

INSPECTION REPORT

PARLIAMENT HILL SCHOOL

London

LEA area: Camden

Unique reference number: 100050

Headteacher: Ms Christine Peters

Lead inspector: Mr D B Evans

Dates of inspection: 8 – 11 March 2004

Inspection number: 259154

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Female
Number on roll:	1190
School address:	Highgate Road London
Postcode:	NW5 1RL
Telephone number:	020 7485 7077
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Clark
Date of previous inspection:	2 March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Parliament Hill School for Girls became a specialist technology college in September 1999. As a Leading Edge school it works closely with the wider community in Camden and its surrounding area. It has Investors in People accreditation and participates in the London Excellence in Work Experience Scheme. Attainment on entry to the school is slightly below average in comparison with all schools. There are 1190 girls on roll which is bigger than most other secondary schools. The school is popular and over-subscribed. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Half of the students are White British, a fifth are of Asian origin, there are significant numbers of Black Caribbean and African students. Sixteen students for whom English is an additional language are at an early stage of language acquisition. The main languages are Bengali, Somali and Arabic. Over one in ten students have special educational needs which is below the national average; the largest groups are those with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) and social, emotional and behavioural needs although the school does have some students with more severe special needs. The proportion of students having a Statement of Special Educational Need is broadly in line with the national average. The number of students leaving or entering the school at other than the usual time in Years 7 to 11 is broadly average. There are 131 refugees and four travellers.

The school sixth form is part of a successful La Swap consortium with three other neighbouring schools. Numbers of students in the consortium are very high compared with national average and include many students who join the consortium in Year 12 from other secondary schools at the end of Year 11.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1049	Brian Evans	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
1165	Peter Dannheisser	Lay inspector	
12331	Vera Grigg	Team inspector	Design and technology Design and technology (sixth form)
2200	James Stirrup	Team inspector	English English (sixth form) Drama/Theatre studies (sixth form)
11751	David Sutcliffe	Team inspector	French (sixth form)
14573	Hugh Wareing	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
16042	Paula Haes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
20420	Stuart Rawcliffe	Team inspector	Chemistry (sixth form)
1578	Maureen Sinclair	Team inspector	Citizenship Religious education
10543	David Dewhurst	Team inspector	Special educational needs
30563	Jacqueline Pentlow	Team inspector	Physical education
11672	Peter Harle	Team inspector	Art and design
31673	John Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music
32150	Kerrigan Redman	Team inspector	Geography Geography (sixth form)
20664	Kevin Jarvis	Team inspector	Science
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team inspector	History Business studies (sixth form)
32251	Peter Bratton	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Parliament Hill is a good school and has a number of excellent features. It gives good value for money. It has a number of excellent features. GCSE examination standards are above the national average. Students achieve well. Teaching is good and students have good attitudes to learning. Leadership and management are good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school exemplifies a rich multi-cultural community in which relationships are excellent.
- The leadership of the headteacher, supported well by the senior leadership team, is very good.
- Links with other schools and institutions are excellent.
- In Years 7 to 9, tasks are not consistently matched to students' attainment levels.
- Assessment to support students' learning Years 7 to 9 is not fully developed in all subjects.
- There are very good careers and work-related strategies to support all students.
- Attendance is below the national average.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form or for collective worship.

The school has made good progress since the school was last inspected in March 1998. The school development plan is a very good working document that has clear priorities for improving achievement. Examination results have improved. The extended information and technology (ICT) curriculum enables students to acquire above average ICT skills. Teaching and learning have improved. As at the last inspection, statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form are not met. Good practice in assessing students' progress is more consistent across subjects but more remains to be done. Attendance is improving but remains below the national average and is unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	B	A*
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	C	A	C	

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Students achieve well but achievement in Years 7 to 9 is weaker than in Years 10 and 11.

Overall, their attainment on entry to the school is below average. By the end of Year 11, the overall trend over the past five years in GCSE examination results has been broadly in line with the national average. In 2003, students of all abilities made excellent progress, in the top five per cent of schools nationally, when compared to schools with similar intakes. The average GCSE points score per student in 2003 was above the national average. The school met its challenging target for GCSE average points score per student in 2003. Inspection evidence show that overall standards are rising. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, English, mathematics and science test results were broadly in line with the national averages in each subject. The overall trend was broadly in line with the national average. However, the 2003 Year 9 test results in comparison with schools of similar prior attainment in tests at Year 6 were very low and in the lowest five per cent nationally. This is surprising in the light of inspection evidence but a major contributory factor is that tasks set for many classes do not always cater for the full range of ability. Students with English as an additional language achieve very well. Students with special educational needs make good progress and the school is in the early stages of implementing an extended programme for meeting the needs of gifted and talented students. Currently A-level standards are broadly average.

Students' personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. There is a strong, positive ethos in the school which values and respond to the needs of

a rich multi-cultural school. Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory overall in spite of the school's efforts.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good.

The sharing of good classroom practice characterises the improving quality of teaching in the school. It is having a very positive impact on students' motivation, which enables them to achieve well. In all years nearly all teaching is at least satisfactory and a very high proportion is good including many very good and a small number of excellent lessons. Key skills in numeracy, literacy and ICT are taught well. Students sustain concentration and support one other in their learning. Resources are good and accommodation is satisfactory. The curriculum, including an extensive extra-curricular programme, is good. Support for disaffected students is effective and is met through very good work related provision. Assessment data and their use by teachers has improved but is at an early stage of development in Years 7 to 9. The school cares very well for its students and gives them very good support and guidance. The school works successfully with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher has been very good in working towards the school aim of ensuring the highest possible quality of education for all students. The senior leadership group are an effective team and seek to enable every member of staff to take a leadership role in raising standards. Good progress has been made in developing partnerships with other schools and colleges as a Leading Edge school. Strategies for reducing the administrative workload for teachers are well under way. Management systems are very good and include a strong emphasis on effective self-evaluation procedures. They are well defined and the coherent development plan covers all aspects and subjects of the school. The governors carry out their responsibilities efficiently and contribute to the further development of the school in an informed and supportive way. The school does not have enough physical space to conduct a whole school daily act of worship. Governance, overall, is good.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about the work of the school. They value what the school provides for their daughters, both academically and through the range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities on offer. Almost all parents say that their daughters like the school which encourages them to become mature and independent. Parents are generally happy with the communications from the school but almost a third of those responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire disagreed that they were well informed about how their children were getting on. They recognise the strength of leadership and management in the school and are comfortable approaching the school on any issue relating to their daughters. Students also hold positive views about their school. Almost all like school and believe they are well taught.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

Issues in the main report for consideration by governors, headteacher and staff in further improving the quality of education include:

- In Years 7 to 9 provide for the needs of all students in classes where there is a wide range of ability and particularly for the more able.
- Improve attendance and punctuality in all years.

and,

- when space and staffing are available, to meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form.

THE SIXTH FORM AT PARLIAMENT HILL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

The sixth form is run jointly with William Ellis School for boys on the same campus and is part of La Swap, a consortium of four schools that has operated successfully for nearly 20 years and currently provides for 1229 students. The consortium is very popular and a third of La Swap is made up of external students from different London boroughs. La Swap students go to one or more of the four school sites depending on their course choices. The Parliament Hill sixth form is therefore made up of a mix of male and female students that includes about a third from minority ethnic backgrounds and a small proportion of students with special educational needs or who have English as an additional language. About three quarters of sixth form students continue their education at university.

OVERALL EVALUATION

Overall, provision in the sixth form is good. The sixth form is cost-effective. Standards are in line with national averages. Leadership is good. Senior managers have a vision for developing a wide range of courses suitable for both those intending to apply for university and those entering the workplace. Management is good, especially with regard to transfer of students and links with the other three schools in the consortium. Teaching and learning are good. Students participate eagerly in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

The main strengths and weaknesses are

- Good teaching across the sixth form leading to good learning and achievement by students.
- A wide-ranging curriculum in the consortium gives students a very good choice of both academic and vocational courses.
- Excellent arrangements for the induction of students and for applying for work or for places at university.
- Excellent links with neighbouring schools in the La Swap consortium.
- There is a high level of student satisfaction.
- The procedures for monitoring attendance and promoting punctuality are unsatisfactory.

There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. As a result learning and achievement are good. ICT requirements have been met.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form in Parliament Hill School are shown below. All the lessons observed included students from one or more of the other three schools in the La Swap consortium. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form at Parliament Hill School were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good in English literature. Good teaching and good leadership and management motivate students to achieve well. Good in French. Most students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' fluency and accuracy provide a very good model for their students.
Mathematics	Good. Teachers have high expectations and very good subject knowledge. Current standards are above average and show a significant improvement over past years.
Science	Good in chemistry. Teaching is good. Students achieve well and have good independent learning skills. Very good use is made of interactive ICT equipment.
Humanities	Good in geography. Teaching and learning are good. Students achieve well. Fieldwork opportunities develop students' research and independent learning skills well.

Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Very good in product design. Very good teaching and leadership and management enable students to achieve very well. A number of students enter the course without prior learning in the subject but quickly develop good research and independent learning skills.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good in drama. Students achieve well because they have positive approaches to learning and teaching is good. Leadership and management are good.
Business	Good in business education. Students with below average attainment levels to the course achieve well. Very good leadership and management have built up the department very well in a short period of time.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Induction arrangements into the school are excellent. Students from outside the four local schools feel welcomed in the La Swap consortium. They are given excellent preparation for university or for entering the world of work. Feedback from teachers to students is good in nearly all subjects and particularly strong in product design and in drama.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are good. At Parliament Hill School the sixth form co-ordinator and the teachers in charge of Years 12 and 13 provide good leadership with a clear vision for a wide-ranging curriculum. Co-operation within the La Swap consortium is very good. Finances are managed well. The prospectus and other documents for students and their parents are well presented, and the progress and future development of students are well monitored. However, the management of the sixth form has not yet been successful in developing strategies for ensuring good attendance and punctuality.

The tutor team is well led by the director of sixth form assisted by heads of Years 12 and 13. They and the tutors manage the day-to-day organisation of the sixth form well and monitor students' progress, resulting in high standards in both years, high rates of retention and high numbers being accepted for university courses.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very enthusiastic and enjoy life in the sixth form. They overwhelmingly consider that teaching is challenging and demanding. Students strongly believe that they are encouraged to become independent learners and all feel that they have been given appropriate advice and guidance during this phase of their education and in the years leading up to it. Students believe that they are given very good support and advice on the next step in their education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students achieve well and standards are well above average by the end of Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are taught well and have contributed particularly to the recent marked improvement in standards in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average.
- Sixth form standards are well above average.

Commentary

1. Standardised tests show that students' attainment on entry in Year 7 is lower than average and intakes include a much smaller proportion of students gaining the highest levels in tests at the end of Year 6 at primary school. Results in English and mathematics in Year 9 in 2003 were broadly in line with national average and though science results fell back slightly, the overall trend in test results in Year 9 has been broadly in line with that nationally. There has been a dramatic improvement in mathematics test results since the last inspection because teaching has improved and there has been a positive spin-off from the school's specialist technology status. Test results in comparison with schools with similar proportions of free school meals are well above average but value-added progress base on prior attainment between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 average points score was in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. The discrepancy between the two comparisons has puzzled the school but improving achievement in Years 7 to 9 is a key priority in the school development plan. Strategies focus on improving the achievement of the more able and just above average groups of students.
2. In all three core subjects there is a range of initiatives, including the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning, booster classes, projects on gifted and talented and a greater range of learning resources. Students with special educational needs achieve well in most lessons and their achievement and progress is very good for many of those with greater needs who are at school action plus level or with Statements of Special Educational Need and who have more individual and small group input. This is reflected in the good average annual gains in reading and spelling ages for students with special needs and in strong examination performances, with three in every four obtaining at least five GCSE A*-G grades. Students with English as an additional language achieve well because they are given good in-class support and set work appropriate to their level of language acquisition. Staff monitor carefully the achievement patterns of different minority ethnic groups and respond to their needs effectively. For example there has been a significant improvement in the achievement of Bengali girls over the past few years.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.3 (31.5)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	34.9 (33.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.1 (33.6)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 180 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Since the last inspection the proportion of students who achieve five or more GCSE A* to C grades has improved from being below the national average in 1999 to well above average in 2003. The overall trend in GCSE examination results is above that nationally. In 2003 the school again achieved their GCSE targets agreed with the local education authority. The school is on course to meet its targets in the current school year. In 2003, the average point score per student was in the highest five per cent nationally for schools with similar prior attainment at the end of Year 9. Inspection evidence shows that standards remain high and that students of all attainment levels continue to achieve well. Teaching and learning strategies are adapted to meet students' needs well. Strong curriculum leadership in mathematics has enhanced students' achievement. In a number of subjects there has been an effective focus on developing a wider range of teaching and learning strategies.
4. Priorities in the school development plan confirm the school's determination to raise standards further in Years 7 to 9. Inspection evidence shows that its strategies are being successful in improving students' achievement. In Years 7 to 9, good teaching, good attitudes to learning and good leadership and management enable students to achieve well. In English students achieve well although in Years 7 to 9 more able students are not consistently challenged in the work set for them. Mathematics standards have improved significantly through improved teaching and learning strategies and in all years students achieve well. Teaching in mathematics and science is good. Achievement in French is very good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Students achieve well overall in Spanish, ICT, art, music, physical education and religious education in Years 7 to 10. In these subjects teaching is generally good and enables students to become independent learners. It is very good in design and technology and in the GCSE Life Skills course because leadership and management and teaching are very good. Achievement in geography is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11 where teaching is often very good. In history and drama achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Achievement in citizenship is improving rapidly even though the programme of study is relatively new.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	54 (52)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	89 (90)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	37.7 (34.7)	35.9 (34.7)

