

INSPECTION REPORT

STOKE NEWINGTON SCHOOL

Hackney, London

LEA area: Hackney

Unique reference number: 100279

Headteacher: Mr Mark Emmerson

Lead inspector: Mr R Passant

Dates of inspection: 26 – 29 April 2004

Inspection number: 258788

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 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1202
School address:	Clissold Road Hackney London
Postcode:	N16 9EY
Telephone number:	020 7254 0548
Fax number:	020 7923 2451
Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Bill Sheasgreen
Date of previous inspection:	7 December 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a mixed 11 to 16 comprehensive school. The intake is skewed towards boys (60 per cent boys). There are 1154 pupils on roll. The school is bigger than most secondary schools. The school has grown in size by about a third, since the last report. Approximately 40 per cent of students are white with 15 per cent being African Caribbean, about 12 per cent are Turkish or Kurdish and 10 per cent are of Asian origin. Over 17 languages are spoken at the school. Total mobility, that is the number of students joining or leaving the school at times other than the start of the academic year, is edging towards the upper quartile compared to schools nationally. Joining mobility shows a significant impact in Year 10. There are 109 refugees and asylum seekers and 15 New Traveller pupils. Thirty-three students are supported through the ethnic minority achievement grant and there are 60 pupils for whom English is not their first language and who are at an early stage of language acquisition. A further 13 are at Level 2. There are 410 at levels 3 and 4. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is very high. There are a small number of students in public care. There are 295 students on the special educational needs register. One hundred and fifty-one are at school action, 89 at school action plus and 55 have statements. The percentage of pupils having special educational needs including statements is above the national average as is the percentage of students with statements. The school has re-integrated 12 permanently excluded students in the last two years (from other schools). Hackney operated banding until October 2003; the school has equal proportions of students in Hackney's three achievement bands determined by the London Reading Test. Whilst comprehensive in intake the overall attainment level on entry to the school is below average. Many students have low literacy skills when they enter the school. For older students it was well below average when they joined. The school serves a diverse range of communities and students come from a wide spectrum of economic circumstances, culture and educational success. Stoke Newington is one of Hackney's crime 'hot spots' with high levels of deprivation, street crime and drug abuse. A third of students are eligible for free school meals. The school is over-subscribed, with 432 first choices for 240 places. The school is a Media Arts College and won the school achievement award in 2002 and Investors in People in 2002. It has been a member of an education action zone (EAZ) which closes down, and reforms, in September 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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31218	Tom Allen	Team inspector	Geography
10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	History
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
8076	Terence Bendall	Team inspector	Design and technology
17530	Mary Cureton	Team inspector	Special educational needs Media studies
15163	Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Science
20527	Brian King	Team inspector	Mathematics
27665	Alrene Lees	Team inspector	Music Performing arts
31983	Debra Makin	Team inspector	Physical education Drama
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	English as an additional language Religious education
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Art and design Information and communication technology
18950	Carmen Rodney	Team inspector	English
1578	Maureen Sinclair	Team inspector	Citizenship Personal, social and health education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Stoke Newington School is a good school with many very good features. There is a strong dynamic for on-going improvement. The school is led very well and there is strong teamwork across the school. All members of staff are very committed to the students¹ and work hard on their behalf. Students achieve well and often very well particularly in the older classes as a result of good and often very good teaching. Standards are close to the national average at GCSE and well above average compared to similar schools². The school tracks students' progress carefully and individuals are supported effectively. The school has managed its rapid expansion and improvement since the last inspection well but the expansion has diverted energy. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very good leadership by the headteacher with a very strong focus on raising standards and students' achievements.
- Very strong teamwork at senior level and across the school leading to a shared vision of what the school is about and where it is heading. There are strong systems of accountability and support in place.
- Teaching is skilled. Members of staff are ambitious for their students and their very good relationships with them underpin learning.
- The specialist media status is making a positive contribution to students' attitudes and achievement.
- Most students behave well for most of the time. Most lessons are conducted in a productive atmosphere. That said, there are some students who are particularly challenging and pockets of unsatisfactory attitudes, which dilute learning in some classes.

There has been good progress since the previous inspection. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching improved. Higher attaining students are now challenged.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	B	C	C	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Students achieve well and often very well. Pupils make above average relative progress in the lower school. Standards of attainment as indicated by National Curriculum tests in Year 9 are below average compared to national results but average when compared to similar schools, that is schools which had similar attainment on entry. The trend for improvement is above the national trend. Girls do better than boys.

The percentage of students gaining A* - C grades at GCSE shows a steady rise over the past few years. The school has effectively targeted boys' examination performance as a priority and as a result boys' performance shows significant and steady improvement since 1999 and is now close to the average for boys in their age group. Girls' results were above the national average for girls' performance. The relative progress from Year 9 to Year 11 is well above average. Students achieve very well. Higher attaining pupils achieve very well in that the percentage of students who gain A* or

¹ Ofsted reports normally use the term 'pupils' to describe boys and girls attending school in the 11 to 16 age-range and the term 'students' to describe those in attendance post-16. The school's preferred term is students and this is used throughout the text of the report to describe those attending the school. Headings in the report, which use the term pupils, have been retained.

² That is schools which have similar results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests.

A grades at GCSE is above the national average. Students with special educational needs make good progress, as do students with English as an additional language.

The school has targeted the most significant underachieving ethnic groups and is working with the students and their parents – a Black parents and Turkish parents group meet with school staff on a termly basis – specifically to raise levels of attainment. The progress of travellers is tracked carefully as are students who are in public care.

A very significant achievement is the very high proportion of students, eighty-three per cent, who go onto further education.

Overall, the behaviour and the attitudes of students are satisfactory. Most students behave well for most of the time but there are pockets of low-level disruption, which dilute or impede learning in some classes – particularly but not exclusively when the member of staff's relationship with the class is still being developed. There are significant pockets of poor attendance and poor punctuality and overall attendance is below average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good with very good features. The strong sense of on going improvement applies particularly to this aspect. There is good quality care and support which is focused on individuals, tracking their progress and achievement and identifying early the need for intervention. The curriculum, overall, is very good and has been re-designed to match more closely the needs of students particularly in Years 10 and 11. There are currently statutory requirements that are not being met. **Teaching is good.** It is often very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance has many very good features. There is a specific weakness with regard to some aspects of statutory provision particularly for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in this specific respect governance is unsatisfactory. Overall, governance is good. **Leadership by the headteacher and senior leadership team is very good.** There is skilled and creative strategic planning and use of funding to develop coherence between various initiatives to enhance achievement. On-going development is engrained in the school's systems.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Overall, parents have positive views about the school, as do students. In an extensive survey of students conducted for the inspection ninety-three per cent of students 'strongly agreed' or 'tended to agree' with the statement that 'this was a good school to be at'. Ninety-five per cent thought that 'teachers expected them to work hard and do my best'. Parents and students indicated concerns about the behaviour in some classes. Students were confident that the school would take the issue of bullying seriously. Although they acknowledge bullying takes place in one form or another all students spoken to were clear that there was no racial undertones. Many students in their comments to the questionnaire saw the ethnic diversity of the school as being a strength.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are identified within the school's improvement plan. The senior leadership have a very good idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

- That said, the key improvement is to continue to working at enhancing the learning culture in the school.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that all students receive their entitled access to religious education in the upper school.
- Co-ordinate students' experience of ICT in the upper school and report on standards.
- Ensure that tutorial time is used effectively to and that it provides an opportunity for reflection to fulfil the requirement on collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, students achieve well. They often achieve very well particularly in the upper part of the school. Standards at GCSE are broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of students gaining A* - C shows a steady improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 9 National Curriculum tests are below the national average but average compared to similar schools. Girls do better than boys. The trend for improvement in these tests is above the national trend.
- Higher attaining pupils do particularly well and the percentage of students gaining A* and A grades at GCSE is above average. Boys' performance improves at GCSE.
- The school tracks students carefully and picks up on underachievement. It is working closely with parents of Black and Turkish children to raise their achievement.

Commentary

1. The intake to the school is comprehensive in nature. The intake is managed by the Learning Trust to meet the criteria for the banding arrangements, which remain in operation for this year. The banding is based on the London Reading Test. Standards, as reflected in the National Curriculum tests taken in the primary school, show recent improvement but are, overall, below average. Standards of attainment of older students when they entered the school were well below average. That said some curious anomalies do occur where some students with National Curriculum test results in English at level 5 have very low reading ages. Many students have low literacy skills when they enter the school.
2. Standards of attainment as indicated by National Curriculum tests in Year 9 are below average compared to national results but average when compared to similar schools, that is schools that had similar attainment on entry. The trend for improvement is above the national trend. The students' relative progress is average compared to schools nationally but above average compared to similar schools. Students achieve well although girls do better than boys. When averaged over three years, the results indicate that girls perform close to the national average for girls in their age group in mathematics and science and well above in English, whereas boys' performance is below the national median for boys in their age group overall and in mathematics. In science, boys' performance is well below and in English it is close to the average. Measured by the number of students gaining level 7, higher attaining pupils do well. In lessons seen, girls in the lower school tended to demonstrate a better work ethic than the boys.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.7 (31.9)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	32.8 (33.3)	35.4 (34.7)
science	31.8 (31.1)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 240 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Standards in GCSE in 2003, and over a three-year average as measured by the average points score were close to the national average. They were well above average compared to

similar schools. The percentage of students gaining A* - C grades shows a steady rise over the past few years. Boys' performance shows significant improvement and steady improvement since 1999 and is now close to the average for boys in their age group. Girls' results were above the average for girls in their age group. The school has effectively targeted boys' examination performance as a priority. The relative progress from Year 9 to Year 11 is well above average. Students achieve very well. Higher attaining pupils achieve very well in that the percentage of students who gain A* or A grades at GCSE is above the national average. The school maintains a gifted and talented register; their progress is tracked carefully. Members of staff have received additional training in provision of extension materials and students are encouraged to participate, along with other students, in specific enrichment activities.

4. In 2003, all students with statements entered for the GCSE examinations achieved their targets of three A - G grades. A high proportion of these achieved more and better passes than expected. Three-quarters of those receiving some help from outside the school achieved at least two A* - G grades. Almost all students receiving support provided by the school achieved at least five GCSE passes A* -G. Students with English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	44 (40)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88 (85)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (90)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	34 (32.2)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 194 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. The numbers of students in any specific ethnic in a particular year group are often small and as a result their results are subject to significant percentage swings. It would appear that over a three-year average: African, Caribbean, Indian, Irish and Kurdish boys and Turkish boys and girls perform below the school's average; whereas, Chinese, English, Scottish, Welsh, Pakistani and Vietnamese students perform above.
6. The school has targeted the most significant underachieving groups and is working with the students and their parents – a Black parents and Turkish parents group meet with school staff on a termly basis – specifically to raise levels of attainment.
7. The school currently has 15 students from Traveller families, mainly New Travellers, but also some Travellers associated with the Circus who make periodic stays. The school gives very positive support to these students and is generally successful in keeping them in full-time education and moving into the upper years of the school. The school monitors their progress carefully, they get the right advice for example over careers and through the very close links with the Traveller Support Teacher there is good liaison with the families.
8. The school has a number of students who are in public care. Their progress is monitored closely by the deputy headteacher who is in close contact with the appropriate agencies.
9. The school has targeted the improvement in students' literacy skills. There is a sharp focus on improving writing, a key area for improvement from the school's audit. There is widespread use of writing frames³ to support students' writing in most subjects. Many students have difficulty in writing at length against the clock and various strategies are taught across the

³ These are aids to help students organise their ideas into a logical order.

school to develop this skill. In order to help them generate their ideas they are encouraged to 'map out' their ideas and they are taught specific approaches to order their ideas into an analytical essay. Whereas higher attaining students use good oral skills, most lack the confidence to adopt a formal register and speak at length or with clarity. Oracy skills improve as students progress through the school but many do not listen attentively or show mutual respect when listening to others. Students learn to understand the technical vocabulary, which is displayed, incorporated into lesson objectives, recorded in exercise books and stressed throughout teaching. Research skills are developed in most subjects and students are encouraged to read aloud. There is good emphasis on reading and interpreting information well, particularly examination questions.

