

INSPECTION REPORT

HAMSTEAD HALL SCHOOL

Handsworth Wood, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103516

Headteacher: David Brown

Lead inspector: Janet Mills

Dates of inspection: 24th - 27th November 2003

Inspection number: 259304

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 - 19
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1,117
School address:	Craythorne Avenue Handsworth Wood Birmingham
Postcode:	B20 1HL
Telephone number:	(0121) 358 5991
Fax number:	(0121) 358 6707
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend Peter French
Date of previous inspection:	10 th November 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hamstead Hall School, in Handsworth Wood, is a mixed oversubscribed comprehensive school with 1,117 students on roll, of whom 187 are in the sixth form. It has specialist status as a sports college and a Gold Artsmark. Sixty-three per cent of the students are Asian or Asian British, 19 per cent are black or black British, and 11 per cent are white British. A very high proportion of the students speak English as an additional language (61 per cent), and the proportion entitled to free school meals (22 per cent) is above average. The attainment of students on entry to the school is below average. The school includes a unit for students with moderate learning difficulties. Over the whole school, the proportion of students with a statement of special educational need (four per cent) is above average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
32072	Dr Janet Mills	Lead inspector	
9163	Mr Geoff Humphrey	Lay inspector	
18665	Ms Susan Murray	Team inspector	Special educational needs, English as an additional language
30198	Mr Reg Chick	Team inspector	Physical education
32783	Mr Michael Webb	Team inspector	English
5525	Mr Richard Cooper	Team inspector	Mathematics
16786	Dr Selwyn Hodge	Team inspector	Science, post-16 chemistry
32105	Dr Alan Dobson	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
18734	Mr Chris Salt	Team inspector	Design and technology, post-16 information and communication technology
8076	Mr Terry Bendall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
19530	Ms Jennifer Bray	Team inspector	Geography
22849	Dr Ron Catlow	Team inspector	History
13065	Ms Karen Brock	Team inspector	Art and design, music
10448	Mr Michael Elson	Team inspector	Religious education, citizenship
15940	Dr Norman Godfrey	Team inspector	Post-16 art and design, business education, health and social care, leisure and tourism
30648	Mr Brian Skelton	Team inspector	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Hamstead Hall is a **very good** school. The teaching is very effective, students' attitudes to learning are very positive, and students achieve well. Examination and test results improve substantially upon students' below average achievement on entry to the school, and this improvement is particularly strong during Years 10 and 11. The quality of education and value for money that the school provides are very good, as are the leadership and management provided by the senior staff.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The inclusiveness of the education that it provides and its strong sense of community.
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher and the challenge and support provided by the governing body.
- The dedication and commitment of the staff and the very high quality of teaching and learning.
- The students' very positive attitudes to learning and their high standards of behaviour.
- The growth in students' achievement as they pass through the school.
- The significant contribution of the school to the community in Handsworth and Handsworth Wood.
- The valued support that the school provides to other schools and colleges in Birmingham.
- The need to provide more opportunities for students' spiritual development which, although improved, continue to lag behind those provided for their moral, social and cultural development.

The school has made good progress **since its last inspection**. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching has improved. A sixth form has opened and it is effective. Designation as a sports college has helped the school enhance its ethos, develop its relationship with its local community and increase students' achievement. The school has responded thoroughly to the key issues raised by inspectors: attainment in design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT) has risen although further work is needed in ICT; students arrive punctually at lessons; the quality of the library, opportunities for spiritual development, provision of information in the prospectus and attention to health and safety matters have improved; and performance management has been introduced.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	A	B	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	N/A	C	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' achievement is **good**. They enter the school with relatively low levels of attainment; by Year 9 their attainment has risen markedly above the national level of improvement; by Year 11 it is above average and well above the average for schools where similar proportions of students are entitled to free school meals. Subjects that are particularly strong include mathematics, science and physical education (PE). Students maintain their good progress during the sixth form.

The provision for students' personal development is **very good**, and for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development it is **good**. Students' behaviour is a strength of the school. Rates of attendance are high.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. The teaching is **very good** overall, with a virtual absence of unsatisfactory teaching and this leads to **very good** learning from age 11 to age 18. The teaching of students of average and below average ability is particularly effective. **Curriculum** provision within the timetable is sound overall, and enriched by a very good and unusually extensive range of extra-curricular provision. Students' language development is promoted effectively, but more so in some classrooms than in others. Assessment procedures are good overall, but uneven in quality between subjects. The quality and quantity of the resources meet the needs of the curriculum well in most subjects, but the condition and appearance of the accommodation hinder the learning in some subjects. Students are cared for very effectively and receive a very good quality of support, advice and guidance and the school is exemplary in the way that it seeks and acts on students' views. A growing proportion of parents respond to the school's efforts to forge links. The school's links with the community are exemplary and the support that it provides for other schools is valued strongly by them and is helping to raise the quality of teaching and learning in the institutions involved.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are both very good. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and the governing body provides high levels of challenge and support and meets almost all their statutory duties. The financial and administrative affairs of the school are very efficiently handled. All staff have unusually high levels of involvement in the development and improvement of the school. Its systems have the robustness and flexibility needed to cope with unanticipated events.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The parents who completed questionnaires, or who attended the pre-inspection meeting, are very supportive of the school and consider that it has improved. They would welcome further feedback about their children's academic progress. Students agree with their parents that the school treats them fairly and with respect. They enjoy coming to school and consider that they are taught well and expected to work hard.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

In order to improve further, the school should:

- Provide students with further opportunities for spiritual development.
- Enhance the language development of students throughout the school.
- Improve the quality and use of assessment, including marking.
- Raise the challenge of the teaching offered to more able students.
- Increase the breadth of the curriculum offered in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form.
- Improve the quality of the buildings and the learning environment.
- Develop the independent study skills of students in the sixth form.

The school should also ensure that the school meets statutory requirements in respect of information and communication technology (ICT), religious education, citizenship and provision of a daily act of collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT HAMSTEAD HALL SCHOOL

There are 187 students in this new sixth form: 122 in Year 12 and 65 in Year 13. GCE and GVNQ courses are offered and science-based courses are particularly popular.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good**, cost-effective sixth form. Very good teaching combined with students' very positive attitudes and very effective assessment procedures lead to good achievement. Many of the students gain examination results that are higher than would have been expected from their GCSE grades. The sixth form is managed and led effectively.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good or very good provision in eight of the subjects that were the focus of the inspection: art and design, business studies, chemistry, English, health and social care, information and communication technology (ICT), leisure and tourism and mathematics.
- The benefit to students from good practice in marking and assessment, so that they know how to improve.
- The very high quality of the support, advice and guidance that students receive.
- The high extent to which the school acts on sixth formers' views.
- The curriculum provides less effectively for students who are not suited to, or do not wish to take, academic courses.
- Students' independent study skills are underdeveloped.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision is good . Standards in language and literature are good and the quality of teaching is uniformly high. Students need to develop further as independent learners.
Mathematics	Provision is excellent . Students with wide-ranging GCSE results achieve very well through their very positive attitudes and very good teaching. Lessons are well planned and stimulate mathematical thinking.
Science	Provision in chemistry is good . Students make good progress in lessons as a result of effective and very knowledgeable teaching. Students receive very good support and encouragement and are very keen to learn. Standards are in line with the national average. Students' achievement is satisfactory.
Information and communication technology	Provision is very good . Students understand technological concepts and how these can be applied to real life situations. The teaching and learning are good and standards are well above average.
Humanities	History: provision is satisfactory . The teachers are knowledgeable. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall, but they need to develop more skills in interpreting and evaluating historical sources.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art is very good . Standards are above average because of very good teaching and the excellent attitude of the students. Progress is very good and achievement is good because of very good lesson planning and challenging activities. Standards continue to improve.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in leisure and tourism is good . Satisfactory standards of work were seen during the inspection. Standards are improving because of good teaching and the positive attitudes of the students. Both GNVQ and AVCE courses are well managed offering students every opportunity to make good progress.

Curriculum area**Evaluation**

Business education

Provision in **very good**. Standards are above average and continue to improve because of very good teaching by teachers who have a secure knowledge of the subject and high expectations. The students respond very well to the challenges presented to them and therefore progress and achievement are good.

Health and social care

Provision is **very good**. The subject is extremely well managed and, combined with very good teaching, this results in standards that are well above the national average. The attitude of the students is excellent, they respond to the challenges offered and therefore achievement and progress are very good.

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

This is **very good**. Students receive high quality counselling regarding their education. Their progress is very well monitored and tracked and they are supported very effectively when applying for higher education, further education or employment at the end of their course.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

These are **very good**. However, senior managers are aware that the predominantly academic curriculum that is offered does not fully meet the needs of all students in Year 11.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive about the sixth form. They feel that they are taught effectively, teachers are helpful, their work is assessed thoroughly and the school is well run. Homework is found to be useful and they received good advice about what to study. However, some sixth formers speak of social divisions among the student body and a few – particularly in Year 12 – feel that there is no adult who knows them well.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students' achievement is good throughout the school. Their results in national tests and examinations compare well with those in similar schools and improved in 2003. Students with special educational needs and students of average or below average ability make particularly good progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement in mathematics is very good; it is good in English and science.
- The progress made by students during Years 10 - 11 is well above average.
- The progress made by students during Years 7 - 9 was above average in 2002 and Year 9 students' achievement increased in 2003.
- The students who continue into the sixth form make good progress.
- The school's strategies are impacting positively on the achievement of African-Caribbean boys and boys more generally.
- The school is particularly successful in raising the achievement of students of average and below average ability; more able students make progress that is sound, but less remarkable than that of their peers.
- Students, English language and literacy skills are sound in Years 7-9, and improve to good in Year 10.

Commentary

1. The achievements of Year 11 students at Hamstead Hall School in recent years have received public recognition. Its 2001 examination results made it the mixed specialist comprehensive in England that had added most value to students' attainment on entry¹. Its 2002 results placed it in the top one per cent of schools for value added from Year 6 to Year 11 and led to the school receiving a congratulatory letter from the Minister of State for School Standards. Its 2003 results are above those for 2002, as Table 1 shows. The proportion of all the Year 11 students who gained a GCSE Grade C or above was 54 per cent in English, 57 per cent in mathematics and 59 per cent in science. GCSE subjects with an entry of at least 20 students, of whom at least 60 per cent gained a grade C or above include art, business studies, ceramics, English literature, graphics, product graphics and religious studies.

Table 1

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	59.0 (55.2)	n/a (49.9)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93.0 (89.1)	n/a (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96.0 (94)	n/a (96.0)
Average point score per students (best eight subjects)	36.0 (34.6)	n/a (34.7)

There were 177 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

¹ Technology Colleges Trust Report 2002: *Value added and the benefits of specialism.*

2. The difference between boys' and girls' results is smaller than usual; in 2002 boys achieved better results in GCSE mathematics. While the school is rightly addressing the underachievement of African-Caribbean boys through a range of initiatives, Hamstead Hall is the school in Birmingham LEA where they achieve most highly². Eighteen (45 per cent) of the 40 African-Caribbean boys who were in Year 11 in 2000, 2001 or 2002 achieved at least five GCSEs at grade C or above.
3. Work seen during lessons and in samples of students' work confirms the good achievement across the curriculum in Years 10 - 11 and very good achievement in two subjects that are taken by all students: mathematics and physical education. However, some students are not achieving well in ICT because of gaps in the school's provision.
4. The achievement of Year 9 students is improving and is good overall. Table 2 shows that the results in national tests improved, in absolute terms, in English, mathematics and science in 2003.

Table 2

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.3 (30.2)	n/a (33.3)
mathematics	34.8 (33.8)	n/a (34.7)
science	32.7 (31.2)	n/a (32.9)

There were 188 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Table 3 shows that the results also improved in comparison with those of similar schools and illustrates the strength of the school's work in mathematics. It also shows that mathematics and science extend their more able students. Other subjects do this less effectively at present and the progress that such students make is satisfactory, rather than good. As in Years 10-11, the work seen in Years 7-9 was very good in mathematics and physical education, but weaker in ICT. It was also weaker in history. In several other subjects, the work seen shows that there is a spurt in the standard of work in Year 9 that could be activated earlier during students' time at the school, through further enhancement of the teaching in Year 7.

Table 3

Year 9 national tests: schools with similar percentage of students entitled to free school meals

Standards in:	Level 5 or above		Level 6 or above	
	2003	2002	2003	2002
English	A	C	D	D
mathematics	A	A	A	A
science	A	B	A	D

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.

6. One fifth of students in Years 7, 9, 10 and 11 and one quarter of students in Year 8 are listed on the SEN Register. Further students enter the school with prior attainment that is below average. These students make good progress in the main school and gain GCSE grades that are broadly average. In mathematics the introduction of a modular GCSE has greatly

² Table compiled by Birmingham LEA in respect of the 17 secondary schools with ten per cent or more African-Caribbean students.

improved the motivation and learning of students. In humanities, the introduction of a Certificate of Achievement has also been helpful.

7. Most of the students with statements of special educational need make much slower progress and their attainments at GCSE are usually modest. The exception to this are students on the autistic spectrum and those whose learning has been significantly impeded by their behaviour. These few students are in higher sets and they typically gain higher grades at GCSE.
8. About five per cent of the present Year 7 students had, on entry to the school, sufficient discrepancy between their verbal, non-verbal and mathematics scores to suggest a specific deficit in English language skills. While this would merit further investigation by the school, the very strong emphasis on language development in many subjects may well be addressing many of their needs. Work scrutiny and observations in the main school did not show clear evidence of a deficit in language skills arising through the use of English as an additional language (EAL) in oral or written work. While there clearly are some deficits in the quality of extended writing in some subjects, this does not appear to be an issue specifically related to EAL. The school's data indicates that bilingual students achieve in line with their age and ability and that progress is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and accelerates in Years 10-11.

Sixth form

9. Achievement in the sixth form is as strong as in the main school. The school prides itself on admitting well-motivated students with relatively low GCSE grades to AS and A2 courses and this affects its points scores on these courses. Nevertheless, table 4 shows that points scores and the percentage of A/B grades rose in 2003. However, observations during sixth form lessons suggest that some bilingual students lack the language and language skills needed to learn and apply higher order abstract concepts. In addition, sixth formers' independent study skills are underdeveloped in several subjects, including subjects that were sampled, rather than a focus of the inspection.

Table 4

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	93.9 (97.0)	n/a (94.0)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	42.5 (40.6)	n/a (42.0)
Average point score per student	253.0 (246.5)	n/a (263.3)

There were 81 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2001-2002.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is **very good** for the main school and **good** for students in the sixth form. The punctuality of all students is **good**. The attitude of all students towards their learning and their interest and engagement in their work is **very good**. Behaviour throughout the school is **very good**. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is very good and has much improved over recent years.
- The quality of the relationships and racial harmony throughout the school is very good and a major strength.
- Students enjoy school; have very good attitudes to their learning and work hard to achieve their potential.

- Behaviour is very good and students are considerate, polite and welcoming towards visitors and demonstrate good moral and social values.
- Students have a good appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions.
- There is a weakness in the spiritual provision of the school although many students have a strong personal spiritual awareness.

Commentary

10. Attendance in the main school is very good. The school has developed rigorous procedures for promoting attendance and punctuality and these have been very successful at improving both during the last two years. These improvements have been achieved with the co-operation of parents and carers and also reflect the high levels of interest by students in the curriculum and range of activities provided by the school. Attendance and punctuality are now better than they were at the last inspection.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/3 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.1%	School data	0.5%
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.

11. Students have very good attitudes towards their learning and demonstrate high levels of interest and engagement in lessons. They are very well behaved, polite and courteous and respond very well to the expectations framed in the school behaviour policy which is consistently and successfully implemented. Although fixed term exclusions are high, 99 students being excluded at least once in 2002/3, the application of this sanction is considered to be fair by the students themselves and is clearly proving to be effective.

