents also say that their children like school.

78. Inspection findings support parents' positive views, but clearly attendance is a major issue. Although a significant number of parents have concerns about homework, the inspection team judges that provision is satisfactory overall and helps students learn. A few parents have concerns about their children's progress, behaviour and the range of activities outside lessons. However, these aspects of the school are judged at least satisfactory. A few parents at the parents' meeting were disappointed at the service they get from the reception area, saying in particular that it can be very difficult to speak to teachers when they have concerns.
79. The quality of information to parents, especially about students' progress, is very good. Parents have very good opportunities to discuss their children's work with staff. Written information is very good. For example, 'mini reports' are sent out each term, giving concise information for each subject, about how much effort is made, and the learning targets which students have been given. Students' annual reports are very detailed about what students know, understand and can do. Again, there is great emphasis on future learning targets. The school brochure is bright and attractive. It is supplemented by 'student and parent' handbooks that clearly state school policies, provisions and expectations. The school also provides excellent booklets for each year group with details about the curriculum. Newsletters are sent home each half term about school developments, issues and dates to remember, and there is a separate newsletter for high achievers.
80. All parents have signed up to the home and school agreement. This clearly sets out the school's, parents' and students' obligations. Attendance at consultation evenings is good. There is also good attendance at a wide range of celebratory events such as presentation evenings, fashion shows and school productions. Many parents work closely and effectively with staff to improve attendance, punctuality, behaviour and their children's achievements. The student and family support worker makes a very good contribution to the school's work in supporting individual issues or making referrals to learning mentors, pastoral support staff or external agencies. The school regularly consults parents about their views, for example about the pattern of consultation days. Parents occasionally help in school. For instance, they recently took part in the 'reading is fundamental' initiative and supported students in the library.
81. The learning support faculty makes and maintains very good, productive relationships with parents, carers, and a very wide range of outside agencies. There are formal communications about reviews and consultation evenings, as would be expected, but the school as a whole uses the telephone or personal contact very much more than the written word. This is an effective use of time and effort. Parents of students learning EAL are often in contact with the school, and teachers keep them well informed about their children's progress.
82. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the high quality of its relationships with parents. It has made some further good improvements, for example in the quality of the information it provides to parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

83. The school is well led. There is a large leadership team of eleven staff, including the headteacher, four deputy head teachers and six assistant heads. Other key staff include the heads of faculty and subjects, and the five heads of learning, each in charge of a particular year group and its tutors.
84. The headteacher's leadership, reported as excellent in two previous OFSTED reports, continues at this level and is now giving the school many of the good qualities which he has tirelessly sought for his school. The headteacher is always about the school and knows every detail of its daily management. Because he insists on everything working as it should, including the essential elements of good behaviour and punctuality, he has achieved an ordered and positive community. His determination that every student should have a full chance to fulfil their potential has led to very good opportunity for everyone, and to a high degree of harmony between students from all racial backgrounds and groups. In very adverse circumstances, the headteacher has led the school from a parlous condition to one which provides well for its students and staff and has the potential to improve its performance further. He has great ambition for the school and is now well on the way to seeing it realised.
85. The single greatest obstacle to improvement has been the difficulty of recruiting and retaining teachers, and this has been a problem even at deputy headship level. The headteacher has successfully sought to overcome this difficulty by creating a large senior team, so giving the school the flexibility which has allowed its programmes to continue and develop. The leadership of the long-serving deputy, with particular responsibility for staff development and the development of teaching and learning, is very good. A further deputy, leaving this term, gives good, experienced leadership. Leadership by the two deputies appointed this term is potentially good; both will strengthen the school's initiatives in teaching and learning, and the vital battle to improve attendance. Changes at this senior level pose problems for the continuity of leadership, ably overcome by the headteacher's forceful, determined presence. At the moment, much depends on him, and it is not clear how well the school would function without his inspirational, personal lead.
86. Part of the answer lies in the quality of leadership at the level of assistant headteacher. This is good overall and very good in several areas of high importance to the school. These are the programme for gifted and talented students, the neighbourhood renewal project, provision for SEN, the school's assessment programme and its strategy for teaching and learning. Leadership of subjects and years is at least satisfactory, and good overall. These teachers are well informed about the school's policies and students, and care for their students' welfare and progress. They benefit from the headteacher's passion for a successful community, helping him create the very good ethos and sense of common purpose which is the basis for the school's improvement and growing success.
87. These qualities reflect the school's good statement of aims, which centre on the achievement of success for all, and an equal opportunity to succeed. These aims are positively realised every day. For example, the school's very successful merit awards scheme gives everyone the chance to do well and to gain valuable prizes. Students from a great variety of backgrounds, including many from refugee families, have a real opportunity to do well. They value the chances their school gives them, and admire the tireless championship of their headteacher on their behalf. They reflect the value and respect they receive by treating their school well and supporting its many events. Their

vivid lives in school are superbly captured by the headteacher in some marvellous photographs which brighten every corridor.

88. The overall provision made by faculties and departments is never less than satisfactory. It is good in English, drama, citizenship, physical education, and in the specialist provision made by the SEN and EAL departments. Science, mathematics, geography, history, ICT and modern foreign languages are improving areas. Improvements are needed, often because of recent staffing difficulties, in art, design and technology, music, and the management of EAL assistants in their work in mainstream lessons.
89. The school is supported by a very good governing body, which is extremely well led. Many governors have untiringly served the school over difficult years, when sufficient good staff were difficult to find and the school was struggling to recover from failure. Its present success is due in large measure to the very good teamwork between the governors and senior staff. Governors' committees are very well led; the school is fortunate in the range and quality of governors' expertise. Governors are very well informed about the work of the school; they assess its progress accurately and set relevant targets for the headteacher, which they monitor carefully. They make regular visits to the school and champion its developments, for example that of the very impressive new Phoenix Sports and Fitness Centre.
90. The school monitors and evaluates its performance well. Teaching is thoroughly monitored by heads of faculty, with detailed evaluations well shared with staff and with careful consultation about necessary professional development. This is well reflected in the school's good use of its performance management system. Very good use is made of the expertise of the local education authority (LEA), which monitors both individual teachers and the progress of the whole school. Its annual reports are full, detailed and perceptive. The LEA report for 2002, in common with this report, identifies the development of teaching and learning as a leading priority. The reason that more progress in this area has not been made in the lessons seen during this inspection lies in the school's rapidly changing staff establishment. Twenty new teachers, many inexperienced, joined the school in September 2002, and the level of sophistication needed to improve daily practice in this very challenging school has not been reached by some new teachers.
91. The school has a good institutional improvement plan, with 14 areas for further development, each clearly presented, with good provision for monitoring, and well reflected in the plans of individual faculties, years and other areas of work. Its leading priorities – achievement, teaching and learning, the Key Stage 3 Strategy, and attendance – represent an accurate assessment of the school's priorities and coincide entirely with the key issues for action identified in this report. By clear organisation and good professional support, the school makes good progress towards the targets in its development plan. It has set demanding but realistic targets for students' GCSE achievement, and reached these in 2002.
92. The daily management of the school's many programmes is good, often very good. The facilities manager gives careful, dedicated service. Under his clear direction, the school is a clean, bright and attractive place. One significant health and safety issue, the lack of window restraints in one area, was reported to senior staff during the inspection. The senior administration officer provides welcome assistance for the senior staff. Other technical and secretarial staff work well in their different areas, while the headteacher's personal assistant represents the school very positively. The ICT manager provides good expertise. Under his careful management, the school's use of electronic systems is now good, with a range of data available in three separate areas -

administration, assessment and other information for teachers, and information to help students in their work.

93. The leadership and management of the faculty of learning support are very good indeed. The faculty is necessarily large, reflecting the enormous level of need in the school, which has on its SEN register over half its students. Systems for transmitting information between members of staff are logical, clear, and relatively simple. This task represents a huge amount of work and great strength of purpose over recent years. Now that these systems are in place, the school needs to make sure they work for the benefit of the students. Only in science is the idea of teaching to students' individual needs and strengths embedded in teachers' thinking, because that faculty has worked very closely with the head of learning support to develop their ideal schemes of work. Generally, the heads of faculty and departments are not consistent in their approach to lesson planning for the very wide range of need found within their classrooms, and they do not automatically ensure that all their teachers use all the available information as a basis for planning. The head of learning support is well supported by senior staff, but following through the good work already achieved is a huge task. The school needs to follow the successful example of the relationship between the science and learning support departments.
94. Leadership and management of provision for students learning EAL are good. However, the school needs to make fuller use of the EAL department's expertise. This is seen particularly in providing specific EAL training for subject teachers, all of whom need to know more about how to cope with the EAL needs of their students, which they have been informed of by the department. Improvement is also needed in the partnership between classroom teachers and the specialist EAL teachers, and in the role of EAL support assistants. Resources for the support of students learning EAL are efficiently, effectively and appropriately managed.
95. The school's finance officer manages this area very well. She brings considerable expertise to the running of financial planning and the control of daily and annual expenditure. The latest audit report of November 2002 revealed no major weaknesses. Budgets are carefully prepared, well discussed with senior staff and governors, and closely monitored through the year.
96. Because of the difficulties faced by Phoenix students and their community, the school qualifies for and receives a very generous total sum in special grants – some £700,000 in 2002-03. The total amount spent on the education of each student is therefore high. This has enabled the school to provide generous staffing, with the average contact between a teacher and students relatively low at 70 per cent and the amount of money spent on staffing per student a relatively high £2423. It has also been able to provide a well above average sum for resources for learning, £689 per student in 2002-03. Although the school is generously funded through these grants, it makes very good use of the money it receives. For example, a generous grant of £200,000, to recognise this school as one of eight in the country facing exceptionally challenging circumstances, has been well spent on agreed priorities to improve the quality of education. The school's ethnic minority achievement grant has financed the recruitment of extra staff with expertise in this area. Good use of the grant for pupil learning credits has been made for the development of the curriculum.
97. Two outstandingly successful uses of special grant have greatly helped the school in recent years. One has been the Neighbourhood Regeneration grant which funds the PNRP, which very successfully runs a large range of activities of great benefit to the school's students and their families. This is reported in detail in the curriculum section

of this report. The other is the Excellence in Cities (EIC) project, which has funded the successful learning support unit, the very useful learning mentor programme, the very well run gifted and talented programme and the annual summer schools. Together, the initiatives made possible by the special grants which have been available in recent years have helped the school and its students enormously. They have played a strong part in the rising standards of attainment and behaviour now so evident in this school.