There were 169 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Sixth form

5. The average point score in the 2003 A-level examinations was below average for girls, but average for all students. This represents a decline in standards compared with the previous year when results were well above average as they were at the time of the last inspection.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	90.5 (96.9)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	32.6 (44.0)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	232.2 (282.8)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 113 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards at the end of Year 13 are average. This is a return to the standards of 2002 after the lower levels of 2003. The A-level subjects inspected in depth all show students to have a very positive attitude to learning and a high proportion achieve very well. As befits a specialist technology school, standards are particularly high in product design because teaching and learning are very good. Achievement is good in Year 13 as it was also in the two previous years with good value-added progress when compared with students' GCSE grades. This is a result of good teaching throughout the sixth form. Teacher share very good subject knowledge and students are well cared for. Students receive good support through the marking of their work and their progress is well monitored. They co-operate well with teachers and most are able to develop their learning independently.
- Although there is no formal policy for the integration of literacy, mathematics and ICT into the teaching of other subjects in the sixth form, students apply their skills well. For example, in business education students are able to analyse data effectively and are confident in using formulae. In geography, students make good use of a variety of graphs and in design technology they accurately apply their knowledge and understanding of ratio when making models.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The development of students' attitudes and behaviour is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance and punctuality have improved slightly since the previous inspection but are still unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students adopt very positive attitudes to all aspects of school life.
- Relationships, including racial harmony, are excellent throughout the school.

Commentary

- Senior management have very high expectations for moral and cultural development and students respond accordingly. There are well understood codes of conduct which are comprehensively implemented and students are continually encouraged to distinguish right from wrong. This not only covers mundane situations such as behaviour in the dining room but also far deeper issues which are covered in religious education and personal, health and social education. Staff are very good role models in promoting the moral principles of respect, welfare and resolution of conflict. The school succeeds in developing an open and safe learning environment in which students express their views and explore moral issues.
- Students' cultural development, especially multi-cultural education, is also very strong. Racial harmony is a key feature of the school. The curriculum offers opportunities to explore cultural assumptions, as demonstrated by the work on racism in personal, health and social education. Great stress is placed on addressing race equality by, for example, the employment of staff from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Students are actively involved in

organising events that celebrate a range of faiths and ethnic diversity. A very good range of extra-curricular activities enables students to extend their cultural horizons and there are very strong links with the local community.

10. A particular feature of the students' good social development is the well-honed skill of being able to work productively in groups and to listen to each other with mutual respect. There are various examples of students helping others, both formally and informally. Responsibility is generally accepted well. Drama and musical events enable students to develop their social skills and to enhance their self-esteem. Subjects foster a sense of community. For example, science makes frequent references to ecological issues and their effect on society.
11. Many aspects of the very good moral and cultural development promote students' spiritual development well, such as a sense of empathy. However, there are relatively few assemblies that allow students to share in a collective moment of reflection or consideration the possibility of the intangible. This aspect of the curriculum is not strongly enhanced in tutor time although it does occur in other subjects. For example, history strongly supports reflection and thought on a number of issues such as Black History and the Holocaust.
12. Attendance is unsatisfactory. However, although it is below the national average, it is the best in the borough. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good though this work would be enhanced by further computerisation. This would enable the school to have more data on the undoubted effect that poor attendance has on some students' achievement. Prompt action is taken by the pastoral team, when attendance problems are identified. Rewards are given for excellent and for improved attendance. Punctuality is unsatisfactory. Transport problems are often cited but sometimes the first tutor group session of the day is not perceived as important by students. Equally many students do not return to school promptly after the lunch break, despite the sanctions. This means that useful learning time is lost and achievement is adversely affected.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.7	School data	1.4
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.

13. Students are positive about their school. They actively engage in lessons and relationships amongst students and between students, and their teachers and other adults, are excellent. Students enjoy being in a community where they and their friends come from such varied backgrounds. There are very occasionally some groups which show less positive behaviour and attitudes – for example in Year 9. Students with special educational needs, including those with considerable physical difficulties, are well integrated into the daily life of the school and there is a positive attitude towards diversity so that students withdrawn for additional support are very positive about this as well as appreciating additional support in class. They show no hesitation in using the very good range of inclusion services available as, for example, in seeking help from the learning mentors.
14. Students are pleasant and helpful to staff, peers and visitors to the school. The previous report identified arrangements for lunch as a negative aspect and this is still the case. Although there have been recent changes to the menu many students can spend most of their break queuing and they make trenchant criticisms of the system. Many feel obliged to go out at lunchtime. When asked, almost all students identify this aspect as often their only criticism of the school.

15. In almost all lessons, students are keen to learn. The low exclusion rate reflects both the good behaviour of students and the well thought-out and effective strategies used in the school to support good discipline.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	538	24	1
White – Irish	16	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	35	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	22	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	14	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	94	1	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	33	3	0
Black or Black British – African	78	2	0

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

Sixth form

16. The development of students' attitudes is good. Many sixth form students are very good ambassadors for the school. Students relate very well with each other and their teachers, and this helps to create a very positive ethos for teaching and learning. Many students demonstrate a very strong commitment to their studies and to the aims and purpose of the school. Their commitment to helping younger students in the school is impressive.
17. The very positive attitude of most students is a major strength of the sixth form. The large number who continue their studies at this school, demonstrate the very strong commitment for learning. Students' successful relationships with teachers are built on trust and mutual respect, creating a successful culture for teaching and learning. Students conduct themselves maturely and sensibly and present good role models to others younger than themselves. They play a full part in the wider aspects of school life, organising events for themselves and main school students. They willingly accept responsibilities as mentors.
18. The attendance levels in some courses are low. Although individuals with poor attendance records are followed up, the systems to track and follow up attendance to specific lessons and subjects are not sophisticated. Only sample weeks are looked at. The school acknowledges that absence is a problem and is reviewing strategies. Individuals are followed up and if necessary their families are contacted, but the degree of absence is significant. In some cases students opt out on their fourth AS-level subject without making this clear, or they simply do not turn up for lessons. The school analyses sample weeks of attendance but until a co-ordinated electronic system across all four schools in the consortium is installed, the analysis of attendance and punctuality will lack rigour.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good in all years. The curriculum is good and offers students a wide range of opportunities. Resources for learning, including new technology, are good. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but cramped with a mixture of old and new buildings that are well maintained. Advice, support and guidance are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but are not yet used effectively in all subjects to guide students' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students respond positively to the high expectations set for them in their work.
- Relationships between teachers and students in the classroom are very good.
- In a number of Years 7 to 9 classes work set does not always meet the needs of all students particularly the more able.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning.
- Assessment data are not consistently used in some subjects in Years 7 to 9 for planning improvements in students' achievement.

Commentary

19. The high proportion of good teaching and learning springs in part from effective monitoring and support of teachers by senior staff. This strategy is based on giving teachers secure whole school support systems, including staff development, to work within. Students recognise that all teachers have very good expectations of them and they have responded by having positive attitudes to their learning.
20. Teachers are good role models and generally create a relaxed but effective learning environment. They ensure that all students are involved in lessons. Racial harmony and supportive group work are a strong feature of the learning in every classroom. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects. They explain their subject matter clearly and respond skilfully to students' questions. Lessons are planned well and build on students' prior knowledge and basic numeracy and literacy skills. New technology is integrated well into most programmes of study. Most lessons move at a brisk pace and students respond well by making very good gains in knowledge and understanding.
21. The table below highlights the fact that just over eight in every ten lessons observed during the inspection were graded as good or better. There were no significant differences between the proportions of good teaching in Years 7 to 11. Lessons that were satisfactory and one unsatisfactory lesson were characterised by low expectations or lack of pace and students thus made less progress. In good lessons students make good progress and achieve well. In just under four in every ten lessons teaching was very good or excellent and students made much better than expected progress and achievement is high. Good, sometimes very good, teaching is true of all subjects.
22. Teaching and learning are good overall in English, French, Spanish, mathematics, ICT, art, drama, music, GCSE history, religious education, geography and physical education because lessons are well-structured to respond to students' eagerness to learn. They are satisfactory overall in science, citizenship and in history in Years 7 to 9. Teaching and learning are very good in design and technology and in the Life Skills vocational course in Years 10 and 11 where very good planning, secure subject knowledge and students' involvement in their own learning make a very effective impact on achievement. Teaching and learning support staff effectively implement strategies for supporting students' literacy and numeracy skills.

Harmonious relationships among students, irrespective of background or learning competency level, are a very positive feature of lessons. Nearly all teachers value students' work and effectively praise effort and good work. As a result, in lessons students are confidently expressing their views and asking questions of their teachers when they are unsure or do not understand. This assists students' direct learning. More widely, it reassures students that their peers are keen to learn and that a keen interest in learning is valued by staff and students. Students with English as an additional language are given very good support in the classroom and achieve well.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 166 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (2%)	44 (27%)	80 (48%)	33 (20%)	3 (2%)	2 (1%)	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.

23. The school is reviewing its procedures for target setting. Not all students, particularly in Years 7 to 9, are clear as to what they need to do to improve their work. In English and mathematics, assessment procedures are good and guide students well towards their targets. In some other subjects, although assessment is at least good, it is not used as effectively to support learning through target setting.
24. Teachers make good provision for students with special educational needs. However it is simply satisfactory in lessons where less use is made of the good and very good quality of information available concerning students' particular needs. The school provides a wide range of in-class, withdrawal and extra-curricular support for students with special educational needs, for example a homework club and 'open door' policy.
25. A good variety of assessment procedures is used for students with special educational needs and these appropriately inform the level of provision and enable the school to share with the students in setting set crisp, well judged targets for progress. The weekly meetings of the Inclusion Forum which assesses the needs of students at risk of exclusion and decides action provides a particularly good example of good liaison which has made a good contribution to the quality of learning in class. The school is thinking very hard and innovatively about the process of using individual education plans and similar systems to the greatest effect. The very good quality of assessment in English, which means that teaching and targets are to some extent individualised for all students, effectively complements the assessment of students with special educational needs and has strengthened the ability of the school to design a leading edge target setting system for students with special educational needs.

Sixth form

26. Teaching in the sixth form is good or better in over 90 per cent of lessons, with none that are unsatisfactory. This is a good improvement compared with the last inspection in 1998. All teachers have very good subject knowledge, for example in French where they speak fluently and accurately and offer a very good model to their students. They plan well and have high expectations of students. They use a wide range of teaching strategies to motivate students, for example in one excellent mathematics lesson where the teacher made very good use of the interactive whiteboard and also provided suitable extension work for those who needed it. In chemistry there was very good use of discussion, and practical work was well integrated into theory. As a result students make good or very good progress in their learning and achieve a higher than expected level in many cases, for example in product design, where students are expected to be in charge of their own learning and to be highly creative. However, lateness and absence are negative factors in the learning of some students in a range of subject areas.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good and very well designed to meet the range of students' needs including work-related learning. Staff have responded very well to the challenge of curriculum development as a specialist technology school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Innovative provision for the needs of students of all abilities including those with special educational needs particularly in the context of a specialist technology school.
- Students are offered a very wide range of post-16 courses within the La Swap consortium.
- There is good provision for disaffected students in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

27. The school covers a broad range of curricular opportunities. It provides a strong, well-established curriculum in personal, social and health education. Students complete a course in religious education leading to an approved qualification at the end of Year 10. The citizenship programme of study is satisfactory overall although timetabling has been hindered by staff illness and recruitment of specialist staff. Curricular provision overall is good within the majority of subjects taught. It is satisfactory in history, modern foreign language and citizenship and is very good in technology which has made a strong contribution to development and achievement within maths and science.
28. The school is very inclusive and this is reflected in the increasing number of GNVQ work-related courses in Years 10 and 11. Inclusion is further supported by the good provision for students with special educational needs. For those with greater needs it is very good. Support courses are arranged for students with special educational needs in key areas such as English and mathematics. The strong focus on inclusion is also reflected in the 'Action Research' of staff involved in the PACE, (Progress Achievement and Continuation in Education), which is well researched, effective and worthwhile in creating a programme for a group of students who might otherwise become disaffected. In addition, the introduction of a Life Skills foundation course in Years 10 and 11, the equivalent of two GCSE grades, is very successful in motivating reluctant learners. In Year 7, Library Lines, a project on library usage, has led to a six-fold increase in borrowing of books by new students.
29. The well established curriculum for personal, social and health education ensures that students achieve effective coverage of sex and relationships education and focuses attention on alcohol and drug misuse. The programme of study revisits these subjects and enables students to gain a deeper understanding with growing maturity. As well as a very good adult mentoring system, the use of older students as mentors for younger ones contributes to the very supportive ethos.
30. The very good provision for access to the curriculum and equality of opportunity is strengthened by very effective teaching of English as an additional language. The information provided for students to make choices is good. The growing range of, and high investment in, vocational courses as well as the strong liaison with the sixth-form La Swap consortium effectively prepares students for the next stage of work or education.
31. The thirty five to forty minute periods were criticised for being too short at the last inspection. Progress is being made on harmonising timetables within the sixth form La Swap consortium and the arrangements for lesson periods of one hour from September 2004 will remedy a number of anomalies in time allocation for subjects such as music and ICT. Overall the school has made good progress in further developing the curriculum since the last inspection.