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	120	10	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	24	5	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	634	47	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	62	11	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	7	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	190	73	1
Black or Black British – African	4	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	13	5	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	18	5	0
No ethnic group recorded	17	0	0

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

12. There are a wealth of opportunities for students to show initiative and take responsibility, for example as members of the year group and whole school councils and through leadership in a wide range of extra-curricular and sporting activities. A number of students also become involved in the school's outreach programme, for example helping primary schools with the setting up of their school councils or providing coaching skills for various sports.
13. The school has created a very successful multicultural and multi-ethnic community within which all are included and encouraged to achieve their full potential in their learning and life skills. Diversity is not only recognised but celebrated and students have a good appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions. This is achieved in an atmosphere of friendly competition in lessons and in extra-curricular and sports activities. In the student survey, students acknowledge that there are racial and harassment issues from time to time but it is clear from the inspection that because students have high self-esteem and self-confidence they are able to assess, discuss and resolve such issues between each other or by sharing them with members of staff. The quality of the relationships throughout the school and this openness by students and staff alike, are major strengths.

Example of outstanding practice

The school's 2002-2003 Awards Evening, which celebrated the cultural life of school and community and the value placed on progress, as well as students' subject, pastoral and sporting achievements.

The evening was organised impeccably and presented to a very high standard. It focused on the awards earned by students who were in Years 7-12 during 2002-2003. The glossy programme was produced to a professional standard and included photographs of all 64 students who had achieved university places in 2003. All the award winners had their photograph taken with the distinguished visiting speaker, who was educated partly in Handsworth. Some of the pastoral awards acknowledged the progress of students whose earlier times at the school had been troubled. The music that was performed during the evening illustrates the racial harmony in the school and the confidence of students. It included Indian, Caribbean and western popular forms. Bryan Adams - Everything I do, sung solo by a Chinese girl, was delivered with polish and commitment. The gospel choir included white boys and Asian girls. The older dhol drummers noticeably guided the younger ones as they performed. The Bhangra dancers whom they accompanied included white girls. The dancers and drummers have already taken part in the Birmingham LEA 'Sound City' project and community events. The drummers receive tuition from the LEA Music Service and the dancers are taught by a deputy headteacher.

14. The school provides a clear moral code and students develop moral awareness and good social skills. Many students have a strong personal spiritual awareness with well-developed personal values and beliefs, which enable them to act according to their own principles and to challenge issues that constrain the human spirit such as aggression and injustice. Students are able to explore their own aesthetic values, feelings and emotions through poetry, their own writing, art and music. However, there is a weakness in the way that the spiritual dimension of life is expressed within the whole school and class assembly programmes.

Sixth form

15. Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form are both good. Students want to do well in their examinations and are highly motivated learners. They are willing to take responsibility, for example offering themselves as mentors for younger students and by playing an important part in supporting the school's role as a sports college with its brief to serve the wider community and other schools. They provide very good role models and their personal qualities are very well developed. They are mature individuals who are very well prepared to become example citizens in a modern multicultural and multiracial society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. The teaching and learning are very good. Some of the improvements made to the teaching are recent and this, together with an assessment system that is good and a curriculum offer that is sound, helps to explain why students'

achievement is good, rather than very good. The school cares very well for its students, and its partnership with the community is excellent.

Teaching and learning

Across the school and particularly from Year 8 to Year 13, the quality of teaching and learning is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers are very knowledgeable and enthusiastic.
- One third of the lessons are very good or excellent.
- Some of the teaching is inspirational.
- Only one per cent of the teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Many teachers use the whole of the long lessons of 70-75 minutes very effectively.
- Well-briefed teaching assistants and support teachers reinforce the teaching and support the students' learning.
- Resources including interactive whiteboards are used effectively, where these are available.
- Innovatory approaches, which are mainly based on students' preferred learning styles³, enhance the teaching of teachers who understand them thoroughly, but limit the teaching of the minority who follow them blindly.
- The quality of teaching and with it learning, sometimes falls towards the end of long lessons.
- The quality of the teaching is good, rather than very good, in Year 7.
- There is some very good teaching in almost all subjects.

Commentary

Table 5

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 245 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
19 (8%)	62 (25%)	120 (49%)	38 (16%)	3 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages.

16. The teachers have excellent command of their subjects, are enthusiastic and insist on high standards of behaviour. Teaching assistants and support teachers are thoroughly prepared for lessons and add to the quality of teaching by helping to move students' learning forward. Learning resources, including the interactive whiteboards available in some of the classrooms, are chosen and used effectively. The homework tasks that are set are generally interesting and extend the learning that takes place in lessons. Teachers work hard to ensure that they provide students with equality of opportunity.
17. Students respond with engagement, application and, almost without exception, very high standards of behaviour. They learn from each other, as well as from the teacher. In a Year 8 history lesson, one student answered another's open question about why a portrait of Elizabeth I showed her wearing a cross and carrying a bible, although she was not a Catholic. In a Year 11 science lesson, students of different faiths listened with respect as their peers gave initial responses to a scenario in which a couple at risk of having a child with Downs Syndrome, decided whether or not to undergo amniocentesis and then – on testing positive – whether or not to have an abortion. Students then applied their knowledge of science and probability to the circumstances of this fictitious couple and a useful discussion ensued. The

³ Barbara Prashnig 'The Power of Diversity - New ways of Learning and Teaching' www.networkpress.co.uk

ability of students of all ages and abilities to discuss ethical, moral, religious and social issues maturely, without fuss and with respect for each other's views, experience and cultural background, is one of the hallmarks of learning at Hamstead Hall.

18. The planning of lessons is often exemplary. Lessons have a strong sense of direction, which is informed by the learning objectives that have been set and plenty of pace. Strategies, activities and groupings are varied within lessons in order to maintain students' interest, reinforce learning and challenge students to achieve at greater depth than would be feasible in shorter lessons. That said, strategies derived from drama, such as hot-seating and 'teacher in role', are sometimes used less effectively; sharing of the good practice to be found within the school could increase the learning value of these activities and help to further promote the development of students' language across the curriculum. In addition, the quality of teaching and learning sometimes drops towards the end of lessons. On one of the inspection days, inspectors focused on observing half lessons and table 5 shows the grades given to the 71 half lessons that were inspected. Clearly, second halves of lessons were, in general, of lower quality than first halves of lessons (see table 6). This does not mean that the school should necessarily shorten its lessons. It is unlikely that a sequence of eight short lessons, for example, would each be of the quality of the first halves of the longer lessons that were observed. In addition, none of the half lessons observed was unsatisfactory. However, these findings suggest that, in seeking to raise the quality of its teaching still further, the school could usefully focus on the ends of lessons, in particular the use of plenaries.

Table 6

Summary of teaching of 71 half lessons observed during one of the inspection days

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
First half of lesson	2	17	17	4	-	-	-
Second half of lesson	-	4	16	11	-	-	-

19. The school has carried out research into individual students' preferred learning styles and many teachers apply the findings when planning lessons and teaching. Where this approach is causing teachers to think even more about their teaching and its effect on individual students, it is impacting positively on students' learning. For example, a history teacher working in a crowded classroom had seated a student likely to have difficulty with organising written work at the front of the class and among peers likely to act as role models and moved over to offer focused advice when it became clear that further support was needed. In addition, the school is experimenting with teaching aspects of language through dance, in order to help students with a preference for learning kinaesthetically. However, a few teachers sometimes attempt to apply the outcomes of the research blindly, in a way that risks stereotyping students and limiting the learning of individuals. The school needs to help these teachers think more, not less, about the individual differences of the students in their classes.
20. Table 7 shows that the quality of teaching in Year 7 falls below that in other years and that there is another, smaller, dip in Year 10. Both these years are the first years of 'key stages'. The school should work to establish the routines and expectations of key stages as quickly as possible, so that students' prior learning may be built upon effectively.

Table 7**Summary of teaching in Year 7 – Year 11**

	Number of lessons	Percentage of lessons			
		Excellent/very good	Good or better	Satisfactory or better	Unsatisfactory
Year 7	43	19	70	95	5
Year 8	45	38	89	100	0
Year 9	38	34	87	100	0
Year 10	32	28	75	97	3
Year 11	32	47	88	100	0

21. Whole school assessment data, derived both internally and externally, are well used to generate targets for departments and individual students, especially in Years 10-11. There is a range of positive practices in place for the marking of students' work and assessing their progress within departments. There is very good practice in English, mathematics and science, where learning objective booklets have been produced for Years 7-9, targets are shared with the students and there is an element of self-assessment. There are however inconsistencies in practice and not all departments, in particular art and design, have yet built up a portfolio of assessments against which National Curriculum levels can be assigned.

Sixth form

22. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good and the teaching shares the strengths and minor areas for development that are described above, in respect of the main school. Two further related issues arise in a minority of lessons. First, teachers tend to undertake tasks that students should be learning to undertake for themselves, in order to develop the independent study skills that they will need in higher education and their careers. Second, the strong focus on subject leads a few teachers to miss opportunities to promote students' language development; students may not be expected to check their spellings routinely and discussions may be imprecise and unduly informal in register. Assessment in the sixth form is very good, particularly in the vocational courses, where self-assessment and recording are exemplary.

The curriculum

The overall breadth and balance of the curriculum are **satisfactory**. Students are offered a range of GCSE and vocational courses in Years 10-11 through a number of individualised learning pathways. Innovative use is made of the additional period 5, particularly for the study of modern foreign languages and physical education in Years 10-11. However, the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for ICT, citizenship and religious education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good use of the extended school day for additional subject areas.
- Innovative curriculum developments, especially in the core subjects.
- The good range of curriculum enrichment activities in the lunch hour and after school.
- The wide range of AS and A2 courses which meet the university and college aspirations of sixth form students.
- ICT does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10-11 for those students not following a GNVQ course and there is insufficient coverage of the programmes of study in Year 9.
- Religious education does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10-11 and the sixth form.
- Citizenship does not meet statutory requirements in Years 7-11.
- There is a limited range of vocational and work-related sixth form courses to raise the staying on rate of the whole student population.

- The teaching of key skills in the sixth form is not monitored.

Commentary

23. The school operates a basic four period day of 70/75 minute lessons, with the aim of minimising movement across the campus and increasing punctuality. This is effective and, combined with improved strategies for challenge in teaching and learning, allows good delivery of the curriculum in the time available.
24. The overall curriculum in Years 7-9 has good breadth and balance. The setting arrangements in both core and foundation subjects have made a good contribution to raising standards through the matching of work to individual students' needs. There are good and innovative curriculum developments within many subjects, such as the collaborative delivery of numeracy days and the art and music students who act as mentors for 'at risk' primary children. ICT is now taught as a discrete subject in Years 7 and 8 but the portfolio arrangement does not cover the programmes of study in Year 9. The cross-curricular use of drama is not well developed. The design and technology curriculum is somewhat restricted by the withdrawal of resistant materials and recruitment difficulties in food technology.
25. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall and students are well prepared in Year 9 for their preferred subject choices. A good range of GCSE subjects is offered and a high proportion of students, close to 70 per cent, take a modern foreign language. Applied GCSE double awards are offered in ICT, health and social care and leisure and tourism as well as a full award in ICT and the CLAIT examination. The work-related programme is effective and disaffected students are guaranteed an apprenticeship if they obtain four GCSE pass grades.
26. Very good and innovative use is made of the additional period 5 each day. Students in Years 10 and 11 receive part of their physical education entitlement at this time. Students may take, for example, pre-GCSE Panjabi as well as GCSE Spanish, Panjabi and statistics. Students who need extra help are well supported through mathematics workshops and the weekend English classes. There are further good enrichment opportunities through the voluntary lunchtime and after school clubs such as the science club and writers' workshop. Participation in all these activities is well monitored and parents and students value them. They contribute very well to the school's aim of fostering learning beyond the school day.
27. The extended day also allows students to take part in a very wide range of sporting and music activities. A majority of students participate in the very good programme of extra-curricular activities in sport. The school has representative teams in all the major sports and offers a range of lunchtime clubs. Students' opportunities at lunchtime are enhanced through the 'lend a ball' scheme. This allows many students to participate in a non-structured environment. A programme of intra-school activities adds to students' opportunities and includes competitions that are based on tutor groups.
28. The music-related activities that are available facilitate students' cultural development. They include a recently-formed gospel choir, dhol, Bhangra dancing and DJ workshops.
29. Six school days are allocated in each of Years 7-9 for personal, social and health education, which also includes an introduction to careers education. While the modules on these days meet overall syllabus requirements they provide limited continuity of discussion and student participation. The modular PSHE course in Years 10-11 does not meet its intended coverage of the statutory requirements for ICT and religious education. Although an audit of citizenship opportunities has been completed, the subject does not currently meet statutory requirements in Years 7-11. Careers education is well supported through the programme of work experience in Year 11, the associated visits of the Compact tutors from local industrial and commercial organisations and the Industry days.

30. In all areas except food technology, the school has sufficient teaching and support staff with the qualifications and experience needed to meet the demands of the curriculum. Typically, the subject teams are well qualified, with a range of specialisms that they pool effectively. The accommodation of the school limits learning particularly in music and science. A sensible policy of purchasing has ensured that resources are in adequate supply to meet the needs of the school's students and its curriculum.

Sixth form

31. The post-16 curriculum offers a wide range of AS and A2 courses including drama, physical education, sociology and business studies. The latter has doubled in enrolment since its introduction and meets the career aspirations of both males and females. Set sizes are variable and half of the A2 courses had fewer than eight students in 2003, thus limiting interactive learning. There is good liaison with local colleges for the teaching of Panjabi and French. Average retention rates from November to completion are high at over 90 per cent, but there is considerable variation between departments and some such as history show a substantial fall between AS and A2.
32. A small range of vocational courses are offered at GCSE and advanced levels, which successfully meet the interests of those students who plan for related careers. However there is a lower staying-on rate into the sixth form by students from the white and Caribbean communities and the school does not provide courses appropriate to their needs. There is scope for the school to reflect its character as a sports college through additional vocational provision in the sixth form.
33. The PSHE programme is taught on six separate days each year and statutory requirements for religious education are not met. The teaching of the six key skills is encouraged but not monitored. There is good internal and individual preparation for entry to university and colleges of higher education, but preparation for immediate employment relies too heavily on external advice of variable quality.

Care, guidance and support

The care and support afforded to students is **very good**. The advice and guidance given to students is **very good** both in the main school and the sixth form. The school has **very good** health and safety and child protection procedures. Students' views are valued and there are **excellent** opportunities for them to become involved in the life of the school and its outreach into the wider community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good standards of care and welfare.
- The very good support and guidance provided.
- The very good induction arrangements for students entering Year 7.
- A high degree of trust between students and their teachers.
- Excellent involvement of students in the life of the school.
- The high value placed on students' views.

Commentary

34. The pastoral teams support their students very well, value their efforts and create a caring ethos that encourages everyone to work hard and do their best. The quality of relationships throughout the school is a significant strength. A high degree of trust between students and those who teach or help them to overcome difficulties is clearly evident. The pastoral care is sensitively matched to the ethnic and cultural diversity of the student population. The support and guidance provided is very good. Form tutors and mentors know their students very well

and play a key role in monitoring their personal development and in dealing with any issues that might present a barrier to their learning or academic progress.

35. The attention paid to health and safety is very good and much improved since the last inspection when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. The health and safety policy clearly defines staff responsibilities and risk assessment procedures are rigorous and effective. The provision for first aid is very good. Students are taught to use school equipment safely and to take responsibility for their own health and safety particularly during practical or sporting activities. There are effective procedures for dealing with child protection issues and staff are well trained and sensitive to the individual needs of all students. There are well-established links with social services and all other relevant outside agencies.
36. There is a very good induction programme for students when they transfer from the partner primary schools. Students are given very good guidance when selecting their option subjects for Year 10 and when deciding on the next phase of their education at the end of Year 11. There are good opportunities for students to gain a knowledge and understanding of business and industry through a range of business related subjects, careers advice and work experience which is well organised and available to all students at the beginning of Year 11.
37. The students are fully involved in the life of the school and their views are very highly valued. The school seeks the views and opinions of students in a number of ways. There are school councils for each year group who in turn send representatives to a whole school council. Not only do these councils act as consultative forums between the senior management team and the students, the school council has its own budget for implementing improvements to student facilities and the school environment. Representatives from the council also serve on the National Youth Parliament. There has also been a strong student participation in the development of school facilities and its evolution into a sports college. The students make a significant contribution to its work as a sports college and its outreach to other schools and colleges.