10. Many students enter the school with weak arithmetic skills. Attention to basic numeracy from Year 7 and a support curriculum produces improvement, both with and without calculators. Progress in subjects such as science, geography, and design technology, is sometimes restricted by the moderate numeracy skills, and teachers have to work hard to provide support and raise standards. Other subjects are less affected. The school does not have a numeracy policy yet in place as identified in the previous report, which is a weakness.
11. Students develop considerable competence in ICT to enable them to use it for research purposes and develop their skills with specialist packages.
12. There are two principal factors that are or have been barriers to raising achievement. The school has had to manage a rapid growth in size as well as pursue its agenda for improvement. It has managed both aspects well but the two are not mutually supportive. The increase in size has meant the need to recruit more staff, and it has not always been easy to find suitably experienced and qualified staff. It has meant induction, training and integration and re-development of teams and re-establishing core values. In that process, although extremely valuable and essential activities, it has diverted energy. Systems and procedures have needed to be reviewed and revamped. Above all it has made it harder to establish the consistency of expectations that is possible in a more settled situation.
13. The second factor is also linked to the increase in the school's size. The key factor to raising achievement in the school is the development of an overall consistent learning ethos. The rapid growth has not helped this process. There are many external factors, which impinge on the lives of a significant number of students and leave them particularly needy and often challenging, irrespective of economic or social circumstances. The increased volume of students with additional needs and the sometimes very challenging behaviour that some present has made achieving the 'critical mass' of a settled ethos more difficult.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Overall students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students behave well. Behaviour improves significantly as students progress through the school.
- The school has a variety of effective strategies to support challenging students.
- The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A very good programme for personal, social and health education underpins students' personal development.
- Attendance is below average despite the school's best efforts.

Commentary

14. The majority of students behave well, and often very well, for most of the time. In many lessons, particularly in Year 10 and 11, there is very good behaviour and a very positive work

ethic. Behaviour improves significantly as students become older, evidence of the effectiveness of the school's strategies to manage and improve behaviour. Walking around the school during lesson times the impression is of a calm community. At break time and lunchtime students seem to be happy together. There are occasional instances of horseplay but no incidents of any oppressive behaviour were seen. Students queue in reasonably orderly fashion to collect meals at lunchtime. The lunchtime staff describe students' behaviour as being 'not bad'. Movement around the circulation areas is orderly.

15. The school has a sharp focus on improving behaviour and the attitudes of students. Senior managers have an analytical approach to tackle the improvement of behaviour. The students' support referral system is imaginatively implemented. Individual and collective concerns identified through the incident forms are discussed in regular students' support network panel meetings – a multi-agency panel approach – and ways forward identified, involving teachers, mentors, Year Curriculum Co-ordinators (YCCs), inclusion staff and the learning support unit. This behaviour improvement programme appears to be very successful in that the incidence of poor behaviour is declining. A considerable amount of data about incidents and the action taken is available, and the referrals for poor behaviour are coded, which allows patterns of behaviour to be easily seen. The programme has three main aims: the promotion of good behaviour through positive recognition (by awards and merit systems), to support teaching staff when there are problems with students and to take rapid action and finally, to provide specific support to those students who are at risk from exclusion.
16. The headteacher describes an in depth two-prong approach to tackle behaviour: dealing and containing behaviour through the support structure as outlined above and also through modifying behaviour through the curriculum, for example, drama and music therapy lessons, the anger management sessions held by mentors, the life skills programme and through the Key Stage 3 strategies.⁴
17. There is a good adult presence in public places, although students wanted more teachers on duty at lunchtime. The senior leadership team provide very effective emergency support. The school takes bullying very seriously and is effective in dealing with known cases.
18. Students, in their comments attached to the questionnaires, described the school's friendliness and felt that students worked well together. They clearly saw the school's cultural diversity as a significant strength. Whilst they recognised that bullying took place at the school, they took pains to point out that this was not racially inspired. The racial harmony that exists is a great strength of the school. Generally students reported that they felt safe in the school, a point echoed by parents in their comments. Three-quarters of the students felt that there was an adult that they could turn to if they had a problem and this proportion increased as students got older. In their comments, students stressed the importance of their tutor. Seventy per cent of parents agreed, either by ticking the 'strongly agreeing' or 'tending to agree' column that their child is not bullied or harassed at school and about a quarter indicated that they 'tended to disagree'. Two per cent strongly disagreed.
19. The school is helped in providing a safe and secure environment by the very effective relationship that exists between the school's senior leadership team and the school-based police officer attached to the school as part of the Safer Schools campaign. Regarded by the school as being an integral part of the school's leadership with the significant mutual respect that this implies, sensitive policing and management of specific incidents allow the school to maintain on-going support to the individual students even while criminal investigations and due process is being undertaken. The presence of the officer around the school also adds to this sense of student security and is a source of advice and clear support to the senior team.

⁴ Key Stage 3 Strategy (Years 7 to 9) - aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning, developing cross-curricular skills such as literacy and numeracy and helping students who come into Year 7 below level 4 to make faster progress. The strategy is based on four key principles: raising expectations, improving progression from primary school, promoting teaching and learning styles that engage and motivate students and demand their active participation and providing professional development and support for teachers.

20. Whilst the school is very successful in tackling behaviour issues there are, nevertheless, some lessons where learning is diluted by the attitudes of a minority of students. Teachers are generally very skilled at managing behaviour in a positive manner (this has been the focus for much staff development) but nevertheless, in these classes, sometimes, despite the best efforts of the teacher, standards and learning are affected because management of behaviour dominates the lesson. In the lower part of the school, as a broad generalisation, girls tend to have a better work ethic than boys and this may well account for the difference in standards by Year 9. The behaviour of boys develops as they get older.
21. Some students find it generally difficult to suspend their own agenda for the benefit of others, which is often coupled with the need for instant gratification. Others find it difficult to suspend their apparent disinterest because what had happened outside of school clearly influenced behaviour within the classroom so that the immediate concern was paramount. What makes the difference between one teacher and another is not just the teachers' skills, important as these are, but the fundamental quality of the relationships which exist between the teacher and the students and which forms the basis of the mutual respect which allows for effective management. Relationships between teachers and students are very good across the school but for staff new to the school, still in the process of forming this crucial underpinning, managing some classes is hard. To teach successfully at the school requires this 'x-factor' of relationships, which goes beyond professional competency. In this sense teachers are not easily transferable.
22. Students with specific behaviour needs are catered for well. Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are developed by the provision of well-monitored behaviour targets. Students are encouraged to make very good relationships with support staff, and this helps their social competence. They have good, well-supported opportunities to work effectively in groups to improve their capacity to make and sustain relationships. Students are shown how to work independently when their reading ability allows them to do so. These interventions promote better and more mature attitudes.
23. Nine pupils currently attend the newly established learning support unit. Only two are currently full time. Their very difficult behaviour prevents their own learning and that of others. All are at risk of permanent exclusion.
24. There is active diagnostic testing. No retesting of academic attainment has yet taken place, but there are plans to do this when each student is four weeks into reintegration. Students' behaviour within the unit was seen to improve perceptibly during the short period of the inspection. There is clear, specific instruction on socially acceptable behaviour in the unit. All students have individual learning plans and plans for pastoral support. These are currently monitored by pastoral staff, but formal monitoring by the staff of the unit is being actively considered to ensure a more rapid response to any difficulties. Teaching staff use a wide range of well-established techniques to modify students' behaviour. Students' behaviour targets inform all the teaching. Extended provision of ICT and such techniques as role-play help students to develop more positive attitudes and better social skills.
25. The school has a very wide range of needy students. Engaging with them, providing support and guidance is extremely demanding in terms of time, energy and patience. Learning mentors and home school support workers are seen as essential elements in the school's response to keeping these students 'on board' and within school through the extensive one-to-one work and support that they give. Maintaining an inclusive approach is hard and the simple solution, that of exclusion, is easy. Maintaining this support, often apparently against the odds, stems from the school's deeply held commitment that the school should support all of its students.
26. The choice of the school's specialist status is astute for many reasons. One of reasons for its effectiveness is that music, English, media work, drama, dance and physical education provide opportunities for differentiated teamwork to achieve a common goal. It is precisely this

skill that some students lack. A number of students felt that the school was good at encouraging their individuality – and it is. It is also seeking to provide real opportunities where that individuality has to be subsumed into a corporate effort – where individual rights are balanced by corporate responsibilities.

27. Establishing a learning ethos – where students come to school prepared to work – is the focus for much of the school’s efforts. It is succeeding but, overall, it has still not yet achieved the critical mass where all teachers are always able to teach effectively and the students’ efforts consistently approach or match that of the teachers. In this it has been hampered by the school’s rapid growth. In the school’s recent past it has grown by a third and systems and procedures have had to be put in place, revised and consistently applied to cope with this expansion. The headteacher feels that this has delayed the creation of this learning ethos. Clearly more time is needed to steadily and consistently apply the procedures, which have been established – for they are clearly working.
28. The overall provision for students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school is good at fostering students’ sense of self-esteem, recognising their individuality and developing their sense of identity. Through the emphasis on the media arts they are encouraged to appreciate intangible concepts and learn to project their own feelings through another medium. They have opportunities to reflect on the principles and beliefs and what drives and motivates the various characters in the plays and novels that they study. Individuals are valued, their contribution recognised and the school is predicated on the principle that individuals are important. In this broad sense, students’ spirituality – their personality – is encouraged well. In the extensive student survey conducted for the inspection, 80 per cent of students felt that they were trusted to do things on their own. The social provision is also good. Students are provided opportunities to take responsibility through, for example, the student council, the peer mentoring project, the student leader scheme and student run events. Assemblies stress the community responsibilities. Subjects, such as drama and music provide intrinsic opportunities for working co-operatively. The school operates within a clear moral framework and students are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions. The provision for cultural development is also good within the curriculum and students see the diverse ethnic mix of the school as being a very positive strength.
29. The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also underpinned by a very good Life Skills programme which is the school’s name for personal, social and health education. This considers specific issues pertinent to students developing into young adults.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.6	School data	2.4
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

30. The school takes attendance very seriously and works very hard to improve it. The overall attendance rate is below the national average. There are pockets of significant casual absence and lateness. That said, the school has improved the percentage of authorised absence. The school contacts parents in the case of unexplained absence through an automatic and persistent telephone contact system. The school uses electronic registration which allows for detailed analysis of absence. Learning mentors are involved and there are rewards for good attendance and detentions for late attendance. Not all parents are cooperative in keeping absences to a minimum.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	391	60	1
White – Irish	18	0	0
White – any other White background	216	19	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	43	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	10	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	25	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	84	7	1
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	18	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	35	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	153	69	1
Black or Black British – African	54	12	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	3	0	0
Chinese	12	3	1
Any other ethnic group	74	58	1
No ethnic group recorded	9	0	0

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

31. Most exclusions are for a short period – for a variety of reasons including bullying/ fights, bad language and disobedience. A small number of exclusions are for eight to ten days for more serious offences like assault or drugs. Punishment is fairly applied according to offences. Most students are excluded once. The ‘short sharp shock’ is effective. Procedures for exclusions are appropriately followed, including model letters home and referral to the governors’ disciplinary committee. The number of exclusions is reducing.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good with very good features. The strong sense of on-going improvement applies particularly to this aspect. There is good quality care and support which is focused on individuals, tracking their progress and achievement and identifying early the need for intervention. The curriculum, overall, is very good and has been re-designed to match more closely the needs of students particularly in Years 10 and 11. There are currently statutory requirements that are not being met. Teaching is good. It is often very good. Members of staff are very committed to the students and work very hard on their behalf.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good. It is often very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where the investment in developing a positive learning ethos within subjects pays dividends and allows for more creative approaches and higher-level interaction with students. In the sample of lessons seen, in half the Year 11 lessons seen, learning was very good or better as a direct result of the very high quality teaching.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning for lessons is detailed and informed by good quality information. Teachers manage the wide spread of ability within classes well.
- Staff have very good subject knowledge and expectations are high.
- Teachers use a variety of teaching styles to actively engage students.
- Teachers are very generous in their use of time to provide additional support to their students.
- Assessment is used effectively to monitor and track individual students' performance.
- There is a sustained focus on improving learning, standards and achievement which is reflected within classrooms.
- Whilst behaviour and students' attitudes are usually good, there are some lessons where behaviour dilutes the learning experience, sometimes significantly.
- The pace of learning drops in double periods and the use of homework to extend learning opportunities is inconsistent.
- Teaching and support for students with additional needs is good.

Commentary

32. Teachers are skilled professionals, who are very committed and work very hard on behalf of students. There is strong teamwork.
33. The main factors which support good learning and achievement, are:
 - Lessons are planned in detail. Members of staff have good quality information about the students they teach and they use this information well in their planning. The spread of ability in many classes is very wide and teachers' planning to meet this range of need is good and often very good. Schemes of work are detailed and support teachers.
 - Students are given good individual support. Learning support assistants are used well.
 - The Key Stage 3 strategy is being used effectively, for example the three-part lesson or clearly identifying the objectives of the lesson so that students have a map of where the lesson is going and a chance at the end of the lesson to recap over what they have learnt.
 - Teachers are aware of students' preferred learning style, whether for example, they find it easier to learn visually, through text or through activity. As result they use a wide range of teaching styles and methods to accelerate the learning. Approaches are often creative. Teachers make very good use of visual aids to give concepts concrete form.
 - Teachers have a good knowledge of what is required in examinations and the 'point, evidence, explain' approach taught across the school is a good example of teachers providing effective support for examination essays.
 - Teachers are generous with their time and give lots of additional support to students. There is a lot of out-of-hours learning that takes place, during holiday periods, after school, at lunch times. Teachers want the students to do well. They demonstrate a properly professional but nevertheless emotional commitment to them and their success.
 - The professional climate is one where expertise and skills are shared amongst staff.
 - Eighty-seven per cent of students (from 895 returns) thought they were taught well. Ninety-five per cent thought that teachers expected 'me to work hard and do my best'. Eighty per cent of parents thought teaching was good.