32. The school provides good opportunities for enrichment with about fifty extra-curricular clubs and activities along with lunchtime and after-school homework and support opportunities. A well chosen range of visitors, including Glenda Jackson and Ms Dynamite (an ex-student), provides positive encouragement for women's achievement.
33. Teachers' qualifications and training are generally well matched to the needs of the curriculum. A well structured programme for staff development responds links very well to priorities identified in school and departmental development plans. Support staff are well qualified, effective and experienced which enables them to make a good and often very good contribution to the special learning needs of students. Accommodation is satisfactory but teaching space is at a premium. The school has appropriately identified limitations in the accommodation for the teaching of physical education, dance and music and made suitable plans to address this. Overall, the school has a good range of resources, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and these are used well.

Sixth form

34. The La Swap consortium provides overall for a very good range of A-level and vocational courses available at A-level. Sixth form students make a good contribution to the main school curriculum by their support and encouragement of younger students' learning. As a result 11-16 students are made aware of the wide choice of courses on offer and are keen subsequently to take up post-16 education within the consortium.

Care, guidance and support

The school's provision of support, advice and guidance for students is very good, as are procedures to ensure students' care and welfare. Very effective support and guidance are provided for students. Steps taken to involve students in school life are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Arrangements to care for students' pastoral and academic interests are very well structured.
- Students are given very good information as they move from one stage of education to the next.
- Students' health and welfare are well provided for, though the school needs more rigour in the way in which it ensures that safety and security are regularly monitored.

Commentary

35. Students' academic work and personal development are considered to be equally important in the school and, hence, both are given equally good attention. A well-structured system to monitor progress and development involves all form tutors, department and year heads.
36. Regular discussion, coupled with good record-keeping, means that each student's development and needs are very well known. As a result, all students are given very good support and guidance. Provision for students with special educational needs is good with a wide range of interventions and good liaison with other school and external support services. Those with particular needs are identified and support for them by the pastoral team is very effective. Regular 'Inclusion Forum' meetings involve all relevant staff regarding students' pastoral support plans. This good practice makes sure that students are considered 'in the round'. A special programme of action research, in co-operation with a university, has enabled the school to identify and support groups of students in Years 9 and 10 who might otherwise become disaffected. The school has now received funding with which to identify individuals at an earlier stage and even within the primary schools. Full time counsellors are available for those who have personal issues. As a result students feel very well cared for. Almost all students answering the pre-inspection questionnaire say that they have adults to whom they can turn if they have problems. In addition the younger students value the peer mentors – students in Year 9 with whom they are paired when they start at the school and who help them

settle in happily. They remember their first impressions of the school with pleasure. They also said they like their teachers who treated them well, and enjoy the wealth of clubs and opportunities available. They appreciate the information they receive about how well they are doing in all subjects, and what they need to do to progress. This helps them feel secure and in control of their own learning.

37. A behaviour slip system ensures that all staff who need to know can monitor those students who have been having problems and help them make progress. This carefully constructed scheme is used creatively and successfully as an incentive to improve attitudes and behaviour. The number of these slips is reducing as a result of the well-planned support. Sound, impartial advice is given to those students, who are progressing either into the sixth form or employment. Students appreciate the caring ethos created by their teachers, with whom they have very good relationships.
38. The school council and class councils function effectively and are well regarded by students across the age range. The school council is a valuable aid to both teachers and students in the sharing of ideas and views. It encourages a strong sense of self-worth among students and enables staff to have a clear idea of matters concerning students. The success of the school council in identifying and communicating its concerns is illustrated well in the improved toilet facilities. The impact that the council is having in the school is evidence that students' views are sought and acted upon.
39. Child protection and first aid procedures are good and meet requirements and staff have been appropriately trained. The school responds quickly and to the needs of individual students. The school nurse deals very well with students' medical needs. The school responds quickly and effectively to any emergencies. The school is kept tidy and safe for students and staff. Professional checks on equipment are undertaken. However, the governors and staff school do not undertake regular formal risk assessments or audits of the school, grounds, and these should be done so that all issues are identified and dealt with in compliance with health and safety regulations.
40. Staff working full time in the school advise students about careers and arrange work placements and work experience. Students in Year 9 are given help to decide their options for GCSE subjects and important industry day help them think about their futures. They receive an excellent preparation for the next stage of their education. Year 10 students all have work experience and start to consider their post –16 choices. Conferences on specific careers help raise students' aspirations. The Year 11 careers interviews enable students to form a clear picture which helps them determine what they need to do to achieve their goals. Because of this planned and individual support, students have a very positive attitude about their own futures and about the school. Parents are able to be closely involved. This provision is a strength of the school.

Sixth form

41. The provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth form students is very good. The school values students' views and responds to them very well. A key element of the good leadership of the sixth form is that each student is valued as an individual. Tutors know them well and, consequently, provide very good personal and academic support. Regular one to one meeting with their tutors provide good quality mentoring programme does much to support students to take responsibility for managing their own learning. It is a tribute to the school and to the collaboration between the four schools of the 'La Swap' partnership that one third of the students in the sixth forms join the school from outside the partnership and that a very high proportion of students at Parliament Hill School continue their education there after Year 11. Four boys, based at a neighbouring school, described the system as 'more like a university than a school – you meet so many new people and you have such a wide choice of things to learn'.

42. Very good induction arrangements are in place for all students entering the sixth form. This enables all students to settle quickly into the new routines and demands that studying to a higher level places on them. The school, in partnership with the Connexions service, provides early careers guidance and advice to prepare students to understand and meet the requirements set down by the further education institutions. Year 12 students are offered several visits to universities in London and beyond. In addition, some 40 students with no family history of further education have been paired with university students who offer friendship and advice. Sixth form students all feel grateful for the enrichment of their experience, whether they are academically or vocationally motivated. They value the voluntary work they are encouraged to do, the work experience, the visits – some abroad – and enrichment courses. They are all very positive and supportive of their school. The school makes concerted efforts using a wide range of strategies to involve all students, including more disadvantaged ones in all that is on offer. It succeeds very well in providing support to students when necessary. Nevertheless absence and poor punctuality are a concern and indicate that the school is having difficulties in adequately fulfilling the needs of this minority.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has good links with parents, very good links with the community and excellent links with other schools, all of which have a considerable impact on students and students' learning and personal development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has developed a network of links with the wider community. The value of these links is exceptional for sixth form students.
- Parents are very supportive of the school's work.
- The school regularly seeks and acts upon the views of parents.
- Students' annual reports do not consistently provide parents with sufficient information.

Commentary

43. Parents hold the school in high regard and actively support it in a variety of ways. Parental support includes the active parents' and teachers' association which raises sums of money for the school each year. A few parents offer particular skills which have been of great use to students as, for example, in film making. Attendance at all parent consultation evenings, performances and at specialist events, is very good. Parents consult heads of years if they have any concerns and questionnaires are sent to them every year before the academic review day for students which some parents attend. This enables the school to identify and act upon parents' views. Parents of younger students are asked to sign a weekly planner. This helps them keep in touch with their children's work, and enables them to communicate with their children's form tutor if necessary. There are close relations with places of work which offer varied work experience to students in Year 10. Parents of children with special educational needs are well involved with the progress of their children. The school maintains extensive links and opportunities and advice for parents to contribute to their children's progress and support programmes and shows a high regard for their opinions.
44. Consultation with parents at parents' evenings and through drop-in sessions gives the school a valuable insight into parental satisfaction with its work. The headteacher has a weekly 'surgery' to which parents may come with no previous appointment. Parents were particularly appreciative of the surgery and had found their visits very positive. The great majority of them say they feel comfortable about bringing any concerns they may have to the school.
45. The school attracts students from a very large number of primary schools. It offers taster lessons for students, and some have come to use the information technology equipment and gymnasium. The school has been developing close relations with five local primary schools. All prospective students are interviewed and because of this the school has a great deal of

information about the students when they first arrive. This helps to ensure a smooth transition and induction into the school, and guides the school's decisions about the structure of tutor groups. As a result students settle in very easily.

46. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, almost a third of parents disagreed that they were kept well informed about their children's progress. As a result parents are not all in a position to give the support they would like to their daughters. Annual reports on students' progress are not providing parents or students with enough detailed, clear and specific guidance on the steps students need to take in order to improve their learning. The school is currently reviewing the reports.
47. Parents do feel well informed about what is going on in school through the good weekly newsletter 'Contact' and the willingness of the school to provide translations and interpreters at meetings. Students' personal organisers are used well, regularly checked by form teachers and in the case of younger students, signed by parents. They provide a very valuable means of communication between teachers and parents.

Sixth form

48. The school has a very impressive network of links with many schools and colleges in the area. In particular the La Swap consortium enables four schools to offer a splendid range of options for all students who wish to continue their education beyond Year 11. The schools are able to share teacher expertise and significantly enhance the curriculum offered to students. Because of this, the vast majority stay in education and most chose to continue within the consortium.
49. The school draws on its community to provide a rich and diverse range of activities for students and students. The school capitalises on its location, organising trips and visits to places of interest. Industry links are satisfactory. There are close relations with universities and students benefit enormously through visits and university student mentors who come to advise individuals and work with staff.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher gives very good leadership. The governing body gives good service to the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school development plan is a very good working document which effectively focuses the work of governors and managers on improving the quality of education.
- The school evaluates its performance well and takes action to address subsequent weaknesses.
- Financial planning is used well to support curriculum development and improve facilities.

Commentary

50. The headteacher gives very good leadership and is strongly supported by a close-knit effective senior leadership group. Governors, staff and parents share with senior managers their vision of a high achieving school which meets the needs of all students. A well-constructed school development plan includes clear, short, medium and long-term strategic plans and is giving staff at all levels of responsibility the opportunity to improve their management skills and further raise standards.
51. The school's status as a technology school and its role as Leading Edge school has had a positive impact on both teachers and students. The school's systems for reaching decisions, devolving responsibility and ensuring good communication are very good. The senior management group work well as a team and ensure that school policies are implemented. Roles and responsibilities of teaching and support staff have been remodelled to ensure that

teachers do not have to spend time on administrative tasks. Support and administrative staff play a very important part in the success of the school.