Sixth form

38. The school provides very good guidance to students in the sixth form. They receive high quality counselling regarding their sixth form education. Their teachers promote high aspirations and expectations for their students. Their progress is very well monitored and tracked and they are very well supported when they apply for places in universities or colleges for higher or further education.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership between the parents and the school is **good**. Parents have positive views about the school and the quality of education it provides. The involvement of the school in and its links with, the wider community are **excellent**. The outreach to other schools and colleges and the support provided to them is also **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent contribution made by the school to the local community.
- The excellent and extensive links with other schools and colleges.
- The extended educational and recreational opportunities arising from its special status as a sports college.
- The good quality of the parent-school partnership.

Commentary

39. There is a good partnership between the parents and the school. Parents expressed positive views about the school and the quality of education it provides through the pre-inspection

meeting and returned questionnaires. There are good lines of communication between the school and its parents that keep them informed about their children's progress, the curriculum, the extensive range of extra-curricular activities and the many opportunities provided for them to participate in school events and consultation evenings. The school consults with parents over major issues, such as the decision to prepare a bid to become a sports college.

40. The annual progress reports provide a good overview of students' progress and attainment although the targets for future improvement are very succinct and could usefully be expanded to provide parents with guidance as to how they can more effectively support the teaching and learning process. The reports demonstrate that teachers, form tutors and heads of year all have a good knowledge and understanding of individual students. Formal consultation evenings afford parents the opportunity of meeting tutors and subject teachers to discuss their children's progress and review any specific difficulties or learning needs that may have been identified. The homework planners are used to track that students are up to date with their work and these are signed by parents and checked regularly by form tutors.
41. There is an active parent teacher association that reflects the diverse ethnic and multicultural population served by the school. The association supports the school through fund-raising, social events and by promoting its extended role as a sports college within the wider community. For example, many parents have become involved in the 'Family Sport and Community Club'. Overall, parents are very supportive of the school and make a good contribution to their children's learning both at school and at home. The school is very receptive to the views and opinions of parents and has a policy of including them where students are experiencing learning difficulties and need additional support, for example the forming of a special parents' group for black Caribbean boys to help lift their attainment and help them achieve their full potential.
42. The school has developed excellent links with the wider community by putting itself at the heart of its community through the provision of an extensive range of sports and leisure programmes. This extensive range of extra-curricular activities has raised the aspirations of students and parents and provided opportunities for both to enhance their life skills and to become more included in the diverse community to which they belong. This enhancement has been clearly demonstrated by the response to school surveys and the significant improvement in parents' interest and participation in school events and activities.
43. The school's community sport initiative is a regular weekly and holiday programme of activity that is tailored to all ages of participants. It offers members of the community opportunities to gain level 1 and level 2 coaching awards. This gives participants the qualifications to coach within the wider community. The initiative is very well attended, has a friendly atmosphere and is much appreciated by participants. It assists in the seamless transition from school to adult participation in sport and supports the national agenda in respect of health and fitness.
44. The school provides excellent support for other schools and colleges and attracts specialist funding from organisations such as 'The Children's Fund' and 'The Department for Education and Skills Innovations Unit'. As a sports college Hamstead Hall provides training and facilities for staff and students in an extensive number of secondary, primary and special schools both within and outside the local educational authority. The outreach to other schools and colleges includes the provision of mathematics, science and music consultancy aimed at raising attainment through improved teaching and learning skills and creative arts mentoring for local primary schools. The school is a leading member of a charitable trust of schools and colleges who work with inner-city children. Hamstead Hall is regarded by the local education authority as a lead school with many transferable skills that can bring benefits to teaching and learning and provide training for student teachers, as well as opportunities for the continuous professional development of established teachers.

Sixth form

45. The school works closely with the parents of students in the sixth form. The extensive outreach provides excellent opportunities for sixth form peer mentors to support curriculum development in partner primary schools and a partner special school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are **very good**. This is also the case for each of leadership, management and governance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and provides a role model for the other leaders in the school.
- The governing body is instrumental in shaping the vision and direction of the school, has a very good understanding of its strengths and areas for development and challenges and supports the senior management team very effectively.
- The management procedures of the school are not unduly bureaucratic and its systems cope flexibly with change and unanticipated events.
- There is a very strong commitment to the professional development of staff.
- The leadership and management of all the subjects are good or better: in mathematics and physical education they are excellent.
- Very good strategic financial planning is matched to clear priorities for spending.
- The school provides very good value for money.
- Lapses in communication between managers and other staff are infrequent.

Commentary

46. The governance of the school is very good. Governors are representative of the community that the school serves and capitalise upon their community links as they bring a wide range of skills and backgrounds to the service of the school. Governors are ambitious for and committed to its success and their expectations of what constitutes success are very high indeed. The governors function well as a group, building on – and where appropriate moderating – each other's contributions. Individually and collectively, the governors challenge and support the headteacher and the senior management team very effectively. The governors are instrumental in shaping the vision and direction of the school and in ensuring that it fulfils its statutory duties to promote inclusive policies in relation to race, disability and sex. Governors have a detailed and balanced understanding of the school's strengths and development needs. The chair of governors and headteacher have presented sessions to National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) students on effective governor-headteacher relationships.
47. The leadership provided by key staff is very good. The senior managers are dedicated and committed members of staff who are role models to staff and students and who work hard to help the school meet its aims and values. A flattened leadership structure, coupled with dispersed and shared leadership, promote the efficiency and reflectiveness of senior managers' work and the participation of all staff in the success and development of their school. Central to this is the work of the headteacher, who is a strong motivating force and committed to developing the leadership potential of others. He has a clear, inclusive and extremely ambitious vision for the school that he communicates and develops consistently and rigorously through the various aspects of his work. In addition to learning from best practice elsewhere, he is helping to shape it through his work in and beyond the school. His leadership is excellent.
48. All staff are involved in the improvement and development of the school through opportunities to contribute to the school improvement plan (SIP), departmental development plans (DDPs),

and school improvement groups (SIGs). There are seven SIGs that focus on literacy; learning styles; numeracy; ICT; citizenship; assessment; rewards and progress. The action plans of the SIGs are presented as part of the SIP. The SIP, SIGs and DDPs mesh effectively, in that members of staff know where the school is going, what their role is in taking it there and how they can influence where it goes in future. The morale of the staff is very good.

49. The management of the school is very good. This is an intensively self-critical school with a rigorous approach to self-evaluation and openness to outside evaluation. Data including examination and test results is analysed promptly and in detail, with actions agreed and monitored.
50. The school has a positive approach to performance management and uses it as a key component in increasing the quality of teaching and learning in the school and thereby raises standards. There is a clear focus in departmental structures on monitoring and evaluation and the majority of heads of department are now proactive in their management style and regularly co-ordinate observations of teachers. All teachers and support staff have targets which have a school, departmental and individual focus.
51. The school is strongly committed to the continuing professional development of all staff. Provision is directly linked to the school improvement plan or to the objectives that arise from performance management. There is an expectation that best practice will then be shared with colleagues through the school improvement groups. The school has a very good induction programme for all new staff, including the integration assistants, which contributes to its ability to retain them. It is firmly committed to initial teacher training, a process which is rigorously monitored to ensure that both students and student teachers benefit from the experience. Lincoln University runs a masters degree course at the school and staff from other schools join Hamstead Hall staff in their studies.

Example of outstanding practice

The school's commitment to explicit and shared evaluation of good practice led to the creation of a post for a senior teacher: Research.

This new post is intended to bring synergy to peer observation, data analysis and ongoing self-review within the school, taking place at the level of the individual, team and whole school, within the scope of the school improvement plan. In addition to supporting staff engaged in their own research, including teachers on the masters' course run at the school, the senior teacher co-ordinates externally driven research inside the school and the dissemination of research generally.

52. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is good overall. Most teachers are well qualified and now teach either to their specialism or within a group of related subjects such as the humanities. There is a good range of complementary skills within the physical education department. The ICT department for the first time has a team of specialist teachers which has a positive impact on standards. Technical support in all departments is good.
53. Financial planning and management are good and the school rigorously applies best value principles. The school has been very successful in securing additional funding to match its aspirations. Specific grants are judiciously used to support the work of curriculum departments, to position the school as a leading sports college within its community and to enable it to operate as a lead school that supports many other schools and colleges within the local authority and beyond.
54. The governors, who reflect the ethnic diversity of the community served by the school, are very strongly committed to the vision of the school with its emphasis on being an inclusive learning community that values and respects its students and celebrates diversity. The strategic thinking of the governing body is clearly driven by this ethos. Governors are well informed, exercise good financial monitoring and undertake critical self-evaluation of all outcomes. They both support and challenge the headteacher and senior management team

and play a pivotal role in ensuring that the school provides very good value for money, which it does.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,718,380	Balance from previous year	311,971
Total expenditure	3,999,390	Balance carried forward to the next	30,961
Expenditure per student	3629		

Sixth form

55. The sixth form is a viable unit that provides very good value for money.
56. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Students receive high quality advice when choosing sixth form courses and efforts are made to tailor the subjects available to meet their needs. A high proportion of the sixth formers progress into higher education and the school encourages them to aim high when preparing their applications and to consider courses that are available in Oxbridge and other Russell Group universities, as well as local universities.
57. Senior managers are aware that the predominantly academic curriculum that is offered does not fully meet the needs of all students in Year 11. Previous attempts to introduce more vocational courses have stalled, but the school's new status as a sports college provides it with new opportunities on which it is poised to build.

THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

What is the effectiveness of the special educational needs (SEN) unit?

Students designated for the SEN Unit make **good** progress throughout the main school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is now using a strongly inclusive model of provision where unit students are taught in ordinary classes usually with other students with similar levels of special educational need.
- School staff use a range of strategies successfully, to address their learning and, where necessary, manage their behaviour.
- Teaching assistants are used very effectively to support unit students in mainstream lessons.
- This has had a very positive effect in extending the range of skills used by staff in many lessons including those where students do not have SEN.
- Although some new courses have been introduced, the range of accreditation available to unit students at the end of Year 11 is limited.

Commentary

58. Until this year, the unit has had places for up to eight students per cohort. Most of these students are designated as having moderate learning difficulties, but, in many cases, their needs are more complex; most have a very short concentration span and some have difficulty in behaving appropriately in lessons. One has an autistic spectrum disorder.
59. Intake to the unit in September 2003 consisted of only four students, with, for the first time, a large number of students entering Year 7 of the main school (seven) with statements. The

anticipated intake for September 2004 is two students for the unit and about 11 for the main school. This change is a result of parental preference as well as changes to funding arrangements made by the LEA.

60. The SEN unit does not now function as a separate entity, although the head of unit retains responsibility for the management and care of those students assigned to it.
61. Unit students are all integrated into mainstream school tutor groups and lessons. They are placed in sets according to their ability and supported by teaching assistants who provide curriculum support (and mentoring) for them but who are also concerned to develop their skills as independent learners. This works very successfully. Students in all year groups and in almost every subject make good progress. Work is set at an appropriate level, with a variety of short-stepped tasks that enables them to maintain interest, complete work and achieve success.
62. The current unit students do not appear to require separate teaching that would enable the development of basic cognitive skills (including early literacy and numeracy skills) below a level which can be addressed in mainstream lessons.
63. The main function of the unit in the school, now, is as a social, pastoral area where any student may go at breaks or lunchtime for supported study or access to computers, or to chat with friends and staff, play quiet games or watch a video.
64. 'Unit' students and other students use it extensively for this purpose.

PROVISION FOR AND STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY, BLACK AND ASIAN STUDENTS

What is the effectiveness of the provision for and standards achieved by, Black and Asian students?

The provision is **very good** and enables students to achieve **well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The effectiveness of the provision for Black and Asian students is the same as that for all other students.
- There is a very strong focus on language development across the curriculum and teaching is effective in this area thus developing the skills of bilingual students for whom English is an additional language.
- Relationships between students from different ethnic backgrounds are very good.
- The school has put in place procedures to investigate and develop areas where students may be less successful as a consequence of their linguistic or cultural backgrounds.
- The school works very well with parents and the local community to enable it to respond to their concerns and to develop more effective ways of working with their children.

Commentary

65. A large majority of the students are Black or Asian. They include the 57 per cent of students who are Asian or Asian British (Indian), and who are mainly Sikhs, 17 per cent of students who are Black or Black British (Caribbean), six per cent of students who are Asian or Asian British (Pakistani) and smaller proportions of other ethnic groups, including four per cent of students with dual ethnicity.
66. The school reports that approximately 60 per cent of the Black and Asian students are functionally bilingual in their daily lives.

67. The majority of the Black and Asian students make good progress through the school and attain very well at the end of Year 11 in line with the overall school results. Most bilingual students appear to be very competent English language users. Work scrutiny and observations during the inspection did not show clear evidence of any difficulties which might arise from needs relating to speaking English as an additional language (EAL) in oral or written work. Although there are clearly some deficiencies in the quality of extended writing in some subjects, this does not appear to be an issue specifically related to EAL. In general, the quality of language development and the emphasis given to it, in many subject areas (particularly English, mathematics, science and the humanities) is of a very high standard.
68. The available evidence suggests that bilingual students achieve in line with their age and ability and that progress is at least satisfactory in Years 7-9 and accelerates in Years 10-11. The standards achieved in examinations in Year 11 and the sixth form are very good.
69. There is little provision at the moment for structured teaching of English as an additional language for the very few students who require this and their progress in developing full fluency and competency is therefore likely to be reduced. A bilingual support teacher and other bilingual members of staff support students whose first language they know. Where there is no member of staff who can communicate with a student who does not understand or use English, help is sought from other local schools.
70. Teachers working with sixth form students noticed that some found it hard to deal with higher order language and with concepts that are taught through the use of higher order language and this was confirmed during the inspection.
71. The school has recently begun to focus on this area of work to find out whether, or to what extent, the progress of bilingual students has been influenced by the fact that they speak another language at home and to examine areas of possible underachievement or slower learning which may result from this. It has established an EAL strategy team which will take this forward, looking at provision in three different areas: beginning bilingual students; students in the main school whose range of language in English may be underdeveloped in some aspects; and sixth form students who struggle with more abstract concepts and the language needed to express them.
72. The fact that many students are functionally bilingual is a strength which could be built on not just at an individual student's level, but for the whole school.
73. The school has worked hard to develop positive relationships with parents from different local communities who make up the student population of the school and to promote the highest achievement of the students.
74. A high proportion of staff and governors, including two deputy headteachers, are Black or Asian; they provide powerful role models as well as a good understanding of the needs and aspirations of the local communities.
75. The school has worked with the African-Caribbean and Asian heritage groups to share and explore innovative practice to improve achievement amongst students from these groups. It has established a Black parents' group which has resulted in reduced numbers of exclusions and much improved achievement, in particular, for black boys. It shows the power and effectiveness of action which can be taken when school and parents really work together and understand what each requires from the other.
76. Overall, provision for Black and Asian students is of a very good quality and enables the students to achieve in line with their abilities; for many of them, this is to a very high standard.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are mainly above average, especially in Years 7-9, but standards of writing and language development generally could be developed further.
- Most of the teaching is of high quality and occasionally outstanding.
- The leadership of the department is committed, energetic and innovative.
- Good relationships and a very good climate for learning are established in almost all lessons.
- Students of all abilities and ethnic groups are valued and supported as individuals.
- The performance of the most able students, of boys in comparison with girls and independent learning are underdeveloped.
- Assessment information is not used systematically enough to inform the teaching and planning.
- Further monitoring and evaluation of teaching and students' progress, are needed, in order to assist departmental policy and planning.
- There are weaknesses in the use and quality of resources including the library, teaching accommodation and ICT in students' learning.