98. The school makes good use of the resources it receives. Accommodation is good in most areas; it is well cared for and spacious, and there is plenty of space for specialist activities, such as arts studios, the accelerated learning centre and the very well equipped and presented area for special needs. The library is a welcoming and spacious area, well equipped with computers and study spaces; book stocks are new and relevant to the needs of students, and a significant sum has been assigned for the further improvement of the book stock over the next two years. The new Phoenix Sports and Fitness Centre is an excellent, flexible development in the school. It will greatly enhance the school's contribution to the community whilst being useful for the students during term-time. Resources for learning are generous and well used. The number of computers and their use around the school have greatly improved. The ratio of students to computers is now 4.5, which is well above average. Students are well-versed in computers and make good use of them in their daily work.
99. Resources in terms of teaching and assistant staff are generous. Of the total of 49 teaching posts, all but four are now filled by permanent staff, and the only current vacancy is in ICT. Though the school's staffing is now more stable than at the time of the last inspection report, there are nevertheless ten teachers who qualified in other countries and are therefore relatively unfamiliar with the National Curriculum and recent teaching initiatives. The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory overall, though unsatisfactory in ICT. However, this is again a great improvement compared with the last report, though the school still has difficulty in finding and retaining staff. Assistant staff are well provided in almost all areas of the school and together make a very good contribution to the professional roles of the teachers.
100. The school has a very good programme of staff training and development. The school year begins with a residential training conference for all staff, concentrating on a significant area of good practice. For example, the theme in September 2002 was 'Building on Success', with a useful presentation on target setting for students. There has also been an emphasis on teaching and learning, with detailed and helpful reference to the government's Key Stage 3 Strategy. Though such courses have helped teachers to consider their own practice, a great deal more time is needed to give all teachers the confidence to develop their own skills of classroom management along the lines recommended, and to help train students in their part in a successful lesson. The school maintains good records of the training which each teacher has received; all staff have had relevant training in an agreed area of need in the last 12 months. Governors regularly enquire into the amount and quality of training which teachers have received. There is a helpful programme for the induction of newly qualified teachers, and induction for experienced teachers new to the school is also provided. Good use is made of consultants to support specific teaching needs, while some staff have made use of the expertise of a local school which has been chosen for its ability to share its good practice.
101. The school makes good use of the principles of best value. For example, it compares its costs carefully with those of other schools in the borough and ensures that it gets good value for what it buys. It is very effective in challenging itself to provide an ever-

improving range of opportunities for its students and the community. It consults widely on the improvements it seeks to make, as in its extensive consultation with parents about its proposals for the 'Building on Success' scheme, described in the section on care for students in this report. At the parents' meeting, parents were pleased to have been consulted and keen to see the scheme implemented.

102. The school provides good value for money. Many students come from backgrounds with severe social disadvantage. Though attendance is poor and results well below average, these results are improving and students make satisfactory progress in their work. They behave well and relationships are very good. Though the school receives more money than average, it makes very good use of it, and provides a generous range of experiences for its students, who profit from it considerably. The school's special programmes, for example in learning support, EAL and the management of behaviour provide good value, and parents are pleased with the education their children are receiving.
103. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the strengths in its leadership and management then reported, but has made several large improvements, for example in the leadership of science, ICT, assessment, SEN, and the gifted and talented programme. It has improved results and become much more effective. Improvement in its leadership and management has therefore been good.

A more detailed note on library resources

104. The school regards the learning resource centre as a very significant part of its provision, and has planned closely for its further development. The centre is currently going through a three year programme of improvement, with a significant amount of money being spent on the fabric of the building and on resources, including book stock.
105. The centre has a number of small rooms for group teaching and individual study. Group rooms contain interactive white boards and video facilities. The school has recently installed 12 new computers linked to the Internet. These are well used by students, both at lunchtimes and at the end of the school day. The school intends its students to make good use of the centre, and this is reflected in the borrowing rate, which averages one book per student at present.
106. The school has discarded a large number of old books, which were considered out of date, did not reflect the current world or which promoted stereotypical images. This has reduced the number of books currently available to students, with 2030 fiction books and 3732 non-fiction books in stock. This is currently approximately seven items per student, a figure below the figure recommended by library organisations. Fiction stock, however, is enhanced by a number of book boxes in English classrooms. Overall provision will significantly improve over time, as the school expects to double the library stock over the next two years.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

107. The school should

(1) Help teachers further improve:

- their overall planning of lessons in Years 7 to 9,
- their use of the very good information they receive on students' attainment, SEN and EAL needs to improve their assessment and planning of students'

work,

- their ability to help EAL learners, working more effectively with EAL classroom assistants,
- the teaching of the key skills of numeracy, literacy and ICT, and
- their training of students as good learners.

(Paragraphs 23-25, 35, 43-45, 93-94, 100, 170-171, 174; for departmental assessment practice see 118, 125, 143, 148, 152, 178, 180, 193, 223)

(2) Continue its efforts to improve attendance, which remains poor.
(Paragraphs 29, 69)

(3) Continue the drive to improve attainment further, analyse the differing levels of attainment by boys and girls and attempt to ensure that disparities in performance are overcome.
(Paragraphs 1-11; Paragraph 7 for the attainment of boys and girls)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	128*
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	77

* 124 lessons were graded for the quality of teaching

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	12	53	47	7	0	0
Percentage	4	10	43	38	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	758
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	423

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	392

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	306

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	124
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	104

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	11.4
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.7
National comparative data	1.5

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)

The figures on this page include all students. Refugee students have not been deducted in these tables.

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	82	70	152

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	22	37	44
	Girls	16	15	19
	Total	38	52	63
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	25 (31)	35 (28)	42 (27)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	7 (4)	17 (12)	10 (8)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	23	38	42
	Girls	25	21	25
	Total	48	59	67
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	32 (29)	39 (25)	44 (28)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	7 (3)	26 (5)	10 (3)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

i. The following summary of GCSE results in 2002, excludes refugee students:

Percentage of students achieving 5+ GCSE/GNVQ A*-C	25
Percentage of students achieving 5+ GCSE/GNVQ A*-G	95
Percentage of students achieving 1+ GCSE/GNVQ A*-G	100
The average points score achieved	27.7

ii. The following tables of GCSE results in 2002 compare results for boys and girls in this school with national average results. All students, including refugees, are included:

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	114	64	178

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	23	106	113
	Girls	15	56	61
	Total	38	162	174
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	21 (10)	91 (86)	98 (93)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	25.8
	National	39.8

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	12	92
	National		–

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
178	11	
14	1	
77	4	
40	8	2
5		
1		
8		
10		
13		
24		
13		
169	21	
125	5	
15		
1		
59		
6		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	47
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1042

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	27.2
Key Stage 3	23.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002-03
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	£
Total income	3854199
Total expenditure	3721199
Expenditure per pupil	4814
Balance brought forward from previous year	216802
Balance carried forward to next year	133000

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	25
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	26

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	758
Number of questionnaires returned	294

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	40	8	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	48	34	12	4	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	36	10	5	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	38	19	7	4
The teaching is good.	48	41	7	2	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	62	30	5	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	30	4	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	22	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	57	33	6	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	55	33	7	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	35	5	4	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	33	10	4	7

Other issues raised by parents

The pre-inspection parents' meeting, attended by 14 parents, was positive in tone. Parents were pleased with homework and those able to comment felt the school had improved in recent terms. Parents reported some incidents of poor behaviour which interfered with learning. They felt that communication via the front reception office should be improved.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, sometimes very good
- Good schemes of work are provided for students in Years 7 to 9 and the GCSE syllabus is imaginatively interpreted
- Students have positive attitudes to their work

Areas for improvement

- Teachers need to ensure that work matches the needs and abilities of all students in the mixed ability classes in Years 7 to 9
- Students need sharper short-term targets for improvement, to give them a better chance to see how they are doing

108. Standards of attainment on entry to the school in all areas of English are well below the expected levels. Students, however, make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9, though attainment for students at age 14 remains well below average. This is reflected in the results of national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, when attainment was very low in comparison to national averages and well below average in comparison to similar schools, with 25 per cent of students achieving a Level 5 compared to a national average of 66 per cent. Scrutiny of English work suggests that standards are likely to improve slightly this year. Whilst standards dipped somewhat between 2001 and 2002, there has been overall improvement in these results over the past five years.

109. Students continue to maintain satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11, as they respond to the increasing demands of the GCSE English course, though standards at age 16 remain well below average. This is shown in GCSE results in 2002 when 28 per cent of students achieved an A*-C grade in comparison to a national average of 57 per cent. A similar picture is found in GCSE literature, with 33 per cent of students gaining an A*-C grade as against a national average of 63 per cent.

110. These GCSE results are a significant improvement for the faculty, because only 9 per cent of students in 1999 gained an A*-C grade in English language and 6 per cent an A*-C grade in English literature. Though overall standards in English have improved since the last inspection, they are below those in mathematics and science at the end of Year 9, though there is no particular difference between the performance of boys and girls at this level. Standards are generally in line with those in mathematics and science by the end of Year 11, with girls achieving higher grades than boys.

