

INSPECTION REPORT

CHESTNUT GROVE SCHOOL

Balham

LEA area: London Borough of Wandsworth

Unique reference number: 101054

Headteacher: Mrs Margaret Peacock

Lead inspector: George Knights

Dates of inspection: 19th to 23rd January 2004

Inspection number: 259338

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	961
School address:	Chestnut Grove Balham London
Postcode:	SW12 8JZ
Telephone number:	020 8673 8737
Fax number:	020 8675 1190
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Sarah Bethell-Jones
Date of previous inspection:	16 th March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Chestnut Grove School is a mixed comprehensive school with Arts College status for pupils aged 11 to 19. It is located in Balham in the London Borough of Wandsworth. Pupils in the school come from Balham and neighbouring boroughs. There are 961 pupils on roll, making it an average size school. Attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average. The school is popular and over-subscribed. Many pupils come from homes with below average socio-economic circumstances. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Around three quarters of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and around 7 per cent of pupils have English as an additional language. The number on the school's register of special educational needs is well above the national average, as is the number with Statements of Special Educational Need. Around half the pupils remain in the sixth form on completion of compulsory schooling. Pupil turnover is average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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33160	Natalia Power	Team inspector	English Media studies
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17923	Michael Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
2032	Christopher Polyblank	Team inspector	Music
31037	Ann Barwell	Team inspector	Physical education Sports studies
15277	Christopher Vidler	Team inspector	Business education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Chestnut Grove School provides a **satisfactory** education for all its students. Standards are improving but remain **well below the national average** for younger students and **below average** for older students. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**. Leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory** and the school gives **satisfactory** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses

- The school meets the needs of each individual student by providing good advice, support and guidance.
- There is too much teaching that is unsatisfactory or poor.
- Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory.
- A good programme of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum.
- Teachers make good use of assessment to guide planning and students' work.
- Provision is very good for geography but is unsatisfactory for science and citizenship education.
- The school has established effective links with the community and with other schools and colleges.
- Good steps are taken to induct and train teachers new to the school and to the profession.
- Management of aspects of the sixth form is unsatisfactory and sixth form accommodation is inadequate.

Overall, progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have improved for older students and steps taken to deal with the issues identified in the previous inspection report have been satisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. These results represent satisfactory progress in English but unsatisfactory progress in the other two subjects. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were below the national average and were slightly lower than in the previous year, though they represented good achievement for this group of students. The number of students gaining five or more A* to C grades improved significantly in 2003. Sixth form students gained results in 2003 that were much better than expected, given their attainment at the start of their courses.

Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	E	D	D	A
		2000	2001	2002	
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E	E	E	

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 pupils attained at the end of Year 9

The work of students currently in Years 7 to 11 is below national average standards, but achievement is satisfactory. Sixth form students, similarly, are working at below average standards but are making satisfactory progress. Students' personal development in the school is satisfactory, as are their attitudes to work and other aspects of school life. Behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is satisfactory and relationships within the school community are good. Attendance at school and punctuality to lessons are unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided in the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching, most of which occurs in classes for younger students. Teaching and learning are particularly good in geography but are unsatisfactory in citizenship education. In science, a considerable amount of teaching is unsatisfactory because of difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified teachers of the subject. The assessment of students' work is good.

The curriculum offered to students is satisfactory, both in the main school and in the sixth form. It is enhanced by a good enrichment programme, including many extra-curricular activities which students enjoy. Accommodation for sixth form study is inadequate. Arrangements for the care, welfare, health and safety of students are satisfactory and the school provides good support, advice and guidance to students, both in the main school and in the sixth form. The school takes good account of the views of students and acts upon them well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher's leadership of the school is good. She has a strong commitment to the students and a clear view about what she wants the school to be like. Strategic development is sound but the evaluation of what the school does is not sharply enough focused on the impact of teaching, learning and other provision on students' achievement. The quality of leadership and management of subjects varies too much. Governance of the school is good with governors fulfilling their roles well, other than in providing for all students to take part in a daily act of collective worship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students value the education that the school provides and consider that the school has improved in recent years. Parents recognise that students like the school and applaud the progress they make. Parents and students praise the steps taken to give students a rounded education through the wide variety of experiences open to them. Students and their parents recognise that students are expected to work hard and do their best. Inspectors agree with parents and students that a few students behave badly. They judge that the school manages to help these students improve their behaviour so that the learning of others is only occasionally disturbed. Parents and students believe that the school celebrates the individual differences in students and helps all students with difficulties. Students recognise that staff care about their well-being. Most parents and students have confidence in the way the school is run.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- improve provision in science and in citizenship education;
- eliminate the unsatisfactory or poor teaching in the school;
- increase attendance levels and make sure that students arrive punctually to lessons;
- improve sixth form management and enhance sixth form accommodation;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is satisfactory. Standards are well below average but students achieve well because sixth form teaching is good. The curriculum satisfactorily meets students' needs. Leadership is satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory. The sixth form is cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Sixth form teaching is good, enabling students to learn well.
- A policy of open access to the sixth form is good in that it enables the needs of all who wish to stay to be met.
- The attendance and punctuality of sixth form students are not good enough.
- Management of some aspects of sixth form provision is unsatisfactory and accommodation for sixth form students is inadequate.