Commentary

77. Standards in the Year 9 test results in 2003 were close to the national average for all schools and were an improvement on the previous two years results. Two thirds of Year 9 students reached or exceeded Level 5, but at Level 6 and above, results were less than half the national average and below average when compared to similar schools. Teachers' assessments in 2003 underestimated the proportion of students reaching Level 5, but over-estimated those reaching Level 6.
78. In GCSE English in 2003, 57 per cent of students gained an A* to C grade, improving on the previous year but below the results of two years earlier. This years results are very close to the national average. Girls did significantly better than boys, in line with national trends. Smaller proportions of students than nationally gained A* or A grades. Asian girls did particularly well; black boys underperformed. There is insufficient data available to comment further on the results achieved by the different ethnic groups in the school.
79. In GCSE English literature in 2003, 76 per cent of the 144 students entered gained a C grade or above: a substantial increase on the previous year and well above the LEA and national averages. Again, girls did significantly better than boys. The department is looking at ways of improving the performance of boys.
80. Standards attained in lessons and workbooks by the current students are average, or on occasion a little above, by comparison with national expectations. Standards are improving as new initiatives such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy begin to show a positive effect. Students make good progress in lessons and over time when the quality of teaching is also high; they make generally good but sometimes uneven progress overall. Useful assistance from the LEA literacy consultant is beginning to raise standards among students of all abilities in Years 7-9.

Students in all year groups show potential but they are not always developing sufficiently the specific language skills they need in order to improve further.

81. Standards of speaking and listening are usually good. Students answer thoughtfully and contribute eagerly to lessons. They listen attentively to the teacher and each other. They sometimes speak at length, make presentations, read aloud with expression and act in role. Their confidence and skill in doing so need building up further. Very effective use of drama techniques is used in some lessons, as when a Year 11 top set formed a 'theatre' within a circle of chairs in order to explore main characters and their relationships in 'The Tempest'; or in a Year 8 lesson when the teacher spoke in role as characters from the class novel 'Goodnight Mr Tom, while students asked perceptive questions showing their good recall and understanding of the author's intention.
82. Most students express ideas and opinions in speech more effectively than in writing. They tend to be less confident in using formal registers and need more practice in doing so. Most teachers encourage the use of drafting to improve written work but this is not consistent. As the department is aware, there are two areas where improvement is needed: clearer expression in using sentence and paragraph structure and more accuracy in spelling and punctuation. Rather too many able students are misspelling common words and not always having these errors pointed out at the drafting stage. The best of students' writing is, however, varied and interesting, covering a range of modes. There are many good examples of personal and creative writing including poetry; as in Year 7 through an imaginative unit of work on rhythm and verse form. The standards and progress of lower-attaining students are usually good in relation to their abilities, but there is some variation across the department.
83. Students read fluently on the whole and enjoy their reading of all kinds of texts, including challenging literature and discursive prose. Some show hesitancy when reading aloud and may need more practice with texts at the right level of difficulty. A positive feature is the students' ability to draw inferences, to read texts closely and to compare and contrast. Standards of reading overall are at least average and often good.
84. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in all but a very few of the lessons seen and there is some excellent practice in the department. In the less effective lessons, demands were not always pitched at a high enough level; expectations of the amount and quality of work expected were not clear enough. Too little time was sometimes left for students to evaluate their learning at the end of the lesson. Lessons are planned carefully and well. Objectives are shared with students at the start, but the teaching does not always build sufficiently on what students have achieved previously and on the teacher's knowledge of attainment within the group. The use of time in the school's long lessons is nearly always good, with time limits given for set work, but sometimes the pace is too slow.
85. In the well-taught lessons there was progression in learning which the students were aware of and played a full share in achieving. The teacher's questions were open-ended, stimulating thought and enquiry. Very good use was made of a variety of methods including work in pairs and groups, reporting back and in particular the interweaving of reading, speaking, listening and writing. Novels, poems and plays studied were brought alive for the students in imaginative ways, often through their own contributions which are respected by the teachers. A very good climate for learning, curiosity and mutual respect, was shown in all but one or two of the lessons. The teaching benefits from the very good subject knowledge of all members of the English staff.

Example of outstanding practice

Language development in a Year 9 English lesson for low attainers.

Set 8 (of 8) had been reading poems and stories about World War 2. In the lesson observed they interviewed a local couple who had lived through the bombing of Birmingham. The husband had been a fireman and his wife had worked in a factory. The students prepared for the lesson by learning how to make short notes while listening carefully and by helping one another to "reconstitute" the notes into full sentences when the visitors had left. The teacher had stressed the importance of asking "open" questions that prompted the visitors to tell their story. The students demonstrated very good social and speaking skills, greeting their guests politely, listening respectfully and thanking them appropriately at the end. The students were very good at asking their guests to describe what the events that they had lived through felt like. Everyone shared a rich experience: a meeting of generations, cultures and languages. Eighty year old Brummies with their way of speaking and today's young people with their contemporary idioms, communicated very effectively because of excellent teaching and very thorough preparation.

86. Areas for improvement include greater consistency and sometimes greater rigour in assessment and marking, the best of which is detailed and helpful to the students; enhancing independent learning skills as students progress up the school; and focusing the teaching on areas of greatest learning need.
87. The head of department and her deputy have achieved much since they took up post some 18 months ago. Enthusiasm for the subject is conveyed to students and a high-quality and intelligent model of teaching is provided for other staff. There is good teamwork and joint planning; a range of promising innovations such as links with the dance and music departments and encouragement of staff to develop their own research and teaching interests. Responsibilities have been delegated in relation to literacy, drama and special needs; expectations of these roles could be made more explicit. Other areas for improvement are: longer-term development planning, to include priorities and strategic aims; and monitoring and evaluating current practice. The plan for English and the monitoring of teaching are not linked closely enough at present to outcomes in the form of students' attainment and progress.
88. Resources and accommodation for the subject have improved now that the teaching rooms are grouped together close to the library. There are some lively displays giving a flavour of English but the decorative condition and overall appearance of the accommodation are drab. Computers and interactive whiteboards are now available. Their use and use of the library by students, needs to be extended. The book stock in the library needs renewal and development.
89. Improvement since the last inspection is good. It is ongoing and has still to be reflected fully in test and examination results, for example at the higher levels and among boys.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

90. During the inspection there were examples of good practice in language and literacy development in many lessons. Teachers introduce key words and new ideas well, with a good range of learning activities, both oral and written, to ensure that new concepts have been grasped. Key words are on display in many classrooms and are referred to in lessons. Teachers in history, mathematics and English lessons make very good use of questions to prompt students towards more thoughtful and detailed answers. Students usually listen well to one another, work well together in small groups and can build on one another's views. When speaking to visitors, students were courteous and used language well. In some lessons students' use of spoken English was too colloquial and they did not choose an appropriately formal style for academic discussion. Techniques derived from drama, such as hot-seating, were used infrequently to develop students' understanding and use of language in lessons other than English.

91. Where students were given the opportunity to read aloud they did so well and with a good sense of character if reading from literature. Teachers do not always take opportunities to ask students to read. Students read effectively for research from electronic sources, like the Internet.
92. Students' writing skills are less developed than their speaking and listening skills, but they generally make good progress and achieve well. In the best lessons students received very good guidance on how to plan and structure their written work. Progress units in Year 7 help students with weaker reading and writing skills to make good progress quickly. Students with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Students with English as an additional language make very good progress especially in Years 10 and 11 but those at an early stage of learning English do not make such good progress. The school does not do enough to record the different language needs and progress of students by gender, age and ethnic background.

Modern foreign languages (MFL)

Provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of MFL is good and sometimes very good.
- The department is well led and has identified priorities for future development.
- All students may take a full GCSE in French if they wish.
- Panjabi is offered in a variety of modes enabling students to take it to GCSE as well as French or instead of it.
- The MFL curriculum is enhanced in period 5 (twilight) by the addition of a fast track in Spanish for able students in Years 10 and 11 and by the flexibility which allows students to fast track in Panjabi to GCSE and even to AS/A2.
- The expectations of more able students need to be raised.
- Schemes of work should be reviewed with particular reference to the coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study in Years 7-9.

Commentary

93. GCSE **French** results in 2003 were roughly in line with the national average at A*-C, having been well above in the previous two years. The national average also dropped in 2003 but not by as much as the school. The gap between boys and girls in the proportion of passes at A*-C is much narrower than that found nationally. The proportion of candidates with passes at A/A* was very low. Results in French compare well with other subjects in the school, given that French has easily the highest entry after the core subjects.
94. The teacher assessment results in Year 9 show that the proportion of students obtaining Level 5 or higher was slightly above the national average. In the work seen in Years 7-9, students were mainly performing between Levels 2 and 4 across the attainment targets (with students with SEN at about Level 1 or 2). Only a minority of students were on course to reach above Level 5 by the end of Year 9. Students tend to lack the confidence to take the initiative or to ask questions in the target language, although there were examples even in the lower sets of some students doing this successfully.
95. Higher attaining students in Years 10 and 11 understand the target language well and can work out meaning from context. They mostly speak with good pronunciation. The best writing is good but students need more experience of extended writing and to consolidate their accuracy. They ask and answer questions using three tenses but some are too dependent on prompts. Lower attaining students also understand the target language well and have good pronunciation but show weak retention and often lack confidence in speaking outside very structured situations.

96. Attitudes to learning are almost always good and frequently very good: virtually all students are responsive and show interest. With very few exceptions, they behave well in the long 75-minute lessons, although some visibly tire towards the end of them. In the lowest sets many students bring weak learning skills to French lessons, for example difficulties in organising information may impinge on their understanding of the foreign language. However, many students of all abilities show good application: they co-operate well with each other in pair work and are prepared to listen to each other's contributions in plenary. Boys perform as well as girls in lessons and sometimes better. There is no difference in performance between ethnic groups.
97. Achievement overall is good throughout the main school and in some cases in Years 7-9 is very good.
98. The commitment of the teachers and their enthusiasm for the subject is self-evident.
99. Recent stability in staffing has helped to promote teamwork and the sharing of ideas and materials. The teaching is good and the support of the French language assistant and the learning support assistant is used well. Key features of the teaching include: thoughtful planning and organisation; the teachers' subject knowledge and effective use of the target language; use of a range of materials and activities; and the development of students' grammatical knowledge to underpin communication.
100. Nevertheless, there is scope for raising expectations of more able students, for example by requiring more extended writing earlier in Years 7-9 and for exposing all students to more extended listening tasks. More opportunities are needed for students to access the higher levels.
101. Several examples of very good practice were seen, notably with two classes in Year 9 containing many students with special educational needs. In these lessons students were enabled through carefully sequenced activities to develop their understanding and pronunciation and to make some progress in speaking French in specific situations.
102. Students starting **Spanish** in Year 10 make good progress. They speak and write well in structured situations and in Year 11 build on these foundations by tackling more open-ended tasks. They respond well to the challenge of encountering a widening range of language and absorb it quickly.
103. Spanish is taught well by a specialist in French who transfers her expertise very effectively to the subject. Although she does not yet have formal qualifications in Spanish, she is developing her knowledge and has the confidence to teach through the target language. The school is supporting her commitment to further develop her skills in Spanish.
104. Standards in **Panjabi** are good. Students speak with confidence in role-plays and plenaries. Most are fluent, although some are dependent on prompts. Pass rates at GCSE A*-C have dipped in the last two years, owing partly to a temporary discontinuity in staffing, but are similar to those of other subjects in the school. There is a need for continuing monitoring of performance at individual level, particularly since the gap between boys and girls is wide.
105. The teaching of Panjabi has many strengths. These include: efficient team teaching (involving the teacher and a well qualified learning support assistant); the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff; good relationships with students; very good feedback on oral work; and careful marking to ensure that students' mastery of script can be consolidated as quickly as possible.
106. The work is well organised to meet the needs of groups of mixed ability and (in period 5) mixed age. Planning is based on a detailed scheme of work which includes a strong cultural dimension. Parts of the scheme of work should be developed further, for example by making

more explicit references to differentiation and to the application of a range of activities to the topics covered.

107. The **MFL** department is well led and managed. Key issues have been identified and priorities pursued assiduously. The department handbook provides pragmatic guidance for colleagues, for example, on the sharing of classes where this is unavoidable. Schemes of work are kept under review, but the focus on the programme of study needs to be strengthened. Assessment practice is good. Criteria are made explicit to students; they are expected to engage in self-assessment and this is monitored.
108. Overall the department's resources are adequate. However, access to ICT facilities is extremely limited and the use of ICT cannot therefore be integrated into every unit of work. The supply of textbooks is insufficient for all students to have an individual copy and to retain it; this limits the range of homework that can be set. The department has introduced a policy of extending the reading experience of students; further investment is needed in this initiative.
109. The MFL department has many strengths. Performance and provision have improved since the previous inspection. The department is well placed for the next stage of its development.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent teaching in a Year 9 French bottom set, which included many students with special educational needs.

As a result of very careful planning and organisation, students were enabled - by the second half of this 75-minute lesson - to understand a structured dialogue in the perfect tense about 'My birthday party'. They then performed it with good pronunciation, introducing new elements such as who was invited and what presents were received. They read the text, transcribed it accurately and adapted it.

The teacher, a native speaker, taught through the medium of French nearly all the time, enabling students to follow by using gesture, expression, synonyms (for example 'chouette' = 'super') and paraphrase. She radiated enthusiasm and encouragement and was therefore able to insist on accuracy without inhibiting the students. Consequently, the students made genuine efforts to improve and all volunteered at some point in the lesson. Students were given a choice of a multiple-choice or a more demanding open-ended task: all coped with the former and most subsequently attempted the latter with some success. Before being allowed to leave each student had to answer a question; this kept them focused to the very end of the lesson and demonstrated that they had retained the material covered.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving and are better than those achieved in similar schools.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good as a result of very good planning by teachers.
- Achievement is very good, as is the progress students make and this has led to very high standards being displayed throughout the school.
- The very good relationships between staff and students are based on high expectations and a belief by staff that students can succeed at very high levels.
- The leadership and management of the department are excellent and exhibited in very good teamwork.
- There were no significant weaknesses.

Commentary

110. By the end of Year 9 in 2003, the percentage of students attaining Level 5 or above in the national tests was similar to all schools nationally. When students' attainment upon entering

the school is taken account, the results are well above similar schools. Level 6 results and average point scores are also improving, reflecting the inclusive nature of the department.

111. At the end of Year 11 in 2003, the proportion of students gaining a GCSE A*-C grade was above the national average. The results are improving year on year and standards have improved since the last inspection. Students are able to apply concepts learnt in one area of mathematics to another and this contributes to the good standards achieved.
112. Work seen during the inspection confirmed these standards.
113. All students achieve very well throughout the school and they have a positive attitude to the subject. The quality of teaching within the department is very good. There are very good relationships between teachers and students and a genuine willingness to learn by all students. Their behaviour is very good and they are keen to listen to others. The confident way that students correctly use the language of mathematics to aid understanding is particularly good. This was shown in a bottom set Year 11 lesson starter on algebra where students were using key words such as inverse and clearly applying it to operations.
114. The provision for lower ability students is particularly good and reflects the inclusive nature of the school. These students perform as well as their peers. Teachers use a variety of strategies and materials to keep students on task. It is obvious that joint planning had taken place between support teachers and teachers. The teaching assistant working with the department makes a positive contribution to the learning experience of the students.
115. The department creates a positive atmosphere by its organisation, display and the way that students are valued. Learning is generally very good and often excellent throughout the school. The teachers' high expectations permeate the atmosphere and are a significant factor in raising achievement. These expectations are reflected in the curriculum which has depth and students are able and expected to experience difficult problems in all year groups. However, in a few lessons, there could have been greater differentiation which would have extended students' thinking even more. Students' written work is neat, covers a wide range of topics, and shows that the whole range of levels are being addressed within each mathematical area. Teachers are clearly committed to improving the quality of work and have already started to look at ways to improve the quality of formative marking to enhance progress.
116. Most teachers are very good at developing students' thinking and this was exemplified in many lessons. This skill was particularly evident in a Year 10 lesson on quadratics. Students analysed each other's answers in the starter activity and showed considerable skill in interpreting the graphs and picking out the roots and intercept.
117. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is good and enhanced by the numerical warm ups at the start of lessons which are linked to lesson objectives and help consolidate learning. The use of ICT was a weakness in the last inspection but the department has made very good progress in this area. ICT is used very well as a thinking tool and to develop understanding. Graphical calculators, electronic whiteboards and computers were used well. This was particularly obvious in a Year 8 lesson on determining the effect of the m & c in $y=mx+c$. All other weaknesses identified have been addressed and the progress since the last inspection is very good.