34. There are two further factors.
- Teaching staff receive detailed information about students' attainment, data upon the stage of acquisition of English as an additional language, and on special educational needs. High quality central records are produced. Data is monitored regularly both to identify underachievement and to indicate those students who are making particularly good progress, appropriate action then being taken. Clear analysis of performance by gender and ethnicity takes place, and the school takes steps to provide support for those who are experiencing difficulties. Reading tests are undertaken annually for students in Years 7 to 9. The current strong focus on improving literacy skills as well as behaviour seeks to underpin the drive for overall improvement in standards. Target setting by students occurs through departments, and though inconsistently applied also directs attention to areas for improvement.
 - This assessment for learning by central management and the monitoring of documentation is a strength. Data is well used in most departments. Assessment in music and history is very good, diagnostic and promoting learning. Analysis in art is extremely good "you need to do this to...". In most other subjects assessment is good, though the quality of marking of work is sometimes lower than expected, as is the development and evaluation of targets for students.
35. There is in the school a sustained focus on improving the quality of learning, attainment and achievement. It is engrained in the culture of the school. The expectation that students will make progress, and that progress is monitored and checked provides a structure of accountability along with the necessary support. Although this is a feature of the school's leadership and belongs within that section of the report, its impact is at the level of classrooms. As a result teachers have strong sense of impulsion, they communicate in most lessons 'the need to learn this because...'. Pace in lessons does not simply refer to the speed that the lesson is conducted at but the 'press' for achievement.
36. There are factors that slow learning.
- As indicated in the previous section, not all students have positive attitudes in some lessons. The students' own culture, often characterised by seeing the school as a social centre rather than a place to work, does not help. Staff are often working harder than the students. The best lessons were characterised by students bring their energies interest and enthusiasm to the lessons and teachers managing the learning to reach very high levels through their teaching skills. In some other lessons learning was diluted by unsatisfactory or poor behaviour – in a few cases despite the best efforts of the teacher. As already indicated, the 'x-factor' in these lessons was a developing relationship with that particular class. Teaching in this school can be very demanding; holding a class, taking the learning forward against an undercurrent of disinterest can be very hard. The school has, however, strong systems and procedures to provide support to teachers. Essentially it is seen as a collective issue to be dealt with through consistent teamwork. The effectiveness of the strategies is apparent in the learned good behaviour.
 - Some students are dealing with very difficult personal issues and the school provides them with a stability and structure, which though some find difficult to accept nevertheless provides some foundation. The school works very hard to keep individuals within this structure. Nevertheless, these students can be very demanding and challenging within a class.
 - Discontinuities in learning lead to underachievement. Hence the school's drive on improving attendance and the importance it places on regular attendance. The school is almost fully staffed. The fact that some parents commented upon the discontinuities caused by the use of supply staff only goes to point up the importance of the very good relationships which exist between staff and students within the school and the fundamental importance of these relationships in the learning process.
 - The school has introduced double periods to reduce movement around the school. The pace of learning often drops in these lessons. In modern foreign languages teaching in large chunks of time does not provide the regular opportunities to revisit skills and is making learning more difficult. The use of homework to extend the learning in lessons is

inconsistently used. The quality of marking, ensuring that students know what it is that they have to do in order to improve their work, is also inconsistent. Target-setting, although used, could be developed further along with more overt use of grade criteria.

37. Teaching and learning in small specialist groups for students with special educational needs is consistently good. Departments bid to have a teacher with special skills in special educational needs attached to them to prepare learning material, give help and advice and suggest strategies to help students learn. This strategic use of expertise is very good. Visiting experts help the school teach students who have visual or hearing impairment, or speech and language difficulties. Booklets, worksheets, PowerPoint material and exemplars of high quality are available centrally. Lessons in basic skills are well taught, and include interactive ICT. Students learn well as a result.
38. The teaching, both in a supporting role in lessons and in withdrawal classes for students with English as an additional language, is good. Lessons are well prepared and specifically tailored to the needs of the students. Targets sheets are used to focus the support and these targets are revised as the students progress. Classroom teachers in general are aware of students' language needs through the information disseminated to them via the English as an additional language staff. This information is also available via computer and this can be downloaded. It is updated regularly. Training for staff has also been available to help them give specific support to the students who need it. All students are assessed on entry to the school, both in Year 7 and those who arrive mid-term.
39. The school maintains a register of higher attaining students – the gifted and talented students. Students do not necessarily know that they are on the register because the school has a strongly egalitarian approach and did not want there to emerge what might be seen as an elite group. The initial register was drawn up using National Curriculum levels, but because it was seen as being dominated by white students, departments made their own recommendations to add to the list. Individual student progress is tracked carefully. There are clear expectations that additional challenge should be inbuilt into departmental schemes of work and departments also make specific bids for 'events' or consultancy which are open to all students who are interested or within a particular year group. Good practice is disseminated via the staff bulletin. There has been significant investment in staff development, looking at preferred learning styles and methods to accelerate learning. The school does make use of early entry for GCSE and has introduced AS government and politics with other courses being proposed to provide greater challenge. GCSE results are analysed carefully to plot the success of the school's approach.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 134 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9 (7%)	26 (19%)	52 (39%)	39 (29%)	7 (5%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen. 140 lessons were seen. Six lessons were not given a teaching grade, either because the observation was too short or because an outside visitor was conducting the 'lesson'. Percentages are based on 134 lessons.

The curriculum

Overall, the school has a very good curriculum. There are many very significant strengths. There are some weaknesses in the curriculum relating to statutory provision, particularly regarding religious education. Provision is well monitored and highly responsive to a very wide range of ability and special educational needs. Students of all abilities receive the education appropriate to their interests, needs and abilities and all are able to make the same good progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The impact of specialist status is having a very positive impact upon the school.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements in religious education, ICT and citizenship for the current Year 11.
- There are significant strengths in the provision for 14 to 16 year-olds.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is very good and that for careers, excellent.
- There are very good enrichment opportunities.

Commentary

40. Media arts college status has enabled the school to further develop the core subjects of English, media studies, art and music. Demanding targets in these subjects, allied to improved resources, are already helping to raise standards and improve students' attitudes to learning as media techniques are introduced across the curriculum. Links with media institutions inform the curriculum and positively affect curriculum enrichment, which is very good.
41. There are three areas where the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements and which are a significant weakness. Firstly, in ICT in Years 10 and 11 coverage in subjects across the curriculum is insufficiently co-ordinated and control measuring and modelling does not take place in sufficient depth. Students' achievements in ICT are not assessed in the upper school. Secondly, all students do not take religious education in the upper school; and finally the current Year 11 has not had sufficient experience in citizenship.
42. Nevertheless, the curriculum for older students is particularly well designed. It provides clear and well-developed learning routes for all abilities as students elect to follow the extended, core or alternative pathways that suit their particular needs. These are good examples of innovative practice such as the introduction of AS courses to challenge the higher attaining student.
43. Overall, the vocational aspects of the 14-19 curriculum are very good. The school has successfully introduced a number of vocational GCSEs, and GNVQ courses although apart from CLAIT, Excel and the BTEC qualification, relatively few lower level courses. These vocational courses range from Performing Arts and Leisure and Tourism to Engineering and ICT. Creative opportunities to extend the work-related curriculum have been taken. For example, under the auspices of the Increased Flexibility Programme, students in the GCSE Textiles group were involved in an eight-week Fashion Design and Making course at The London College of Fashion. Students taking the Leisure and Tourism and Engineering courses at the local Further Education colleges gain from the industrial experience of the staff. Problems often associated with these linked courses do not apply at this school. School staff attend college with the students and team-teach, thereby avoiding the pitfalls of poor communications and different expectations between the two institutions. Students comment most favourably on this and the nature of the courses.
44. Underpinning all the very good work of the school is its excellent careers education and guidance (CEG), including work experience. A particular strength is the focus on continuous improvement. Thus, the CEG co-ordinator has already made contact with a recently appointed local specialist in Enterprise Education to plan the inclusion of this aspect of economic and industrial awareness within the school curriculum. Departments have been asked to identify work-related learning within their subjects and the Life Skills and citizenship curriculum covers some aspects. The school is just piloting the progress file that can be used to record wider achievements, including involvement in work-related learning.
45. A well-organised Foundation pathway enables the less academic to gain success within a framework that focuses on real life situations. Their work on a number of projects such as The Garden Project helps to improve their ability to plan and implement action, work as a team and gain from the expertise of external consultants. They have acquired First Aid Certificates, run

Mini Enterprise companies and evaluated their own performance. They can take the Sports Leader courses.

46. The development of these skills is a very good preparation for the world of work. Students benefit from very good team teaching that includes a number of specialist staff and a very favourable adult to student ratio. High standards are set by all staff. Consequently, current results are very good, with over half of Year 10 achieving an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) bronze award since September 2003. This represents good attainment in a short space of time when compared to local and national figures. It is very good achievement as a considerable number of the group begin the course with very poor prior attainment. This relatively new course is well planned. Physical provision is not very good because the base room has not been refurbished to easily promote the range of teaching and learning styles that these students require. The room lacks a television, computers and a good range of easily accessible resource materials. Teachers have not yet reviewed the assignments to ensure that the specific criteria that determine success for each task are clear to the student.
47. The provision for life skills is very good. Students gain from a well-planned and structured curriculum that is fine-tuned to take account of their needs and local circumstances. For example, there are additional sex education lessons in response to requests from Year 11 students, and the department has taken careful note of health concerns that are highlighted by local specialist agencies. There is a very good on-going programme to raise awareness of drug abuse. Careers education and guidance is excellent.
48. The school promotes a very wide range of extra-curricular activities covering a range of subjects. Provision for sport is a developing area, which is taking advantage of local links in the community to provide good quality support and additional training for students. The youth centre uses the facilities extensively to provide recreational activities such as badminton and table tennis during lunchtimes and after school. Participation in the arts is very good. Very good numbers of students enthusiastically enjoy the very wide range of activities on offer, not only in school but also in workshops with professionals, visits to art galleries, theatres and concert halls. The school has developed very good creative partnerships, which are enhancing students' perception of the arts. The organisation and co-ordination of enrichment provision is thorough, involves numerous school staff and, overall, is well supported by students. In addition, there are extensive out of hours opportunities to enrich learning. The school sees itself very much as an extended school and some aspects of this concept have already been put in place.
49. The school is very inclusive. The number of permanent exclusions was low in 2002/3 and the school has successfully integrated a dozen students from the local Pupil Referral Unit. The school has a very large number of students with additional needs. There is a wide range of need, which demands the flexible approaches the school is using and developing. The learning support department makes an excellent contribution to the provision of the appropriate level education for all students. There is a good level of support in lessons that is well informed by students' targets for work and behaviour. Provision for students who have English as an additional language is good. Through the efficient use of the limited resources, and through the intelligent analysis of use of examination statistics, the subject leader is able to provide a service in which students are making good progress. Higher attaining students are challenged and specific courses introduced to extend the level and nature of that challenge.
50. The school has a strong cadre of very experienced teachers. Teachers are good role models and they are all qualified to teach their subject area either by qualification or experience. There is a good match of staff to the curriculum. Members of staff gain a broad experience and responsibility quickly at the school and retention of high quality teachers is an issue identified by the headteacher as being a significant barrier to raising achievement. Overall, learning resources are very good and are used very effectively. The school has invested significant funding in improving the overall environment of the school and ensuring that corridors and

classrooms are attractive spaces. Students' work on wall helps foster self-esteem. Significant additional building work is planned. The reception area staff are particularly welcoming and play an important part in providing support to students as well as providing a professional 'front' to the school.

Care, guidance and support

Overall, there is a good provision. The school works hard to ensure that students feel safe and secure. There are very effective structures in place and an effective pastoral system.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is careful tracking of students' progress.
- Child protection procedures are effective. There are good links with specialist agencies and vulnerable students are monitored closely.
- Attendance is taken very seriously.
- Mentors and home school support work provide excellent support.
- The personal, social and health education programme is very good and there is excellent careers advice.
- The pastoral system is effective.
- There are good induction systems to ensure that students settle in quickly.