111. The majority of students enter the school with under-developed oral skills. Most listen well to their teachers and friends, though many have a low vocabulary and lack confidence in their speaking skills. Teachers tackle this issue in a positive manner, giving regular opportunities for students to talk about their work. Occasionally, some teachers accept the brief response from the quieter and more passive members of the class. Standards in speaking and listening at the end of Year 9 remain below average.

112. Many students in Years 10 and 11 respond well to the internally assessed speaking and

listening activities which form part of their GCSE studies. As a result, the more able students make good progress in their oral skills. A number of average and lower-attaining students still have problems in using formal language and find it hard to express their ideas and opinions in a well structured manner. Overall standards in speaking and listening skills by the end of Year 11 remain below average.

113. Standards in reading skills upon entry are well below average. The school has recently introduced a phonics course to support students in Year 7 in reading. Students with identified weaknesses in reading skills, and those for whom English is an additional language receive good help from support staff. The English faculty provides students in Years 7 to 9 with the chance to read a good range of literature, including poetry and stories from other times and places, including the plays of Shakespeare. Students also explore a number of contemporary issues. All of this contributes to students' moral, social and cultural development. Students are also helped to develop satisfactory reading comprehension skills. As a result of this good provision, students make sound progress in their reading, though many do not fully understand the meaning of what they are reading. Standards in reading at age 14 remain well below average.
114. A number of more able students respond well to the poetry, stories and plays in the GCSE syllabus. Critical and analytical skills are well taught by teachers. Despite this, many students find it difficult to read and understand demanding literature, other than at a surface level. They find it hard to appreciate the writer's use of sub-text, and the power of language to promote a particular stance or opinion. Standards in reading at the end of Year 11 remain well below average.
115. Though standards in writing at the end of Year 9 are well below expected levels, students make satisfactory progress in this skill during their first three years. A number of more able students write at a reasonable length and with few mistakes. A number of average and lower-attaining students, however, find it difficult to write at length in clear and well-sequenced sentences. They are often insecure in their basic English skills and continue to make mistakes in their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
116. Students continue to make satisfactory progress in their written work in Years 10 and 11, though attainment at age 16 remains well below average. A number of average and more able students make good progress because they are well motivated to take advantage of the opportunities outside school to improve their work. They demonstrate the ability to make a personal response to the questions asked, reinforcing their answers by relevant quotations. In contrast, though some of the average and lower-attaining students write knowledgeably about plot and character, they have problems in responding to the abstract concepts and issues in the poems, prose and plays they read, and find it hard to write at length or in detail. Some lower-attaining students still have problems with their basic English skills.
117. The overall quality of teaching is good, and some very good teaching was seen. The faculty has responded well to the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, though there are some inconsistencies in practice, with lesson objectives focusing on content rather than the development of skills. Good use is made of timed targets by most teachers, with the result that students concentrate well and lessons move at a brisk pace. Although work is generally matched to students' abilities within classes where students are taught by ability, this is not always the case in the mixed ability classes in Years 7 to 9, with the result that some more able students are not always appropriately challenged. Where teaching is at its best, teachers demonstrate a personal enthusiasm for the work in hand, have high expectations of students of all abilities and provide them with a range of activities which match these abilities well. As a result of

this, an animated, rigorous working atmosphere is created where very good learning can take place.

118. Leadership and management in the faculty are good. The faculty improvement plan concentrates well on raising standards in the subject. The imaginative scheme of work in Years 7 to 9 and the good interpretation of the GCSE syllabus enable students to write for a range of purposes and in different styles. Opportunities are given for students to word-process their work. The faculty uses a satisfactory range of procedures to help assess, track and record students' progress over time, though the attainment targets inside students' books are too general to be very helpful. The faculty also provides a good range of extra-curricular activities including homework clubs, visits to the theatre and poetry competitions. This enriches the good curriculum provided by the faculty. Good relationships between teachers and students contribute to learning, with all staff having a strong commitment to continuing to raise standards in the subject.
119. The faculty has made good progress since the last inspection. Results and the quality of teaching have improved.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Many students make sound progress over their time in the school
- Able students achieve well
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory and students co-operate well with their teachers
- The department works well as a team. Teachers give generously of their time to help students outside lessons

Areas for improvement

- Students' results in GCSE mathematics and at the end of Year 9 need improvement
- The achievement of boys at the end of Year 11 also needs improvement
- The range of learning experiences offered to students, particularly those with SEN or who are EAL learners, requires extension
- Further improvement is needed in teachers' day-to-day assessment and recording of students' progress in lessons

120. Students' attainment in mathematics when they enter the school is well below average. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are rising year-on-year, although standards in mathematics remain low compared with the national average. These results, however, mask the high number of students entering the school after Year 7. The school's careful data analysis indicates that students remaining in the school from the beginning of Year 7 achieve more successfully in mathematics tests than those joining in later years. For these students, attainment in 2002 at the expected Level 5 and above was in line with that for similar schools, with students making the same rate of progress as those nationally with comparable starting points at the end of Year 6. Mathematics results compare favourably with those in English and match those in science. Students with SEN, and EAL learners make sound progress from Year 7 to Year 9. Boys achieve better than girls overall, generally because of the girls' lower starting points. There are some differences in the achievement of various ethnic groups, not always related to starting points.

121. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the proportion of the school's students achieving

grades A* to C was well below average for all schools, but a significant improvement on the 2001 results. Almost all students who were entered for GCSE mathematics, including those with SEN, were successful in achieving a pass grade. Based on their achievements at the end of Year 9, the percentage of students gaining A* to C was above that expected in similar schools. Girls' performance bettered that of boys, reversing the pattern for the cohort at the end of Year 9. The department has not clearly identified reasons for the slower progress of some boys over the period of their GCSE examination course. However, when results for refugee students are excluded, the gap between boys' and girls' attainment lessens. Mathematics results are generally in line with those in English and science.

122. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by the end of Year 9 is well below average overall, and similar to that recorded in the national tests. Nevertheless, attainment ranges across the mathematics sets from above average to very low. Higher-attaining students have good numerical skills and are confident in using a range of mental methods in their calculations. Many achieve well across all aspects of mathematics. In a lesson on similar figures, able students displayed good oral skills when giving reasons for their solutions. Nevertheless students' work indicates an insecure understanding of basic concepts, such as place value, resulting in ill-considered solutions. Students in middle groups make sound progress in basic manipulative algebra. However, for a significant number of these students, this is a purely mechanical process, with little understanding of directed numbers, or of the concept of equality. By the end of Year 9, students with SEN and those in lower groups make steady progress in number skills although they find difficulty in deciding which operation to use in simple problems. Students with home languages other than English make as much progress as their peers in most areas of mathematics. Understandably, reading skills hinder their interpretation of word problems.
123. By the end of Year 11, standards in mathematics lessons remain well below average. However, some higher-attaining students reach above-average standards, as in a revision lesson on standard form. Mathematically gifted students approach tasks systematically and offer well-interpreted data handling projects as part of GCSE coursework. Nevertheless, a small number has a hazy recall of earlier material, sometimes relying too much on half-remembered rules, as in the revision session on bearings. Students in middle and lower groups have very limited numeracy skills, finding difficulty with basic table facts. In a lesson in final preparation for GCSE mathematics examinations, students struggled with questions involving time. For some students with SEN, estimation and approximation skills are underdeveloped. Of the students who join the school with little command of English, many do well in their mathematics as their language skills improve. However, achievement for some is still hampered by limited command of technical and other vocabulary in written papers.
124. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. There was a small number of unsatisfactory lessons with unqualified teachers. Consistently good aspects of teaching include very good management of students' behaviour and good relationships. Both factors support students' concentration in lessons and promote positive attitudes to work. Most students rely heavily on their teachers, in and out of school hours. Generally, teachers have good mathematical subject knowledge and are well organised in the classroom. However, not all teachers show sufficient understanding of how students learn mathematics. Learning activities are often too restricted, and do not take into account students' different learning styles. Work is not always well enough matched to the students' earlier learning, as in a Year 8 top set lesson on area. All teachers in the department try to indicate key technical vocabulary in lessons, but do not necessarily use these words in assessing the students' understanding of work. Resources to

support students who have a home language other than English are limited. In the absence of additional support, mathematics lessons often lack sufficient language development activities to enable well-motivated students to make fast progress.

125. In the best lessons, thorough planning ensures that learning outcomes are clearly defined. However, teachers' extensive planning is not always effective. Lesson objectives are sometimes so general that it is difficult for teachers to plan well to assess and record what students learn in the lesson. In some lessons, students spend too long copying difficult-to-read objectives, to little purpose. In other good lessons, the pace is brisk and students make best use of their time, as in a Year 11 lesson on number and a higher-set lesson revising trigonometry. In such lessons, oral work is well used to challenge students' understanding and there is a considered balance between consolidating previous work and clarifying misunderstandings. In all good lessons, students apply themselves well because of the collaborative effort between teachers and students. Marking across the department is inconsistent in frequency and quality. It is not always clear that incomplete work or errors are followed up.
126. The mathematics department is well led and managed by a member of the senior leadership team. This necessarily imposes constraints on developments within the department because of the heavy workload of the curriculum leader. Assessment information is used well to analyse trends in examinations and students' overall progress. Key messages from the rich data available to the department, however, are not yet used well enough in planning students' work. Monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department are good, and teachers' use of ICT in lessons is improving. Through the example teachers set, and making rooms attractive and welcoming, teachers strive to enhance students' personal development. There remain curriculum issues, however, to be addressed. The National Numeracy strategy is not yet well embedded, and erratic timetabling in Years 10 and 11 is unhelpful.
127. Since the last inspection, progress within the mathematics department has been good. Staffing is more stable and teaching has improved. Students are making steady progress. The department has a clear commitment to improve and the capacity to succeed.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Very strong and innovative leadership ensures clear direction and a shared commitment to improving teaching and learning in science
- Standards continue to improve
- Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of science and are enthusiastic about it
- The assessment of students' work is a major strength
- Teaching and the planning of lessons are good overall, with some excellent practice in Year 11

Areas for improvement

- Further improvement is needed in standards at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE, especially in the attainment of girls at the end of Year 9
- A continued emphasis is needed to involve students with a range of ICT and include its practical use in investigations
- Further improvement is needed in teaching and the management of students' behaviour in Years 7 to 9
- Further development of the good liaison with primary schools and improvement in the programme of visits is needed

128. This is a rapidly improving subject, very well led and with good potential for further improvement. All students follow a modular course in science during Years 7 to 9. This is followed by double award science to GCSE at the end of Year 11. A small number of students has recently taken three separate sciences at GCSE, but has not yet sat the examination.