Example of outstanding practice

Leadership in mathematics

This is excellent. Teaching, learning and standards are at the heart of the agenda in the department and the head of department leads the team of teachers in continually evaluating their work and striving for improvement. Teachers are not dependent on textbooks; they plan their own lessons. The head of department builds on his ability as a leader through also supporting another comprehensive school, which was until recently subject to special measures. The mathematics teachers there have visited Hamstead Hall to observe lessons, and the team teaches with them regularly at their own school. Their headteacher visited Hamstead during the inspection to share performance data showing improvement in mathematics with inspectors, and to commend the impact that Hamstead Hall has had on mathematics at her school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

118. The numerical agility shown by students is good and meets the needs of other subjects. These skills are evident across the school but particularly so in geography and physical education where students use measuring tapes and timers with confidence. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is good. The Key Stage 3 Numeracy Strategy is being implemented effectively with numerical warm ups at the start of mathematics lessons, linked to lesson objectives and helping to consolidate learning.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCSE examinations are well above average.
- Very effective leadership ensures that standards in the subject continue to improve.
- High quality teaching underpins the good progress made by students in lessons.
- Students work hard and are very keen to learn.
- The curriculum is very well structured and provides good opportunities for students to learn effectively.
- Science accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- There is too little technician time available to meet the needs of the department.

Commentary

119. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average. However when matched against schools with students from similar backgrounds, standards were well above average. Compared with the previous year, there was a particularly good improvement in the percentages of both boys and girls reaching the higher levels (6 and 7).
120. Students enter the school with below average attainment levels, but by the end of Year 9 standards are close to the national average. Students develop a good understanding of scientific ideas and are confident when carrying out investigations. As a result, achievement is good. Students respond positively when asked to think ideas through for themselves and use evidence effectively to draw conclusions. However, where students are unsure of exactly what they need to do, or when too few opportunities are provided for them to become fully involved in the lesson, they begin to lose confidence. Students' written work is generally well presented, but poor literacy levels hinder the progress of a significant minority. This occurs particularly where the work involves complex writing or unfamiliar scientific terms. Teachers are well aware of students' difficulties and provide good help and encouragement.
121. In 2002, standards in the GCSE examinations were significantly above average. In 2003, there was a further improvement, particularly for boys, with overall results much higher than national expectations.

122. By the end of Year 11, students follow scientific arguments well and are beginning to make good links between different ideas. The overall level of attainment is above average. Achievement is good. Students respond well in lessons, particularly when teachers provide high levels of individual challenge. Although students sometimes have difficulty recalling earlier work, teachers take good account of this in lessons and provide very effective help. Teachers assess students' progress well. A range of planned revision opportunities is also provided which further assists students to attain high standards in examinations. While students in Years 10 and 11 still have some problems using scientific terms, good support from teachers means that literacy is not usually a significant barrier to learning.
123. The achievement of boys and girls is similar throughout Years 7-11. Teachers have high expectations and provide very good opportunities for all students. This ensures that students are well involved in lessons and encourages them to work together co-operatively. There are very high levels of racial integration. The effective support provided for students with special educational needs by both teachers and inclusion staff results in good progress being made.
124. Students' attitudes towards the subject are very good. They show interest and are very keen to learn. While students usually concentrate very well on their work, a number begin to lose interest towards the end of lessons. Although teachers provide a good variety of activities, some younger students, in particular, find it difficult to give of their best for the whole 75 minutes. Behaviour is very good in lessons, but some students do not always listen well. Occasionally, teachers fail to ensure that all students are fully focused on their work. The very good response of students in lessons, combined with high quality teaching means that learning is good throughout Years 7-11. Students particularly appreciate the individual help teachers give them to improve and are keen to ask for advice. However, this sometimes results in students being given too much help and not being allowed to think for themselves enough. As a consequence, some students lack confidence when tackling more challenging activities on their own.
125. Teaching is good overall, with many lessons being very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject which they use well when planning and delivering lessons. They explain ideas clearly and are careful to assess how well students are doing in lessons. As a result learning is good. The approaches suggested by the Key Stage 3 Strategy have been introduced very effectively and are enhancing the quality of teaching. Lessons are delivered enthusiastically and teachers are careful to involve students; they challenge their understanding well. Very good use is made in some lessons of computer-generated visual aids to develop ideas further. As a result students are very well engaged in the work and enjoy what they are doing. Good links are made with students' own experiences and teachers often capture students' imagination well. Occasionally, however, teachers' eagerness to involve students leads to students losing the main points of the lesson. One aspect of teaching still requiring some improvement is that the summaries at the end of lessons are often too hurried and do not reinforce students' learning sufficiently.
126. Leadership and management are very good. Work in the department is very dynamic and forward looking. The head of department has a very clear understanding of where further improvements are needed and appropriate changes are being introduced. The monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the subject are very effective and this has led to high quality development planning. The teachers and technical staff work very well together as a team and there is a clearly shared commitment to raise standards further. A very good training programme, based upon the good practice in the department, has already brought about significant changes in classroom practice.
127. Curriculum provision in the subject is very good. Courses are very well planned and co-ordinated. A very effective review of teaching and learning materials and syllabus requirements has taken place and, as a result, very high quality schemes of work have been introduced.

128. Science accommodation is unsatisfactory. In particular the preparation areas are in urgent need of improvement. Some classrooms are too small to accommodate the groups using them and there is a lack of suitable storage space. Most of the laboratories are in need of refurbishment and, although teachers have attempted to improve the environment with good display materials, the accommodation detracts from the very good work of the department.
129. While there is a very good match of teachers to the needs of the subject, there is too little technical support available for a department of this size. As a result, teachers often have to use valuable teaching time organising their own equipment during lessons.
130. There has been good improvement since the last inspection:
- Standards have improved considerably.
 - Much better use is made of ICT, particularly for scientific applications such as data logging.
 - The pace of lessons is now very good as a result of the very successful introduction of the Key Stage 3 Strategy.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good** overall. It is good in Years 7 and 8 and in respect of the vocational courses taken by some students in Years 10 and 11, but the cross-curricular provision made in Years 9-11 for all students is only satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching staff are committed, knowledgeable and led well.
- Lessons are planned well and use a range of teaching styles.
- The curriculum and teaching have improved in Years 7 and 8 as a result of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, but the standards of attainment in Year 9 remain low.
- Statutory requirements are not met in Years 10 and 11. The cross-curricular provision of ICT gives incomplete coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study and students' achievement is not assessed against the National Curriculum levels.
- Standards in the recently introduced GNVQ course are above average.

Commentary

131. In 2003, the teacher assessments of Year 9 students showed that standards were well below average. The standards of students on entry to the school are below average, and so progress overall in Years 7 – 9 is unsatisfactory. The existing arrangements for ICT in Year 9, whereby the subject is taught across the curriculum, are partly responsible for this low attainment. However, the use of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is beginning to raise standards in Years 7 and 8.
132. Most students do not take an ICT course in Years 10-11. Their coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study is not assured and their attainment is not assessed against National Curriculum levels.
133. Full Intermediate GNVQ and CLAIT courses are offered in Years 10-11. The provision on these courses is good. For the students who take these courses, progress from Year 9 to Year 11 is good and students' achievement is very good. The introduction of the GNVQ course has been successful.
134. The achievement of students in the lessons seen was satisfactory overall and there were examples where achievement was better, especially with some lower ability groups in Year 11 where achievement was very good. Progress is good in Years 7 and 8, but not in Year 9, where some of the more advanced skills need to be developed further.

135. The quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to very good and is satisfactory overall. The quality of learning matches that of the teaching. A major strength is the use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy and the range of teaching styles used. Good use is made of teaching assistants to support the learning of students with special educational needs. Two very effective lessons were seen with two different groups of lower attaining students in Year 11. Considerable trouble had been taken to ensure that the students had sufficient skills to achieve success and this, together with carefully structured support from teachers and teaching assistants resulted in high achievement. Teachers are committed, knowledgeable and work hard to help students to achieve success. Technicians and peer mentors provide valuable support to teachers. In some classes, the number of students exceeds that of the number of computers available. This leads to a lack of progress for some students who cannot then be fully involved in the lesson.
136. Leadership and management are very good overall. There is a good department handbook and there are clear objectives in the development plan to move the department forward. However, there have been some difficulties with the continuity of teaching groups. The Year 7 groups were changed substantially at half term, because of the needs of another subject and this has seriously inhibited the students' learning. Technical staff are managed very well and make a very valuable contribution to the work of the department. Teachers make good use of sixth form students as peer mentors. Although there are not always sufficient computers for all the students in a group, provision of hardware throughout the school is very good.
137. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Teachers are now far more knowledgeable with very good expertise amongst specialist and non-specialist teachers. Technicians also have high level of expertise and make a very valuable contribution to the work of the department. Leadership and management are now much improved, as is the assessment of the work students do. Teaching is now much improved across all years. Areas where improvement has been insufficient include attainment at the end of Year 9, which is still well below average. Statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 are still not met, but the provision in these years is better than at the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

138. The use of computers across the school in other subjects is satisfactory overall. Subjects where ICT is used effectively include science, geography and music in Years 7-9 and mathematics, physical education and music in Years 10 and 11. Access to computers is difficult in some subjects such as French.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good leadership of the department and a shared commitment to raising standards.
- Teaching is good overall with a fast and challenging pace set in most lessons.
- Students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well by the end of Year 11.
- Teachers share their enthusiasm for geography with the students who listen and behave well.
- Assessment is not yet used to set targets and monitor planning.
- There is insufficient use of subject-specific software.

Commentary

139. Standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were below the national average in 2003. There was no GCSE group in 2003 but results in the previous two years were below the national average. Inspection evidence shows that students are now attaining standards in all years that are in line with the national average and that there is a marked upward trend. There are no distinct or consistent variations between the attainment of boys and girls or between different groups of students. Students use geographical terms accurately and can describe and explain features such as the tropical rainforests and coastal landscapes. They have a good understanding of the balance of factors which lead to rural-urban migration and of contrasts in the quality of life between more and less developed countries. Students' map skills and their general use of ICT are good, but they do not yet use sufficient subject-specific software.
140. Given the low prior attainment of most students when they enter the school, this represents good achievement. The department makes a good contribution to students' literacy skills. There are opportunities for reading and writing in every lesson as well as a range of written tasks. This written work is illustrated with appropriate graphs and charts. Students with special educational needs achieve well with the support of learning assistants and when they are given individual work. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Gifted and talented students are given work that is sufficiently challenging.
141. Good achievement is the result of good and energetic teaching in all year groups. Students' interest is sustained and their attention held by the pace and challenge of the varied activities and interesting resources. Teachers are adept at involving all students in activities, for example, by the effective questioning at the beginning of lessons or the starter games and puzzles, both of which build on prior learning. Extra help is always available for individual students. Students learn actively throughout the lessons. Teachers give a clear lead but also ensure that students are given opportunities to show what they can do, particularly in group and paired work. Explanations and instructions are precise and the objectives for each lesson are clear. Teachers do not always check progress against these objectives during the lessons and there is sometimes insufficient time to complete the closing activity. Relationships in all classes are open, trusting and friendly so that standards of behaviour are consistently good. The department makes a good contribution to students' social, moral and cultural development.
142. Homework is relevant and used well to extend students' skills. Oral feedback in class is good and written comments are encouraging. There is a limited range of assessments in Years 7-9, particularly to measure attainment against National Curriculum standards, although this is a main strand in the departmental development plan for the coming year. Assessments are not yet used to plan lessons to meet the needs of all students. Clear targets are not set and monitored so that students understand what they have to do to improve.
143. Leadership of the department is very good. The head of department is strongly committed to the raising of standards, is a very good role model and sets high expectations for the students. The department is progressive and forward looking and is efficiently managed on a day-to-day basis. Teamwork is good. Since the last inspection both standards and levels of achievement have improved, schemes of work are fully in place and teaching is consistently good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A variety of activities in lessons keeps students on task and leads to good learning.

- The teachers have good subject knowledge.
- The management of students is good and provides a positive learning environment which ensures good behaviour in lessons.
- More able students are not always stretched and their learning is not sufficiently extended.
- Assessment does not always give students clear guidance on how to improve their work.

Commentary

144. In 2003, teacher assessment showed that attainment at the end of Year 9 was slightly below that expected nationally. Attainment in GCSE was average and had improved over earlier years. Girls achieved a higher proportion of GCSE A* - C grades than boys.
145. Standards in the current Year 9 are just below those expected nationally. This represents sound achievement for many students when compared with their attainment on entry. The students have good factual knowledge and understanding that they apply in their writing, drawing and use of maps. This was clearly demonstrated in a lesson on the migration of people into towns. Students assess sources for bias and reliability and show increasing skill in handling them. Girls often achieve slightly higher levels than the boys and the more able students are not always fully challenged. Where support is given this greatly enhances the learning of students with special educational needs.
146. Standards in the current Year 11 are roughly in line with those expected nationally. This represents good achievement over the two years for students who have chosen to do history, including students with special educational needs. Students analyse and discuss sensitively issues such as the Jewish policy of the Nazi government in Germany. There is some good extended writing by some students. More able students need to be further challenged by either extended or more differentiated work.
147. The quality of teaching and learning is good and in two of the lessons it was very good. Features of the more effective teaching include sharing of learning objectives for the lesson, the teacher's skills in question and answer, the variety of activities and resources used and the use of plenary sessions to drive forward and consolidate learning. Students respond by using their developing thinking skills well and are willing to share their ideas and understanding with their peers when working in pairs and in writing. The marking of students' work did not always make it clear what they need to do in order to improve.
148. A clear vision and direction plus teamwork are helping to maintain the good standards that have been achieved and maintained since the last inspection. The department attempts to be inclusive and students greatly benefit from this. Regular meetings and monitoring help to ensure that best practice is shared. The department's action plan contains some good points for the development of the subject: many have already been achieved and there is a strong willingness to action those that remain. The use of visits greatly extends the learning that takes place in the classroom, but further enhancement of the provision outside of school time is needed.
149. The leadership of the subject is good, as is the improvement made in the provision since the last inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education for students in Years 7, 8 and 9 and for those on the GCSE course is **very good** but for other students in Years 10 and 11 it is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 are very good and have led to attainment above expectation at the end of Year 9.

- Teaching, learning and achievement on the GCSE course are very good and results are among the best in the school.
- The head of department not only offers an excellent role model but has also created a very effective team.
- Procedures for assessment and tracking of students and for monitoring performance within the department are an area for development.
- The school fails to provide the minimum statutory requirements for most students in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

150. The standard of students' work at the end of Year 9 is above expectation. Students have sound knowledge and understanding of the distinctive beliefs and practices not only of Christianity but also of the other religions they study. They address issues that arise, such as the problem of suffering. They give their own point of view, in response to such issues, with the support of well-reasoned arguments. They consider too the implications of their own beliefs and values. In their work they use specialist vocabulary with confidence and accuracy.
151. The standard of most students' work at the end of Year 11 is well below average, because they have too few lessons to allow success. In Years 10 and 11 some students follow the GCSE religious studies course, and they experience considerable success. In 2002, although results were at the national average overall, boys' results were significantly better than those for boys nationally. In 2003, results showed not only a continuing upward trend but also the highest level of 'value added' in the school. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards remain high. A distinctive feature and a recipe for success in the examination, is students' skill in the use of evidence and argument to support different points of view.
152. Students' achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 has improved substantially since the last inspection. Students achieve very well in relation to their capability, with their level of achievement rising with their time at the school. In Year 7, when learning about animism, students make satisfactory progress. In Year 8, however, in their study of Islam, because of the very good teaching, students learn in depth and in detail about the hajj and Eid-ul-Fitr. As a result they make good progress. In Year 9 students learn about the work of Martin Luther King. As a result of much very good and some outstanding teaching, achievement is generally very good and sometimes excellent.
153. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 has deteriorated since the last inspection and is now poor. In Year 10 most students lack the time needed to cover the content and reach the standard expected by the agreed syllabus. Since the last inspection, in order to introduce citizenship, the school has reduced the time available for religious education in Year 10. In Year 11 the amount of time is also insufficient. The level of attainment expected is impossible within the time available. Students following the GCSE course, on the other hand, have enough time. The reason for the improvement in these students' achievement since the last inspection is the combination of the very good attitudes they show with the very good teaching they receive. These students now achieve very well.
154. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now very good throughout the school. Teachers' planning is excellent. Teachers share learning objectives with students and adopt teaching strategies that engage students' interest and attention. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and a clear grasp of the purpose of religious education. They use time very well and achieve not only very positive attitudes but also the highest standards of behaviour. As a result students acquire knowledge, deepen understanding and develop skills beyond expectation. The department is aware of the one substantial area remaining for development. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Teachers make insufficient use of assessment, as a way of identifying, and responding to, individual students' needs. Students have too little sense of how well they are doing and of what they need to do better.