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 in English is very good .
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is satisfactory . Standards are below the national average in the context of a policy that encourages students from a wide range of ability to study the subject at advanced level. The very small number of students who choose to study the subject limits teaching methods and learning styles.
Science	Provision in chemistry is satisfactory .
Information and communication technology	Provision in information and communication technology is good . Students achieve well because they are well taught on a course which is well chosen to meet their needs. Students particularly enjoy discussing the social effects of new technologies.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in media studies is very good .
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in the newly introduced course in hospitality, sports, leisure and travel is good . The first examinations will be taken in summer 2004. The course is popular with students.
Business	Provision in business education is good . Teachers are extremely hard working and well organised and have done very well to ensure that high standards of achievement are maintained.

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

The provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth form students is **good**. Sixth form students are successfully involved in the life and work of the school. Their views are sought, valued and acted upon through the sixth form committee. Students value the approachability of teachers and tutors and their concern for their well-being and progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is **satisfactory** but management is **unsatisfactory**. Numbers of students in the sixth form have increased and the school provides a wide range of courses that meet their needs. The management of some key aspects of the sixth form, including monitoring of attendance and provision in subjects, such as chemistry and mathematics, are unsatisfactory. Governors understand what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. The sixth form is cost-effective.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Sixth form students enjoy being at the school. They value the good relationships with teachers and recognise that they are taught well. Some have concerns about the relevance of courses but believe that they get regular and helpful support and advice from teachers as they progress through the sixth form. Concerns expressed by a significant minority of students about careers advice are not fully justified. Teachers help students choose future career paths carefully. Some students are concerned about the management of the sixth form and their concerns are partly justified.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Main school

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are **well below average**, as they have been for several years. In GCSE examinations, results are **below average**. The achievement of students currently in the school is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve better in English than they do in mathematics and science in their first three years in the school.
- In 2003 the school met its targets for GCSE results but did not meet its targets for national tests at the end of Year 9.
- There was a significant improvement in the number of students gaining five or more A* to C grades in 2003.

Commentary

1. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. Given the attainment of students on entry to the school, this represents satisfactory progress in English, but unsatisfactory progress in the other two subjects. When compared with similar schools, results in English were above average, while those in mathematics were below average and those in science were well below average. In recent years, overall results in national tests have been improving, but at a slower rate than improvement nationally. Details of results in national tests in 2003 are set out in the following table.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.2 (31.6)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	31.4 (30.7)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	29.2 (29.0)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 177 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Students currently approaching the end of Year 9 are achieving well in English and the standard of their work is average. In mathematics, achievement is satisfactory and here, too, standards are close to average. In science, however, achievement is poor because teaching is not good enough to help students make satisfactory progress. As a result, standards of work of students in science remain below average.
3. In other subjects, students achieve particularly well in geography, history and music during their first three years in school. They achieve well in these subjects and reach above average standards by the end of Year 9. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects except citizenship education. Here, achievement is not as good as it should be because not all aspects of the subject are taught equally well.
4. In GCSE examinations in 2003, results were below average and were, overall, slightly lower than in the previous year. However, the number of students gaining five or more A* to C grades improved significantly and overall results represented good achievement for this group of students. The 2003 results were well above the average for similar schools. The work of

students currently approaching the end of Year 11 is below average overall. This represents satisfactory achievement at this stage in the examination courses for these students. Standards of work seen are highest in geography, where they are well above average, and in music, where they are above average. Standards are average in English, business education, art and physical education and below average in other subjects. Students currently in Years 10 and 11 are achieving very well in geography and well in English, music, business education and media studies. Achievement is, however, poor for these students in science. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 are given in the following table.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades	40 (32)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades	86 (88)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining one or more A*-G grades	97 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	27.4 (30.0)	35.9 (34.7)

There were 145 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. The school is careful to attend to the needs of all students. Students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. They are well supported in lessons and make satisfactory progress towards their individual targets. A small number of these students are withdrawn from some lessons for additional support and, in these sessions, they achieve well. The achievement of students from different minority ethnic groups is also satisfactory and the school is careful to check that no particular group falls behind in their studies. Students who are at an early stage of learning English make good progress and achieve well as a result of the good attention to meeting their needs. Students for whom English is an additional language, and who have learned enough English to follow the general curriculum with their classes, make satisfactory progress.
6. The school did not meet its targets for performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 but has set similarly challenging targets for 2004. Targets for GCSE examinations were met in 2003 and, in the case of the number of students gaining five or more A* to C grades, were exceeded. Targets for the coming year are higher than those in 2003.

Sixth form

Results in the sixth form are **well below average**, but are impressive, given students' attainment at the start of their courses. Students' achievement is currently **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students did much better in the 2003 examinations than was predicted.
- Standards vary considerably from subject to subject.