129. Students' attainment in science on entry is well below the national average. In 2002, the proportion of students attaining Levels 5 and 6 and above in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 was low in comparison with the national average for all schools, although there has been a significant improvement year on year over the past three years. Attainment is in line with the average for students in similar schools. However, the attainment of girls remains well below that of boys. At age 14, the results in science are similar to those in mathematics and better than in English.

130. In GCSE examinations there is a pattern of improvement over the past three years, although the proportion of students gaining grades A*-C is well below the national average. There is an established link between those students gaining Level 5 and above in Year 9 and their later success in GCSE. At this stage, there is no consistent pattern of different achievement by boys and girls. The proportion of students achieving grades A*-G is approaching the national average.

131. Attainment in lessons varies considerably and the standard of work seen is generally below that expected nationally. During Years 7 to 9, students' progress is overall unsatisfactory. They take a long time to overcome their initial lack of interest in science, while the difficulties faced by students with SEN, and by EAL learners, make it hard for them to understand the significance of the concepts they are required to study. So behaviour and concentration vary in quality, and progress suffers accordingly. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on classifying rocks, students lost enthusiasm and became

bored with the work. Many younger students are not very enthusiastic about science and behaviour in lessons is sometimes barely satisfactory. Yet, where teaching is of good quality, attitudes to learning are largely positive, expectations are improved and relationships are good. Whereas some students take pride in their work, a number of books are not well looked after and often work is unfinished, of poor quality and of insufficient quantity. A small number of students are keen and approach work with a sense of excitement. Nonetheless, for many the work ethic is weak and students do not know how to learn and record their success. Some written work is of a poor standard. There are few examples of imaginative writing and the engagement with new knowledge, skills and processes is generally poor. In these first three years, there are issues of poor student management still to be addressed, along with realistic and appropriate expectations of what students can and should be able to do.

132. However, by age 16 most students, including those with SEN and EAL learners, have made satisfactory progress. Behaviour and attitudes are firmer and students have begun to overcome the complex problems of motivation and uncertain skills which they faced in the earlier years. For example, students in a Year 11 lesson made satisfactory progress, demonstrating a reasonable understanding and interpretation of the shapes of distance/time and distance/velocity graphs.
133. The quality of teaching overall is good and there are examples of very good and excellent practice. From work scrutiny and direct lesson observation, teaching is generally better in Years 10 and 11, where it is good, than in the lower school, where its effect is satisfactory. A range of teaching and learning approaches is used with success, and good practice is shared well, for example in the regular use of starter and plenary activities. Specialist teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of science, which they use well with students. They organise and prepare individual lessons conscientiously, often with detailed plans and lesson notes, as in the lessons on forces in Year 11, and on the reaction of acids with carbonates in Year 9. In all lessons seen, aims and intended outcomes were clearly displayed and known by most students. This contributed to their understanding and the overall success of the lesson.
134. The assessment of students' work is a major strength. It is well organised and effective, giving students regular opportunities to know how well they are doing. The tracking and recording of students' success is good. The results of regular marking, tests at the end of units of work, investigations and other material are successfully used to group students by ability, set targets, and report progress to students and parents. Though assessment practice helps teachers plan relevant work, many teachers of classes in Years 7-9 are still not preparing teaching material for the full range of ability. Further improvements in this area are needed before all students in these years can make satisfactory progress. The faculty celebrates students' success well with work of good quality on display throughout the science laboratories, corridors and generally about the school.
135. Teachers' promotion of key skills is satisfactory overall. Mathematics is used frequently in lessons and literacy is well supported by keywords prominently on display, and by the use of dictionaries. Whole-class questioning is used effectively by most teachers. In line with good practice, students are challenged and a few speak confidently about their work, though the knowledge, understanding and skills of some younger students are not yet great enough for them to speak with confidence. Staff are developing the skills of using computers for administration and lesson preparation but there is not yet enough ICT for students in lessons. For example, students do not have enough day-to-day experience in using electronic data collection and handling; tables and graphs are often drawn by hand.

136. The new head of faculty, appointed in January 2000, is well experienced and has a clear, innovative and dynamic vision for the improvement of the subject. He supports and handles people well. Along with the acquisition of new staff, and sound monitoring and evaluation, the faculty has made changes which support learning well. As a result, standards are improving at both key stages. The curriculum is constantly under review and new schemes of work are already operating throughout both key stages. Numeracy, literacy and ICT targets are firmly embedded in the new schemes of work and textbooks and other resources have been made available to support new aspects of teaching. Documentation is of outstanding quality, especially the department's recent handbook and development plans. Records of attainment and progress are held centrally on computer and there are examples where the analysis and outcomes of assessment have directly and successfully improved the way students learn. Over a period of time, refurbishment has made a positive impact on the appearance of rooms and the quality of students' work. Resources are well organised and used effectively and the use of interactive multi-media equipment is especially impressive. Teachers and technicians work successfully together and are familiar with safe working practice. Activity in science is well supported by two qualified and experienced technicians and resources are generally very good.
137. Improvement has been good since the last inspection. There is a strong and shared commitment from all staff to further improvement. There are good links with other secondary establishments. A good range of extra-curricular activities already exists, and the faculty intends to further develop its contact with partnership primary schools and increase its range of visits. As a result of these improvements, an increasing number of older students have positive attitudes towards science and its activities.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well in all years in observational drawing and construction skills
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations for their students
- There is a high standard of display throughout the school

Areas for improvement

- Standards reached by the end of Years 9 and 11 need improvement
- Further improvement is needed in teachers' planning and their use of assessment to improve learning, in all years
- A greater emphasis on literacy, numeracy and the provision and use of ICT is required

138. Students enter the school with levels of attainment, overall, well below average. Many need help in overcoming their low self-esteem and fear of failure before creativity can flourish. By the end of Year 9, in 2002, teachers assessed the students' overall level of attainment as well below average. By this stage, students understand form and use line and tone successfully, for example whilst drawing shells. The use of sketchbooks, however, is poor, with few students appreciating the reason for having them. Students' understanding of ideas, such as Cubism, is limited, particularly for middle and lower-attaining boys. Starter activities do not sufficiently engage students' interest. Many boys do not listen to oral instructions. Higher attainers, often those for whom English is not their first language, listen carefully, concentrate well and successfully apply Cubist ideas to their own work.

139. The present Year 9, whilst still below average, have made better progress than they achieved previously in Years 7 and 8. They have recently acquired good drawing and collage skills, although their painting is still poor. Greater emphasis on observational drawing has helped students to understand shape, tone and texture more than was possible in previous years, when drawing was largely from photocopied materials or illustrations in books. Motivation has improved as a result of the wider range of materials available such as clay and papier mache. This now represents a satisfactory level of achievement and progress for these students. Students' attitudes are good in Year 7, but teachers have been less successful in eliminating silly behaviour in Years 8 and 9. This often slows the pace of lessons and limits the amount done. Listening skills are poor. Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, in Years 7 to 11, are under-developed.
140. The GCSE results in 2002 were well below the national average for the proportion of students gaining A*-C and A*-G grades. Students in this subject tended to achieve less well than they did in most of their other school subjects. The level of performance was lower in 2002 than in previous years. Girls did significantly better than boys. There has been a decline in standards, linked to recent changes in staffing, since the previous inspection.
141. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of work is average. This now represents a good level of achievement and progress for these students. Higher attainers use their time well and are anxious to succeed, although middle and lower attainers are still too dependent on the teacher. Students' best work is decorative and reflects their personal tastes and cultural backgrounds well. As with the younger students, Year 11 still find it difficult to evaluate their own work and ensure that they have met all the examination requirements.
142. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. Teachers plan well, with good attention to the requirements of the curriculum, but often fail to recognise that many students lack the earlier building blocks of learning that would help them to understand the quality aimed for. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. Teachers are working hard to change students' long-established attitudes to the subject, but a significant number of older students are finding the transition a difficult one to make, because they have a narrow view of the subject. Teachers' own subject knowledge and high expectations particularly inspire the gifted and talented to experiment successfully with materials.
143. The two newly qualified teachers, supervised by the head of faculty, have made satisfactory progress in developing the department in a very short time. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is good. Assessment procedures are sound, but opportunities are missed for dating work in order to track progress. Homework is set frequently and marked regularly with helpful comments. Some practical improvements are urgently required, such as efficient storage space, a useable computer room and improvements to the overall appearance of the art area, including displays to help students develop their skills of literacy and numeracy.

144. Satisfactory progress has been made, since the previous inspection. Though standards had fallen because of staffing difficulties, the present teachers are improving students' achievement and the curriculum.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- All aspects of the curriculum in this subject are covered well
- The school's provision for students to participate and show responsibility is very good
- The headteacher is strongly committed to the success of this new subject

Areas for improvement

- Arrangements for assessment lack rigour, so that students are often unaware of their progress and targets

145. The introduction of citizenship has been helped by the school's good arrangements for students' care, its PSD courses, and the very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural education it provides. As a result, its provision for students' participation and responsibility is particularly good. The headteacher is keen to develop the subject, which enjoys sound accommodation and good resources. All strands of the curriculum are covered well to conform to national requirements. Currently, there is little evidence upon which to judge standards as no internally moderated teacher assessments are available for Year 9 and nobody nationally has yet taken GCSE examinations.