155. The worst aspect of provision in religious education is entirely beyond the department's control. Whereas the curriculum is good for students in Years 7, 8 and 9 and for those on the GCSE course, for most students in Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is poor. The school fails to provide the minimum statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11.
156. Leadership within the department is very good. The head of department not only offers an excellent role model but has also created a very effective team. The clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations shown by the whole department are very good. Management, on the other hand, is no better than satisfactory. Procedures for assessment, for tracking of students and for monitoring performance within the department, are all areas for development.
157. Since the last inspection attainment in Years 7-9 has risen, particularly by the end of Year 9. Teaching, learning and achievement have become better. Despite these improvements provision for most students in Years 10 and 11 has got worse. Within the department, improvement has been good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is resulting in improving standards.
- Students form very good relationships with their teachers and work hard, striving to achieve the highest quality of finish to their design work.
- Behaviour is excellent and attitudes to design and technology are very good across the department. Students work well independently and in small groups and learn from each other.
- All teachers place a good emphasis on developing technical vocabulary and literacy targets are embedded in their daily planning.
- The workshop technician has excellent skills and makes a significant contribution to the quality of students' learning.
- There has been significant improvement since the last inspection.
- Class sizes, particularly in Years 7 to 9, are too large and this restricts students' access to tools and equipment during lessons.
- There is a lack of specialist staff to cover the food technology courses.

Commentary

158. Standards in design and technology: graphic products at GCSE are well above average and for design and technology: food technology they are just below average. In the other GCSE subjects offered, textiles (art and design) and graphics (art and design), standards are well above average.
159. Students make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9 because of their high motivation and a desire to produce design and practical work of a high quality. This can be seen in Year 9 where students gain new skills and techniques such as annealing, silver soldering, plannishing, abrading and polishing rings in their jewellery project. The scheme of work has been rewritten to provide better coverage of the National Curriculum and achieve a closer match to students' interests. Most students taking GCSE courses demonstrate a high level of independence in undertaking their design and practical work. Their subject knowledge, technical vocabulary and level of understanding are good. In a Year 10 graphics lesson students were reviewing their coursework and reflecting on the quality of their design work. They explored a new range of graphics media and considered how they could further improve

the quality of their design work. There is an increasing use of ICT in students' coursework, together with well-developed skills in using specialist software such as Photoshop and two-dimensional designer. Students with special educational needs (SEN) make very good progress because of good organisation and very good teaching.

160. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent and is good overall. The best teaching is planned in detail and organised to ensure students learn at a good pace, understand the purpose of each lesson and know how well they are doing and what they can do to improve. Literacy targets with technical "key words" relating to each lesson are featured in each lesson plan. Students enjoy the subject and welcome the practical approach to learning. In resistant materials, they are well motivated with inspiring whole class demonstrations and respond to the teachers' high expectations; students are made to feel that they can produce practical work of professional quality. They have good management skills and a good understanding of how to modify their work as it progresses. Students listen carefully and behave well.
161. The department has benefited greatly from the recent appointment of a new subject leader and has worked hard to address the weaknesses highlighted in the last inspection. Significant progress has been made. In addition to raising standards, the subject leader has established a clear vision for the subject within the school, improved the role of the department and established how the subject can better relate to the needs of students. He is well supported by a relatively new, dynamic and hard working group of teachers and there is a more unified approach between the contributing subject areas of design and technology. Schemes of work have been rewritten and a new assessment system introduced, together with new GCSE syllabuses, to help to raise students' attainment. The workshop technician also makes a significant contribution to the quality of students' learning with the specific skills he has to offer. The subject leader recognises there is still a lot to do and the departmental development plan includes a longer term strategy for improvement. Although the choice of specialisms in Years 10 and 11 is popular with students, they are still rather limited and do not offer an option for students who wish to follow a more technological syllabus.
162. There is a very positive working culture, which pervades every class in every year group, where students strive to achieve the highest quality of surface finish and design presentation they can. This is a delight to see and is a particular strength of the department.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching and support staff have good subject knowledge and shared expertise.
- The breadth of study and wide range of experiences for students are supported by a variety of genres, styles and traditions and artists and craftspeople.
- Very good standards are achieved by students at GCSE.
- A good quality of students' artwork is displayed both in the department and across the school.
- Good use is made of ICT to support students' learning.
- Leadership is good.
- There is a lack of rigour in tracking the progress of students and there are undeveloped assessment procedures throughout Years 7-9.
- There is inconsistent use of sketchbooks in Years 7-9.

Commentary

163. Standards in art and design are above national expectations by the end of Year 9. In the 2003 teacher assessments, 93 per cent of the students achieved Level 5 or above. In lessons seen during the inspection, standards achieved by many students were good. In Years 10 and 11 standards in lessons are very good and this is reflected in the GCSE grades. In 2003 81 per cent of students obtained A* to C grades. This is well above the national average. Standards are good in all areas but work was particularly impressive in ceramics and textiles. Students' achievement was highest when they used sketchbooks effectively to record and experiment with different media and annotated their ideas to show their progress in making images and artefacts. For example in one Year 10 textiles lesson the students had looked at paintings by Rousseau, in particular his paintings of forests and undergrowth. They focussed on several ideas in the initial painting and then developed work in their sketchbooks, emphasising the visual and tactile qualities of the materials. Their work included print work, painting and drawing and experimentation in colour, and this enabled them to move to a final quality textile piece incorporating a number of ideas.
164. By the end of Year 9, students have enjoyed a range of experiences which support the development of skills including the use of particular techniques in printing, use of clay, techniques in observational drawing and using the computer to enhance and manipulate images. In addition, there are many opportunities for students to work from their own imagination and ideas in order to create their own work using a given stimulus. Students are stimulated by the work of artists from different times and places and from different traditions. For example, in Years 7 and 8 students used Aboriginal art as a stimulus. In one lesson the teacher had enabled the students to create pictures using Aboriginal symbols, motifs and colours from a restricted palette. In another, the teacher had used the same ideas to extend students' skills in design by creating papier-mâché bowls which were decorated in the same earth style colours. In another class in Year 7 students were using familiar cartoon characters such as The Simpsons as a starting point for developing work on Pop Art. Many students commented on how Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol had used particular techniques in order to achieve their desired effect. Some students were trying to incorporate these same ideas into their own work as an extension activity. Students' progress is good in the main school and by the end of Year 11 many students have made significant progress.
165. Overall, the teaching is good – and very good in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching is most successful, teachers set clear objectives for the lesson and students understand what they have to do. In some lessons there were some excellent starter activities, which began with a résumé of the previous lesson's outcomes, progressed to some supporting ideas or stimuli for the day's work and led to meaningful discussions about other work by the same or another artist. In a Year 11 lesson the students were creating a pot using ideas suggested by the work of Picasso, in particular the painting Guernica. This work depicting anguish and despair stimulated some extremely emotive feelings and responses from the students, which helped increase their own motivation to produce more original work. All students' work is well displayed in the classrooms and this acts as a motivator for other students. Students clearly enjoy their art lessons and concentration, particularly in GCSE classes, is often high. Behaviour in lessons for younger students is mostly good, but occasionally some off-task chatter breaks the concentration of some students. There has been good improvement in teaching since the last inspection with all lessons now satisfactory or better. Most students are engaged in lessons and concentration is often good. The progress of students is always satisfactory or better.
166. The wide range of experiences available to the students in lesson time is clearly a strength of the department. In addition to multicultural enhancement, the department works hard to be inclusive in other areas, for example by using the work of major female artists and craftspeople such as Sonia Delaunay and, more recently, Bridget Riley. The good-sized accommodation and teaching spaces include a specially designed ICT suite, a kiln room and ample storage space for all teachers. There are occasional clubs for extra-curricular activities

but these are few and irregular. However, the department is often open at lunchtime for students, particularly in Years 10 and 11, to complete work. Although teacher assessments are completed at the end of Year 9 each year, the procedures for reporting students' progress in Years 7-9 are underdeveloped. The schemes of work do not contain clear assessment criteria or expectations for the end of each unit of work, such as offered as exemplars in the QCA schemes of work for Years 7-9 and students do not know what level they have achieved until the end of Year 9. Consequently differentiation is by outcome and the targeting of students for support or extension work is not as secure as it could be. Assessment procedures in Years 10-11 are secure and reflect examination requirements.

167. The department is well led by an experienced head of department. She is supported by a team of teachers who have a range of specialisms and interests. In turn they are also well served by an excellent technician who has previously worked in the design profession. The team work well together and have high expectations and are clear about the direction in which they wish the department to develop.

Music

Provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the department and its teamwork are particularly strong.
- A wide range of musical experiences is on offer to students both in the classroom and as extra-curricular activities and these reflect the diverse nature of the school community.
- Assessment procedures are developing well in Years 7-9 and the curriculum offers clearly targeted activities for all students.
- The numbers of students engaged in extra-curricular activities and opportunities are increasing with almost 100 now learning instruments.
- The accommodation available for music making is unsatisfactory with inadequate spaces for visiting instrumental staff and no areas where students may compose in groups.
- Resources for classwork, other than keyboards, are inadequate with too few tuned percussion instruments available.

Commentary

168. Standards in music are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 9. In the 2003 teacher assessments, 60 per cent of all the students in Year 9 achieved Level 5 or above. However, although a significant number of students did not achieve Level 5 in these assessments, the majority of students in classes achieve good standards particularly when they are engaged in practical work. In Years 10 and 11 standards in lessons are sometimes good or very good with a few students working well beyond expectation particularly in composition work when using computer software. However, these high standards are not yet reflected in recent GCSE results. Of the students entered for the subject at GCSE in 2003, 37 per cent obtained A* to C grades. This is well below the national average.

169. Students achieve the highest standards when they are actively engaged in making music and then applying what they have learnt to other activities such as listening or appraising. In many lessons in Years 7-9 students develop good musicianship skills, particularly in their keyboard work. In several lessons seen in Year 8 students worked in pairs on a pre-composed Reggae piece. The majority were able to play quite complex riffs or ostinati whilst their partners were playing the melody. Their keyboard skills were developing well with some students able to play two independent parts at the same time and with some students beginning to develop their own improvised sections over a composed bass part. In another Year 9 lesson a Rock n' Roll piece acted as a stimulus for many students to develop their own extensive improvised compositions. Rhythmic development is also good with students in Year 7 using rhythm boxes as a starting point for their own group composition work using

percussion instruments. By Year 10 this work is further developed into opportunities to explore the rhythmic work of world cultures. In one GCSE lesson students had the opportunity to explore Brazilian rhythms using instruments similar to those used in a Batacada band. By the end of the lesson all 22 students were actively engaged in recreating the exciting street music of a Brazilian carnival.

170. Overall teaching is good throughout the main school. All teachers have clear expectations of what students are able to achieve and consequently they set challenging tasks. The strongest teaching allows for good opportunities for active music making in order to promote effective learning. Lessons are well planned to allow for the integrated activities of listening, composing and performing and take account of students' different abilities through effective target setting and differentiated tasks. Assessment procedures are developing well with the department developing simple, but effective, ways of relating tasks to National Curriculum levels. In a number of lessons in Years 7-9 students of both higher or lower ability had individual targets on specially prepared cards. The use of support teachers in all lessons is also strong. Students clearly enjoy their music lessons especially when they are making music. Concentration and enthusiasm in these lessons are high.
171. In teaching and learning there has been good improvement since the last inspection. The pace of teaching is now good and students are managed well. Work is well targeted at individual students and all students understand what they have to do to improve. All teaching is now at least satisfactory, teachers have high expectations and students' work is marked effectively.
172. The curriculum offers a wide range of musical experiences, which include good opportunities for engaging in the diversity of world music as well as western classical works. However, further work is needed to widen the opportunities for practical work through extending the range of instruments available in lessons, to include tuned percussion instruments as well as keyboards. New schemes of work are being developed although there is further work to be done on the curriculum scheme for Year 7. Despite the good work being developed by the gospel choir, there are too few opportunities for students to use their voices in lessons either through singing activities or through using the voice as an alternative instrument for composition or performing. There has been significant investment in the use of ICT to support learning in recent years and this is proving very successful in attracting students to the department either through DJ workshops, or more generally. Work in the department is further enhanced by the diverse extra-curricular programme, which includes several dhol drumming groups, a gospel choir, as well as other instrumental groups. This is a developing area of the curriculum and the department now attracts large numbers of students to instrumental lessons, mainly provided by the LEA music service. These include a very good range of instruments such as woodwind, brass and violin as well as guitar, keyboard, tabla and sitar. During the inspection there was a group lesson on dhol. Students were practising for a performance in which they were accompanying Bhangra dancers at the school's awards evening. This provided excellent opportunities for all students to engage in high-level music making which was challenging and supportive of the different abilities of the players. The teacher had high expectations of what they could do and the subsequent performance was excellent. It was also an excellent example of music and dance in combination.

Example of outstanding practice

The DJ club

This activity, which takes place at lunchtime and after school and is run at the request of students, draws (mainly) boys into the musical life of the school. During one session, a visiting DJ artist supported 12 boys as they composed, performed well-known songs and raps and learnt to use recording equipment. Concentration and motivation were very high and several boys returned to the music area later in the week to carry on working on their own.

173. The accommodation for music is not attractive. Although there are two main teaching rooms only one is large enough for good class performance work and both are in serious need of a

makeover. The two practice rooms are dismal and the visiting instrumental teachers are expected to teach in these if a classroom is not free. They are also used for group work and both students and teachers are expected to compete with a drum kit in one and untidy shelves in another. Neither has adequate external light. However, the recording studio and computer room, although small, are a welcome addition to the department's work.

174. The leadership and management of the department are very good with considerable developments having taken place in the past few years since the arrival of the new head of department and other teachers in the team. All are aware of the improvements needed to take the department forward and are working hard to achieve their aims.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching with some excellent features promotes very good learning and achievement for all students.
- An excellent climate for learning supports excellent attitudes in students.
- Excellent leadership of a highly committed team enables students to achieve very high standards.
- Participation and education in sport have become seamless, because of the excellent programme of community provision and strong partner institution links.
- There are no specific areas requiring improvement.

Commentary

175. Teacher assessment of Year 9 students in 2003 shows that students were working above national expectations. Girls and boys achieved similar standards. Evidence from the inspection supports teachers' assessments. During Years 7 to 9, students begin to apply skills with great accuracy, precision and control. This was apparent in trampoline, dance and volleyball lessons. In Year 7, students begin to perform movement and skills with technical accuracy. By Year 9, they compare and contrast sequenced movements in dance and trampoline with advanced aesthetic and technical awareness. Advanced volleyball skills are performed with vigour and astute technical and tactical awareness. All students develop the skills and knowledge of orienteering very well. This helps to advance their cross-curricular knowledge in numeracy, literacy, geography and science.

176. The highly accurate application of skills, knowledge, understanding and creative awareness is transferred into Year 10. Standards in statutory physical education lessons are well above national expectations and broadly in line in GCSE lessons. In 2003, 54 per cent of students gained an A*-C grade in their physical education GCSE course. To judge from the present achievement of students in Years 10 and 11, it is likely that GCSE grades in 2004 and 2005 will improve to above the national average.

177. Standards in GCSE dance lessons are well above the national average. Consequently in 2003, 71 per cent of students gained an A*-C grade in their dance examination course. Students who are not entered for full GCSE courses are entered for the GCSE short course or entry-level certification. Virtually all students achieve a form of accreditation in physical education.