Commentary

51. Attendance is taken very seriously and there are very effective procedures in place to track unexplained absence, which includes automatic telephoning of parents. There are close links with external agencies and in extreme instances court action has been taken. Behaviour is tracked carefully as is academic achievement and the information used effectively to decide whether intervention is necessary. Mentors and home support work provide excellent support. There is a strong focus on developmental work. There is also a strong emphasis on anti-bullying and known cases are treated very seriously. Peer counsellors and student leaders play an important role in this. Fully trained peer counsellors (about 20) hold drop-in sessions. Students with whom this was discussed felt that they could approach peer counsellors or adults and that their concerns would be taken seriously. Two anti-bullying fortnights are held, mostly for Year 7. The incident form has sections to report on bullying and racist incidents - records are well maintained and the reported incidents are thoroughly monitored. The Safer Schools initiative is working particularly well because the police officer provides sensitive support to the school leadership team and the relationship is founded on strong mutual respect and trust.
52. A key element in both the teaching and the quality of care and support is the very good relationships, which exist between most teachers and students. It is the quality of these relationships, which underpins much of the work of the school. The school does seek to consult students both formally and informally. The main formal channel is through the school council, which is in the process of being revitalised. But other forms of consultation are also undertaken, for example through the use of questionnaires and through tutor groups. Overall the procedures for consultation of the student body are sound.
53. There are good systems for health and safety and risk assessments are undertaken and acted upon. There are several fully qualified first aid staff although there is no first aid room. Treatments are recorded and, where needed, parents are informed of accidents. Students' medicines, like the inhaler, are securely kept. Relationships between students and the first aid staff appear to be warm and reassuring. There are good arrangements for the transfer of pupils from primary school. (88 per cent of parents agreed or tended to agree that the arrangements made to settle their child into school were good.)

54. Year Curriculum Co-ordinators (YCCs) head up pastoral teams for their particular age group. Pastoral support is well organised. Students in their comments saw the tutor as being an important focus in the school. YCCs have regular contact with parents. The life skills programme, which provides the personal, social and health education in the school, is very good. The careers guidance is excellent.
55. Care, guidance and support of students with special educational needs are very good. Special needs staff listen to what they say and respond to their needs. They enter into discussion with students as to how their targets are going to be met, and give good advice and help, whilst allowing them to make their own suggestions and decisions. Support groups are set up as required. Career guidance for these students is a significant strength. Specialist learning mentors also provide a high level of additional support.
56. Although the school is large, the school is effective in trying to ensure, that as far as it is possible, individual students do not slip through the mesh of support that the school has put in place.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with schools and colleges and the local community, which have a direct link to extending learning opportunities. Links with parents are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are three main areas where the links with other schools and colleges and the local community most clearly extend the learning opportunities and help to raise achievement.
- There are good links with parents although somewhat hampered by the fact that, in common with many schools, letters do not always reach home.
- The school is moving to becoming an extended school - becoming a focus for much community work.

Commentary

57. The school has extensive links with local schools and colleges and within the community that extend the range of learning opportunities. Particularly important is the work being done linking the curriculum of a number of primary schools to lower school work as part of the Key Stage 3 strategy; the opportunities which result from the Creative Partnerships and the resultant links with arts and media practitioners; and the opportunities provided through these links and the links with local colleges in extending the range of the curriculum in the upper school.
58. The school has good links with parents as a whole and with certain specific groups. Overall, the results from the parents' questionnaires were positive, indicating support from all communities. There is a good turnout to parents' meetings and an active parent teachers' association. The school does consult with parents over specific issues. There is a regular newsletter and termly meetings with parents of Black and Turkish-speaking students specifically to develop a partnership approach to raising their children's achievement. In addition there are periodic meetings held by the parent teachers' association about educational matters. Communication with parents is mainly through letters sent home via the student body. The school faces the common problem that delivery is not guaranteed. The school is seeking to involve parents to a greater extent in the school improvement planning process. The headteacher does seek to establish an active partnership with parents.
59. Partnership with parents of children with special educational needs is, for the most part, excellent. Parents are almost always fully involved with the provision for their children with special educational needs and usually attend annual reviews. The school has good access to interpreters. The school maintains excellent links with a range of agencies that provide specialist help support the students. Some students occasionally spend some part of their

school day in neighbouring special schools, which also send their students to the school to be included in mainstream education.

60. The community make extensive use of the school and many aspects of the extended school are in place whereby the school becomes an active focus for community provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance of the school has many very good features. There is a weakness with regard to ensuring the statutory curriculum, particularly relating to religious education. In that specific regard governance is unsatisfactory. Overall, on balance governance is good. Leadership and management by the headteacher, leadership team and key staff are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership, which builds leadership and management capacity in others.
- Strong teamwork and shared vision for the school's development.
- Very good financial management and creative use of funding.
- Very effective management systems in place.

Commentary

61. Governance of the school is good. Governors are very supportive and work hard on the school's behalf. They bring a wide range of personal and professional expertise to the school. There is a very good relationship between the governing body and the school's senior leadership but the relationship is not a cosy one. The governing body is prepared to challenge the leadership appropriately and does act as critical friend of the school. The governing body is involved in setting the strategic direction of the school by its review and involvement in the school improvement plan.
62. Very good features are associated with the reporting process to the governing body by heads of department in which they give an account of examination performance, which, coupled with the attachment to specific aspects of the school by individual governors, some of whom are able to undertake periodic visits, leads to a greater understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and cements the relationship of accountability and support with school staff. The governing body expect regular and very detailed reports from the headteacher and other senior members of staff make presentations about particular aspects of their responsibility. The chair of governors is very experienced and provides long-term and consistent support to the school. He works closely with the headteacher on a formal and informal basis. The committee and panel structure works well. The clerk to the governing body is very effective. Performance management procedures are very effective. There is a very clear understanding of governance and distinct from management. They take their responsibilities very seriously and are instituting their own governing body improvement plan to ensure that they review policies on a regular basis. The governing body is very committed to developing their technical expertise and members take advantage of the training provided by the Learning Trust's Governors' Support Unit.
63. The governing body accepts that it is not meeting the statutory requirements with regard to all students taking religious education but did not take the decision lightly and sought professional advice from the EAZ and the Specialist Schools Trust about the changes the school wanted to make to develop the various 'pathways' in the 14 to 16 'pilot' curriculum that is currently being offered. This curriculum is subject to on-going review and development. The high drop out rate of students coupled with the very high number of parents exercising their right to withdraw their children from the subject and the low results from the short course compounded the problem of ensuring the students' entitlement to religious education. Nevertheless, in this specific regard governance is unsatisfactory. The school is also not meeting statutory requirements in two other areas. The school has introduced citizenship but was only able to

make a specialist appointment in September 2003 and as a consequence the current Year 11 have not received their full entitlement to the subject although the full provision for citizenship is in place for other year groups. Not meeting the statutory requirements to co-ordinate the ICT provision and report on standards is a more technical matter lying more appropriately with the senior leadership team.

64. The governing body also has a clear rationale concerning the non-compliance with the statutory requirement for the collective act of worship. The governing body expects that all students will attend a weekly assembly and a year assembly and three further class assemblies. The school has made provision for 15-minute tutorial time so that tutors can use this time to further develop the assembly theme and reinforce the school's ethos and values. The governing body applied to the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) to have the Christian content lifted and has received this determination. There is no doubt that gathering the whole school in the rather bleak environment of the sports hall requires considerable logistical organisation and does not provide a particularly conducive atmosphere for reflection – although in the assembly seen the theme was pertinent and the music provided by the drumming club exhilarating. The arrangements as laid out by the governing body seem perfectly reasonable – particularly given the diversity of faiths held by students. However, much depends on how the time is used in the tutorial time. From a relatively limited sample but backed by the school's own evaluation, the use of tutorial time is currently variable. There were good examples where the theme of memories – the particular theme for the week – were being explored and the time used productively to reinforce students' personal development or foster relationships. Others were less productive.
65. The leadership of the school by the headteacher is very good. He has a very clear vision for the development of the school. He is ambitious for the students and determined that they should attain the standards of which they are capable. He is also ambitious for the school, wanting it to be very successful because he sees it as then doing well by its students. He is clearly dedicated to ensuring the highest possible standards in all areas of the school's work. Students lie at the heart of what the school is about. The commitment to inclusive education stems from him. He is reflective and self-critical. His evaluation of the school prepared for the inspection reflects this. He plans strategically and creatively ensuring that there is coherence built between initiatives and that they are focused on supporting students' learning. He has established strong teamwork within the senior leadership team and within the staff so that they share in his vision. He works with integrity and has the respect of staff and parents. He builds capacity by developing leadership and management in others. The school is popular and oversubscribed. There is a strong dynamic for on-going improvement because it is engrained in the school's procedures and practices. There is a very strong sense of departmental accountability and commitment to support departments to make things happen. There is an integrated cycle of monitoring, review and evaluation, which inform school improvement planning. The school's priorities are clear and owned by the staff through the departments. The headteacher works closely with the trade union representatives group to implement specific administrative and classroom support to teachers.
66. Leadership by the leadership team and other key staff is also very good. They are clear in their various roles and responsibilities and bring individual strengths to the team. There is a very strong sense of teamwork and shared vision. They provide very good professional role models for the staff through their teaching commitments and also to the students. They share the commitment to running an equitable and inclusive school and are able to influence motivate and reinforce what the school is about. They are highly visible, know the students and are about the school exerting a positive influence by their presence. They are also on hand to provide support if needed to an individual teacher.
67. Management in the school is also very good. Data is used very well to guide future action. There is an effective assessment system, which is used to track students' performance. There is a common referral system, which is used well by various internal agencies. Performance management systems are effective and there is a commitment to staff

development and developing professional expertise. The day-to-day running of the school is smooth.

68. Financial planning and control are very good. Strategic planning in the school is very effective and is supported by its financial planning. The annual development plan is carefully costed. The school has access to a wide variety of funding sources, which it targets effectively and creatively to raise standards of attainment. In addition to normal capitation, for example, subject departments have to make bids for extra funding to support specific projects. Careful planning has led to an improved learning environment, improved resources and an increase in support staff. The finance committee receives regular reports so that it monitors spending effectively. The school has acted on all recommendations in the last auditor's report. Day-to-day financial control is rigorous. Procedures for placing orders and for the control of petty cash are, for example, clearly set out in the staff handbook. The school works very hard to achieve best value. It constantly challenges its own performance. It carefully monitors the effectiveness of service providers. This has led recently, for example, to the school taking over responsibility for catering. It has effective procedures for consulting parents and students.
69. Leadership of the learning support department is very good and has resulted in very good provision for all students of special educational needs. Management is also very good. Complex day-to-day arrangements run smoothly. Documentation is of a particularly high standard. Monitoring of procedures and students' progress are particular strengths. The English as an additional language department is very well led and managed. There has been a very good level of improvement since the last inspection. Students are now well supported and enabled to make the same good progress as others.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	5,715,550
Total expenditure	5,592,556
Expenditure per pupil	4,653

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	47,597
Balance carried forward to the next	122,994

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good** with some very good features.⁵

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is a strength and offers challenge and support for all students.
- Standards are above average in the National Curriculum tests; but although attainment in the GCSE examinations has continued to rise, results are below average.
- Achievement exceeds expectations because teachers use various approaches and literacy strategy effectively to support learning.
- Gifted and talented students from all ethnic groups achieve very well.
- Leadership is very good and has steered the department towards improving standards through high levels of teamwork, evaluation and action.
- Written and oral skills are not always adequate to communicate ideas in a formal register.

Commentary

70. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were above average for all schools and similar schools. Girls achieved better than boys. These results represent very good achievement. Higher attaining students performed above the national average at Level 7. Standards in the 2003 GCSE examinations in English and English literature were below average, but virtually all students were entered and achieved a grade, which is not the case nationally. Students obtained better results in English literature. Students achieved well, but African Caribbean boys and Turkish students are not attaining as well as their counterparts. Gifted and talented students attained above the average at grades A* and A in English. Overall, standards have risen significantly since the last inspection.
71. Students entered the school with well below average levels of attainment in English. By the end of Year 9 and 11, standards of work seen indicate good achievement due to the intensive teaching, and the curriculum based on the literacy strategy which teachers use to develop students' competence. However, despite the best efforts of teachers, there are factors, which hinder the progress of some students. For instance, late completion of coursework, sporadic attendance and lack of formal writing skills to adequately express their ideas under exam conditions. Furthermore, a small number of students do not 'buy into' the culture of learning and teachers have to work hard to motivate them.
72. Standards in speaking and listening are barely satisfactory for most students who do not always use a formal register or listen well with concentration. In contrast, higher attaining students are articulate and are rarely at a loss for words; however, there are too many passive learners. Many students have very low reading skills on entry and are still behind their reading age by the end of Year 9 and 11. Nevertheless, they make good progress in interpreting and analysing texts because of the emphasis teachers place on developing these skills. Higher attaining students from all ethnic groups reach high standards in critical analysis. They read autonomously and their analysis is often above the standard required for the highest GCSE

⁵ This judgement is a summative judgement made on the quality and range of curriculum provided within the subject: the way the subject is organised, the quality of teaching and learning, the achievement of pupils and the resource provision. These judgements are specific to the subject. Whilst it is appropriate to use this judgement to compare the provision for a specific subject between different schools, it is inappropriate to use this judgement to make relative comparisons between subjects within the same school because like is not being compared to like.

grade. By the end of Year 9, students use the point, evidence and explain approach (PEE) confidently. Students with special educational needs manage this task well because of the intensive teaching, modelling and support. However, written response does not always reflect their grasp of literary texts. Higher attaining students reach good standards in writing, with attention to detail when planning and organising their work. Lower attaining students tend to use simple sentences but they use writing frames well when structuring their writing. Editing skills need to be reinforced rigorously. Spelling mars their work and because many write as they speak, there are errors in sentence structure and punctuation marks. Presentation is generally good, though boys adopt a sloppy approach.