52. The race equality policy is a well-thought out document and regularly monitored. Management and leadership of the work of the English as an additional language department are very good and staff contribute well to the very positive cultural ethos in the school. This is also supported by the Bangladeshi home-school liaison worker and the Somali community worker.
53. There are thorough procedures for analysing performance data and monitoring the work of the staff through lesson observations and the scrutiny of students' work. As a result, the senior team has a good grasp of the strengths and key areas for development. These are confirmed by inspection evidence. The actions taken to secure improvement have been carefully prioritised and are being carried out skilfully. The staff development and induction programmes are integrated well alongside the school development plan.
54. Leadership by key staff is good overall and departmental development plans have priorities that reflect those of the school. Middle managers fulfil their rôles as lead professionals and the leadership of teaching and the curriculum is a strength, focusing on aspects that will improve standards and achievement.
55. Management throughout the different departments is also very good. Many departments have developed their own internal profiling systems and performance data is used consistently well to inform their planning for teaching and target setting. Senior managers promote self-evaluation amongst departments that results in an action plan outlining departmental priorities. However, in some instances, teaching and learning are not yet monitored rigorously, and this is why in a few cases teaching is not consistently good.
56. Leadership and management of students with special educational needs are good. The new special educational needs co-ordinator has been in post for half a year without the support of a deputy; however one is appointed for next term. A very good development plan is increasing the access of all students with special educational needs to the full curriculum which culminates in 2006 and includes an appropriate emphasis in the development of good skills for the whole range of staff. An exceptionally good feature of management is the development of a clear, analytic overview of what the department is doing and the willingness to seek new solutions to issues which have confronted the management of special educational needs nationally. The integration of the individual education plan procedures for students with special educational needs with other school assessment, reporting and tracking procedures is progressing well.
57. Governance is good. The governing body brings a wide range of experience and expertise to the school. Governors are aware of the need for the provision of a daily act of collective worship. Inspectors agree that progress is not possible until space becomes available. Financial planning is used well to support curriculum development and improve facilities. The school implements its race equality policy well; it is formally monitored and the results reported to governors. Procedures for strategic planning, monitoring the quality of education and financial management and control are good. The chair of governors has regular contact with the headteacher and there is an open and transparent approach to discussions about the work of the school. Finances are well managed on a day-to-day basis and there are very good links between the planned expenditure and the school priorities. The principles of best value are strictly applied in relation to all expenditure in accordance with practice in the school as a whole, with a particular emphasis on the close analysis of students' performance in external examinations in comparison with that in other schools.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,281,473	Balance from previous year	233,317
Total expenditure	5,339,557	Balance carried forward to the next	175,233
Expenditure per student	4,155		

Sixth form

58. The quality of leadership and management of the sixth form by senior managers is very good. There is a very good relationship between the sixth form and the main school. Overall, the leadership and management provided by subject leaders are good.
59. All sixth form funding is strictly allocated for its purpose. The sixth form is cost-effective and does not draw resources from the main school. Course provision is determined by the students' choices, balanced by the stringent annual costing of individual courses to ensure that all are financially viable.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and makes a significant impact on students' achievement.
- Students display very positive attitudes to learning and achieve above average standards at 14 and 16.
- The department provides an interesting and demanding scheme of work for students in Years 7 to 9 and interprets the GCSE syllabus in an effective manner.
- Lack of differentiated or extension activities in the mixed ability classes in Years 7 to 9 results in more able students being insufficiently challenged.
- Current assessment procedures do not enable the department to measure and standardise students' progress and attainment.

Commentary

60. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and standards in English at by the end of Year 9 are above the national average. In the 2003 national tests attainment was above the national average and well above average when compared to schools with a similar intake. Students continue to sustain good achievement in Years 10 and 11 as they respond to the increased demands of the GCSE syllabus. Standards by the time students are 16 are above average. In the 2003 GCSE examinations students achieved above average grades in both GCSE English language and literature.
61. Most students in the school display good oral skills, though a number of students are less secure in their oral skills when required to speak within a more formal activity. Students listen with interest to their teachers and value the ideas and opinions of others. Regular chances are given for students to work in pairs in discussing their work, with teachers encouraging students to think in greater depth and to explain themselves in more detail. Standards in speaking and listening at 14 and 16 are above average.
62. The majority of students are good readers. Students in Years 7 to 9 have a good vocabulary and display good reading comprehension skills as they read and enjoy a good range of poetry, novels and plays, though there are too few opportunities for students to read literature from other cultures and traditions. The Library Lines Project in Years 7 to 9 is a very effective way of enhancing students' reading skills and promoting good reading habits. Critical reading skills are well taught in school, particularly in Years 10 and 11. This enhances students' ability to read and understand the demanding texts which form part of the GCSE syllabus. Reading skills are above average.
63. Students improve the basic skills of punctuation, spelling and grammar in Years 7 to 9 and use them to good effect within a good range of English activities which allow them to write in different styles and for different purposes. Students plan their work well with chances for students to improve the quality of their work through regular re-drafting activities. Many students in Years 10 and 11 display the ability to make a strong personal response to the questions asked of them as part of their coursework. They sustain a well-reasoned argument and support it by relevant examples and quotations from the texts they explore. Standards in written work are above average.

64. The quality of teaching and learning is good and includes some that are very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed. Teachers use the English strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy to good effect, though occasionally it is used in an inconsistent manner. Regular opportunities are given for students to take some control of their own learning through well planned paired and group activities, with chances for students to assess and mark each other's work. Whilst teachers generally provide students with a good range of imaginative writing activities there are occasions when students of all attainment levels in mixed ability classes in Years 7 to 9 engage in the same activity and use the same resource material. In these lessons the pace of learning varies considerably from student to student and more able students are not challenged enough. In a number of lessons teachers use a good range of teaching and learning styles to support students and each activity supports and extends skills in the other.
65. Leadership and management in the subject are good, with all members of the department being committed to the continued raising of standards in the subject. There are good schemes of work in place with teachers using the 'Action Marking' strategy to good effect to help students to identify areas and targets for improvement. The department uses good assessment procedures at the end of individual modules of work to give students knowledge of their National Curriculum level and to contribute to target setting. However, assessment data are not always used effectively to introduce necessary intervention and extensions activities to support students at all levels of ability. Standards in the subject have been maintained since the last inspection and improvement has been satisfactory.

Literacy across the curriculum

66. The development of literacy across the curriculum is good. All staff have been involved in INSET for this area of the curriculum. This focused on a range of activities including workshops on the use of key words and technical vocabulary and the use of writing frames to support students in the development of their writing skills. Regular spelling tests take place in individual subject during tutorial times. The development of literary skills is identified in department handbooks and schemes of work.
67. The literacy coordinator supports individual departments in identifying specific areas for development. This has resulted in direct teaching in order to measure the impact of the development of literacy skills. The focus this year has been on history, geography and art, with support being given to other departments on a rolling programme. Examples of good and very good practice were observed in English, religious education, geography, art and design, modern foreign languages and ICT. There is also an annual literary festival that celebrates and promotes aspects of writing.

Modern foreign languages

French and Spanish were inspected in depth. German is being phased out. One German lesson was observed in which the teaching and learning were very good and standards were well above average. The department provides after-school sessions in Bengali and Italian.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Standards and achievement in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 have very positive attitudes to learning.

- In Years 8 and 9, the attitudes and behaviour of a minority of students are unsatisfactory and occasionally poor.
- The assessment of students' attainment and progress is good.

Commentary

68. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, results in French were significantly above the national average, with a higher than average proportion of GCSE grades A and A*. Students performed better in French than in most other GCSE subjects. There has been a substantial improvement in the French results since the last inspection and students of all abilities do better than expected, given their attainment two years previously. In work seen, standards were well above average. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good overall and enhanced by some very good teaching and learning and by the very positive attitudes of the students to their studies. A few students arrive late to the lessons and consequently do not achieve as well as should.
69. By the end of Year 9, standards in work seen are in line with national expectations and achievement is satisfactory. Standards in reading and writing are above average for the higher attaining students. They write well in past, present and future tenses, expressing their views clearly. Average and lower attainers reach standards in reading and writing appropriate for their ability. Standards in listening and speaking are not as high, and pronunciation is often weak. Progress in these skills is sometimes impeded by the unsatisfactory or poor attitudes to learning of a substantial minority of students who disrupt the lesson.
70. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall, and in Years 10 and 11, it is good. All teachers have a good mastery of their subject and several are native speakers. Teachers plan their lessons well, using a variety of activities and attractive resources to motivate and engage students. There are good relationships in the classroom. Lesson objectives are very clear and a good, stimulating start is planned for each lesson. Teachers ensure that students from all backgrounds are able to make equal progress. When teaching is unsatisfactory, the teacher's skills in classroom management are inadequate to cope with the disaffection of a minority of students. All teachers plan work for the different levels of ability but it is not always implemented effectively.
71. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has managed well a period of staffing difficulties. These are now happily solved and several very good appointments have recently been made. The head of department ensures that resources are of good quality and relevant to students. A good system of assessment has been introduced, with students' assessment of their own progress a strong feature. Students know what levels they are working at, as a result of regular assessment and thorough, diagnostic marking. A good team of teachers share their good practice in a very co-operative spirit.
72. The curriculum is broad and the strong programme of grammar study begins in Year 7 and has a beneficial effect on students' understanding of language and the accuracy of their reading and writing. As the complexity of grammar inevitably builds up, the programme becomes too demanding for the lower attaining students in Years 8 and 9, which may be a factor in their disengagement. The broad curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning motivate students in Years 10 and 11, so that large numbers wish to continue to study modern languages in the sixth form.
73. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards and achievement are similar in Year 9, still held back at times by the wide range of ability and the behaviour of some students, but in Year 11, standards and achievement are much improved. Teaching and learning remain of high quality. The quality of marking, assessment, target setting and lesson planning has improved. The use of ICT has improved.

Spanish

Provision in Spanish is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards and achievement in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- The assessment of students' attainment and progress is good.

Commentary

74. In Spanish, GCSE results were in line with the national average. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 11 were well above average. Students are set to gain higher results than last year's GCSE candidates, now that permanent teachers have been appointed. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good overall and enhanced by some very good teaching and learning and by the very positive attitudes of the students to their studies. By the end of Year 9 standards are close to the average and students achieve well. Students express opinions with confidence. All students, including low attainers, make satisfactory progress in their extended writing.
75. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are very good in Years 10 and 11. In an excellent Year 11 lesson, productive relationships between students and teacher, allied to carefully constructed worksheets suitable for all levels of ability, enabled learning to take place at a very rapid rate. Students were fully absorbed in their work, enthusiastic and eager to pursue their study of language to a very high level. They joined in a good-humoured and productive debate about grammar and vocabulary, helping each other to understand and improve, in a confident but respectful manner. Students' work is carefully marked with suggestions for improvement. GCSE classes are well prepared for their examination.
76. The benefits of shared leadership with French enable both languages to benefit from joint developments. Leadership and management in Spanish are good for the same reasons as in French. Resources are good. Assessment of students' work is thorough and enables them to know what they have to do to improve to achieve their targets. Teachers create a positive environment for learning which enables students to achieve well. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management create a highly committed and mutually supportive team of teachers.
- Good planning and teaching in Years 7 to 9 are raising achievement at a rate greater than the national trend.
- Teaching strategies do not adequately extend the abilities of the most able students in Years 7 to 9.
- The policy for assessment does not fully integrate all aspects of students' learning.
- Attractive displays and the teachers' use of ICT create a very good environment for teaching and learning.

Commentary

77. Standards attained by Year 9 students in the 2003 national tests were average but well below those of schools whose students had a similar level of attainment on entry. However, the test results show a fast rising trend over the past four years which is well above the national trend. The standard of students' work seen during the inspection is average and confirms the dramatic improvement in achievement in Years 7 to 9. Students achieve well. The subject has benefited considerably from teaching and learning initiatives related to the school's specialist technology status.
78. The GCSE results of students in 2003 were marginally better than those for all schools and similar to those for all girls nationally. The results were an improvement on those for 2002 that in turn were a significant improvement on those of the previous year. The most able students in Years 10 and 11 are producing work at a level that matches the highest standards at GCSE. Currently standards are above average and students achieve well.
79. Teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Teachers plan their work extremely well and use a variety of teaching strategies to promote learning. This is particularly so in Years 7 to 9 where good teaching is raising achievement. Successful lessons are well structured and are characterised by a lively pace in students' learning. Students respond well to the opportunities that teachers create for them to collaborate in their learning. A good example of this was seen in a Year 9 lesson where students were discussing problem-solving techniques in mathematics. Students' work is well presented and indicates good variety and subject coverage.
80. Homework is set regularly and marking provides useful feedback. A policy for assessing progress is in place but this does not fully integrate all aspects of teaching and learning or inform students sufficiently well about how they can improve. In Years 7 to 9 students are mainly taught in mixed-ability groups and teaching takes some account of their differing abilities but in a number of lessons does not adequately or consistently extend the learning of the more able. In Years 10 and 11 students are grouped according to their ability in the subject and tasks are more consistently matched to students' levels of attainment. All classrooms have attractive displays and teachers make good use of the inter-active white boards to make their teaching stimulating and motivating for students. This creates a very good environment for learning.
81. The leadership and management of the department are very good and have been a critical factor in a fast improving subject over the past few years. A highly skilled and very competent head of department is supported by two able colleagues in the management of specific stages of teaching and learning. Together they lead a strongly committed and mutually supportive team of teachers that is well matched to meet the needs of the curriculum. The department has established procedures for critical self-review and has successfully addressed the issues arising from the previous inspection. It is recognised as a National Leading Edge Department and provides training and support for mathematics teachers from other schools. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

82. Students use and apply number well in other subjects. For example, in geography and science students are competent in using graphs to illustrate and analyse information. Students demonstrate very good spatial awareness in art and in GCSE physical education successfully apply their knowledge of angles in relevant situations. In design and technology students measure and weigh accurately and there are very few numeracy deficiencies that impair learning. The school has ensured that all teachers have received training for integrating the use of mathematics into courses of study.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is led and managed well.
- Teaching and learning are good overall; they are generally better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.
- Some examples of very good marking were seen but this quality is not consistently in place across the department.
- The department is well resourced and materials and equipment are carefully linked to the requirements of the curriculum.