178. Throughout Years 7 to 13, students develop a very good knowledge and understanding of how different types of exercise can contribute to their fitness and health. All students are

competent in performing warm up and cool down exercises and have a sound knowledge of body parts and how they work.

179. Students' achievement in relation to their variable standards on entry is very good. Many students work at levels in excess of those usual at their age. The achievement of students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is very good. The more gifted and talented students are given every opportunity to develop their advanced skills.
180. The department puts great importance on developing students' literacy skills. This underpins all learning. Staff continually emphasise key words and constantly encourage students to develop their knowledge and understanding of technical language and relate it to their physical development.
181. The department has established an excellent climate for learning. The very high quality of teaching promotes the students' very good progress and success. Very good subject knowledge, very high expectations and very good relationships underpin all teaching. In a very high proportion of lessons observed, teaching was very good and some was excellent. The students' attitudes to physical education are excellent.

Examples of outstanding practice

Teaching in physical education

The students reach such high levels of attainment in physical education because of the very high quality of the teaching. Teachers show their passion for and commitment to the subject through teaching that is challenging, encouraging, exploits a range of learning styles in order to meet students' needs, teaches students to take responsibility for their learning and promotes students' physical and creative development. Reciprocal teaching, in which teachers and students work together to advance learning, is common throughout the department. In addition, the teachers have the confidence to experiment with their teaching – for example by using kinaesthetic approaches to teach mental awareness in a Year 10 GCSE lesson.

Students' attitudes to physical education

Students enjoy physical education and their attitudes are excellent. During the inspection the attendance at lessons was 96 per cent, although some students were absent from school in order to celebrate Eid and there was 100 per cent participation in lessons. Students' application and productivity are excellent, whether they are working individually or in groups. They strive to improve their work by applying the criteria they have developed with teachers and they teach and encourage their peers to improve. Relationships between students are excellent.

182. Assessment procedures are very good. Teacher and student self-assessment are used for setting individual learning goals in order to improve students' understanding of their own and others' learning. However, the marking of written work for the GCSE course does not guide students sufficiently in how to improve. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is well matched to the needs of all students. There is very good use of ICT across the curriculum. Students have opportunities to participate in clubs, team games and competitions. Many students gain local and district honours and there is an Olympic trialist in swimming. The accommodation is a mixture of the brand new and the old and tired. It is used effectively, but the changing and showering facilities for boys are in urgent need of refurbishment. Excellent visual displays including portrayal of students' performance enhances the learning environment.

Example of outstanding practice

Curriculum in physical education

The department is moving towards fluid teaching and the fluid curriculum. Teachers team teach or move within timetabled blocks to teach parts of lessons most suited to their strengths and areas of excellence. The department has the confidence to meet the needs of the students by surveying them for their preferred choice of curricular and extra-curricular activity. This provides a more relevant statutory programme of physical education which is inclusive and gives equality of opportunity. The department has added to its area of learning by extending the taught curriculum by 45 minutes on four days of each week. This ensures a minimum of two hours physical activity for all.

183. The leadership of the department is excellent. The staff, teaching and non-teaching, form a very strong and committed team who provide positive role models to students, parents and other teachers.

Example of outstanding practice

Leadership and management in physical education

The department is held in high regard within the school and throughout Birmingham LEA. It is involved in national research linked to boys' underperformance and at the cutting edge of developments in physical education. Reciprocal and fluid teaching, kinaesthetic learning, the health agenda, inclusion and sports education are at the heart of its approach. Sports coaches are involved in the work of the department, both in school and in their centres such as Birchfield Harriers AC. Partnership links are excellent and there is an extensive community sports programme that is valued by students and parents. This is helping the department to ensure a very smooth transition from primary to secondary school and into the adult world. The director leads the department in continually evaluating its provision and diagnosing its needs. This excellent department is far from complacent.

184. The department has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is poised to improve still further because of its capacity for self-evaluation and review and its very high expectations of itself.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education is taught through a programme of whole-day activities that did not coincide with the inspection and so it was not inspected.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the lessons observed, the teaching and learning were good.
- Students have many opportunities outside lessons to practise the skills of citizenship.
- Citizenship as a theme comes high in the school's priorities.
- The school has not introduced a basic curriculum entitlement to National Curriculum citizenship for all students.
- Without a programme of study the school's provision lacks coherence and sequence.
- The school has not defined intended learning outcomes or devised ways of measuring whether they are achieved.
- Responsibility for leading the National Curriculum in citizenship has not been clearly assigned to a single teacher and this is impeding the development of the subject.

Commentary

185. It is impossible to judge the standard of students' work at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. The school did not make available examples of students' work, or offer a timetable of citizenship lessons for observation during the inspection.
186. Teaching and learning were good in the three lessons observed. In Year 9 students had the opportunity to talk to two people who had experienced the difficulties of World War Two at first hand. The teacher handled the occasion very well and students benefited enormously from the opportunity to learn about the experience of war and its sufferings from people of a previous generation. The other lessons were with students in Year 10. One was a debate on the question of capital punishment and students took the issues raised very seriously. The other lesson was about the effects of crime. The teacher showed a video on the distress suffered by victims of burglary. Most students again took the matter seriously and were keen that criminals should be punished for their crimes.
187. In addition to lessons the school provides a range of activities for students to practise the required skills of enquiry and communication. One of the teachers leads on citizenship for the Handsworth Consortium of Schools and the Birmingham Youth Parliament. The school has active year councils and a school council. All students have the benefit of a module of community service in Year 10. Through these and other activities students have many opportunities to experience participatory democracy at work both within and beyond the life of the school.
188. The school has raised teachers' and students' awareness of the importance of good citizenship. Audits of the curriculum show and inspectors' observations confirm, that many teachers contribute to the development of students as good citizens. How much taught time is spent on citizenship, however, is far from clear. The amount of citizenship in the programme provided on PSHE days is relatively small and students in Years 7, 8 and 9 have no other input of PSHE. In Year 10 two modules out of four are on citizenship, including one of community service. In Year 11 the school divides the time available equally between religious education and careers, with no explicit citizenship.
189. In its improvement plan the school has identified citizenship and self-responsibility as one of its six themes for development. This clearly indicates its value to the school and to staff. There is also a citizenship school improvement group (SIG) with an action plan. The plan mentions citizenship but not as a subject of the National Curriculum in need of a programme of study. The school relies on the content listed in the order but lacks documentation showing what students study and when. Nor are the intended learning outcomes stated. Much of the teaching and learning comes through other subjects but how this makes a coherent and sequential programme is not clear. The school invites students to make their own links on a sheet inserted into their planners. This is a tick list, which, even if it were successful, would not amount to a programme of study. Nor is it the assessment and recording sheet envisaged by the action plan.
190. Leadership is unsatisfactory. Citizenship as a taught course lacks a clear sense of direction. At the end of the inspection the school showed uncertainty about which teacher was responsible for citizenship. This uncertainty is additional to those about how much time is available and about how well students achieve. Taken together with the absence of a programme of study, the omissions and uncertainties indicate that statutory requirements are not yet fully in place. Provision in citizenship is unsatisfactory.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 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	9	88.9	n/a	33.3	n/a	37.8	n/a
Ceramics	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	20.0	n/a
Chemistry	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	20.0	n/a
Drama	10	90.0	n/a	30.0	n/a	37.0	n/a
Graphics	10	70.0	n/a	30.0	n/a	31.0	n/a
Health and social care	16	100	n/a	31.3	n/a	40.0	n/a
Information technology	29	86.2	n/a	24.1	n/a	31.0	n/a
Science	5	40.0	n/a	0	n/a	12.0	n/a

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	7	100	n/a	42.9	n/a	77.1	n/a
Biology	12	91.7	n/a	25.0	n/a	73.3	n/a
Business studies	29	96.6	n/a	41.4	n/a	80.7	n/a
Ceramics	2	100	n/a	100	n/a	120	n/a
Chemistry	10	100	n/a	40.0	n/a	76.0	n/a
English language	5	80.0	n/a	40.0	n/a	60.0	n/a
English literature	12	100	n/a	33.3	n/a	81.7	n/a
Graphics	4	100	n/a	100	n/a	110.0	n/a
Health and social care	11	100	n/a	45.5	n/a	90.9	n/a
History	6	83.3	n/a	0	n/a	56.7	n/a
Information technology	28	96.4	n/a	75.0	n/a	105.2	n/a
n/a Leisure	6	100	n/a	0	n/a	70.0	n/a
Mathematics	24	87.5	n/a	37.5	n/a	74.2	n/a
Physical education	5	60.0	n/a	20.0	n/a	44.0	n/a
Physics	7	100	n/a	14.3	n/a	74.3	n/a
Sociology	10	100	n/a	50.0	n/a	94.0	n/a

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No. in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Part 1 Leisure and tourism	13	69	n/a	31	n/a	-	n/a
Part 1 Health	10	60	n/a	10	n/a	-	n/a
Part 1 Business	17	59	n/a	9	n/a	-	n/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English was inspected in depth and lessons in Panjabi were sampled.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are good in English literature, satisfactory overall and improving.
- The quality of teaching is uniformly high.
- Students are well motivated and enjoy their studies.
- Courses at AS and A2 levels in English language and English literature are offered; delivery is well planned and organised.
- The confidence and independent study skills of students are underdeveloped.

Commentary

191. Examination results in Years 12 and 13 are improving, especially in English literature. At AS in 2003, 19 students were entered. All gained at least an E grade, compared with 86 per cent the previous year. There was one A, four Bs and seven Cs. At A2 in literature, 12 were entered, all of whom gained at least a D grade, including one A, two Bs and four Cs.
192. In English language at AS in 2003, ten candidates were entered, nine of whom gained an E grade or above including two Cs, compared with a pass rate of only 54 per cent the previous year. At A2 in English language, seven students were entered and six gained E or above including three Bs and one C.
193. The take-up is comparatively small but is increasing and the subject is popular. The dual offering makes good use of the expertise there is in the department in English language and linguistics, as well as allowing students inclined towards language study to follow this course. The balance of entry abilities and male and female students is equitable.
194. Standards in lessons reflected the range of students' previous experience and attainment but in no case did students appear to be under-prepared or inappropriately placed on the courses followed. They benefit from clear exposition by the teachers who teach each group, a variety of interesting assignments and an appropriate level of challenge, with extra help being available when needed. Written work is carefully prepared by students and often shared in draft as a class. Self-assessment is incorporated well. In varying degrees, students sometimes find difficulty in presenting their arguments fluently in writing and their note-making and note-taking showed over-dependence on material provided by the teacher. However, they were in the first term of the year and were making good progress in mastering the methods and discourse of both linguistic and literary interpretation.
195. Lessons seen in language found students analysing music reviews prior to drafting and explaining their own and exploring the language of politics by comparing and assessing the styles of modern speeches and their delivery. In literature, a Restoration play and, with another group, a contemporary novel were investigated with vigour and a mature exchange of ideas. The strengths of the department's teaching at this level are: the responsibility given to students themselves to arrive at and defend their own views; and the fruitful use of discussion in a mutually supportive but also challenging climate. Nevertheless, students' use of research and self-discovered reference materials could be built further into the teaching. The school library is adding to its small collection in support of sixth-form studies and students are sometimes able to use a local higher education library; such resources and their use will need further development.
196. These courses are fairly new in the school and there was no sixth form at the time of the last inspection. The provision for English has been successfully established.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

197. Language and communications skills in the sixth form are satisfactory. Even after obtaining good grades at GCSE students still have language skills to learn as they progress to a higher level of study.
198. Most students are confident in discussions in lessons, listening well and sharing ideas effectively. In most lessons teachers take pains to introduce new vocabulary well and to correct colloquial and imprecise use of words, but this is not always the case. In a good sociology lesson Year 12 students were required to use words like “positivism” and “functionalism” in their own sentences to demonstrate that they understood the terms well enough to use them accurately. In a drama lesson, however, students were not sufficiently corrected when they used words imprecisely.
199. Reading skills are satisfactory and students arrive at good critical judgements through reading a range of materials including electronic sources. The library is poorly stocked for independent study and students’ research skills are underdeveloped. Some departments, like business education, introduce research skills through work on case studies and contemporary articles and many subject areas provide students with materials for wider background reading.
200. Writing skills are not as well developed as speaking and listening skills, but some of the most effective teaching included successful strategies to teach students how to plan their written work. A good English lesson on ‘Wuthering Heights’ required Year 13 students to consider a range of propositions about the hero and to discuss how they would respond in a well-argued essay. Very good teaching in a Year 12 history lesson on The Great Reform Bill was entirely devoted to teaching students how to interpret questions, respond to propositions and how to structure an essay which answered the question fully and directly. The students learned many valuable language and examination skills from the lesson.
201. All of the students spoken to acknowledged that the demands on their literacy had increased a lot in the sixth form, especially when dealing with abstract issues and complex arguments, but they were unanimous in saying that good teaching was helping them to make good progress with developing their language skills.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is very good overall, and this explains the increasing numbers of students studying mathematics, and their very good progress.
- Learning takes place in a very positive atmosphere, because of the positive relationships between staff and students.
- The teachers are experts in their subject and they plan effectively and make links with other curriculum areas.
- There were no significant weaknesses.

Commentary

202. The inspection covered the courses in the OCR A-level mathematics and AS-level mathematics provided by the school. Modules are offered in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics.
203. In Year 13 in 2002, the percentage of students attaining the high grades at A-level was below the national average. However, the school achieved 100 per cent pass rate and this is particularly good given that half the students had taken an intermediate GCSE. The

examination results are improving from year to year. The school adds value in the sixth form and students make very good progress.

204. The numbers of students studying A-level is high and increasing. They have access to a wide mathematical curriculum and many go on to study mathematically related courses at university.
205. The standard of teaching and learning is very good and often excellent. Teachers take responsibility for teaching and do not rely on textbooks. They use ICT well to stimulate learning. They have very high expectations of students who respond well to the challenges set. This was seen in well-paced lessons where all were involved.
206. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and enables them to plan effectively. They use mathematical language expertly to establish and reinforce concepts. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, the teacher's skilful use of reflective questioning enabled students to interpret the results of analyzing data to establish correlation. The teacher clearly established, by discussion, the need to link the data to real situations. She did this by using the whiteboard to display different scenarios
207. Students' attitudes and behaviour are both very good. They are committed to and positive about their work and are prepared to admit when they do not understand and ask for further explanation. In one case a student asked for clarification but preceded her question with "before you tell me – here is my idea miss". Staff encourage this independent approach to learning.
208. Students with an intermediate background at GCSE are well provided for. The quality and pace of lessons, which stem from teachers' planning, create a very positive learning environment that underpins effective learning. The lessons are well differentiated with a variety of work available according to the level of students' understanding.
209. The rooms used to teach mathematics are well equipped and there is no lack of resources. The quality of relationships between students and staff is a particular strength. Students believe that they are being stretched and express their gratitude for the amount of support teachers give them.
210. Subject management is excellent. The teaching that teachers are allocated matches their specialisms. There are very good procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress and for setting targets. Students know how well they are doing and this contributes to the progress they make.

Mathematics across the curriculum

211. The mathematical skills across the school are very good. Students apply numerical techniques in a variety of situations. Students are confident in the way that they apply their understanding of mathematics.

SCIENCE

During the inspection, chemistry was inspected in depth. Work in biology, physics and science was sampled.