73. The quality of teaching is good with many very good features. Teachers are dedicated to helping students achieve of their best. They use their knowledge of students' preferred learning style and specific needs to plan and select resources that will aid learning and motivate them. Students learn well because expectations are high and teachers prepare them well for the tests and examinations. Teachers successfully use visual approaches, interactive tasks and modelling to improve students' grasp of the work. However, there are missed opportunities to develop students' oral skills. Team teaching is used very effectively to provide intensive support for students with learning difficulties. Relationships are good and lessons are generally well managed and organised. Teaching is satisfactory or less when: students' behaviour impedes teaching, they are 'switched off' and lack the discipline and work ethic to remain focused despite the best efforts to engage them. The double lesson is too long, particularly for Year 7 to 9 students, and plenaries are not used sufficiently. The marking of students' work is thorough, particularly in Years 10 and 11; however, the assessment criteria are not sufficiently linked to target setting.
74. The quality of leadership is very good and there is a clear vision for continuous improvement. A committed team has been created. The development plan is thorough; self-review is substantial and identifies how the department should move forward. There is a high level of accountability, though there is scope for using data more rigorously to identify the progress of different groups of students. Schemes of work are being revised and planning ensures that the subject is well taught. The department is well managed. ICT is used, though there is still a need to embed it, as well as media studies and wide reading in the curriculum.
75. Since the last inspection, progress has been good. Standards have risen substantially; teaching is now a strength; literacy is embedded in the curriculum; the resources are indeed very good and are linked to the needs of students with special educational needs and those learning English.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

76. Students enter the school with below average literacy skills but their good achievement at the end of Year 9 is linked to the drive on literacy across the school. A range of initiatives, including production of materials for parents, have been introduced to promote literacy. Although these are embryonic, evidence indicates significant improvements in students' writing in subjects such as humanities and art. Proposals are in place to begin providing intensive support for students with very low literacy skills. An experienced practitioner runs the library and works very closely with most departments to develop study skills across the curriculum. Departments such as maths, music and physical education do not make good use of the library. The library is well organised and has a good range of available resource materials, including ICT, to support learning and provide support for parents.
77. The three-part lesson works very well in English and subjects across the curriculum have adopted ideas from the Literacy strategy. The science department has worked well with the librarian to develop a range of study skills project work whilst in humanities, the focus on writing is leading to improved evaluative and analytical essays. There is a sharp focus on improving writing, a key area for improvement from the audit. There is widespread use of writing frames to support students' writing in most subjects. In drama, students write with flair

when analysing and evaluating plays. Extended and evaluative writing are common features in design and technology, music, art and history. Good attention is given to grammatical features in French but, overall, there is too little writing in personal, social and health education and mathematics.

78. Whereas higher attaining students use good oral skills, most lack the confidence to adopt a formal register and speak at length or with clarity. There were examples of good discussion skills in ICT where Year 8 students talked knowledgeably about using websites. Oracy skills improve as students progress through the school but many do not listen attentively or show mutual respect when listening to others. Students learn to understand the technical vocabulary, which is displayed, incorporated into lesson objectives, recorded in exercise books and stressed throughout teaching. Research skills are developed in most subjects and students are encouraged to read aloud. In art, contextual study is strong particularly in Years 10 and 11. There is good emphasis on reading and interpreting information well, particularly examination questions.

Modern foreign languages

Overall, provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory** with some good features. There has been significant improvement in provision during the last year.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Above average attainment and good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Some inconsistency of achievement in Years 7 to 9.
- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Some inconsistency in teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- Good leadership and management.
- The proportion of students studying a language in Years 10 and 11 is below average.

Commentary

79. GCSE results in French in 2003 were well above average with a particularly high proportion of students achieving the higher grades. This represents significant improvement compared with previous years. Students performed better in French than in other subjects in the school and there was the same high standard from both boys and girls. However the proportion of students entered for the examination was well below the national average.
80. Results in Turkish were also well above average with a high proportion of students achieving the higher grades. Girls performed better than boys but the standard achieved by both gender groups was very high by comparison with other subjects in the school and by comparison with achievement nationally in minority foreign languages. These results are in line with the high level of achievement since the last inspection.
81. In work seen during the inspection standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average but achievement is satisfactory. Overall students lack oral confidence and find it difficult to produce extended speech. The progress made by students is inconsistent. There is considerable variation in the standard of writing achieved by high attaining students in Year 9. There are, however, examples of good achievement in writing, for example by some groups in Year 7. Progress for students with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language is also inconsistent. Where they receive effective support progress is good. However, in some lessons, their needs are not met effectively. Most students have positive attitudes but, in some lessons, particularly in Year 7, poor concentration limits their progress. Behaviour is good in almost all lessons but occasionally poor behaviour leads to unsatisfactory achievement.

82. Standards in French in Years 10 and 11 are above average and achievement is very good. Students in Year 10 develop a wide range of vocabulary and expression. In Year 11 students who began to learn the language at the start of Year 10 are performing at an above average level. Standards in Spanish are average but students make good progress compared with their level of attainment at the end of Year 9. High attaining students have a good command of the main tenses. Students are confident orally. Standards in Turkish are very high and achievement is good. Most students are fluent speakers but develop their reading and writing skills effectively.
83. Learning and teaching is satisfactory overall. They are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, good in Years 10 and 11. There was some unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9. Students' learning is enhanced because planning by teachers is almost always good. Lessons are well structured and targets are clear. However planning does not always address the needs of all students, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Good relationships in most lessons lead to a good working atmosphere. Students' work is regularly and thoroughly assessed. Most students are given clear targets so that they are usually clear about the progress they are making. Teachers mark students work consistently but helpful comments which show them how to improve are not used by all teachers. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because teachers have high expectations. The level of challenge is, however, sometimes not as great in Years 7 to 9, particularly for some high attaining students. Use of the target language by teachers is not consistent and students are not encouraged to use the language for basic communication. In the best lessons in Years 7 to 9 teachers ensure thorough group repetition of new vocabulary before giving students the opportunity for individual oral practice, so that students develop good pronunciation and oral confidence, but this is not done consistently. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including trips abroad. Support lessons for Year 11 have made a significant contribution to improved exam results.
84. Leadership and management in the subject are good. The new head of department has a very clear vision about how to move forward and there has been significant progress since the start of the year. She is supported by well-qualified teachers who are developing into an effective team. The department monitors its performance effectively with good support from the leadership team. Double lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9, limit progress.
85. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of leadership and management and this is leading to improved teaching and standards.

MATHEMATICS

The quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**, with some good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of students is very good.
- More students now reach higher levels in national tests by the end of Year 9.
- Assessment records and information to teachers are very good.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent.
- Lesson planning is good but needs of individual students are insufficiently recognised.

Commentary

86. Many students enter the school with below-average attainment in mathematics. By the end of Year 9 just over half gain level 5 or better in national tests. Two-fifths reach level 6 or better, a proportion that has steadily been increasing. Girls attain results close to the national averages. Results for boys are much lower, and have shown little improvement over the last five years. Overall 2003 results were lower than those of 2002, well below national averages

and below similar schools. When compared to the standards attained by students on their entry into the school achievement is good, as most boys and girls show an improvement of at least one level, many by two or more.

87. There is steady growth in the percentage of students gaining grades A* to C at GCSE, nearly two-fifths doing so in 2003. Overall results and average point scores remain well below national averages. Results at A*-G are below national. Results for boys are still below those of girls. Attainment in mathematics is lower than in other subjects taken by the students. Again, however, overall achievement is good when compared to previous standards. Inspection indicates that whilst standards remain below national, improvement in performance is expected. Standards overall are therefore below average when compared to national data, but achievement is good when compared with prior performance.
88. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned, supported by detailed data on student performance, and extension material is available for faster workers. In very good lessons students receive enthusiastic teaching with clear instruction and are given plenty of opportunity to practise skills and discuss issues arising, and relationships are strong. This was particularly evident and learning well promoted in a Year 11 class dealing with rational algebraic expressions, a Year 10 lesson on enlargements and similarity, and a Year 9 class revising transformations using computers. In contrast, unsatisfactory lessons suffered from slow pace or too much teacher input, the limited student participation or practice producing restlessness, lack of concentration and underachievement. There is over-reliance on worksheets, and greater awareness of their suitability for particular groups of students is needed. Learning overall is satisfactory. Higher-attaining students are attentive, reliable and study well. Students in lower sets also achieve well, but consideration needs to be paid to the learning of mid-attaining students and to the wisdom of retaining mixed-ability classes throughout Year 7. Learning support staff assists students whose language acquisition is at an early stage and those who have a variety of special educational need, enabling them to progress equivalently to others in their classes. Middle-attaining students vary in their attentiveness and attitudes to learning. Work is often set out poorly. Some students, particularly boys, distract the learning of others, so the teacher spends a disproportionate amount of time in control. The pace of learning drops in double periods. Marking of work is inconsistent, as is provision of homework, hampering promotion of effective learning. In some year groups students record targets following exercises, which is good, but follow-up is patchy, and many are unaware of what they must do to improve.
89. Analysis of student performance by gender and ethnicity is bringing about targeted support, beyond school hours or during vacations, though as yet is not fully taken up. Good use of ICT occurs, both in lessons and in coursework projects.
90. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Schemes of work have been updated. A good team ethos is being developed. Resources are good. Training programmes are satisfactory, including support for new departmental staff, though training for use of the one interactive whiteboard (to be supplemented with others in the near future) is needed.
91. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Apart from the quality of marking, assessment is good. Student achievement is good, and though overall standards remain low they do show improvement. Other items still require attention.

Mathematics across the curriculum

92. Many students enter the school with weak arithmetic skills. Attention to basic numeracy from Year 7 and a support curriculum produces improvement, both with and without calculators. Grid methods for multiplication are increasingly used. Students are able to multiply by powers of ten, operate with decimals and fractions, deal with simple percentages, and calculate areas

and volumes. Higher-attaining students proceed rapidly to more advanced processes including algebraic and trigonometric techniques. Lower-attaining students in Years 10 and 11 still show poor command of multiplication tables and lack confidence in calculation.

93. Progress in subjects such as science, geography, and design technology, is sometimes restricted by the moderate numeracy skills, and teachers have to work hard to provide support and raise standards. Other subjects are less affected. Knowledge of graphs is generally satisfactory though quality is below standard, too many students drawing with pen rather than pencil or failing to use a ruler when essential. Spreadsheets are occasionally used. Good work was evident in art on enlargements, golden section, and understanding of balance both symmetric and asymmetric. In music recognition of patterns in composition and the shape and structure of pieces was good. Competent measurements were undertaken in physical education. In geography there was satisfactory use of map coordinates, earthquake Richter scales, flood hydrographs in river studies, and drawing of bar graphs for world population change or in weather and climate studies. A numeracy policy, recommended in the last report, has still not been produced. This is a weakness. Provision of guidance through a suitably designed numeracy booklet would significantly promote learning about mathematics across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' caring relationships with the students, and their usually high expectations of them, almost always keep lessons calm and focussed.
- Well supported by the technicians, the teachers are generally effective in keeping lessons moving and varied, so the students' attitudes and behaviour are usually good.
- Good leadership, management and resource levels (including resources from special projects) make all the staff feel valued, though problems with recruiting and retaining teachers make it hard for the school to develop a closely knit team and a focussed atmosphere.
- There are good procedures in use to monitor most students' work and set appropriate targets, but in some lessons the opportunity to assess all students' progress is missed.
- ICT is not yet integrated into the science work as tools for more effective, efficient and enjoyable teaching and learning.

Commentary

94. Last summer forty per cent of the students entered for GCSE double science reached or passed the target grade, C. This figure is below the national average of just over half (and hides a significant difference between the success rates of girls and of boys). However, it compares very well with the figure for similar schools and is over double that in 1998, the year of the previous inspection. Also, during the same period, the proportion of students achieving no science grade fell from more than a quarter to well under a tenth.
95. In recent years, the teachers' assessments of the Year 9 students' grasp of science, and the National Curriculum tests in science, have shown a clear, steady, upward trend. The standards of the girls' work in science are now close to the national average, but those of the boys remain well below. However, as all the students' science knowledge and understanding are well below average when they enter the School in Year 7, there is clear added value through those first three years and most pupils achieve well, even very well. Assessment of the students' grasp of science in inspection week – in lessons, in work in their books and on display, and in talking with them – confirms these findings.