146. Provision for students' participation and responsibility is very good. For example, the school's strong sporting and extra-curricular base gives many opportunities for those with a range of talents to contribute; the school councils are active and students from all years play their part in helping to frame the school's code of conduct and sense of community. All have opportunities to help others through charity work. The school's excellent links with the community, reported elsewhere, do much to enhance both students' learning and their confidence. Older students also help younger ones with reading.

147. Most students have an appreciation of citizenship consistent with their age and levels of understanding and this is helped by departments such as geography and history, which lay good foundations in areas such as global citizenship, economic sustainability and rights and responsibilities. Older students are prepared well for work experience and produce some imaginative work in connection with their assignments.

148. In lessons seen during the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning was overall satisfactory with some good features. Evidence was also gained from studying teachers' planning, analysing students' work and discussions with staff and students. Planning of lessons and of the curriculum is good and, together with resources of good quality, enhance the quality of learning for most students. In lessons seen, students in Years 7 and 8 gave some interesting views about, for example, the law and tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. Currently, however, arrangements for assessment lack rigour and students are often unaware of both their progress and their targets.

149. The headteacher has been responsible for the subject until recently and, along with staff, is deeply committed to the subject's success. Between them, they have enabled the subject to make a strong contribution to the creation of a vibrant, multicultural school where stereotypes about gender and ethnicity are challenged. Provided that the quality of assessment is enhanced, the subject has a very good capacity for improvement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- There is good co-operation between teachers and learning support assistants
- Students have good enthusiasm for designing and making in textiles
- Students make good or very good progress in some lesson
- Leadership of the department is now good and standards have started to improve

Areas for improvement

- The faculty needs to sharpen its requirements for the individual improvement of students
- Teachers need to improve their planning of lessons and make better use of lesson time
- The sequence and balance of the planned curriculum in Years 7 to 9 needs improvement

150. Attainment in the tests set by teachers in 2002 was well below the expected level at the end of Year 9. Attainment by the end of Year 11 in 2002 was very low. Some students did not turn up for the second written exam paper. Though standards are now starting to improve under new leadership, the trend in standards between 2000 and 2002 was downwards, leaving design and technology as the worst performing subject in the school. Results in textiles were significantly better than resistant materials or graphics. Girls did better than boys. Standards in lessons seen remain well below average in both Years 9 and 11. Good products are made in wood. Design sketches are improving well in textiles. However, there are limitations in the range of work undertaken. For example, not enough use is made of computers and students do not work from their own plans or evaluate products in use. Older students make too few decisions themselves. They do not show on their drawings what went well or what caused a problem, or evaluate the sources of information they have used.

151. Despite these shortcomings, students make satisfactory progress overall in their lessons. Whilst some students work too slowly, others do well. In one instance, a boy was justifiably proud of the unique transparent acrylic desk tidy. Students with under-developed skills in the use of English or more general learning difficulties progressed well in some lessons because of the good support they received from teachers and their assistants. However, many younger students who do not receive regular support show weak development of written skills from one topic to another. Older students do not check their own work enough. At all levels, there are too few examples of extended writing, although technical vocabulary and its use in informative writing is improving because new activities have been introduced. Number work is better in Year 9 than previous years, as students begin to produce working drawings with dimensions as well as good graphics.

152. Teaching is satisfactory. It has good features in Year 8 and good or very good features in Year 11. When students make very good progress, this is the result of careful planning and very good knowledge of the students. In these lessons, the teacher and two support assistants, through frank discussion, guided and challenged students, leaving them in no doubt that their work was to be quickly checked for quality and improvement. Students gained socially by interacting with adults whom they respected. Products, from boys and girls, looked good and ranged from a Winnie the Pooh' nursery storage unit to curving designs for compact disc storage units. Good examination guidance, from a recently appointed teacher, boosted students' confidence, ready for the imminent GCSE examination. They queued up to collect their revision guides and some volunteered for extra work. Unfortunately, in about half of the lessons seen, the students did not know exactly what was expected of them or how their work would be marked or reviewed at the end of the lesson, because planning for the lesson had not been carefully thought through.
153. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed head of department has a good view of what needs to be done and there are promising indications, particularly in the improving standards now starting to be seen in Years 7 and 10. However, methods of providing regular guidance to students are not sufficiently well planned. Individual students, working without adult support, too often do not know how to improve their work.
154. The faculty plays a good part in the life of the school. For example, a fashion show presented during the inspection was an excellent example of joint endeavour and involved the evaluation of products of good quality by a responsive community of adults and students from a range of different cultural traditions.
155. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. A new team is almost in place. The curriculum is becoming more interesting and varied and standards have now begun to improve.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are above the national average
- Drama is well taught, so enabling students to develop their skills and apply them to their work
- There is an imaginative, challenging range of activities in drama
- Students are enthusiastic about the subject and have good working relationships with their teachers
- Drama makes a good contribution towards students' social, moral and cultural development

Areas for improvement

- Teachers need to raise standards in students' written work

156. It was only possible to observe two periods of drama during the inspection. These lessons, however, along with examination of the scheme of work provided for students, and other planning documentation, indicate that standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with those expected for their age. Standards at the end of Year 11 are good and are

above the national average. This is reflected in the most recent GCSE examinations when 86 per cent of students gained an A*-C grade in comparison to the national average of 69 per cent. Attainment has improved each year for the last three years, and current standards are above those identified in the last report. There are no significant differences between the quality work produced by students with SEN or by EAL learners. Boys generally achieve higher standards than girls.

157. The majority of students arrive at school with a limited knowledge and experience of drama. They make good progress over Years 7 to 9 as they develop a knowledge of drama conventions and apply them to their work. This was observed in Year 7 as students worked together as a class in devising a 'Jerry Springer' type of chat show which focused on drugs abuse. During the lesson, students displayed a mature approach to this subject. They listened with interest and valued others' ideas and opinions. The subject of drugs abuse was covered once more in a Year 11 lesson, with an emphasis on its impact on the family. Students had a good understanding of how to use body language, and appropriate voice and dialect, to create and sustain a character over time. In both lessons seen, the good progress was much influenced by students' enjoyment of the subject and their positive attitudes towards work.
158. Most students have well below average skills in writing. Much of their work is descriptive, and does not focus enough on the analysis of their practical work or the consideration of techniques to improve it.
159. Teaching in the two lessons seen was good. These lessons were well planned, organised and managed. The teacher is extremely secure in his subject knowledge and conveys it well to students, often in an exciting manner. This was observed in one of the lessons as the teacher adopted roles to stimulate students in their own learning. Questioning skills are used well to get students to think in depth about the characters they are playing and how they can be interpreted. Learning objectives are shared well with students, and timed targets ensure that they keep to their tasks. Lesson objectives are reviewed at the end of lessons, with opportunities for students to evaluate both their own and other's efforts, and to share and celebrate what they have achieved. These approaches contributed to students' good learning in this subject.
160. Leadership and management in drama are good. The subject is led by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic head of faculty of expressive arts. The subject has some good documentation in place to support the teaching of the subject. This includes a challenging and imaginative scheme of work. The subject uses good assessment procedures, adapted from the speaking and listening element of the English curriculum, with all students having National Curriculum levels of attainment.
161. Students are regularly given the chance to visit both local and national theatre companies as well as take part in annual school productions. Students on the GCSE drama course are also given the opportunity to perform their examination practical work to parents and friends.
162. The subject makes a positive contribution to students' social, moral and cultural development, with its focus on collaborative learning, the chance to explore a number of contemporary issues and the opportunity to read plays from different countries and cultures.
163. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good, particularly in GCSE results.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS

164. The inspection took place in the last week for Year 11 students and with Year 10 on work experience. It was only possible, therefore, to observe one GCSE lesson, which focused on administrative issues. It is not possible to make a judgement on standards in teaching, progress and achievement. Students will sit the GCSE Expressive Arts examination for the first time this summer.
165. Attendance at a showcase of expressive arts across the school, however, revealed the good provision made for the expressive arts. The range and quality of activities were much appreciated by the very full audience of parents, teachers and friends. Students presented a range of activities including African drumming, gospel singing, dance, poetry and rock music. There were also examples of disc jockey work as well as a fashion show, including designs of patterns and actual costumes by students. The title and inspiration of the show, 'Fusion', gave students the chance to explore individual art forms and combine them to celebrate different cultures and traditions.

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Overall, the quality of provision in English as an additional language is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers' assessment of the needs of EAL learners is very good
- Expert teaching helps students to make good progress
- Students value their specialist teachers highly. They feel welcome, included and individually valued
- Specialist classrooms are full of stimulating displays and a good range of learning resources

Areas for improvement

- Many students lack full understanding of specialised terms, and this restricts their performance in examinations
- Teaching by learning support assistants in subject classes was only just satisfactory, and needs improvement
- The link between team leadership and full-school management needs further development, especially to improve the partnership between specialist and subject teachers

166. Provision for learning English as an additional language (EAL) is good, with some very good features. It has improved since the last inspection and promises continued improvement.
167. When EAL students join the school, staff immediately assess their language and wider learning needs, and plan the required support. Expert teaching helps students to make good progress in learning the more structured English that they need at school. They make very good progress when the language they speak at home is highly developed, but slower progress when this is not the case. Teachers help them to understand what they learn in class and to make at least satisfactory progress in their general learning. Assessment data shows that EAL students usually make better progress than their English-speaking peers and most achieve at least as well as their English-speaking peers in national examinations at the end of Year 11. Even so, many students lack full understanding of specialised terms, for example 'filtration' in science. This hinders these students from showing their better underlying understanding in national tests and

examinations at the ends of Years 9 and 11. The specialist team is working hard at this problem.