Commentary

83. At the end of Year 9, standards are close to the national average for girls although a smaller percentage of students achieve level 5 or above than girls nationally. The trend in national tests over the last four years has been one of improvement. Initially, this was at a rate better than the national average and is now broadly in line with the national picture as attainment comes close to the national average. Results in GCSE are close to the national average. The proportion of students gaining A* to C is lower than for girls nationally, but the proportion achieving the highest grades, A*, A and B, is significantly better than the national average for girls.
84. Students achieve satisfactorily overall. The department's planning, high expectations, teacher commitment and good resources support this. Achievement varies with the quality of teaching and, very occasionally, the behaviour of some students. Absence, too, affects the overall achievement. It not only affects those students who miss work, it impacts on other students because continuity in lessons is undermined. Good numerical skills were evident in lessons in all years. Relationships between students are good and contribute to the effectiveness of learning in group or pair work. The organisation of GCSE coursework has been given much thought and is beginning to feed through in improved standards.
85. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. All lessons were satisfactory or better in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. However, there was one poor Year 11 lesson observed where class management was weak and little learning took place. The department has embraced the National Strategy for Key Stage 3 enthusiastically and actively addresses the issue of a small group of underachievers. This has led to restructuring of the curriculum and there is evidence of improving achievement as students work their way through from Years 7 to 9. This can be seen in their notebooks and in their application of practical and investigative skills. In all years, teachers show a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. The organisation of GCSE courses allows teachers to teach in their specialist areas and this is particularly effective. A very good example of this was seen in a Year 11 chemistry lesson where the teacher's knowledge and enthusiasm held the interest of the students while difficult concepts were introduced.
86. Teaching is almost all in mixed-ability groups. Teachers know their students well and considerable attention is given to matching tasks to students' ability levels. In practice, this is achieved through a variety of techniques such as giving students graded or different worksheets, having different expectations, providing individual attention or support, and by targeted questioning in class. Some of the tasks given to students working at the GCSE foundation level, however, lack sufficient challenge. The frequent use of worksheets was generally effective in the lessons seen but limits opportunities for students to develop their skills for independent learning or to practise open-ended or extended writing.

87. Some examples of very good marking were seen, where detailed, individual comments not only gave credit for achievement but also told students what they needed to do to improve further. As a result, good teaching practice was observed where students were given frequent targets to help maintain pace and to allow students to assess progress with their learning. However, the quality of marking is variable across the department. Teachers make good use of digital projectors and interactive whiteboards, which are installed in every laboratory. This highly effective use of ICT is still evolving in the department and shows considerable promise for enhancing students' learning. Data-logging and other examples of ICT in science are in evidence in all years. In this way the department has benefited significantly from the school's projects as a specialist technology college. There are clear and effective schemes of work across the curriculum and lesson planning is closely linked to progression through these schemes.
88. The department is well led and managed. This quality is reflected in the work of others with responsibilities in the department – the subject leaders and the head technician. There are regular science meetings that focus on aspects of the curriculum and on teaching and learning. Less-experienced teachers are given continuing support. These aspects contribute to the sharing of good practice.
89. Technical support is well organised. A quota of three technicians, however, is barely adequate for a department of this size, given the practical curriculum it delivers and the relatively spread-out locations of the laboratories. Accommodation is good overall. The design of these laboratories allows flexibility and increases the opportunity for using a variety of teaching approaches. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good.
- Students' good attitudes to work.
- ICT used in subjects across the curriculum does not contribute to the assessment of students' capability.
- GCSE taken a year early by all students, not just those who are ready for early examination.

Commentary

90. Standards shown by teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above national average in terms of level 5 and above, but below average at the higher levels. In work seen, standards are above average and shows that students are achieving well in Years 7 to 9. In 2003, GCSE results were below average but this is in the context of all students following a short course GCSE and taking the examination at the end of Year 10. One third did not sit the examination, but were successful in the Key Skills element. Half the girls who completed the GCSE gained a pass in the range A*-C which is close to national average. Overall, therefore, students achieve well.
91. Teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Generally teachers engage the girls in their learning by providing stimulating activities in which the girls become engrossed. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and explain tasks clearly. A good working environment is established in classrooms and girls learn well. In a few lessons, classroom management skills are weaker and so students' attitudes and behaviour adversely affect the pace of learning.

92. Leadership is very good. The subject leader, who has been in post for less than a year and is leading an all-new team of teachers, has a very clear vision of what improvements are needed and has been pro-active in making changes to ensure the improvements are made. Strategic planning is good. Planned improvements have followed a realistic framework and timescale. The subject leader provides a very good role model for other teachers and is committed to inclusion, equality and the needs of the individual.
93. Management is good. High priority has been given to staff appointments and to the effective deployment of teachers. An effective team of teachers has been created and all have contributed to the raising of the subject's profile within the school. Effective action is taken to ensure quality of teaching in classes taken by non-specialists and that resources are available to ensure subject knowledge is supported and passed on effectively. Targets are set for learning and students' progress is tracked. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and ICT now complies with National Curriculum requirements.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

94. Greater investment and strategic planning for developing ICT has benefited from the school's focus on building up expertise as a specialist technology college. Teachers in most subject areas use ICT well in presenting information to students and make good use of the projectors and interactive whiteboards that the school has recently invested in. However, the assessment of students' ICT capability in subjects is inconsistent and leads to the recording and reporting of their attainment at lower levels than are actually achieved.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good lesson planning and subject knowledge engage students' interest well.
- Attainment in Year 9 is average. Teaching, learning and assessment do not sufficiently challenge students of all abilities.
- Pair and group work develop students' co-operative, decision-making and oral skills well.
- Good residential fieldwork activities in Year 11 enquiry, analytical and presentation skills.

Commentary

95. By the end of Year 9, standards are average and students achieve satisfactorily. In Year 9 students enhance their knowledge and understanding of weathering, rivers and coastlines, energy sources and their effect on the environment and development issues. They demonstrate sound ability to use maps, tables graphs and sketches in describing geographical patterns and physical and human processes. In assessments, higher attaining students demonstrate a growing ability to analyse and account for a range of physical and human processes at different scales. However, in work seen in Years 7 to 9, a number of more able students do not attain standards as high as should be expected. This is partly because there is no system of individual student target setting and monitoring to help raise standards.
96. By end of Year 11, standards are above average and achievement is good. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above the national average. In Year 10 students are making good gains in knowledge and understanding of a range of rural and urban issues and population themes. They employ a variety of writing styles and make good use of maps, diagrams and graphs to illustrate and enhance their work. Year 11 students are developing

their knowledge and understanding of hazards and farming. They have taken part in a residential fieldwork course on the Norfolk coast and their notebooks demonstrate very good independent enquiry skills and the ability to use a range of ICT techniques.

97. Overall teaching and learning are good. They are good and often very good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 where there are inconsistencies in style and rigour. Best practice is not shared between all teachers. Teachers plan their lessons well, set clear learning objectives at the start of the lesson, and engage students in a variety of activities. They create a lively and positive learning environment characterised by very good interpersonal relationships and by very good behaviour and attitudes to work. There are ample opportunities for pair and group work which develop students' co-operative decision-making and oral skills. This was demonstrated in a Year 11 lesson where students working in groups used a range of enquiry techniques to evaluate organic farming practices. Open-ended questioning and intervention by teachers ensures that students are supported and their thinking challenged. Homework is regularly set, effectively complements work in class and extends learning.
98. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations. Through the school's annual review process and the analysis of test and examination data he has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and has drawn up an appropriate development plan. Along with his line-manager he is aware of the need to develop further provision in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is regularly reviewed. Departmental spending is clearly linked to priorities for improvement, particularly in relation to providing up-to-date and relevant text books and other learning resources. Although some rooms are not fully suited and some are rather small the accommodation is satisfactory and is enhanced by very good displays of students' work. The provision of interactive white boards in two of the rooms has greatly enhanced the ability of teachers to use a range of teaching techniques and improve learning. There are no dedicated ICT facilities in the department and consequently the use of ICT in the teaching of geography is limited. Good progress has been made in addressing the main issues raised in the last inspection report.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership is beginning to have a positive impact on improving students' achievement.
- Good teaching supports good learning in Years 10 and 11.
- The assessment processes are not yet robust enough to support a rigorous evaluation of students' progress.
- The opportunities for using ICT as a research tool are limited throughout the years.

Commentary

99. Standards are below average in Year 9 and also in Year 11. Judging from the work seen and the students' responses in lessons, achievement is satisfactory throughout all years. GCSE examination results in 2003 were below the national average for girls and represented unsatisfactory achievement because the students, on average, gained a grade less than expected. However, achievement is improving because since September 2003 the head of department has put into place a range of measures including the banding of Year 10 classes. This has enabled teachers to match the learning activities more closely to the specific needs of the students.

100. By Year 9 students develop a range of historical skills, including an adequate understanding of chronology and they are aware of the significance of primary and secondary sources. By Year 11 students develop a sound knowledge of the impact of the First World War on the working lives of women and the Nazi racial policies. Students analyse the various sources of evidence effectively. Some students use ICT to research material particularly for their coursework. However, opportunities within some lessons are limited and this has the effect of slowing the development of students' research, analytical and investigative skills. The schemes of work include planned opportunities for ICT research assignments; however these are not always delivered in lessons.
101. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 to 11. Teachers usually plan and organise lessons to provide a good learning environment. Students are, in the main, keen to learn and they mostly show positive attitudes to their studies. Behaviour is often good or very good in most of the classes. There are good question and answer sessions, with a wide range of students making reasoned contributions. The analysis of source material by students is good and a wide variety is used in the lessons. Homework is marked with encouraging comments but clear targets are not set in many pieces. As a result many students do not have a clear enough guide for improvement. Assessments are set approximately once a term and there is no departmental record keeping or analysis until the end of the year which does not give a clear enough view of progress.
102. Leadership of the department is good with a clear vision for improvement and development because the department is working closely with specialist support from the local education authority. Management is satisfactory because some of the key monitoring mechanisms are yet fully to take effect. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The department has had some recent staffing turbulence which has had an adverse impact on developing the learning. Since September a number of new or returning staff has begun to focus much more effectively on teaching and learning.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching by specialist staff results in highly effective learning and is a key factor in students' very good achievement in Year 10.
- High expectations and a stress on a very brisk pace of learning engender very positive attitudes towards work in the vast majority of lessons.
- The more able students in Years 7 to 9 are not always challenged enough.
- Timetabling and staffing decisions make it very difficult to create a consistent and dedicated team of religious education specialists.

Commentary

103. A new head of department was appointed eighteen months ago and there has been significant progress since then as the vision for the future has been allied with high quality managerial skills. A small number of students took the 2003 GCSE paper and results were well above average. Most did much better in religious education than in other subjects they sat. There was a similar pattern of high achievement for the 80 per cent of Year 10 who took the short course GCSE paper, with 74 per cent obtaining A* to C grades. These results were better than the previous year and this upward trend is mirrored in the work of the current Year 10 who sits the GCSE examination at the end of one year. Excellent or very good teaching by specialist staff, characterised by high expectations of students' potential and a brisk pace of learning, results in very good achievement and very high standards. Students benefit from expert subject knowledge and a precise focus on examination requirements and techniques. Their high level of knowledge and the very good relationships that are a feature of lessons

engender high quality discussions. An example of this was a lively debate about the relevance of religious teaching to racial harmony. This high quality oral work is helpful to students with special educational needs and the less able who make good progress.

104. Tests to ascertain the level of understanding of the Year 7 intake have been introduced and these indicate that standards are broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus when they enter school. Students make good progress, achieving well by the end of Year 9 and standards are higher than expected. This is due to the very well planned schemes of work, teaching packs and resources that support the non-specialist staff well. Students develop a good knowledge and understanding of some of the main religions. They show great respect for each other's views. Students participate well in discussions about a range of issues such as Christianity and community or the relevance of Sikh teaching to modern life. They are confident in explaining the meaning of their family religion as demonstrated by work on Buddhism and Islam.
105. Teaching and learning are generally good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching but a greater focus on challenging the more able in class would have improved learning. At times, marking was variable with too few comments to extend understanding.
106. Very good leadership and management are major factors in the students' success and in the very good improvement since the last inspection. The head of department is an excellent role model as a class teacher because of commitment to hard work, high standards and professional development. Commendable curriculum vision has resulted in the very good use of Year 9 time to begin the GCSE syllabus. Literacy is very well taught and ICT used most effectively to aid learning. There are well-advanced plans to ensure that all Year 10 are awarded a nationally accredited examination in 2004 and that students will meet statutory requirements by studying the locally agreed syllabus in Year 11. This will partly alleviate a current concern about progression for students through the 14 – 19 pathway. Assessment has been introduced and the processes of levelling students' work begun. Some fine-tuning is still required. Two thirds of religious education teachers are non-specialists with other responsibilities and roles which does give rise to some inconsistency from year to year.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and with very high expectations students are motivated to succeed and achieve very well.
- Leadership gives a clear direction to the subject, and teamwork is strong.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is inaccurate, standards stated are too low.
- Technician support is inadequate to meet the demands of the curriculum.
- Liaison with primary schools is effective.
- Workshop space is inadequate to meet the needs of the department.