96. There is also added value as the students move through Years 10 and 11 – again most achieve well. In both cases, however, it is clear that the students' achievements are best with regard to their skills of carrying out experiments and their knowledge of the basic vocabulary and processes of the subject – only those who do not find science learning very hard gain much understanding. For instance, while most students eventually come to recognise the differences between solids, liquids and gases, or those between elements, mixtures and compounds, or those between mammals, reptiles and amphibians, few can always identify examples correctly as they do not *understand* the differences.
97. All this applies in much the same way to members of different groups of students. However, students with additional learning needs (including students with English as an additional language and those who find it hard to behave as they should) do not receive enough additional support – too often the science teachers must provide that support, and the rest of the class lose interest as a result.
98. The quality of science teaching has improved since the previous inspection, at least partly because fewer classes have too large a range of abilities. Lessons – often very long for some – are well structured and students are aware of what the teachers hope they'll learn. Most offer a wide variety of activities, which involve sight, sound, and (occasionally) movement and touch to support the different learning needs of the students. Teachers' explanations are mostly clear, and they use skilful questioning that involves the majority of students. Individual white boards are sometimes in effective use during question-and-answer sessions. All this generally helps the students participate well and then their positive attitude to learning stretches them. In some lessons, pace is low and too much time goes on low-level tasks; students lose interest and teachers miss opportunities to provide enough challenge. Teachers and students do not often use ICT to make teaching and learning successful and fun. Also, homework, though monitored, is not always a fully effective support for students' independent learning.
99. There are good procedures in use to monitor most students' work and set appropriate targets, but in some lessons the opportunity to assess all students' progress is missed. A consistent approach to marking is becoming embedded within the department.
100. Leadership and management within the department are good. The acting head of department works very hard to foster a strong vision, team spirit and sense of purpose. There is a clear and excited emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning through the adoption of accelerated learning strategies; the Learning Trust through the Gatsby Project supports this very effectively. ("Science is easy now," said a student on one of these programmes.) On-going problems with the recruitment of permanent staff have added to the workload and delayed the development of an alternative course in Years 10 and 11. Since the previous inspection much effort has gone into improving the science block. However, there is a need for a clear consistent image through the whole department and the school's growth means that two teachers do not have rooms of their own.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, provision in information communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ICT is well integrated with arts and media subjects.
- Achievement is good overall; students have positive attitudes to the subject and are keen to develop their skills.
- Teaching and learning, in the dedicated lessons, are never less than satisfactory, predominantly good, and some teaching is excellent.
- The quality of cross-curricular ICT is variable and insufficiently co-ordinated.

- Not all students are guaranteed full access to the National Curriculum in Key Stage 4; currently a quarter of the Year 11 cohort take a qualification in the subject.
- The assessment of Year 10 and 11 students' ICT capabilities, and their progress in the subject, are not recorded or reported.

Commentary

101. Students' standards in ICT are overall in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. The department does not offer GCSE ICT, and it is difficult to establish standards compared with those nationally in Years 10 and 11, as not all students take separate lessons in the subject, and ICT attainment is not assessed and recorded in subjects across the curriculum. Approximately a quarter of Key Stage 4 students take GNVQ ICT courses, and past results indicate average standards, with a very limited number of merits and distinctions. However, there is a rising trend of improvement in line with improving resourcing for the subject. ICT work seen in other subjects across the curriculum would indicate average standards overall.
102. On entry to the school there is a very wide range of ICT capability amongst students. However, good progress is made and students quickly become proficient at using the basic computer applications, for example; Year 7 students use computer aided design software to make portrait images, and they use the application competently and creatively to manipulate portraits of themselves that they have taken using digital cameras; and Year 9 students understand the use of control technology software to design systems to simulate the operation of refrigerator interior lights and light-sensitive security lights.
103. Students in Years 10 and 11 on the GNVQ courses quickly progress to more advanced skills. For example, Year 10 students understand how to formulate a suitable introduction when designing a database for a video shop. They carefully analyse information on CD and video labels and develop appropriate fields; and Year 11 students show good awareness of computer hard and software, and specific design requirements when designing a computer system for a graphic designer.
104. Achievement overall is good in both key stages. The majority of students are working up to their individual capabilities, and continually increasing their potential skills. Progress through the key stages is good for all students including those with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language. The vast majority of students have positive attitudes to the subject and tasks set. Behaviour is normally good, and very good in the best lessons. A good contribution is made to students' personal development through projects linked to arts and media studies.
105. Teaching and learning are good overall; it is never less than satisfactory, and there is some excellent teaching. Teachers plan and present the subject with enthusiasm, and very good use is made of innovative resources, for example interactive whiteboards. The ICT Key Stage 3 strategy provides a good basis for project work in the first three years, and effectively links subjects across the curriculum. National Curriculum levels are shared with students at the end of projects, and there is some self-assessment. However, more could be done to share level descriptors through the use of graded examples. Teachers communicate their subject expertise effectively through varied teaching strategies that stimulate interest. The combination of whole class and individual tuition, and differentiated work sheets, promotes inclusivity. There are good challenges in GNVQ lessons, and generally high expectations of conduct and standards. However, in a minority of lessons class management is insufficiently rigorous. Question and answer sessions are used very effectively in the best lessons.
106. Leadership and management of the separate programme of lessons are good and improving. Additional resources are beginning to impact on standards in other curriculum areas, There is a good range of opportunities in ICT lessons but curriculum time is currently low in Years 7, 8, and 9. There has been satisfactory improvement since the time of the last inspection, considering the pace of educational change in the subject in recent years. Although standards

overall, and cross-curricular ICT have not significantly improved, resources, schemes of work, and teaching overall show improvement, and development plans identify priorities for further progress.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

107. National Curriculum requirements are met in Key Stage 3, but not fully met in Key Stage 4 because coverage in subjects across the curriculum is insufficiently co-ordinated and control measuring and modelling does not take place in sufficient depth. Breadth of study also needs strengthening, with greater reference to the place of the computer in society, data protection and computer law, for all students. The use of ICT in subjects is not monitored, and students' achievements are not assessed. Further staff training is needed for this.
108. The quality of cross-curricular ICT is very variable. In some subjects, media studies, art, music and English for example, the use of ICT is good, with some very good features, but it is far less effective in maths, and below average in science. Computer-aided design and manufacture are developing satisfactorily in design and technology.

HUMANITIES

109. History, geography and religious education are taught in Years 7 to 9 within a humanities faculty. These subjects were inspected separately and are therefore reported on as individual subjects. In Years 10 and 11, students have the additional option to study for a humanities GCSE. The faculty also provides students with the opportunity to take AS levels in history and government and politics as part of a commitment to challenge the most able youngsters.
110. Although it was not possible during the inspection to observe any AS lessons, the evidence indicates that students have made a good start to their courses. In government and politics, for example, students recently took part in Westminster Day and spent two days at Highwire creating a web-page and a party political broadcast. The director of the pressure group *Liberty* recently visited the school to talk to students about human rights issues.
111. Standards in GCSE humanities are above the national average. This represents good achievement for all groups of students. Students clearly enjoy their lessons and are prepared to work hard and achieve their best. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed. As a consequence, humanities is a very popular option with well over half the cohort choosing it.
112. The humanities faculty is very well led with clear vision for the future. The courses offered make a significant contribution to the inclusive ethos of the school and are taught by committed teachers who function very effectively as a team.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management.
- Overall, good teaching with evidence of excellence by specialist geographers.
- Standards of attainment are below national expectations.
- Very good relationships between staff and students.
- Limited fieldwork experiences for students.
- A very good classroom environment for learning.

Commentary

113. In the 2003 GCSE examinations the percentage of students achieving grades A* - C was well below the national average. This is partly because students up to Year 9 are taught half the syllabus in a carousel with history. This reduces the breadth and depth of coverage in preparation for geography examinations. Hitherto not all geography lessons were taught by specialists in the subject. However, the proportion of students who gained a pass was close to the national average. The A* - C results for 2003 showed a significant improvement on 2002 and an upward trend since the last inspection. Results in the teacher assessments in 2003 for students at the end of Year 9 was close to the national average
114. The standard of work seen for students at the end of Year 9 is below national expectations reflecting limited coverage and lack of depth in a timetable alternating between history and geography. In the time available students begin to appreciate the importance of symbols on maps and the use of scale to indicate distances. They develop awareness of different sources of energy and the need for conservation. In their study of natural hazards they assess the different ways in which people adjust to the environment. Given the constraints on teaching and learning, achievement at the end of both Years 9 and 11 is satisfactory.
115. By the end of Year 11 a significant proportion of the students lack the breadth of knowledge and understanding to achieve standards equivalent to the national average. They receive good teaching and very good support from the staff and show good motivation to succeed. However their attainment on entry is below expectation due partly to the limited coverage up to Year 9. They acquire knowledge and understanding of a range of topics to meet the requirements of the syllabus. In their case study of the rainforest of Brazil they show the relationships between ecosystems, economic activity and natural processes such as the nutrient cycle, the greenhouse effect and global warming.
116. The quality of teaching is good overall. Lessons are planned in great detail with clear objectives so that the students have a clear understanding of what is expected in each aspect of the lesson. Set time is allocated for each aspect so that tasks are completed without any time being wasted. Teachers ensure that each student contributes to discussions in class activities, in paired work and in larger groups. The wealth of resources are well used, catering for the different learning styles of the students. The very good relationship established with the students helps to create a good learning environment, which is enhanced by the very good displays in the classrooms. Class management is very good in spite of very challenging behaviour from the students in Year 7 who have not yet developed sufficient motivation for learning. Although good examples of the use of ICT were on display, the evidence in students' work was limited. Increased application of ICT is included in the development plan.
117. Leadership and management are very good. The newly appointed head of department has a clear vision for improving standards. There is considerable enthusiasm for the task and the very good partnership with her colleague ensures co-operation and constructive teamwork. The detailed planning of the syllabus and accompanying lesson plans with resources for each of Years 7, 8, and 9 are of a very high standard. Contribution to whole school development resulted in a group of Year 8 geography students making an educational visit to the Alternative Energy Centre in Machynlleth, Wales to investigate different sources of energy. This culminated in a presentation to all Year 8 students as part of the Creative Partnership Energy Project being developed by the school. Assessment procedures with target setting are well established. Fieldwork provision is limited. The staff recognise the value of developing and implementing policies for literacy, numeracy and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as providing opportunities for fieldwork to raise the profile of geography in the school.
118. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have improved significantly and the trend is upward. Issues raised have been addressed. There are new and up-dated schemes of work and sufficient textbooks to meet the needs of the students.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving as a result of very good teaching.
- Strategies to improve students' writing standards are bearing fruit.
- Strategies to help students to improve their examination skills are very effective and are leading to improved standards.
- Marking of students' work is of a very high standard and helps students to understand how to improve their work.
- Some students in Years 7 to 9 do not listen when they need to.
- There is scope to spend more time on extracting relevant detail from cartoon sources of evidence in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

119. Results in the GCSE were average in 2003 for both A* - C and A* - G grades.
120. When students enter the school, standards are below the national average. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 9, representing good achievement for all students. Students write well, with increasing confidence, as a result of the department's emphasis on improving literacy skills. They make good use of information technology to enhance their history skills. In Year 8, for example, students produce desk-top published booklets for primary school children on Henry VIII's break with Rome. These are well-produced and show that students of all abilities can write at length and for a particular audience. Students' skills in understanding that history can be interpreted in different ways are above average.
121. Students in Years 10 and 11 are currently achieving above average standards. This represents very good achievement for all groups of students. Standards are improving because of the department's emphasis on enabling students to improve their examination skills and because strategies put in place to improve writing as well as history skills in Years 7 to 9 are now bearing fruit.
122. Teaching and learning are very good overall, although they are slightly better in Years 10 and 11, where there is some excellent teaching, than Years 7 to 9. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. A particular strength of the department is the focus on improving examination skills in Years 10 and 11. Another strength is the emphasis on developing students' writing skills. As a consequence of these two factors, students gain in confidence and make valuable gains in their knowledge and understanding. They are motivated, keen to participate and ready to be stretched. In Years 7 to 9, however, a minority of students find it difficult to listen attentively, particularly to each other. This was an issue at the time of the last inspection. Learning is enhanced by the quality of marking of students' work. Written comments are very constructive and always tell students what they have done well and what they need to do in order to improve their work. In Years 10 and 11, students make very good use of GCSE mark schemes and therefore know what they need to do in order to reach the higher grades. Although teachers are very skilled in teaching GCSE students how to analyse and evaluate sources of evidence, there is scope to spend more time helping them to extract relevant details from these sources, especially historical cartoons.
123. Leadership is very good with clear vision and direction. Management is also very good with clear planning and effective strategies for improvement. Teachers work very well as a team and there is clear evidence of the sharing of both good practice and concerns. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Religious education

The provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Two specialist teachers are able to give strong input to lessons.
- The majority of lessons have strong content drawn from world religions.
- Statutory requirements are not being met in Years 10 and 11 for those students not following a GCSE course.
- Work for students does not always cater for the range of abilities within classes.
- Some learning is being lost as it not always written down or consolidated at the end of lessons.
- Behaviour is good, but some students do not always sustain their concentration.
- The scheme of work in Years 7, 8 and 9 does not yet fully reflect the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus.