168. Teachers are effective when in support of other teachers within classes and also in withdrawn small groups. They are very expert and use assessment to understand fully the learning needs of the students. Consequently, planning is detailed and precise, with clear objectives. Teaching is challenging and paced, and students rise to the challenge because they understand the part they need to play. Teachers keep a good balance between the need for students to acquire English and their need to learn specific facts and skills, for example of science and of more general literacy and numeracy. Students see relevance and purpose in their learning because the teachers explain both what students have achieved and what they need to learn next.
169. Teaching by learning support assistants varies. It was excellent in a one-to-one lesson. The lesson had three objectives - to build the student's confidence and independence, gain skills in using language to learn and to solve problems, and to enjoy using English to read and write. These objectives were met through very skilled support alongside progressively increasing challenge. Teaching by learning support assistants in subject classes was only just satisfactory. Though support was generally welcome, planning was sketchy and not carried out in partnership with the class teacher, the materials and content were insufficiently adapted, and the support lacked challenge.
170. EAL support benefits considerably from being within the school's wider provision for behaviour improvement and SEN. Careful assessment ensures that students gain the particular support they need. Staff track progress and make changes when necessary. There is strong leadership from the manager of learning support, and the lead EAL teacher, with her colleague, provides very good leadership and daily management. Even so, her leadership and management role is insufficiently defined, and this leads to confusion in such important roles as staff development and full-school planning. A weakness is the link between team leadership and full-school management. For example, there is a crucial need to provide more training for class teachers in the skills needed to help EAL students learn, and to ensure that the policy for partnership between specialist and subject teacher happens on every occasion.
171. There are sufficient specialised and experienced teachers, but too few specialised learning support assistants. This situation is made worse by the lack of awareness of subject teachers. This weakness wastes the efficiency of the few learning support assistants the school does provide, since progress slows when support is not available.
172. The EAL team has two very good classrooms. They are full of stimulating displays and a good range of learning resources. Good use is made of ICT. Students not only highly value their teachers but also the place in which they learn. They feel completely included and individually valued.
173. Partnership links with specialised agencies and community groups significantly enrich the school's provision. They bring additional resources, help for such requirements as translation and a range of activities outside lessons. These extend the curriculum and also build the students' confidence and skills in gaining access to the general curriculum. Partnership with parents is close and productive. The style and nature of the provision for EAL makes a considerable contribution to these students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, alongside pride in their own cultural heritage, not least because the students grow in self-esteem and identity.
174. Since the last inspection, good standards of provision and progress have been

maintained. The need for a greater awareness of EAL procedures among subject teachers, and for better co-operation between subject teachers and assistants, is now more acute.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are improving
- The subject is well led and very competently managed
- Teachers are committed, supportive and caring of their students
- Most students behave well and relate very well to teachers in lessons

Areas for improvement

- More field-work and ICT should be provided, to enhance the programme of study
- Better use of local maps and graph work is needed, and more challenge in written work
- Teachers need a greater focus on knowledge, understanding and skills in their curriculum planning
- Teachers need to develop more self-assessment by students, linked to jointly agreed targets for action

175. Students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is well below the expected level, remaining at this level at the end of Year 9. This indicates that achievement over Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Progress is affected by the variability in the depth of coverage of topics taught and the insufficient development of written work. By the end of Year 9, students have a sound grounding in geographical skills. Most can use and interpret maps satisfactorily but little graphical presentation and analysis of statistical data is evident in Years 7 and 8. Students' knowledge of location, except that of low attainers, is satisfactory. Students of all attainment levels have an inadequate understanding of spatial patterns, but knowledge of geographical processes is good. There is no noticeable difference in lessons in the progress made by students of different ethnic groups or between boys and girls. Students with SEN progress well when provided with learning assistants' support, but more is needed. EAL learners make satisfactory progress, although the regular extraction of some students for extra support results in a lack of continuity and progress in geography, as there are frequent gaps in their exercise books.

176. Standards of work at the end of Year 11 are below the national average and in line with recent examination results. Achievement over Years 10 and 11 is good. Best individual GCSE project work, based on fieldwork in the Hammersmith area, is of good quality and most students produce work appropriate to their attainment levels. However, some students, mainly boys, find deadlines difficult to meet and need even more rigorous and effective checking. There is an appropriate emphasis on examination and revision skills in Year 11, but more is needed earlier in the course. The high rate of absences in Years 10 and 11 needs to be further curtailed by the school, as it restricts students' progress and adversely affects their performance in examinations.

177. Recent GCSE A*-C grade results have shown a significantly improved trend from well below to below the national average in 2002. The proportion of students attaining the A*-G grades are, however, now well below the national average and reflect the high absence rate, low motivation and mobility of a minority of students. Most years, girls perform slightly better than boys but the difference is less than that nationally. When

compared with other GCSE subjects within the school, results are close to average.

178. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Some very good teaching was seen, and a small amount of teaching was unsatisfactory. Teachers are committed and caring of students. Classroom management and control is usually very good and built on very good, effective relationships with students. However, when some less experienced teachers are confronted with disruptive students this is not always so. This, with a lack of geographical content, was the basis for the unsatisfactory teaching that occurred. Lessons are soundly planned and well structured, but more emphasis is required on the specific learning needs of students and particularly on what students are expected to know, understand and do. Some lessons, although of sound quality, are too dominated by the teacher, and do not have enough opportunities for students to investigate and assess situations for themselves. A good feature of every lesson is the sharing of the aims of the lesson with students at the beginning, but testing their effectiveness at the end of the lesson is less well done. In the best lessons, teachers' presentations, for example in Year 11, are lively, purposeful and well targeted, and there is good pace and challenge. Often, teaching provides good variety, but generally a greater range of learning approaches is needed, including more group work and project work.
179. Students' learning is overall satisfactory, although their retention and recall of previous learning is weak. Learning is greatly helped by students' mostly positive and conscientious attitude, good behaviour, constructive relationships with teachers and very harmonious relationships with their peers across gender and ethnic groupings. Learning would be further improved if there were more regular use of local maps and examples within the students' experience. In some lessons, learning suffers when teachers do not relate the new work to what has been previously studied and make sure that it is absolutely clear to students of all attainment levels. Key words are well used in teaching, but students have not developed their writing with enough consistency across the subject. Numeracy skills are sound. A coherent ICT programme needs to be planned and taught to all students.
180. The subject is well led and very competently managed. Documentation is thorough and well prepared. Curriculum planning is sound, but needs adjustment to focus more on students' learning needs. There is a good monitoring programme, through regular classroom observation and scrutiny of students' work, but more rigour is needed to iron out the inconsistencies that exist in the standards of students' work. Assessment procedures are thorough and good. However, marking and informing students on progress is inconsistent across the department, and is an area for improvement. Self-assessment by students and the establishment of agreed targets for action need to be further developed. Staff work well as a team and unqualified teachers are given very good support by the head of department. Accommodation is barely satisfactory; rooms need redecoration and re-carpeting, but some colourful wall displays of students' work improve their appearance. Learning resources are good overall, but a fieldwork budget is needed. Fieldwork undertaken in the local area in Year 7 and 10 provide very effective learning and greatly stimulates students' interest in the subject. However, provision for fieldwork is generally inadequate for younger students.
181. Overall, there has been sound progress since the last inspection. However, more needs to be done in raising standards of work and the quality of learning in Years 7 to 9. The more stable staffing situation and teachers' commitment indicate that they have the capacity to do this well.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good in Year 11
- Teachers have a good commitment to raising standards

Areas for improvement

- Some aspects of teaching for younger students need improvement
- Roles and responsibilities in the management of the subject need clearer definition

182. At the end of Year 9, standards in work seen during the inspection were well below average. Standards at the end of Year 11 were similarly well below average. Achievement is therefore satisfactory when the students' level of attainment on entry is considered. This is the result of a number of factors. First, the history curriculum has been developed satisfactorily; it is appropriate in Years 10 and 11, but there are too many difficult concepts in Years 7 to 9, so that most students become confused from time to time. Second, teachers work extremely hard and use resources well in their attempts to develop knowledge and skills, but lesson expectations are often unrealistically high. Third, many students join the school with very limited speaking and literacy skills; they experience difficulties in understanding the subject and communicating their ideas.

183. Students at the ends of both stages, in Years 9 and 11, therefore have limited historical skills. For example, most are able to use historical sources, but cannot use the different interpretations to reach and support their own conclusions. Additionally, all but the highest attainers have difficulties in selecting, organising and writing structured pieces of work while making appropriate use of dates. This is mainly a result of limitations in their verbal reasoning skills. Students ask and understand straightforward historical questions and show interest in the study of the Black Death, the American Civil War, appeasement and the Second World War. With help, most can place people and events in a chronological framework and demonstrate an appropriate depth of factual knowledge. At both stages, boys perform more strongly than girls.

184. The subject makes satisfactory provision for the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. No systematic arrangements have yet been made, but providing these is a priority in the subject development plan and a start has been made. For example, students in Years 10 and 11 are encouraged to be accurate in their use of language when describing changes in medical ideas. Students in some classes produce charts and graphs linked to trade and industrial production, though examples were not commonly seen during the inspection. As a result mainly of a shortage of software, history makes only a minor contribution to the development of ICT skills.

185. In lessons seen during the inspection, teaching and learning were overall satisfactory with some good, and sometimes excellent, features. Inspection findings from the analysis of work indicate that teaching and learning are also overall satisfactory. Standards of teaching are higher in Year 11 than in Years 7 to 9. This is mainly because lessons are geared more accurately to the students' strengths and weaknesses. For example, skilful use of questioning linked to a single topic enabled a Year 11 class to describe and make links between the events and changes during the Weimar era. In two separate Year 9 classes, by contrast, students were expected to grasp too many details about 1930's diplomacy and the domestic problems confronting the government in 1939, with the result that they became confused and dispirited as the lessons proceeded. All teachers work extremely hard, and cover the National

Curriculum topics conscientiously. Other good features seen during the inspection included generally good class management and relationships, based upon mutual respect and largely positive attitudes from students. These contribute to the quality of learning. A good example seen was a Year 9 class being handled with humour and aplomb whilst studying the preliminaries to the Munich Agreement. The department is planning to enhance the use of ICT to help students' learning. Teachers use the internet to help with lesson planning, and some students use it for their homework. However, its use in lessons is limited at present.

186. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Two senior historians have left in the last year and the school has an interim arrangement in place. Currently, the deputy headteacher and head of Key Stage 3 are supplementing admirably the efforts of the head of faculty and the history staff in Years 7 to 9. The department has addressed the outstanding issues of the last inspection report, and overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Provided that the faculty's roles and responsibilities are tackled constructively, there is a good capacity for further improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The subject is well led and managed
- There is some good teaching, particularly in Year 11
- The provision of computer equipment has significantly improved
- The voluntary Saturday classes are very popular
- Modern languages makes particularly good use of ICT to help students learn

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment are well below average
- A minority of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 has unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour
- There is a limited range of learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11
- A low proportion of specialist teachers and the poor layout of some rooms are affecting the quality of teaching

187. In 2002, teachers accurately assessed students' National Curriculum levels in ICT by the end of Year 9 as well below average, with less than a third of students gaining Level 5 or higher. Standards are beginning to rise with improved schemes of work, better teaching and additional computers. The achievement of current students in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall.

188. Standards at the end of Year 11 in the GCSE/GNVQ option, taken by about a half of the year group, are well below average. In 2002, only one in five students at both GCSE and GNVQ foundation and intermediate levels gained grade C or above. Based on students' low attainment on entering the course, students made satisfactory progress. Problems of teacher recruitment, the low attendance of about a third of students, and the limited language skills of a sizeable minority, contributed to these low standards. Standards are improving, due to better, well managed specialist teaching, extra lessons after school and major upgrades to computer equipment. Several subjects provide planned activities to help students meet National Curriculum requirements. Although standards are well below average, there has been considerable improvement since the 2001 inspection.

189. In timetabled ICT lessons and work seen, most students in Years 7 to 9 consolidate their basic skills of handling and communicating data, using word processing, desktop publishing and spreadsheets. Due to previous gaps in teaching caused by staff illness, low standards of literacy and poor attendance, standards are well below average expectations. No database work was seen, and there was much unfinished work. There were, however, good examples of effective PowerPoint presentations of a marketing campaign for a new lemonade, and higher-attaining students made good progress in exploring spreadsheet formulae to calculate mobile phone tariffs. Most students planned and designed publicity brochures quite well, but many contained insufficient information, and the text was not always checked.
190. In Years 7 to 9, students consolidate their ICT skills in several other subjects such as mathematics, Spanish, English, and history, and National Curriculum requirements are mostly met. In a good French lesson, students, including those with SEN, used an internet site well to download text and images on foods to compile their own attractive menus.
191. It was not possible to see Year 10 students who were on work experience, but their sampled work in the new applied GCSE course showed satisfactory progress overall. National standards are not yet available for comparison purposes. Year 11 students' GNVQ coursework assignments showed good progress from previously low levels. Most students provided good, well-monitored action plans, and well organised business documents, including attractive business cards. Most students showed a good understanding of web site design and produced accurate HTML code. Students' evaluations, including those by EAL learners, were fluently written, and students had developed a good sense of audience. Higher-attaining students produced clear user guides, and annotated screen shots well. Few examples of students' use of ICT in other subjects were seen, although English, mathematics, science and modern languages plan a number of activities which help develop students' ICT competence and skill.
192. The quality of teaching and learning in all years is satisfactory overall, and a third of the 12 lessons seen were good or better. One lesson was unsatisfactory. Good features of teaching seen included good individual support for students, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The very good subject knowledge, interesting worksheets and high expectations of specialist ICT staff kept students, some potentially challenging, interested in their work. Assessment of GCSE/GNVQ assignments was rigorous in Year 11, and students assessed their own progress well, using checklists. They showed good attitudes and behaviour in lessons to improve their personal and social development. Most foundation GNVQ students have SEN, and support teachers give good help. This is important, as a minority of girls and boys in a good Year 11 lesson found it difficult to concentrate on the theory of input and output devices, even when the teacher explained topics very clearly, using slides on an interactive whiteboard.
193. Weaker teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 was by non-specialists, allocated very recently to classes due to previous teachers' illness. There was some inconsistency in the day to day marking of students' work, which was often unfinished. Some poor behaviour resulted from a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, not fully planned to meet students' needs.
194. Leadership and management of the subject are good, as there is a clear vision and strategy linked to the school development plan. Planned ICT learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11 subjects across the curriculum, though improved, require further

development. The number of computers available for students is now above the national average. A working group of staff from different subjects co-ordinates new initiatives. These include good links with the local City Learning Centre (CLC) for gifted and talented students' web design projects, and better staff training.

195. There have been good improvements since the last inspection, particularly in teaching, equipment, students' progress and management of the subject area. The specialist ICT co-ordinator has made determined efforts to make up past deficiencies and this is beginning to have an effect. The subject has very good capacity for further improvement, with the help of planned additional staffing and extra timetabled lessons for GCSE students.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The high quality of leadership and management is significantly improving students' attainment and progress
- Teachers' good knowledge of their students results in carefully prepared support for individuals
- Teachers' skills in ICT help students become more confident in using computers to learn languages
- The very detailed planning of lessons results in clear objectives and well organised activities

Areas for improvement

- The use of English in teaching reduces students' opportunities to listen to French and Spanish
- The amount of time spent on worksheets emphasises reading and writing rather than listening and speaking
- The poor behaviour of students in some lessons slows down the progress of others

196. Standards in Years 7 and 8, where students are taught French, are below the expected level. Students in Year 9 are taught Spanish, where attainment is also below the expected level. In lessons, students often achieve well in relation to their ability. However, the many changes in staffing in previous years have slowed their progress over the full period of time they have been studying a foreign language. French is studied in Year 11. In 2001 and 2002, insufficient numbers of students entered for GCSE to enable valid comparisons with national averages. Of those entered in 2002, most obtained an A*-C grade. The progress made by students in Year 11 is good. The overall trend is towards more students taking GCSE and improved standards and achievement across the school.

197. In lessons observed and work analysed, students who are EAL learners achieve as well as other students. Students with SEN usually make satisfactory progress. There is little difference in the standards of work between boys and girls. In Year 9, students of above average ability learning Spanish acquire a good range of vocabulary on familiar topics such as pastimes, daily routines and going out. They read and understand key words and short phrases. They form simple sentences using the future tense but require a good deal of guidance from their teacher. In general, they are not confident in using different verb tenses and in writing without examples to copy from. Their best attainment is in matching Spanish words to English meanings and pictures, recognising

language rather than using it independently to express themselves.

198. The attainment of students in Year 7 is relatively better than in Years 8 and 9. They have benefited from having had mainly the same teachers throughout their time at school. They carry out short dialogues in French, saying what they would like to eat and drink with reasonable accuracy. Average and lower attainers, however, are still rather hesitant. Higher-attaining students make good progress in writing short descriptions on familiar subjects such as their bedrooms, but they need a great deal of support. In Year 8, students of below average ability make good progress in improving their spelling of French words for items of food by producing a menu on a computer and illustrating their work with computerised images. These students, however, have difficulty in transferring single words from a written sheet to a word-processed document with accurate spelling.
199. Currently no students take a foreign language in Year 10. This is due to the school's difficulty in finding enough suitable teachers at the end of the previous school year. There is one GCSE French class in Year 11. The standards of these students are well in line with national averages. Students of above-average ability in this class have progressed well in writing, using a range of tenses. However, those of average and below-average ability have difficulty in using past and future tenses accurately, although they read short passages with good comprehension. Most listen to tapes and pick out the correct pictures to match dialogues.
200. Teaching is good, characterised by very detailed and thorough planning. Materials are very well organised, resources are to hand, work is prepared in advance on the board, and lessons start promptly. Teachers know their students well and target extra support and activities to match different levels of ability, so ensuring that all students are included in the lessons. They emphasise positive relationships with praise and reward. Teachers are confident in using ICT and integrate this very well with their language teaching. In some lessons, there is an overemphasis on work sheets. This promotes more passive reading and writing than active speaking. A reduction in the amount of English spoken by teachers in some lessons would improve students' listening skills and require them to concentrate more fully on what was being said. Students' behaviour and attitudes are usually satisfactory. However, even when teaching is good, there are examples of poor attitudes. This is largely attributable to the many changes in teachers that students have previously experienced. A small number of lessons are taken by non-specialist staff, who nevertheless manage their students' work very effectively. These lessons are characterised by very good standards of behaviour and co-operation, and students make good progress in reading and writing, although the range of activities is relatively limited.
201. The leadership and management of language teaching are very good. Planning, guidance, assessment and documentation are exemplary. Teachers receive excellent support and work effectively together. There is a very good understanding of best practice in teaching, combined with a great deal of effort, hard work, and determination to succeed. These qualities have led to good improvements since the last inspection. Teaching is now much better. There are significantly fewer examples of poor behaviour, and students are beginning to develop a much more positive view of learning languages.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The curriculum has been well developed to suit the school's particular circumstances
- Teachers make good identification of students' specific musical ability, whatever their general ability

Areas for improvement

- The curriculum lacks composition as a regular and frequent area of study
- The department lacks suitable accommodation, including soundproofing and practice rooms
- Music is not taught as a curriculum subject to older students

202. Standards of attainment when students enter the school are well below average. Between them, students have a very wide range of listening experiences and cultural diversity, but they usually find themselves with a very limited range of knowledge and skills. Across the years, there is no particular difference in the achievement of boys or girls.