Commentary

107. Standards in the 2003 examinations were well above average and have improved over the last three years. Results in graphics and product design were high. Standards seen at the end of Year 11 match the overall high results and food technology standards have improved. Standards seen at the end of Year 9 are above national expectations. These standards are due to the very good teaching. Achievement is very good as students enter the school with standards that are in line with national expectations.

108. The quality of teaching is very good overall, based on secure subject knowledge. Planning is very good, and the variety of activities keeps students involved in learning. Lessons are taught at a rapid pace, so that much is covered and learnt in a lesson. Demonstrations are excellent, and make a tremendous impact on the students as was seen, for example, when aluminium was cast. Questioning is very good. Students are made to think around a problem, therefore they learn. Tasks in lessons are organised so that every student succeeds and all students are able to meet their potential. Students respond positively to the very high demands of teachers and apply themselves determined to do well. They enjoy the subject and work very well together.
109. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers and the technician work together very well as a team, which contributes to the very high standards. Evaluation of prior examination results provides a clear way forward. There is a good system of assessment in all years. Overall, technician support is inadequate to meet the demands of this large department, which results in the inefficient use of teachers' time. A very good system of risk assessment has been developed, but it is not yet included in all lesson plans. Visits are not an integral element of the syllabus, the inclusion of which makes the subject real to students. The excellent liaison with primary schools is seen in an illustrative CD compilation on which imaginative projects have been recorded. It exemplifies the increasing success with which the department is contributing to the school's growing reputation as a specialist technology college. The accommodation is inadequate to meet present needs, and workshop space is not always available. However, good facilities are planned for the next building phase. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning in art and textiles.
- Student self-assessment effectively supports individual target setting.
- The informal monitoring system in Years 7 to 9 should be refined to ensure breadth and balance.
- The present ICT provision needs to be resourced and developed further, and thus give better support to computer aided design in textiles work at all levels.

Commentary

110. Standards in GCSE art are just above the national average, and have been steadily improving over the last three years. Standards in textiles are above average. Standards are at the national average in Years 7 to 9, and above it in Years 10 and 11 and students achieve well in all years. Students with special educational needs attain and achieve well with some good examples of their work on display. Many students have English as an additional language but this does not limit either access or attainment. The most able are challenged and also challenge themselves to produce high quality work; in a Year 9 class the others in the group demonstrated intense and well-justified pride in the work of one of their fellow students. Display is very well used to celebrate and inspire; it is often used as a teaching tool. Good achievement patterns were illustrated in good work on relief tiles involving texture and pattern in Year 7, black and white and colour patterns using repeat, reverse, and inversion which linked to work on Georgia O'Keeffe in Year 8 and sketch book and wire and tissue sculptures on butterflies in Year 9.

111. Observed drawing is at the root of all development work, and skills are progressively built up through the school. The research and development process is firmly founded in lower years and subsequently GCSE groups use it almost instinctively to underpin their own development and teacher feedback at this level is normally concerned with refinement and detail. Consequently in work seen there were very good examples of sketch book drawings and development work with Years 10 and 11 students.
112. Teaching and learning were good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teacher expertise has a significant impact on the breadth and depth of student learning. Clear targets are set in lessons and through projects, and are refined through high quality feedback into individual targets. Students are both encouraged and challenged, and abler students challenge themselves. In examination groups a sense of urgency is created to which students respond very positively. Research, development and sketch book work are taught from the outset, and Year 10 and 11 students use this process very effectively as a learning tool. Enthusiasm and excitement are regular features of the art department, and students were seen learning through observation and analysis, skill development, research and development and progressive refinement of both the skills in use and the images being created.
113. Leadership and management are good; the head of department has a clear vision for art in the school and has created a very good team who work together intensively. The technician, who is art trained, provides very good support to the department's work. The curriculum is broad and balanced, including mainstream and world art; however, ICT is underdeveloped and curriculum monitoring is informal and needs refinement. There is a good assessment system which links National Curriculum criteria and levels in student friendly terms, and includes very good self assessment which helps students set targets for themselves. As a consequence end of Year 9 levels are reliable and reflect the standards of work seen.
114. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching in the subject results in students making good progress in the subject and achieving above average standards at the end of Year 11.
- Students' enthusiasm for the GCSE course results in very good achievement over the two years of the course.
- The department provides students in Years 7 to 9 with an imaginative scheme of work.
- The time devoted to the subject in Years 7 to 9 inhibits students' ability to develop discrete drama skills and techniques.
- Accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory and is not conducive to the creation of an appropriate working environment for the subject.

Commentary

115. The majority of students enter the school with a limited knowledge of role-play and educational drama. Students in Years 7 to 9 make satisfactory progress. Their ability to develop a good understanding of a range of drama skills and techniques is inhibited by the time devoted to the subject in Years 7 to 9. As a result standards by the time students are 14 are average, and in line with expectations for their age.
116. As a result of good teaching and imaginative interpretation of the GCSE drama syllabus students make accelerated progress in their drama skills, achieve well and attain above

average standards by the time they are 16. This is reflected in the above average grades achieved in the most recent GCSE examinations.

117. Students work well together in Years 7 to 9 as they engage in a range of devised dramas and the interpretations of scripted plays. They display good self-discipline and focus on the skills to be developed in the lesson. They listen to and value the ideas and others and are prepared to approach their work from a number of points of view before arriving at an agreed shape for their polished work. This was observed in a good lesson with students exploring the ideas of refugees and their response to living in a different country. A similar approach was taken in Year 8 as students engaged in some good devised drama prior to exploring a short play from Bengal.
118. Students in Years 10 and 11 have a great deal of enthusiasm for the subject with this being evident in their approach to their work. This was observed in a very good lesson in Year 11 with students working on original pieces of devised drama. They had a clear understanding of the nature of their characters and were able to draw on a good range of drama skills to create believable characters through the use of physicalisation, gesture, tone of voice and the use of space to denote status and relationships between characters. Students were supportive of each other and made very useful comments and suggestions as to how each other's work could be improved. Although most students have good literacy skills a number of them still find it difficult to evaluate their own work and the success or failure of the drama skills and techniques they brought to their work, preferring instead simply to describe the activities they were involved in.
119. The quality of teaching is good with some very good teaching being observed during the inspection. Lessons are extremely well planned, organised and managed. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and use their own good drama skills to good effect as they engage in teacher-in-role activities to stimulate students and to extend their knowledge and understanding. Lessons are brisk and purposeful with teachers' enthusiasm contributing to an active and motivating environment.
120. Leadership and management are good. The head of drama, along with other members of the department provide students with an imaginative range of drama activities with good assessment procedures helping students to develop a clear understanding of what they have to do to improve the quality of their work. Regular chances are given for students to visit the theatre to extend their wider knowledge of theatre. There is a drama club. All students are given the opportunity to take part in annual productions. These are much appreciated by students, staff and parents.
121. Although resources for the subject are adequate, accommodation is unsatisfactory. Lack of soundproofing between the two adjoining studios has an adverse impact on students' ability to concentrate fully on their work within an appropriate working environment. With the necessity to work together, the chance to explore a number of moral and contemporary issues and the exploration of drama from other cultures and traditions, the subject makes a good contribution to students' social, moral and cultural development. Standards in the subject have improved since the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership of the department supports good learning.
- The very good attitudes of the students to learning.
- The high standards of achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- The need to refine the schemes of work to detail individual lessons.
- The need to develop the use of computers in the department.

Commentary

122. Standards of work in Years 7 to 9 are above average and in Years 10 and 11 are well above average. Students achieve well. Standards at GCSE for the past two years have been well above national averages with the majority of students gaining the highest grades. The numbers of students opting for music at GCSE is increasing and there are now two groups in Year 10.
123. In a Year 7 lesson, students showed good knowledge of musical terms and elements in class discussion and have very positive attitudes to the subject. They work well independently, in pairs or as groups showing maturity and skill in their interpretation of a graphic score. In a Year 9 lesson, students worked productively preparing performances of Pachelbel's ground bass in groups. Year 11 composition work is of a high standard ranging from carefully crafted instrumental pieces to extremely successful examples of song writing.
124. However, students enjoy music and generally show very good attitudes and work with enthusiasm and interest. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In most lessons teachers have clear expectations, very good subject knowledge and good relationships with the students which helps promote good learning. Homework tasks need to be more challenging. Practical work in class is often too open-ended, student tasks are not linked to assessment objectives. Student work needs to be carefully matched so that students of all abilities can achieve well. The use of ICT in the department is underdeveloped which is partly due to the poor accommodation.
125. Leadership in the department is good. In the management of the department short term planning in Years 7 to 9 is not linked closely to National Curriculum programmes of study and assessment outcomes. Student achievement is not monitored well. The department has good self-evaluation and developmental policies. There is a thriving extra-curricular life in the department with healthy numbers of students having instrumental and singing lessons. There are numerous ensembles and the choir, orchestra and jazz band in particular performing to a very high standard. The school has a good annual musical production, a music festival and a foreign tour supplemented with plenty of other opportunities for performance. The department makes a valuable contribution to the cultural and social life of the school.
126. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory but poor accommodation and the fact that the second teaching room is used for examinations makes practical music difficult at certain times of the year. There is scope for more use of new technology. The shortness of lessons makes meaningful practical work and its evaluation less effective.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in dance is above average.
- A strong assessment structure helps students focus on areas of improvement.
- Good teaching combined with the good teacher-student relationships set up a pleasant environment in which good learning takes place.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities supports well students' learning.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- The structure of the GCSE theory work does not support all students' learning.

Commentary

127. In 2003 students taking GCSE courses had results well above the national average in dance but below the national average in physical education. However, students in physical education did achieve results predicted by their previous levels of attainment.
128. Standards of Year 9, as seen in lessons, are overall average when compared with national standards but above average in dance and below average in ball games. Overall students achieve well. Standards in the core physical education course at the end of Year 11 are in line with national expectations. Students do have the opportunity of taking the Junior Sports leader award but their overall attainment is limited by the time allocated and the accommodation available. Students on the current GCSE course show work in line with the national average. In dance, practical work is above average.
129. Students enter the school with a variety of physical skills depending on the feeder school from which they come but overall are below the national expectations and by the end of Year 9 show work that is in line with the national expectation. This improvement represents good achievement. By the end of Year 11 students have physical skills in a wider range of activities. A number are developing the roles of coaches and umpires. Achievement is good. Achievement in the GCSE dance course is very good and good in the GCSE physical education course but satisfactory in the theory element.
130. Teaching and learning are good. There is no significant difference in the teaching in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. The good relationships between staff and students and between students themselves combined with the good attitudes and encouragement provides a positive environment in which good learning can take place and in which the students feel confident in trying out new ideas. All groups of students are included and the work provided gives a good challenge to them all. Students work well in pairs and in groups, supporting each other in their work. New technology and technical terminology are well used. Numerical skills are developed within athletics. The current assessment scheme is being refined and gives good support to the learning of the students. Students use the levels in their lessons and are aware of their levels and what is needed to raise their work to the next level. The organisation and structure of the theory work of the GCSE physical education course do not give the support to weaker students because notes are not organised in a way to be an effective revision resource.
131. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is a clear vision for improvement; the staff are good role models and work as an effective team sharing good practice. The department has experienced a rapid changeover of teaching staff. Recent improvements have been put into place and are already having an impact. The health and fitness element of activities are emphasised well. A good range of extra-curricular activities supplements the activities provided in timetabled time and gives good support to the learning.
132. Improvement since the last inspection has been good but the accommodation is still unsatisfactory, limiting what can be offered in activities and in the development of skills. The time allocated to students in Years 7 to 8 has improved but in the core in Years 10 and 11 the time is still well below the average.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

As part of its work formerly as a Beacon School and currently as a Leading Edge school Parliament Hill has been in the vanguard of innovative curriculum development for vocational and applied GCSEs over the past two years. Funding is provided through the LEA by the Learning Skills Council and the coordinator in school has been instrumental in helping other schools in the LEA to make decisions about the scale and pace of change. The double award for entry level Life Skills and Skills for Working Life in Years 10 and 11 was inspected in depth. A number of students who participate in the PACE Project described earlier in this report are students on the course. Many are disaffected

and some are very challenging. As an access course it gives all girls the opportunity to progress to a wide range of foundation and intermediate vocational courses within the La Swap consortium and to other FE placements and employment.

LIFE SKILLS AND SKILLS FOR WORKING LIFE

Provision in Life Skills and Working Life is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The course motivates and challenges very well students with emotional or behavioural difficulties or who have specific learning needs.
- Very good teaching promotes high levels of teamwork and their independent learning skills.
- Assessment of students' work and target setting are very good.