Commentary

124. Overall, the standards of attainments in the GCSE courses in 2003 are well below national averages. In the full course, 35 per cent of students gained the higher grades of A* - C. The results on the short course are 4 per cent A* - C. All students across the courses gained an A* - G grade. Overall, the results are down on the previous year. The standards seen during the inspection are below national averages overall, but some aspects are in line with it. Students have a sound basic knowledge and understanding of many aspects of Judaism and the other world religions that they study. Their knowledge and understanding of various aspects of Christianity is not strong. The students have produced many good pieces of written work. The achievement of the students is satisfactory.
125. At the end of Year 9 the standards of attainment are below the standards indicated in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The pupils are familiar with several aspects of world religions such as festivals and symbols. Their knowledge and understanding of the basic beliefs that lie beyond the outward workings of the religious traditions is not strong. Some written work is not very well developed. The achievement of the students is satisfactory.
126. The progress of students with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language is satisfactory. A more consistent provision of work to suit the more able and less able would help the progress of these students. Girls are doing better than boys.
127. Overall the teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and have a good range of learning activities. The content drawn from world religions is strong in most lessons. Occasionally there are exceptions to this. The teaching presents a lot of valuable information but a good deal of it is lost when it is not consolidated or written at the end of the lesson. The students are well behaved but their attention often wanders and again learning is lost. In some instances, a component on Christianity is missing in Years 10 and 11. The teaching is stronger in helping students learn about religions than it is helping them to learn from them. An active assessment policy is in place. There is some inconsistency in the marking of books. Information technology is used when possible. Homework is set.
128. Most aspects of leadership and management are satisfactory. The staffing is good. The scheme of work in Years 7, 8 and 9 does not yet fully meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. There will be insufficient time to meet its requirements when it is in place. Statutory requirements are not being met in Years 10 and 11 for those students not following a GCSE course. The resources are satisfactory. The accommodation is good. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and Technology

Overall, provision for design and technology is **good**, with some very good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment at GCSE are above the national average.
- The recently introduced engineering course is very good.
- The well-qualified, hard working and committed teaching staff are managed very effectively.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 are below the national average.
- Many students in Year 11 produce high quality coursework.
- Currently there is insufficient use of ICT, of design and make assignments, and of the investigation of existing products, as required by the programme of study for the subject.

Commentary

129. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above those for all schools nationally, and for boys and girls. The results were however not as good as the previous year. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were not as good as those for all schools nationally.
130. At the end of Year 9, standards in lessons are in line with national expectations. The quality of work is often good, with some imaginative work in all specialist areas. Students coming into the school have very varied experience of the subject, many having done little, so students' achievement by Year 9 is good. For example, in a Year 9 electronics lesson students made rapid progress in the assembly of a circuit as a result of carefully structure teaching. In Years 10 and 11, standards in lessons are above national expectations. Examples of good achievement occur in coursework in Years 10 and 11 in all material areas where many students have clearly worked hard to produce work of a good standard. Achievement in the recently introduced engineering course is very good with high quality work evident.
131. Teaching and learning are good overall, and some is very good. All teachers use a wide range of teaching styles, and there is good planning of work to suit the needs of different students. Many lessons include a range of different learning activities and these help students to learn effectively. In a Year 8 resistant materials lesson, tightly structured teaching enabled students to make good progress and produce accurate work. The recently introduced engineering course is very successful. Students work with considerable interest and care and produce work that is of a high standard. This course has effective links with a local college and includes students from other local schools. The department provides a wide range of activities outside of the normal school day and arranges extensive and effective residential visits which have a high technology content.
132. Overall, leadership and management of the department are very good Teachers are well qualified, hard working and committed and they are managed very effectively. There are good systems for planning and assessing the work which students do, and these are effective. Although planning is good overall, currently there is insufficient emphasis given to investigation of existing products, and to open-ended designing and make tasks. Although there are examples of good work from individual students, at present there is insufficient use of ICT but this issue will be addressed when the planned refurbishment of the department is completed. There has been good progress in the use of literacy skills. The system of setting targets for students to achieve following assessment in Years 7 to 9 is good. Links with industry, and extended residential visits with a technology theme are very good, and enhance students' learning. The present system of an extended period of time for one module means

that not all students have the same sort of experience. Staff in the department have had a very heavy involvement in the planning of the refurbishment of the department. This planning has been very closely linked to the needs of the curriculum and will provide excellent teaching rooms.

133. The last report indicated that standards and progress were good. The department has maintained this position, in spite of staffing difficulties and a reduction in curriculum time, but standards at the end of Year 9 are not now as high as they were. The department has made a point of reviewing its work at regular intervals and has made appropriate changes in response to these reviews. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

134. The **Performing Arts** course was sampled.
135. The BTEC First Diploma in performing arts has now been part of the school's curriculum for nearly a year. The school has made a good start. The course for the first year is well planned and directed. Emphasis currently is on acting and music, with the focus here on music technology. Assignments are well planned and effective in developing a good hands-on approach.
136. Standards seen in lessons are above average overall. They are achieving very well at this stage. In the acting strand, standards are above average, especially in the variety and fluency seen in physical theatre and music. The dance tended to lack imagination. In musical performance, standards of singing are high with three of the four girls able to maintain individual parts with excellent intonation and highly convincing presentation and commitment. Three other students were able to set up the microphones routing them through the mixing desk and give convincing and correct explanations for why they should be used for particular tasks.
137. Teaching and learning in the two sampled lessons were good. Students built well on their earlier work as a result of well-planned sessions. In the drama lesson the teacher gave pupils the responsibility for organising their own session. They responded well, contributing to the way they were learning as well as to the performance. In the music lesson, although the students made very good progress as a result of the teacher's careful and challenging direction, students were not given the same responsibility to organise themselves. At present acting and music are taught in separate groups and so far there has been no integration of the music and acting disciplines. As a result students have not developed the skills of working together on an integrative project in which common features and expressions of these two subjects are explored. This will put considerable pressure on students and teachers in the final year of the course.

Art

Overall, the quality of provision in art is **very good** with some excellent features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Management and leadership of the subject are very good.
- Standards are well above the national average.
- Students' achievement is very good, and progress through the key stages is excellent.
- The department makes a major contribution to the personal development of students.
- Teaching and learning are overall good, and there is some very good, and excellent teaching. Lessons are extremely well planned and presented.
- ICT and computer-aided design resources are used very effectively.

Commentary

138. Students enter the school in Year 7 with widely different experiences of the subject. Their progress is excellent and achievement is very good from Years 7 to 9. Standards are as national expectations by the end of Year 9, GCSE results are very good, and many students achieve the higher grades. Examination standards are consistently well above the national averages for all schools.
139. The vast majority of students have very good attitudes to the subject and tasks set, and they are very keen to learn about art and design concepts, artists, and the aims and objectives of art movements. They work extremely well together and independently. Behaviour is normally good, and excellent in most Year 10 and 11 lessons. Students' study skills are well developed and the subject makes a very good contribution to students' personal development, through independent learning processes, themes for projects and through contextual studies. There are many links with other subject and community areas, through social, moral, and cultural connections and extra-curricular activities. A good example is the Creative Partnerships Energy project. The majority of students are working up to their individual capabilities, and continually increasing their skills. There is very good value added from Year 7 to 11. Students with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language, and students of all backgrounds, make very good progress. They enjoy the creative, visual nature of the subject, and this, together with good support from teachers and support staff, enables them to succeed.
140. Year 7 students' portrait images, using computer-aided design software are very noticeably produced in the Expressionist style, with strikingly original colour combinations. Year 9 students make direct observational studies of shells, working accurately and quickly in a range of media, including collage and wax resist. Their paintings and collages of shells show overall a good understanding of the use of textures, and how light falling from one side can be used to show shape and form. When working on course work to the theme 'Myself', Year 10 students study the work of Warhol and Lichtenstein, and using self-portrait digital images, they create large lino prints using similar techniques. The resulting prints are highly original and show clear understanding of balanced composition and the use of contrasting hues and tones. Direct observational landscape paintings (scenes from the local park) are full of light and vibrant colour, and paint application technique is strikingly similar to the style of the French Impressionists. Year 11 students work independently and with confidence, when preparing for their final examination. There is a strong emphasis on the exploration and investigation of a wide range of media. Ideas are clearly documented and annotated in sketchbooks with a vigorous approach to investigating and experimenting using different materials and processes. ICT and computer-aided design related work make a good contribution to students' design awareness.
141. Teaching and learning are overall good, never less than satisfactory, and there is some very good and excellent teaching. Teachers plan and present the subject enthusiastically. They have very good command of the subject and communicate ideas and concepts very effectively. They have a good knowledge of the examination requirements and assessment criteria. Direct observational drawing forms the foundation of most work and this is well taught. Teachers have established very good working relationships with students and a productive, purposeful atmosphere in lessons. There are high expectations of conduct and standards in the vast majority of lessons. Good use is made of question and answer sessions, and student participation in discussion, in the best lessons. Teaching strategies stimulate interest with lively introductions, clear aims and objectives, inspirational demonstrations, and high-quality individual feedback during practical work. National Curriculum levels are shared with students at the end of projects, and there is some self-assessment. However, more could be done to share level descriptors through exemplar materials, and further analysis and comparison with national standards would enable more accurate moderation of standards in Key Stage 3.

142. Leadership and management of the courses are very good. Teamwork effectively promotes very good learning. There is a sense of purpose and a clear vision, to develop students' visual awareness in interesting and innovative ways. The department makes a significant contribution to the school environment through lively displays. Students' creative work enhances, informs, and promotes high standards.
143. There have been good developments since the last inspection, with improvements in the quality of teaching overall, a rising trend of attainment, and an increase in numbers taking the examination courses. Development plans identify priorities for further progress, for example, the further development of ICT resources and the refurbishment of some aspects of the accommodation.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality of teaching which contributes to good and very good learning.
- The impact of media college status in providing a wide range of very good quality resources.
- The effective use of assessment in determining students' strengths and weaknesses as a focus for learning.

Commentary

144. Many students enter the college with below average standards and by Year 9 standards are on a par with national averages, representing good progress. 2003 GCSE results indicate well below average standards for the higher A* - C grades although this represents very good achievement for many of those students. The current courses contain students from a wider range of abilities and standards observed are above average overall, with strengths in the breadth and depth of understanding evident in the quality of written work.
145. The progress made over time, and in individual lessons, indicates good achievement in Years 7 to 9 and very good achievement in Years 10 to 11. Students of all abilities, including those with special needs, achieve equally well. They all work hard, concentrate on tasks and work very effectively in groups, sharing ideas to produce some inventive solutions to problems. They are sympathetic of others' efforts, listen carefully to ideas and provide sensitive feedback to improve the quality of work. As a consequence of students' interest and enthusiasm, behaviour is very good. Many Year 10 and 11 students have high aspirations and show real commitment and pride in their work, striving to produce of their best. For example, in a practical lesson students worked hard to improve diction, inflection and clarity in overcoming some very strong accents in their use of voice.
146. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching overall is significant in providing a very good environment for learning. Students are enthusiastic and interested because relationships with teachers are very good, challenging tasks and good organisation focus attention quickly. Students are expected to work independently, and to develop and refine their own ideas and critical skills, which enhances and extends their learning, making good contribution in developing their social skills. Accurate assessment information is shared with students who know their strengths and weaknesses and the areas of work for improvement, and is used effectively in identifying and extending individuals across the range of abilities. Students make progress because teachers provide some very good oral and written feedback based on very detailed subject knowledge.
147. Leadership and management are very good. The curriculum is well constructed to build skills, knowledge and understanding. Very good use is made of community opportunities and extra-curricular activities to extend learning through performance and provide wider experience of

different genre. Teachers work as a very effective team who are committed to taking the subject forward. The department benefits from good accommodation and a very good quality theatre together with some very good resources which are used effectively to support teaching and learning. However, some classrooms are drab and in need of refurbishment. The department has continued to build effectively on the improvements noted in the previous inspection.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and students make a good level of achievement.
- There are excellent resources for practical work.
- Links with the media arts co-ordinator and media professions are strong and productive.
- There is insufficient time for the co-ordinator to manage the subject.