Chemistry

The provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Students work very hard and are keen to succeed.
- Teachers provide students with very good support and encouragement.
- A very good range of additional activities is organised, including attendance at university lectures and industrial visits.
- Students are not given enough opportunities to learn independently.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

212. In 2002, standards in chemistry were below the national average. A-level results were much lower than in 2001 when standards were well above average, particularly for girls. Provisional A-level results for 2003 show an improvement over 2002. All students gained at least grade E and a greater percentage obtained the higher grades (A and B).
213. The subject is popular with students, particularly girls. Most of the 17 students who started the AS-level course in 2002 completed the year. The one candidate entered for the examination gained grade E. The few students who failed to complete the course did so because they found the work too difficult.
214. Half the students who began the AS-level course in 2002 decided to continue studying chemistry in Year 13. They respond well in lessons and make good learning gains as a result of the very knowledgeable and supportive teaching. Standards are around average. Students have a good grasp of broad chemical principles but occasionally find some of the more detailed work difficult to remember. A significant number of students have weaknesses in their understanding of basic chemical formulae which affects their progress. While the higher attaining students often show good insights into chemical concepts, they do not always think sufficiently before answering questions; as a result they often make elementary errors.
215. The number of students studying chemistry in Year 12 is similar to previous years. Students work hard in lessons and learn effectively because of teaching that develops scientific ideas in accessible ways. Attainment overall is average, although a few students demonstrate a very good grasp of chemical principles. Most students can link ideas together well in lessons but a few fail to make good progress because of significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding of earlier work. Because of this, teachers sometimes spend a lot of lesson time revising basic concepts. Insufficient use is made of homework activities to help students prepare better for the work to be covered in the next lesson.
216. Achievement in Years 12 and 13 is satisfactory for both boys and girls. While most students learn well in lessons some find it hard to identify the most important features of the work they are doing and consequently fail to transfer their learning effectively to new situations. Teachers recognise this difficulty and provide students with good help and guidance on structuring their work better. Although most students have good literacy levels, a few find problems distinguishing between similar chemical names and interpreting the written material that forms an important part of the course. Although teachers are well aware of this and help to clarify the main points, some students still fall behind in lessons as a result of failing to understand fully some of the more complex language used.
217. Students enjoy their work and are very keen to learn. They have confidence in their teachers and working relationships are very good. Teachers are very supportive and are very willing to provide additional help outside lesson time. Some students, however, lack confidence in their own capabilities and work rather slowly. They tend to be over-reliant on their teachers for help and guidance and have not yet developed effective independent learning skills. Too few opportunities exist for students to work on their own in lessons since much of the work is

teacher directed. When students are encouraged to think for themselves, they mostly respond well to the challenge and often make very good progress.

218. Teaching is good. Effective use is made by teachers of their very good subject knowledge to explain chemical principles and to develop students' understanding. The work in lessons is generally challenging as a result of teachers' high expectations. Teachers use questioning well to assess students' progress and respond readily to individual problems. However, this sometimes results in other students spending too much time revisiting familiar work. Too little attention is given to providing these students with alternative activities to extend their own understanding.
219. Work in the subject is co-ordinated effectively. The two teachers involved work well together when planning and organising lessons. Very good attention is paid to the requirements of the examination syllabuses. Good use is made of assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods and results in different approaches being tried in order to improve standards further. A very good range of additional activities such as visits to places of scientific interest is organised which students find useful when considering coursework and future career prospects.
220. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Poor preparation and storage areas are having an adverse effect on the work of teachers and technical staff. The laboratory accommodation is unsuitable for modern A-level chemistry courses and detracts considerably from the overall effectiveness of the work in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The school offers AVCE, AS and A2 courses in this area that was the focus for inspection. Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been rapid progress in developing successful AS and A2 courses since they were introduced in 1999.
- There were excellent results in 2003 for AS (86.2 per cent); A-E, A2 (100 per cent); A-E (56.7 per cent grade A).
- Teaching is good across all lessons seen.
- There are very effective assessment procedures and individual target setting, particularly for Year 13.
- There is very strong leadership and effective management.
- Technical support staff make a significant contribution to the high quality of students' education.
- There is a need to extend curriculum opportunity by formalising industrial / commercial visit(s) or by having visiting "expert" speakers.

Commentary

221. AS and A2 results were well above average in 2003. Over half the students taking the A2 qualification achieved grade A.
222. The quality of students' work illustrates clear understanding of technological concepts and how these can be applied to real life situations. Activities develop well in lessons and offer good progression and continuity in learning. In Year 13, students learned the principles of databases and the programming language of Visual Basic and were then required to apply this knowledge to developing their own database program, which had to relate to a real life scenario. The students were then challenged to develop high quality technical documentation, using annotated screenshot images to communicate the necessary information.

223. Teachers have considerable subject expertise and provide appropriate challenge when setting tasks and asking questions. Lessons are planned in detail with specific learning objectives linked to the assessment criteria so the students know what they have to do and know how well they are performing and what they can do to improve. Lessons are presented in an articulate and “punchy” manner which is well received by students and helps to refocus their thinking and sustain their motivation during extended coursework assignments. Individual work is well monitored and supported and a particular feature which supports high achievement is the ‘one to one’ interview at the end of each piece of work during which the assessment criteria are discussed in relation to the teachers’ marks and individual targets are set to improve students’ performance further.
224. The positive attitude and commitment to learning of the majority of students contributes to their high achievement. They show interest and effort in their lessons and are well disciplined as they work independently to research and complete their project work. They make good use of homework and take advantage of the schools’ resources to use computers outside lesson time to improve the quality of their work. Students have very positive attitudes towards their courses and are very complimentary about the teaching they receive. One student summed up the general view that “they expect a lot, work us hard, set very high targets, but at the end of the day they make us feel that we can succeed... and it’s great when we do”.
225. The subject has been particularly well introduced into the school over the last three years and has grown in popularity each year with excellent results. Key features of the success are the very strong leadership and management of the course and the quality and analysis of students’ results. Assessment information has been used to make improvements in the way the course is taught. There is synergy between the teachers, students and support staff, and this has led to very positive relationships with the students.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

226. There is no formal programme of key skills in ICT, although subjects across the curriculum provide many opportunities to use and improve computer skills. Most students already have good ICT capability when they enter the sixth form and in general, this approach works well. Most subjects provide at least satisfactory opportunities and those in mathematics, science, art and design and technology are good. In A-level graphics for example, computers are used frequently to undertake aspects of coursework, for which students are challenged to use sophisticated software to set up three-dimensional modelling and graphical animations.

HUMANITIES

During the inspection, history was inspected in depth and a course in sociology was sampled.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the current Year 13, are below those expected nationally.
- A good knowledge and understanding of the subject by their teachers enhances students’ achievement.
- Students are encouraged to plan their own learning and to research the areas that they are studying.
- Students need further help with interpreting and evaluating the sources they are given and developing their understanding.

Commentary

227. In 2003 the examination results at the end of Year 13 were low, but the cohort was small. The results at the end of Year 12 were also below national expectations.
228. Standards in the current Year 13 are also below those expected nationally. All students show willingness to use their time well and plan their work and most are keen to take part in discussions. This was demonstrated in a Year 13 lesson on 'How democratic was Britain in 1885?' Their written work shows maturity for their age and a willingness to use and question the different sources they use. However, access to further resources, such as those available in university libraries, would further support their learning.
229. The quality of teaching is good and this greatly benefits students as they prepare for higher education. Teachers are skilled in directing students' studies. This was demonstrated in a Year 12 class on 'The causes that led to the passing of the Reform Act 1832'. Students worked in pairs and used cards to help them structure the paragraphs of essays that they were preparing. However there is a need to ensure all students are involved in sharing their knowledge and ideas particularly in class discussions. Work is marked with constructive comments which will help students to make progress.
230. Leadership is good and a team approach plus a willingness to review their materials and teaching styles provides students with a good preparation for their future learning. A visit in Year 12 to the Imperial War Museum in London to see the Holocaust exhibition greatly extended the students' understanding of this aspect of their studies.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

During the inspection, courses in design and technology and graphics were sampled.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

During the inspection, art was inspected in depth and courses in music technology and drama were sampled.

Art

Provision in art is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the national average and continue to improve as a result of very good teaching.
- The attitude of the students is excellent and therefore progress is very good.
- The management of the subject is good, promoting a clear vision and high expectations.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students should be encouraged to annotate and evaluate their work. This would help them to develop skills of critical analysis and extend their knowledge and understanding of how to improve their work.

Commentary

231. Standards in art and design are above average and continue to improve because of very good teaching and the excellent attitude of the students. The best results are in Year 13 because students have graduated from Year 12 and therefore have had a longer time to develop their craft skills, knowledge and an understanding of the demands of the subject. A small number of students study ceramics. The students have all passed their examinations over the past three years. Students demonstrate flair and imagination and are producing work

of quality and originality. The majority of the students are confident when working with a variety of materials and resources. The students are articulate, discuss their work with confidence and have pride in their achievements. Their attitude toward the subject borders on excellent and is a major contributor to the quality of the work produced, some of which is impressive. Progress is very good, particularly in Year 13 because of the attitude of the students and the quality of teaching. Achievement is good in Year 12 and often very good in Year 13. Students work hard and therefore are consolidating and developing craft skills and a wider understanding of art in society.

232. Teaching is very good. Lessons are challenging and well planned. Classroom organisation and management are extremely effective and the relationship between the teachers and the students is excellent. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures in order to raise creative and visual appreciation. ICT is used to good effect. Students have access to computers in the department, digital cameras and some art related computer software. The department benefits from a technician who works with the students and staff and has considerable expertise in graphic design. Assessment is effective; students are aware of expectations and know how to improve their work. Work is monitored regularly and assessment is particularly effective as an influence on future curriculum development and lesson planning. The students are well aware of teachers' expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. Every teacher takes responsibility for a small group of students by acting as a personal mentor. Therefore students are offered excellent support with their work, progress and achievements. Students speak highly of the support provided by their teachers. Students should be encouraged to annotate all their work and by doing so develop skills of critical analysis and extend their appreciation of how to improve their work.

233. The management of the department is good. The clear vision and effective planning promote high standards in lessons. The teachers work as a very effective team offering complementary skills. The quality of teaching is monitored. Teachers maintain good records; targets are set for achievement, and retention and attendance rates are monitored. The accommodation is good. Excellent displays of work in all classrooms and in the public areas around the school are testimony to the high standards being achieved by students. Resources are good but some of the tables should be replaced in order to provide better working surfaces for the students. The sixth form students have almost free access to the art department, but also need a dedicated area within the art department.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

During the inspection, leisure and tourism was inspected in depth, and a course in physical education was sampled.

Leisure and tourism

Provision in leisure and tourism is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The variety of routes to accreditation offers all students very good opportunities for success.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The positive attitude of the students create a very good learning partnership between the teachers and students and therefore progress for all is good.
- The assessment and recording of students' achievement is thorough and valuable in informing students of their progress and achievements.
- The leadership and management are very effective in promoting high standards and a sense of achievement in the students.
- Students need to develop greater independence in their learning, particularly in the Year 12 GNVQ course.

Commentary

234. Standards in leisure and tourism at intermediate level are improving. In 2002 standards were close to the national average with four students achieving a merit and an overall pass rate of approximately 70 per cent. In 2002 standards in AVCE leisure and recreation were above the national average. 2003 results exceeded those achieved in 2002. The majority of students on all courses achieve a pass. Retention rates on all courses are good. A scrutiny of work during the inspection together with discussions with students demonstrates improvement in knowledge and understanding through hard work. The style of teaching is new to students and they find it refreshing. Communication skills are improving because of good teaching, which promotes discussion in all lessons. Therefore students are developing the ability to form and defend opinions. The students on the GNVQ intermediate course lack confidence in their own ability and therefore independent learning skills are not as well developed as with some of the students on the AVCE course. This has an effect upon students' levels of achievement. In leisure and recreation research is more thorough and there is an increased awareness of the unit requirements when submitting assignments. A significant proportion of students on both courses do not always appreciate the degree of detail required in assignments and research. In all classes there is use of computers. All students demonstrate average to good computer skills. They word-process their assignments and in some cases create graphs and charts.
235. Teaching is good. The lessons are well planned and make effective use of a variety of teaching strategies. A large number of teachers deliver the subject. They work well together offering complementary skills, knowledge and expertise. Students are enthusiastic about their lessons and work well. Teachers are supportive, challenging and knowledgeable about the learning needs of all students. Relationships are excellent. Trust and mutual respect are very high, therefore progress is good. Achievement is also good because students have a positive attitude and work hard. Many students interviewed admitted that they had never produced so much finished work. The students have a high opinion of their teachers. Teachers' comments on written work are helpful and constructive. Assignments are graded as units are completed. Regular tutorials are provided.
236. Management of the curriculum area is good. Teaching is monitored. Teachers work as an effective team. Assessment is good, students' progress and achievements are recorded and the marking of work gives constructive advice to students on how to improve. Resources are good and accommodation is good; rooms are inviting and well equipped with computers.

BUSINESS

Business education

Provision in business education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards achieved are very good because of very effective teaching and the positive attitude of the students.
- Teaching is very good; lessons are well planned, expectations are high and therefore progress is very good for all students.
- The quality of management of the subject is very good providing a clear vision and high expectations.
- Assessment is very good and therefore students are aware of their achievements and how they might improve.
- Opportunities should be developed to increase the use of computers to extending knowledge and understanding of how business in society operates.

Commentary

237. Business education is provided as GCE AS and A2 level.
238. Examination results were well above average in 2002. In 2003 the numbers of students taking the subject increased significantly and the standards continued to improve. This is one of the best performing subjects in the school. Progress is very good because of effective teaching, which, coupled with positive students' attitudes continues to raise standards. Students achieve well because they work hard. The students organise their work well and the quality of research and their ability to absorb and analyse factual information improve from Year 12 to Year 13. In all lessons students are engaged in discussions on a range of issues that demonstrate reasonably well-developed skills in forming and defending opinions. Students are able to plan their own work when researching assignments.
239. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject. They foster interest and understanding in the students through carefully planned lessons, which use a variety of teaching strategies. Teachers ensure that students are well aware of expectations in lessons. Relationships in lessons are very good demonstrating high levels of mutual respect and understanding. Teaching strategies are carefully orchestrated to promote knowledge and understanding through whole class and small group activities. Expectations are high and therefore the work is challenging allowing all students to experience the complex nature of business. Discussion is an integral part of all lessons; therefore students are improving their skills in communication and the presentation of work is improving. More use should be made of invited speakers, in order to increase students' knowledge and understanding of business in society and to link theory to actual practice. All students have targets and they are capable of discussing their progress towards achieving them. A number of students interviewed also had career plans and were knowledgeable and articulate when discussing their work. They fully appreciated the quality of teaching, support and guidance given to them by their teachers.
240. The management of the department is very good. The teachers share a clear vision promoting high expectations. The teachers work as a very effective team, sharing best practice and supporting each other. Schemes of work are detailed and delivered effectively. Assessment is very effective, being used to influence the planning of lessons and giving the students a clear understanding of their progress, attainment and future expectations. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care

Provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standards are well above the national average because of the quality of teaching and the excellent attitude of the students.
- Achievement is very good.
- The relationship between students and their teacher is excellent providing a very good basis for effective learning.
- The management of the course is excellent. The planning is of very high quality.
- The quality of teaching is very good.

Commentary

241. Standards are well above the national average. A scrutiny of work including the unit test results indicates that standards of attainment continue to improve. This is primarily as a result

of very effective teaching and very good subject knowledge. The majority of the present Year 12 students have made a good start to their course. The students respond well and work hard and consequently their skills in problem solving and the ability to work independently are developing well. Their skills in critical analysis and evaluation improve from Year 12 to Year 13. Students' written work is generally well organised and free from grammatical or spelling errors, often including charts, graphs and other images created using computers. Opportunities to use computers are included in all units of work and therefore all students are competent.

242. Teaching is very good. It includes very effective planning, very good relationships together with very good subject knowledge. All work is assessed accurately, and constructive advice and guidance is given providing high levels of support to the students. Theory and practice of health and social care are well connected, promoting good learning and some significant levels of achievement. The enthusiasm of the teacher creates a positive environment for learning. The students are developing an appreciation of the impact of health and social care on society. Work placements are arranged giving the students first hand experience of the subject in a practical setting. The students appreciate the freedom they are given to pursue independent study. This style of teaching and learning is very effective because of the clear structure of the experiences being offered. The students are attentive, listen and show an excellent attitude to their work. They are practised in discussion and contribute willingly. Communication skills improve from Year 12 to Year 13. Students speak highly of their relationships with their teacher. Work is assessed regularly and students are given appropriate and constructive oral and written feedback.
243. Management is very good. There is a clear vision and an appreciation of what is required to support the development of the subject and the attainment levels of the students. Accommodation is good; displays make the room inviting and provide a good climate for learning. There is a good range of resources available and students have access to computers.

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	2
How inclusive the school is		1
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	2
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	3	2
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well students learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	3	3
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	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	1	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1	1
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	2

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