Commentary

133. This is a new course and there are no value added statistics for vocational courses available nationally for the Life Skills courses. Judgements are based on a scrutiny of students' work, observation of lessons and discussions with students. Completed units in portfolios show that students with a history of literacy difficulties or emotional and behavioural problems are producing work of a high standard. In each folder there is evidence of good skills progression and an increased knowledge and understanding of the unit studied. Year 10 students contributed freely to a class discussion on health emergencies and their subsequent discussion in small groups demonstrated that they were prepared to learn from each other. Overall students achieve very well because experienced teachers are knowledgeable about vocational studies and have expertise in motivating their students to learn.
134. Teaching and learning are very good. Good teamwork between teachers and support staff is successfully confirmed in the way in which they work in the classroom. It is also exemplified by the joint planning of resources and activities for the course. A very good Year 11 lesson set the group a task to work as a team to plan and carry out an activity for a group of young children in a local nursery. Students organised themselves into different roles and the planning meeting was dominated by enthusiastic discussion of the issues involved. At the end of a long session, students were keen to move on and carry out their various roles including telephoning the nursery, arranging the games, working out the expenses and so on. The skill of the teaching lay in the timing of intervention and support for students in developing their ideas. Students felt that they were achieving their objective through a collaborative approach. Students in both years were keen to express their enjoyment of the work.
135. Leadership and management are very good. The course clearly meets the need of the students involved. Assessment is thorough and the effective use of target setting based on formative assessment is a key element in the very good progress made in lessons. The coordinator is dedicated to continuous improvement and the self-evaluation process by teachers of their work on the course is exemplary. As a result the current action plan is focused on flexibility in meeting the needs of those students with irregular attendance patterns, strategies for homework and extension work and on developing further resource packs for the units of work.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship was inspected in full and is reported below. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) was sampled.

136. The school has very good, well planned arrangements for the delivery of PSHE. It was not possible to observe any lessons but a scrutiny of the students' work indicates that PSHE is taught systematically and enhanced by a range of teaching and learning strategies that

promote meaningful participation. Students are positive about the benefits of the programme. For example, they talked about the challenge of solving problems and making decisions about issues that focused on stress or abortion issues. Contributions from a range of visiting specialists maintain interest and result in a curriculum that is related to real life, such as a talk from the local community police officer on personal safety. A strong feature is the multi-faceted approach to sex education that includes a very strong focus on relationships.

137. There is a stress on issues that have significance for young women, such as anorexia nervosa and assertive behaviour training. There is a sensitive regard to the needs of this multi-cultural school, with very good units on racism and strong commitment to celebrating diversity. Students mature in an extremely positive and caring environment and PHSE makes a very good contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The underlying ethos of the school supports citizenship very well.
- A newly appointed head of department with good leadership and management skills.
- The curriculum is planned well.
- Many staff teaching the subject has received no training.
- The cross-curriculum contribution is insufficiently monitored.
- Assessment procedures have begun but are not fully developed.

Commentary

138. The school's underlying ethos, with its emphasis on rights and responsibilities within a caring community, is strongly supportive of citizenship education. The subject is well led. There has been rapid curriculum development and moves towards the formal identification of aspects of citizenship within the school. There is opportunity for students to research and present ideas and information. Citizenship is taught as a separate subject and standards and achievement over time are satisfactory.
139. In work seen, students' progress in Years 7 to 9 classes was satisfactory overall and very good in a third of the lessons. This was the result of high quality, enthusiastic teaching and the very good use of stimulating resources, which engaged students. For example, there were high quality discussions by Year 7 students about living in a community. Less successful teaching occurred when teachers lacked the subject expertise to extend students' comments or judiciously amend the well-prepared teaching packs. The vast majority of teachers are new to the teaching of the subject and have received little training. It was not possible to see any Year 10 or 11 classes and the work in their folders only covers what has been learnt in a few weeks. A firm judgement on teaching and learning for this age group cannot be made. However, when interviewed, Year 11 students were able to explain clearly how they had begun to consider and apply for activities to be accredited as part of the Active Citizenship Project. The skills of participation and action are addressed through the school council which operates on a democratic basis. Many students are involved appropriately in raising money for charity and participating in activities such as local debates and Youth Question Time.
140. The newly appointed, enthusiastic co-ordinator has good management skills and informed vision. An audit of the contribution of subject areas has been done but the evaluation of the quality and potential of the departmental contribution has not been fine-tuned. Good quality units have been written to deliver the curriculum. Assessment, with a focus on self-evaluation, has been initiated but students are not sure of the criteria that determine success and what to do to reach a higher attainment level. The school is developing portfolios that will

comprehensively reflect students' formal and informal citizenship experiences to inform assessment and future planning. A good start has been made in citizenship education.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	11	100	90	27.3	42.7	34.5	39
Biology	5	100	81.6	0	33.2	32	33.2
Chemistry	6	100	84.8	0	36.9	30	35.2
Communication studies	6	100	94.2	50	36.1	46.7	38.5
English literature	7	100	94.4	42.9	37.9	45.7	38.9
Mathematics	7	57.1	74.2	0	34.3	14.3	31.3
Other social studies	12	83.3	83.2	8.3	32.5	27.5	33.6
Spanish	7	100	87.5	14.3	36.1	27.1	34.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	43	100	96.1	65.1	48.7	94.9	85.1
Biology	14	100	91.6	28.6	36.3	75.7	74.1
Chemistry	12	100	94	41.7	45.9	73.3	81.1
Communication studies	25	100	98.3	52	36.8	89.6	81.1
Drama	12	100	98.1	66.7	41.5	96.7	82.9
Economics	6	100	96.2	0	45.8	56.7	83.1
English literature	41	100	98.5	53.7	43.7	93.2	84.3
French	7	100	96.2	42.9	46.1	82.9	83
Design and technology	8	100	95.3	62.5	35.5	95	76.5
Geography	7	100	97.1	14.3	40.5	71.4	80.9
History	22	95.5	97.1	54.5	41	83.6	81.2
Information technology	5	100	89.1	60	22.4	92	64.1
Mathematics	12	100	93.3	50	52.2	90	84.7
Other social studies	43	95.3	94.3	53.5	38.9	86.5	77.7
Sociology	15	100	95.4	53.3	39.6	90.7	79.1
Business	9	88.9	87.1	44.4	16.5	84.4	60.1

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature

Two A-level lessons were observed during the period of the inspection, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. A scrutiny of students' written work was also carried out.

Provision in A-level English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and contributes to good achievement in the subject and the above average standards achieved by students in their final examinations.
- The department provides a good range of demanding English literature activities.
- The good working relationship between teachers and students makes a positive contribution to learning.

Commentary

141. The school operates an inclusive policy for entry into A-level English literature. This sometimes results in students having average, rather than above average, grades in their GCSE English examinations as they begin this demanding course. Attainment upon entry into Year 12 for the majority of students is average. Students achieve well in the two years of the course and standards at the end of Year 13 are above average. This is reflected in 2003 results when students achieved above average grades. In work seen, students' marked essays indicate that the current Year 13 students are on target to maintain these standards.
142. The majority of students in Years 12 and 13 have good speaking and listening skills, with a number of more able students making perceptive comments about the texts they are exploring.
143. Most students in Years 12 and 13 are good readers, with many of them having high order reading skills. They have a good understanding of how writers use language to convey ideas, issues and concepts and are able to identify sub-text and the presentation of inferred ideas and opinions, rather than simply reading at a surface level.
144. Most students have good writing skills. Their good reading skills enable them to make a strong personal response to the texts they explore. They can write in a confident manner about different texts within a single essay and can recognise, appreciate and write about how novelists and playwrights explore similar ideas and issues from different perspectives. A good example of this occurred in Year 13 as students wrote about the concept of 'The American Dream' as presented in Scott Fitzgerald's novel 'The Great Gatsby' and Arthur Miller's play 'Death of a Salesman'. A number of higher attaining students write in a mature and extended manner about the texts they have studied. The good progress in students' knowledge and understanding is much influenced by the good working relationship between teachers and students.
145. Teaching and learning are good with some very good teaching being observed during the period of the inspection. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and convey it to students in an informed manner. Teachers use a good range of teaching and learning styles to extend knowledge and understanding with regular chances for students to take control of their own learning through well-planned group activities. Groups of students explore individual aspects of their texts and share their ideas and opinions with the rest of the class with the results that students learn through the efforts of others.

146. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The A-level syllabus is interpreted in an imaginative and demanding manner. The department uses the syllabus assessment criteria to good effect with students having a clear idea of what they have to do in order to improve the quality of their work. Standards in the subject have been maintained since the last inspection and, overall, improvement has been satisfactory.

Modern foreign languages

The focus of the inspection was French. One lesson of **Spanish** was inspected in Year 13. Standards in 2003 at Spanish A-level were in line with national averages. Retention is good. Good speaking skills were evident in the lesson observed. Achievement in the subject is good.

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' fluency and accuracy in speaking French combined with a good range of strategies for promoting good learning.
- Most students achieve well.
- The writing of some students is inadequate, lacking fluency and accuracy.
- The limited amount of documentation is a weakness.

Commentary

147. Standards in 2003 at A-level were in line with national averages, with evidence of gradual improvement over time. French is currently being taught at Parliament Hill School only in Year 12 (AS-level). Standards are average but with a range from well above average to below average. There was no appreciable difference in the standards of boys and girls. Speaking skills showed both great strengths and considerable weaknesses. The highest attaining students spoke with both fluency and accuracy. The lowest attaining students had great difficulty in expressing themselves, mainly because of inaccurate pronunciation. Writing skills also varied from very high, with considerable range (including poetry) and accuracy, to very limited range with frequent mistakes. Listening skills are good as a result of the very good oral skills of both teachers. Achievement for all students is good with many students having increasing confidence in speaking and writing.
148. Teaching and learning are good. Positive features included very good modelling of the French language, the use of all four language skills, good planning and presentation of a wide range of interesting materials. In a very good lesson the teacher provided different work for students of different abilities. In another lesson, there was limited opportunity for students to develop their spoken skills and there was too much emphasis on listening. Students discuss issues such as smoking and the use and misuse of alcohol confidently. They begin to make use of the subjunctive mood in both speech and writing.
149. Assessment arrangements show evidence of extensive and helpful comments by teachers in some folders, with grades being used in some cases. Some marking, however, lacks rigour, with major mistakes sometimes not indicated. Students' reports show clear targets for future development.
150. The curriculum is satisfactory with good use of the Internet to access up-to-date materials. The exchange arranged with a Paris school makes a very valuable contribution to the course. Leadership and management are good with a firm view of the need to promote the AS and A-level courses in Years 10 and 11. The department has wide range of resources, books, audio and video-tapes and dictionaries. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' high expectations set high standards for students' learning.
- Good teaching is promoting achievement and raising standards.
- Independent learning skills could be developed further.

Commentary

151. A-level results for 2002 and 2003 were well below the national averages for schools with sixth forms but the AS-level results of students in the current Year 13 are a significant improvement on those of the past two years. A-level work seen during the inspection was average and matched the abilities of the students. Students achieve well. Those students following the recently introduced GNVQ course are working at an average standard and achieving well given their prior attainment.
152. Teaching and learning are good. In all lessons teachers plan their work well and have high expectations of students. This sets high standards for learning. Teachers make good use of ICT in their teaching although more could be done to encourage students to develop their independent learning skills through the use of new technology. Teaching is good or better in the vast majority of lessons and this is promoting good achievement and raising standards. Students work well together in their learning and teachers provide frequent opportunities for them to collaborate. The relationships between teachers and students are very positive and mutually respectful. In most lessons, teachers use a range of teaching strategies to stimulate and motivate students' learning. An A-level lesson seen with a group of Year 13 students proved to be outstanding in this respect.

Example of outstanding practice

The aim of the lesson was to teach students to understand and apply the compound angle formulae in trigonometry.

Planning of the lesson was thorough and ensured that the considerable time allocated would be used effectively. The highly skilled teacher made impressive use of ICT through the inter-active white board colourfully to present information. After reviewing the students' previous learning through a very effective question and answer session the teacher presented them with a task and invited them to collaborate to find the solution. The teacher ensured that appropriate extension activities were available for those who found the solution quickly whilst she supported those requiring further explanation. When satisfied that all students understood the basic principles identified in the task a further collaborative activity was introduced that was designed to reinforce and extend their learning. The teacher maintained a lively pace of teaching and learning throughout the lesson. This ensured students were challenged and totally engaged at all times. All the students were strongly motivated by very effective teaching and made considerable progress in their understanding and learning.

153. Teaching takes account of the differing abilities of students through a policy based on tasks that 'must', 'should' and 'could' be completed by them according to their abilities. This policy is effective and successfully meets the differing ability requirements of students. On a few occasions the work set does not effectively match the aptitudes of students. This results in poor motivation and teaching that is satisfactory but insufficiently stimulating.
154. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is supported by an experienced colleague who has particular responsibility for the organisation and management of teaching and learning at this stage. A scheme of work is in place and assessment procedures record students' progress and coverage of the syllabus. The attendance of some students is erratic and a significant number choose not to continue to study the subject after one year. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

SCIENCE

Chemistry was inspected in depth. Two sixth-form lessons in **biology** and **physics** were sampled. The teaching in these lessons was good with all students achieving at or above their expected level.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching.
- Very good facilities.
- Positive student attitudes.
- Lesson timing is tight for some practical work.
- Opportunities to meet with part time staff are limited.
- The lack of punctuality of students to lessons disturbs lessons starts.