203. The youngest students in the school are already well acquainted with the sound, technique, and effective presentation of rap, and they performed the 'Cockroach Rap' in small groups with a reliable rhythm, good diction, and some style. Students at the end of their music course are able to plan a radio show, and have a good idea of the effective mixture of information on their chosen artists and the recordings they propose to play, in chronological order.

204. During the course of their time in school they make satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 9, standards are still below the level generally expected from students of this age, but not nearly as far below as they had been on entry.

205. All students have some lessons in Djembe drumming, taken by a visiting tutor, who is a drum master. Those who find that they have a talent for this or a particular interest in it, attend extra-curricular classes and achieve levels of drumming well above average for their ages. The work of a group of girls aged twelve and thirteen was controlled, vibrant, and an excellent example of how the discipline enables students to work together and rely on each other.
206. Teaching seen was at least satisfactory, sometimes good. Teaching is planned on the basis of the very considerable amount of information available about each student, and with good knowledge of students' specific ability in music. This is a key strength of teaching, as it enables all students to succeed and to have equal opportunities in music. It also means that those who are more able in music are identified, and are expected to achieve more than their peers. Teaching usually fosters positive attitudes in music lessons, though sometimes students are so impatient and excitable that the learning of a whole group can be slowed down quite considerably. In Djembe lessons, some students find it almost impossible not to play even while the drum master is explaining things.
207. The management of the department is now satisfactory, after a difficult time since the last inspection. For a year there was no department, no music teacher, and lessons were covered by temporary staff. During that time, much of the accommodation and equipment was damaged or destroyed. However, there is now a computer program for recording and developing new music, though this has to be used in the IT room, as there is no facility to use it in the music rooms. Until recently, students have had very little opportunity to study the art of composition because there have been almost no instruments provided for this purpose. The school has tried very hard to cover this major omission by providing drumming, steel pan and keyboard tutors who have led composition sessions, but inevitably these have not met the need for the on-going composition which is at the heart of any study of music. Only in the week before the inspection did the school take delivery of enough keyboards to support this kind of work. There is no GCSE course at the moment, though the development of the curriculum, and the increased offers of extra-curricular activities, indicate that this will be re-considered very soon.
208. The curriculum for music is in the process of being re-written to meet the needs of the students in the school. This is a wise move, and as a result there is a particularly strong emphasis on the music of many cultures and continents, set against the background of the western European culture in which the students live. The curriculum is exciting, and lays the foundation for a wide and diverse musical knowledge.
209. Assessment is satisfactory in music. All students have regular feedback, in the form of spoken comments during lessons, and constructive marking in their workbooks. As yet they do not know what they need to do next in order to improve, but this is being built into the curriculum as it is developed.
210. It is not possible to comment on the improvement or otherwise since the last inspection, as there have been so many changes in the provision for music since that time.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good provision is made for extra-curricular activities
- Students have a positive and lively attitude towards physical education and feel valued, both for their effort and achievement

Areas for improvement

- Teachers need to ensure that students are engaged in the planning and evaluation of their work
- The number of students who do not take an active part in the lessons should be reduced
- The school should consider offering GCSE dance to Year 10 and 11 students

211. Standards in the non-examination lessons in physical education are satisfactory by the end of Year 11 and many individuals achieve well in a variety of games and competitive sports. Although GCSE results in 2002 were well below the national average, they were better than the previous years' results. In spite of much effort by the departmental staff, there are many more boys than girls taking this examination, although there is no significant difference in their levels of attainment.

212. Students arrive at the school with variety of levels of physical education skills and experiences, with many below those expected of 11-year-olds. They settle into the school quickly, make good progress and by the end of Year 9 the overall level of attainment is in line with nationally expected levels. In games activities, particularly in basketball, soccer and netball, students demonstrate good levels of skill, often showing good ball control and being aware of simple attack and defence strategies, although some find it difficult to apply these skills when the element of competition is introduced. Students have a good understanding of how to prepare themselves for physical activity at the beginning of lessons, and some are able to lead their classes in effective warm-up routines. Some students make perceptive comments on how improvements can be achieved, but others are given too little opportunity to develop this aspect.

213. It was not possible to observe Year 10 at the time of the inspection, but students in the Year 11 non-examination groups were able to demonstrate satisfactory levels of skill in a range of activities. They have a good understanding of tactics and strategies, and apply the skills that have been practised when playing in a full game. Students in the GCSE groups are developing understanding and expertise in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subjects, but some students are finding success in the theoretical part of the examination difficult to achieve.

214. Students with SEN are well integrated, are given much support and reach good levels of attainment. There is no evidence that these students are being disadvantaged by the curriculum that is offered. Talented students are identified and are encouraged to extend their skills, both in school and with outside clubs. Many students have represented Hammersmith in a wide range of sports, and a few have gone on to gain national honours.

215. Overall, teaching and learning are good. None of the lessons observed was judged to be unsatisfactory and many were good and a minority very good. All lessons begin and end in an orderly manner with objectives clearly stated and understood by the students.

Lessons are conducted at a brisk, demanding pace with a choice of task that promote a high level of interest and effort, and enable all students to make progress. The vast majority of students respond very positively to their teachers. They are enthusiastic and their behaviour is generally good. Their enjoyment of the lessons is very evident. In some lessons, however, there are a considerable number of students who are not taking an active part.

216. The curriculum offered allows students to take part in a wide range of activities, and is meeting the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The department might now consider offering GCSE dance to Years 10 and 11 students. Accommodation on the school site has very recently been improved by the superb fitness suite, created in one of the gymnasias. Teachers give very freely of their time to provide a good range of extra-curricular activities that are well supported by enthusiastic students.
217. There has been a considerable change in the staff of the department since the previous inspection. One of the assistant headteachers has very effectively assumed responsibility for the running of the department until a replacement head of department is appointed. Teachers in the department work well together, support each other and show a strong commitment to their students. In September 2002, the department was awarded the Sportsmark standard. This is a national award that recognises high quality in the provision of physical education.
218. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous report. A very effective system of assessing and recording students' attainment is now used and is helping to raise attainment. The curriculum has been reviewed and students now get a broader and more balanced range of activities. Accommodation at the school has been much improved by the introduction of the new fitness centre.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Students in Year 11, taking the GCSE full course, have made good progress
- The subject makes an effective contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Areas for improvement

- More effective use of central assessment data is needed for day-to-day and longer term lesson planning
- Schemes of work require more detail to ensure that the locally agreed syllabus is fully covered and that work is matched to the learning needs of all students
- Better links are needed with external institutions to enrich the RE curriculum

219. In 2002, 23 students took the GCSE (full course) examination, all of whom obtained A*-G grades; 93 per cent gained A*-C grades. This is well above national averages. There were no significant differences in the results of girls and boys.
220. Students enter the school with standards well below those expected. By the end of Year 9, they have made satisfactory progress, although the attainment of the majority of students is still slightly below expected levels. More able students attain at or above the expected levels. Most students in the present Year 11 have made satisfactory progress

since they began their GCSE course. The progress of students taking the full course is good overall, and analysis of their notebooks shows that they are making better learning gains compared to those on the GCSE short course. All students take this short course in Year 10, and the popularity of the full course is rising. There is no particular difference between the achievement of boys and girls, at either stage.

221. By Year 9, students know something about the world's main religions. For example, they know about the places of worship and the holy books of these religions. They know about the ways in which religions such as Judaism and Islam began, showing knowledge of the lives of Moses and Muhammed. They are familiar with the different ways in which people worship in different religions, and the more able can use this knowledge to consider ways in which God might communicate with people.
222. By the age of 16 years, students on both courses have considered a range of moral issues such as euthanasia, prejudice and racial discrimination. The more able understand that morality can be affected by custom, law and faith, and some consider the moral, legal and religious aspects of these issues. This was seen, for example, in a Year 11 lesson looking at the moral, legal and religious implications of Martin Luther King's 'peaceful protests' in late 1950s America. Those studying for the full course show a developing understanding of moral issues and the more able apply their knowledge of different beliefs to these issues. They use quotations to reinforce their arguments. Lower-attaining students know about the moral and legal arguments, but are less able to link them to religious beliefs. Students with SEN, and EAL learners, make satisfactory progress when tasks take into account their abilities and levels of English. Some have difficulty with basic literacy skills, and this sometimes limits the amount of written work they produce.
223. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. All lessons have clear aims, but these are not always communicated well to the students so that they know what is expected of them. In the better lessons, teachers use questions effectively to help students to recall previous work and to ensure that all students are involved. Students have opportunities to express their opinions and to share information with others. Excerpts from videos focus students' attention, and introduce topics, for example the five K's of Sikhism in Year 8, or consolidate knowledge, for example of prejudice and discrimination in Year 11. In those parts of lessons that are least effective, tasks are not well matched to the different ability levels in the class. Moreover, insufficient use is made of the very good central assessment information to plan lessons that cater for the different learning needs in the class. In some lessons, there is an undercurrent of chatting, usually some two-thirds of the way into the lesson, which means that the concentration of these students drifts. The lack of sharp, well-focused final sessions for all students in some lessons means that teachers' planning for the next stage of learning is not as effective as it could be. Students' work is marked regularly, but sometimes does not give comments about how their work might be improved. Use of ICT is limited because there is no access in the classrooms, and its use does not yet feature in planning.
224. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Outline schemes of work are in line with the locally agreed syllabus and meet statutory requirements. However, as yet they do not ensure that all aspects of the subject are covered fully and that planning meets the needs of all students. While there have been some assessments at the ends of units of work, the use of assessment to indicate to students the levels at which they are working, particularly for Years 7 to 9, is not fully in place. Resources in the department are satisfactory, with a reasonable supply of books and videos. However, the department would benefit from links with external institutions to improve its access

to artefacts and to enrich its curriculum through the use of outside speakers.

225. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The attainment of students at the end of Year 11 has improved since the last inspection. The tracking of students' progress is better than it was at that time, though much more work still needs to be done. The head of faculty continues to work hard at addressing the key issues identified in the last inspection.