Commentary

148. Lessons in Year 10 were the only ones observed during inspection as GCSE papers had already been received by Year 11. Examination regulations do not allow teaching to take place after that. Evidence of current standards in Year 11 was obtained from an analysis of coursework.
149. GCSE results in media studies have been broadly in line with the national average for a number of years. In 2003, however, standards dipped significantly due to disappointing examination results which fell below the standard of student coursework. Girls have consistently outperformed boys by a wide margin. Students with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Kurdish and Turkish students had a comparatively lower standard of achievement than the rest in 2003. Standards of current students in Year 11 look set to achieve former levels this year.
150. Students' achievement is good in Years 10 and 11 because teaching is well informed and authoritative. Codes and conventions of media texts are carefully and specifically taught so that students have a firm grasp of the organisation of media types from talk shows to rap music videos. Media analysis and interpretation comes easily to current students who have been given a good grounding in literary analysis in their English lessons. Higher achieving students produce original and stylish advertisements showing creativity and flair. Technical knowledge of production is a key strength which has resulted in a range of media texts, particularly of the moving image, which are visually compelling. Editing is a strength of these productions. Students plan well and evaluate their work routinely. All use media language in their essays to support and justify their work but lower achieving students' analysis and evaluation lacks detail and is sometimes reduced to one word answers to simple questions.
151. Teaching and learning are good overall. Classes are well managed and behaviour is usually good. Lessons are always well planned, and have clear objectives, which are shared with the students. There are good opportunities for pair work and collaboration so that students help each other. Learning is best when written notes are simplified to help the lowest achievers. Independent work is consistently well promoted. Provision of an excellent standard of technical equipment, material matched to teachers' expertise and a particularly good level of technical support ensures that students achieve well particularly in the practical aspects of the course, and all have good opportunities to gain the highest grades. The curriculum is very well supported by links with media institutions and professionals which raise standards and widen students' horizons.

152. Leadership, currently within the English department is good and is responsible for the valuable cross-fertilisation of the skills of media analysis and literary criticism, which improve standards in both disciplines. Day-to-day management is good. Although the newly appointed co-ordinator has very little time to manage the subject, the problem of last year's examination results has already been tackled in ways likely to be effective. Schemes of work have already been rewritten to further support teaching and learning. There has already been some effective monitoring of lessons. Valuable links with media institutions are being strengthened and links with other media colleges developed. Although in-house technological training is already a significant strength, the school is aware that a smaller team of teachers with a stronger programme of in-service education is likely to raise standards even higher.
153. The subject was not inspected separately at the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work seen are above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11.
- Students achieve very well in music at all stages as a result of very good teaching and learning.
- Students' attitudes to music are very good.
- Extra-curricular music is of high quality and is very well supported by students.
- Technology and its use in the department enhance students' learning.

Commentary

154. Students greatly enjoy music in the school. They and their teachers share a real enthusiasm for the subject. This is so in class and in the very good variety of groups and clubs which meet at lunchtimes and after school. The department is always lively and noisy, and the extensive accommodation is used regularly through school hours and beyond. The team of teachers, all practising musicians, are of like-mind, anxious for the continued success and improvement of the department.
155. Standards in music by the end of Year 9 are above average. Students come to the school with very mixed experiences of music. Some students have little or none, one or two already have advanced skills. Such is the quality of teaching and learning that students of all standards achieve very well. Students play instruments well, with enjoyment. They use ICT to compose music which even in Year 7 shows some good levels of sophistication. They know the background and conventions of many different styles of music and use this knowledge to improve their style of performance. Standards in the large group of students doing music at GCSE in Year 11 are well above average. They develop their skills in composition by using ICT confidently. Compositions are well structured. Performance standards are high across the board. Achievement at this level is also very good. The department provides extra support for these students including instrumental lessons which are of good quality.
156. Teaching and learning overall are very good. Students have a very good grasp of their strengths and weaknesses in music because teachers assess them frequently and because they write down their thoughts and reflections on how they play and compose. They also receive very well focused advice from teachers in class as they rehearse individually and in small groups. With lower attainers this is patient and thorough. For the most able it may be a suggestion or a demonstration. For all it is always directed where it will help them most. Advice as well as the tasks they are given are always challenging. This and students' desire to learn help them to concentrate well through the long double periods particularly when the activities are practical. In one lesson though they became restless and unfocused because they were desk-bound for too long. When they embarked on their composition on the

computers the focus was back. This technology, plus amplification and recording facilities as well as the range of classroom instruments are of very good quality. Their performances and compositions sound genuine and professional as a result. This is a big motivating force for students. Through their commitment and interest students are learning good self-control. There is a marked improvement in this through the school. They also learn to collaborate beneficially. They enjoy the social aspect of playing together, responding generously to each other's input. Pleasurable involvement and self-esteem is plain to see. Music provides very well for their spiritual, moral and social development.

157. It also provides excellently for their cultural development. Many students take part in concerts, productions and work with professional musicians on special workshops in and out of school. These activities are numerous and have increased greatly since the last inspection. Standards achieved by students and the quality of teaching and learning have also improved. The department has expanded and the technology for which they have good technical support is now extensive. The department, thanks to excellent leadership and very good management, analyses its successes and plans very well for future improvements.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The impact of staffing instability over recent years on students' progress.
- Low aspirations and expectations of students.
- Good assessment and monitoring procedures, which identify individual students' needs.
- The impact of media college status in providing media resources and access to the local community to support learning.
- Time is not always used effectively in lessons.

Commentary

158. Standards vary but, by Year 9, are about average overall. By Year 11, standards are below average with only a small proportion of students demonstrating standards appropriate to their age. 2003 GCSE results were well below national averages and below those evident in other subjects.
159. In Year 7 to 9, achievement is unsatisfactory although achievement is satisfactory in Year 7 where the majority of students show some interest and enthusiasm for practical activity. Although technical competence varies, understanding is good and many students persevere at tasks, practising to improve, for example, their fielding techniques and accuracy in returning the ball. In Years 9 to 11, previous staffing instabilities result in gaps in knowledge and little evidence of progress over time. Many students, and especially girls, are disinterested, and make little effort to work together or to support each other in lessons, which results in unsatisfactory achievement. Those students studying for GCSE examination make good progress. They work hard to catch up on missed work and to grasp concepts of fitness testing, training principles and the physiological effects of exercise on the body. Achievement of students with special educational needs is generally good especially in lessons where additional support teachers are available.
160. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 to 11. Lessons are planned thoroughly but are often focussed too narrowly on technique. Lack of variety of tasks or organisation leads to very slow pace in many lessons. Using a greater range of tasks is the key factor in engaging students' interest. However, there are occasions when, despite the best efforts of teachers, some students do not co-operate. Teaching is more effective when teachers work together in lessons, often with one leading and the other supporting individuals or small groups of students. On these occasions, learning is at least

satisfactory because teaching is varied and group work is used to enable well-motivated students to progress at their own pace. In these lessons, teachers use their knowledge of students' standards, gained through the thorough assessment information, to establish effective working groups where students can demonstrate what they know and extend their skills. Media college status has provided very good quality resources that are used effectively to support learning.

161. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Despite some good work in developing assessment, curriculum, and in establishing rules and procedures in the subject, the impact has yet to be seen in increased participation or improved standards. Key issues of time management in very long lessons, and of teaching methodology and expectation need to be addressed if the department is to gain more positive responses from students.
162. Extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for the more motivated students to pursue their sport. The breadth of opportunities is growing and there have been notable successes, demonstrating the potential within the college. Some very good links with outside bodies widens the range of activities still further. However, students are not always as supportive as they might be or willing to prepare appropriately for competition.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

Overall, provision in personal, social and health education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management.
- Excellent careers education and guidance.
- Very good planning and learning strategies underpin very good teaching.
- A coherent holistic curriculum that makes maximum use of external specialists.
- There is too little stress on precise assessment criteria which students understand.
- Homework is not used to promote high quality research and extended writing.

Commentary

163. A very experienced and committed head of department, strongly supported by senior management and governors, organises a very high quality PSHE programme. The careers education and guidance element, including work experience, is excellent and an exemplar to others. The school is unusual in its level of commitment to this aspect of education which is tightly integrated within the PSHE programme and the work-related curriculum. A full-time non-teaching specialist has been appointed who brings exceptional expertise, enthusiasm and awareness of the potential of careers education and guidance as a catalyst for personal development and achievement.
164. Students gain from a well-planned and structured curriculum that is fine-tuned to take account of their needs and local circumstances. For example, there are additional sex education lessons in response to requests from Year 11 students, and the department has taken careful note of health concerns that are highlighted by local specialist agencies. There is a very good on-going programme to raise awareness of drug abuse. Careers education and guidance is excellent. Twenty per cent more students continue their education or obtain Modern Apprenticeships than the local average. Tutors at other educational institutions praise the students' preparation for post-16 choices. The quality and quantity of personal advice is excellent, with a focus on individual need. Psychometric testing, linked to skilled counselling to develop social skills, helped students who were not reaching their full potential.

165. All teaching is at least good and two-thirds was very good. Good relationships create a positive environment for the study of sensitive issues. There is a fine balance between empathy and the firm promotion of high expectations for behaviour and achievement. Very good planning, carefully prepared materials and the use of time targets engages students. A scrutiny of the work of Year 7-9 indicated that this good pace of learning continues over time. An extensive range of teaching and learning strategies that includes including drama and role-play helps concentration.
166. The head of department is a very good role model for staff. Vision is combined with first-rate management skills. An emphasis on continual improvement and professional involvement informs action. High quality teaching and learning packs successfully support teachers. A particularly strong feature of the coherent, holistic PSHE programme is its ability to respond to students needs through the use of external specialists. For example, there was close co-operation with behavioural support staff to extend students' ability to resolve conflict. The department has already begun work to ensure that assessment is continuous and used to inform the PSHE curriculum. However, there is an insufficient stress on pinpointing the criteria and ensuring that the students are aware of these. Lack of homework reduces the quality of research and extended writing. There has been good improvement in PSHE since the previous inspection.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 11 students have left school without an acceptable citizenship education and statutory requirements have not been met.
- The appointment of an experienced teacher who has made a good start at developing the subject, although planning is not yet fine tuned and the curriculum not embedded.
- Cross-curricular school aspects are not yet fully audited or developed and subjects offer inconsistent support in extending citizenship education.
- The lessons seen were well planned with a good range of teaching and learning strategies that reflect students' aptitudes and interests.
- Staff lack training and assessment has not been comprehensively developed.

Commentary

167. The school did not appoint a teacher with specific responsibility for citizenship education until September 2003. Although there have been some positive developments there had been insufficient time for Year 11 pupils to have grasped a clear understanding of the many facets of citizenship. They lack subject knowledge and are not aware of their role as active citizens or the importance of research and communication. Statutory requirements are not met. Students in Years 7 to 10 have benefited from the production of some good teaching and learning units, reflecting the head of department's commitment and previous work in this area. However, curriculum planning is still in an embryonic stage. The units within the PSHE curriculum have been clearly identified but there has been inconsistent progress in ensuring other subjects make a positive contribution. Only English and humanities are covering specific aspects. An audit of actual or potential subject contribution has not been done. This is important as delivering the entire citizenship curriculum within the fifty minute PSHE slot is problematic, especially as an extensive careers guidance and education programme is also taught within this weekly lesson.
168. Overall, the standard of the work of Year 7 to 10 classes was just satisfactory. This represents good progress when students' learning is compared to their prior attainment. Pupils study a range of topics such the media and racism. There are some opportunities for

discussion but time constraints and inconsistent homework have a negative impact on high quality research and extended writing. The third strand of citizenship education is not yet fully embedded. Although many students are involved in school and community activities they are not aware of their implications within the citizenship curriculum. For instance, staff and students are not involved in building up a portfolio of experiences that celebrate the students developing skills of participation and responsible action.

169. Teaching and learning was overall satisfactory, reflecting a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Half of the lessons were good or better and one lesson was poor. Overall, lessons were well organised and supported by carefully prepared materials and resources but the execution of the planning varied. In one lesson an inability to control the behaviour of some very challenging students resulted in poor learning. A satisfactory lesson would have been better if the teacher had used more current examples when discussing racism. Excellent learning occurred when the teacher used a video clip of Lord of the Flies that completely engaged a Year 7 class. Pupils were involved and keen to relate the extract to their knowledge of the book. The teacher was extremely competent at linking their comments with the key learning points of this unit on government and democracy. An exemplary range of teaching and learning strategies, including the competitive matching of vocabulary cards, maintained interest. Good learning also occurred when planning was changed to reflect students' needs. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers.
170. There is newly appointed and experienced co-ordinator with good management skills. A good but late start has been made in implementing citizenship. However, there is a considerable amount of work to be done before high standards are reached, including a focus on staff training and assessment. Citizenship is a new subject and was therefore not reported on in the previous inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	5
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school*	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).

** In the specific respect that the school is not meeting statutory requirements for religious education governance is 5.*