Commentary

155. AS standards in 2003 were below that seen nationally for A and B grades but above those for A, B and C together. The majority of students achieve satisfactorily. Grades A to C are above the national percentage at A-level, making progress from AS-level good; a large majority of students achieve above expectations.
156. Students in Year 13 show good understanding of their work. They confidently and clearly explained the order of a reaction and readily identified chromophore groups in dyes. Folders show good quality work in 'Aspects of Agriculture'. Coursework of a very high standard has been produced. Typically work seen was at or above average standard. Students in Year 12 understand the chemistry of hydrocarbons. Students could correctly name compounds with substituted groups. They understand the energetics of chemical reactions and relate theory to practical work. Written work in some folders is not well organised. Work in the grade range A to D was seen. Coursework about energy and hydrocarbons (using ICT for presentation of text, images and data) was well produced and has a positive impact on standards.
157. Teaching and learning are good. Very good use was made of interactive ICT equipment. Good choice of software with high quality visual materials made learning about hydrocarbons and dyes enjoyable. Learning was effective because presentation was clear, logical and well paced. The use of discussions and question techniques facilitated students' learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good allowing delivery of high quality materials at an appropriate level. Practical work was integrated into theory and health and safety aspects well managed. The well-managed database is used to monitor students and the department. Marking is frequent and errors corrected providing feedback on what needs to be done to improve. Students remain on task all the time. They enjoy lessons – as a result of very good teaching – and contribute well by responding to teacher questions. They show initiative in generating questions related to the work showing they are trying to relate new work to existing knowledge. However, a number of students are late for their lessons.
158. Students enjoy their lessons and think teaching is good. All enjoy coursework but felt that the 'Minerals to Medicine' unit was most demanding since it ranged across a wide area of chemistry. Students chose chemistry because they enjoyed it, wanted to keep further education options open or would like to follow a career in medicine. Independent learning is encouraged by providing copies of the specification, individual coursework, access through the school web-site, and exchange of emails with teacher. Students carry out research, develop presentations, and make posters. The open classroom atmosphere encourages students to question.

159. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is new and has achieved much in a short time. Use of ICT has greatly improved. A good database is established, extra-curricular activities and schemes of work are developing. There is a sensible development plan. The provision for post-16 sciences has changed greatly since the last inspection and comparisons of standards are not valid. Teaching has improved, marking is more effective, formative assessment is better and the new laboratories and ICT provision are a great improvement. Overall improvement is good.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership, management and teamwork result in a well-planned and diverse learning experience for the students.
- Fieldwork opportunities and extended assignments develop research and independent learning skills and give students opportunities for the use of ICT.
- Good teaching and good teacher student relationships result in good achievement.
- Attainment is enhanced by the support given to students in organising their work and developing their literacy skills and examination technique.
- Presentations, pair and group work involve students well in their own learning.

Commentary

160. AS and A level results in 2003 were in line with the national average in terms of grades A to E but below the national average in respect of the highest grades A and B. Achievement of these students was good since their prior attainment was below average.

161. In work seen, standards by the end of Year 13 are average. This again represents good achievement as the prior attainment of students is below average. In a Year 12 lesson, students carefully and accurately analysed the causes and effects of flooding on the Mississippi River as part of a case study. They demonstrated good thinking and oral skills, using a variety of resources including a video clip and written materials. In a Year 13 lesson on hazard impacts students working in pairs, developed their skills of research and report writing through the construction of a concept map. Students keep well-organised, detailed records that include a range of writing, graphs, maps and diagrams. They develop their independent working and investigation skills through a residential fieldwork course in Barcelona in Year 12. This provides them, along with other assignments, with opportunities to use their ICT skills.

162. Teaching and learning are good. The good achievement in Year 13 is linked to good teaching and learning and good teacher student relationships. The work is highly structured and well planned by teachers who have good subject knowledge. There is a strong emphasis on literacy skills and developing techniques in answering examination questions. Teachers give the students clear guidance in setting up their assessed assignments. Teaching methods are varied and lessons well paced. Praise, humour and good questioning by teachers are key features of lessons. As a result, student interest and engagement are maintained. Discussions with students reveal that they feel involved in their learning through regular discussions, presentations, pair and group work and that their teachers, across the two schools, work well together and support them effectively.

163. Leadership and management are good. The head of department sets high standards and the teachers in the consortium work well as a team. The curriculum is well planned and supported by fieldwork activities. Marking and assessment procedures are thorough and help students improve. Data is used to analyse past performance and to inform strategies further to raise

standards. The use of data for individual target setting and monitoring could be further developed. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Product design

Provision in product design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good, which results in students who are highly motivated and who are very good independent learners.
- Leadership and management are very good, and teachers and the technician work very well together to support students.
- There is good liaison with institutions of Higher Education.

Commentary

164. Too few girls took the AS examination in 2003 for national comparisons to be made. In work seen, standards are average in Years 12 and 13. Students' folders show extensive research and their making skills show good attention to detail. Students achieve very well, as some enter the course without experience of the subject. Retention is very good and many continue into higher education in some aspect of the subject.
165. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Demonstrations are excellent, which not only ensure that students learn the skills needed to make high quality products, but the continuous commentary expands on the subject. This widens students' understanding. Teachers have high expectations of the quality of products made, and questioning is very good, as it challenges students. This encourages students' creativity, and leads to a very high degree of independent learning. This results in active working and learning lessons. Students are very positive about the subject and the support that they have received. They appreciate that the subject has made them think, and has resulted in them taking responsibility for their own learning.
166. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers collaborate well, which ensures that all areas of learning are well covered. Students know that they can approach all teachers and the technician for advice and support. Assessment is very good and students are very clear about how they can improve. Good connections with institutions of Higher Education benefits students, from which they gain a wide understanding of the subject. Product design was not inspected in the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

167. **Art** was sampled. Five lessons were seen in art, photography and textiles in which teaching and learning were good or better. An analysis of work and lessons seen indicated that students' standards were above average and that achievement was very good. The excellent practice in research and development and sketch book use established by the end of Year 11 continues to develop at sixth form level, resourcing high quality work. Art displays include excellent sixth form work which inspires and challenges younger students.
168. During the inspection one **film studies** lesson was seen with 10 Year 13 students where very good teaching and learning were seen. Censorship during the 1990s was taught as part of a wider topic of comparing censorship in the 1960s and 1990s. High quality teaching stimulated a thoughtful and sensitive debate which reflected the students' maturity, good knowledge and understanding of the issues involved.

169. Two **media studies** lessons were sampled during the inspection. In both lessons teachers showed very good subject knowledge and well planned teaching activities. In a Year 13 lesson, students were taken through model answers addressing realism in British soaps which developed their critical awareness and understanding of the requirements of the examination. In a Year 12 lesson, students work on computers, developing their own musical web-sites demonstrating their technical skills and understanding of the demands of the coursework.
170. One Year 12 **music** lesson was sampled where students worked on melody harmonisation. They demonstrated good prior knowledge and secure teaching with their knowledge of primary triads, cadences, modulation and passing notes.

Drama

Two A-level drama lessons were observed during the period of the inspection, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. A scrutiny of students' work was also carried out.

Provision in A-level drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in the subject result in good achievement and learning.
- The Drama department interprets the A-level syllabus in an interesting and demanding manner.
- Students are very enthusiastic about the subject and approach their work with a real sense of commitment.
- There are limited opportunities for students to explore the working methods of influential directors, and the approach to the interpretation of characters advocated by different practitioners.
- Accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory and not conducive to the subject.

Commentary

171. The school operates an inclusive policy for entry into the A-level Drama course. Overall entry into Year 12 is below average, with a number of students not having studied the subject at GCSE level, and with a number of students only having average and sometimes below average grades in GCSE Language and Literature. Students achieve well in the two years of the course and make very good progress in their drama skills, with the result that standards by the end of Year 13 are above average. This is reflected in the most recent A-level examinations. Evidence from lesson observations and a scrutiny of students' written work indicate that these standards will be maintained by the current group of Year 13 students.
172. Students in both years of the course approach their work with a great deal of enthusiasm. This was observed in Year 12 as students were directed by their teacher in an interpretation of a scene from Harold Pinter's 'The Birthday Party'. Students worked well together on the creation of believable characters through the good use of a range of drama skills. A similar approach to work was observed in Year 13 as students explored 'The Trojan Women', both through improvisation and a directed scene by their teacher. As in the Year 12 lesson students worked with real interest and commitment, though a minority of students lacked self-discipline, which impacted on their ability to sustain a believable character over time.
173. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and their own drama skills and use them to good effect in extending students' knowledge, understanding and learning. This was observed in Year 12 as the member of staff engaged in teacher-in-role activities in order to stimulate students and to develop their understanding of individual characters in the play they were studying. The nature of the syllabus used by the

department necessitates that a number of the plays studied by the students are teacher directed. This sometimes results in lost opportunities for students to make a more active contribution to the shaping and interpretation of the plays they are studying.

174. Regular chances are given for students to evaluate their own and others' work, with the intention of improving it. Although students have a good understanding of how scenes are directed from the viewpoint of their own teacher, they have a limited knowledge and understanding of how respected directors and influential practitioners approach plays from both the viewpoint of the director and actor.
175. Leadership and management are good. The A-level syllabus is interpreted in an effective manner with all members of the department being committed to the raising of standards in the subject. There are good assessment procedures in place, with one to one support ensuring that students have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Although resources for the subject are adequate, accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory. With the lack of soundproofing between the two adjoining studios, even the most acceptable of noise levels from the next studios impacts on the students' ability to focus on the activities they are involved in. It is not possible to make a secure judgement on improvement in standards, with the A-level syllabus and the focus of the drama course having changed significantly since the last inspection.

BUSINESS

Business education

Provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership is having a very considerable impact on raising students' achievement.
- There are good links and effective curriculum development between the work experience opportunities and the customer services module.
- The curriculum provides a very effective pathway for students through the three course levels in the sixth form consortium.
- Effective teamwork is developing with the new staffing team this year.
- Assessment processes have developed very quickly since September and are effective.
- Overall students' attitudes to their learning are mixed and a few students find it difficult to work systematically and independently to achieve well.

Commentary

176. In the AVCE 2003 examination eleven per cent secured A or B grades with all students reaching an A to E grade. This matched national expectations and represents good achievement because of the below average entry levels of the students. The 2003 GNVQ intermediate examination result was more mixed with seven per cent securing a merit grade and fifty three per cent gaining the full award. This represents satisfactory achievement and the department has already strengthened the motivation and organisation of the current Year 12 GNVQ students. Retention is very good on the courses with almost all students staying until the end of the courses.
177. Written work in the Year 12 AVCE group and the Year 13 AVCE finance group indicates that students are working at below average standards and this represents, because of their entry level of well below average, good achievement. Students in the Year 12 GNVQ class are working at national expectations and are achieving satisfactorily. The GNVQ students can produce an effective PowerPoint demonstration and other students are able to give effective

criticisms of their performance. In the AVCE groups, students showed a sound understanding of how to use the 'SWOT' (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis tool and a good understanding of how to apply profitability ratios.

178. Teaching is good with some very good features and this supports effective learning. Lessons are well planned and teachers ensure that learning objectives are clear and understood. The teachers have a good command of business education and work effectively together and with the students to develop an effective learning environment. The whole team is new to the school since September 2003 and under very energetic leadership, it is already working well together, sharing good practice and extending the learning opportunities for the students. Rigorous question and answer sessions effectively probe and develop the students' understanding. There is very good use of information and communication technology to develop good presentational skills, particularly in the portfolio work and in note making, and its regular use supports the effective development of good study skills for most students. The assessment of work is thorough in the department, and provides a good indication for further improvements to learning. The students show good oral skills, where well supported by teachers, with a good development of ideas in their groups. However a small number of students in both AVCE groups have poor attendance and punctuality and this affects their progress. The department does rigorously chase up these students and their work is improving slowly. Other students who have attended regularly and developed good study skills are working above expectation.
179. Leadership and management are very good. The current post holder has built up the department very effectively since September, he is a very effective teacher and manager and he leads the department by very good example. The link between the work experience of the students and the customer services module is an example of very good practice. Such experiences enable students to learn both practically and theoretically in a very integrated way. Similarly the curriculum pathway through the foundation, intermediate and advanced courses enables students with relatively modest achievements at 16 to go on to much improved opportunities later. This is a very strong feature of the department. The department is a good and rapidly improving department and has made good improvement since the last inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	5	5
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well students learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets students needs	2	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1	1
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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