Commentary

7. Results in A-level examinations in 2002, were well below average¹. However, the number of students completing sixth form courses is low and therefore comparisons with national averages are unreliable. More significantly, students completing courses in 2003 gained results that were much better than predicted on the basis of their previous attainment. Full details of results in 2003 are set out in the following table.

¹ This is the most recent year for which nationally validated data is available.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage entries gaining A - E grades	84.2 (86.7)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage entries gaining A - B grades	27.6 (18.3)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	162.9 (144.8)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. Standards of work for students currently in the sixth form are variable and depend on the prior attainment of those students. In the subjects that were the focus of this inspection, standards are above average in media studies, average in English, mathematics and business education and below average in information and communication technology and chemistry. In these subjects achievement is good in media studies, business education and information and communication technology and is satisfactory in the other subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Main school

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **satisfactory**. The development of students' personal qualities is also **satisfactory**. Attendance and punctuality are **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students like the school and enjoy their work.
- Most students behave well but some misbehave in lessons and around the school.
- Students enjoy good relationships with other students and with adults.
- In this multi-cultural school, students respond well to one another's backgrounds and traditions.
- Most students respect the feelings and views of others but some do not.
- Too many students miss too many lessons.
- Punctuality is unsatisfactory and prevents some lessons having a purposeful start.

Commentary

9. Many lessons capture students' attention. When teachers arrange interesting lessons and share exact expectations of behaviour most students respond well. They listen carefully, work hard and remain focused throughout. Students get on well together and enjoy working with their peers. They like their teachers and co-operate willingly with them in lessons and during out of school activities. Teachers in many lessons encourage group work and give students increasing responsibility for their own work. Most students respond properly and develop satisfactory levels of maturity as they progress through the school. The good range of additional activities promotes students' enjoyment of school life.
10. Students value the many different cultures represented in the school. They appreciate cultural diversity and most respect other people's values and beliefs. They listen carefully to the views of others. They consider differences with growing understanding, based on their own varied experiences. Students take increasing responsibility for aspects of school life and its diverse activities, such as the Arts Festival in July each year, which is enthusiastically supported by all.
11. Students for whom English is an additional language adopt good attitudes to school life and, when they receive specific provision to meet their needs their attitudes are very good. Systems to support students with special educational needs are adequate and ensure that these students make satisfactory progress toward meeting targets for improvement in their behaviour.

12. Some students, often boys, show less regard for the conventions of good conduct. They lack consideration for the impact of their behaviour on others. Teachers have to work hard to create a positive atmosphere in lessons. Many do this successfully, whilst a small number do not. Variation in teachers' ability to promote good behaviour confuses some students, who react badly to this inconsistency. Most students conduct themselves properly around the school but a few misbehave in the corridors and outside the school buildings. This behaviour is generally rowdy and boisterous, rather than intimidating to other students.

Attendance

Attendance in the last complete reporting year 2002-2003

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	8.3%	School data:	1.8%
National data:	7.2%	National data:	1.1%

13. Attendance at the school is below average, especially in Years 10 and 11. Unauthorised absence is high. The school is aware of students who are likely to miss lessons and staff try very hard to improve their attendance. The school is less rigorous in consistently analysing trends and data to predict and prevent deterioration in attendance levels. Teachers do not always relay attendance information quickly to the attendance office. This, coupled with lack of time allocated for this work, means that the school does not always follow-up absences on the first day they occur. In addition, some parents do not support the school's efforts to secure students' commitment to regular attendance. Many students arrive late to school and some are also late to lessons. Some teachers insist on punctuality but because not all do, students do not build up an expectation that they have to arrive punctually to lessons. Late arrivals to lessons disrupt the learning of other students who do arrive on time.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils		Exclusions in the last school year		
Categories used in the Annual School Census		No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White - British		256	28	2
White any other		60	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean		89	22	3
Mixed – White and Black African		10	1	0
Mixed – any other		43	12	1
Asian or Asian British Pakistani		16	1	0
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi		19	3	0
Black or Black British Caribbean		186	39	4
Black or Black British African		121	13	0
Black or Black British – any other black background		28	11	0
Parent/pupil preferred not to say		9	1	0

14. Students are confident that the school does not tolerate bullying and are aware that poor behaviour results in exclusion. The number of fixed period exclusions is high, particularly of Caribbean students, but involves relatively few students whose attitudes and behaviour have resulted in repeated exclusion. In the past year the school has rationalised the use of withdrawal from classrooms and successfully reduced the exclusion rate. A particularly positive feature of the support for students who behave badly is the 'resolution' process. This fosters students' responsibility for resolving individual situations for themselves, with the help of the members of staff concerned.

Sixth form

The development of students' attitudes and behaviour is **satisfactory**. Students conduct themselves well so they present proper role models. Their attendance is **poor** and punctuality is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students like the school and feel secure in their working relationships with teachers and other students.
- Those students who attend regularly have good attitudes to their lessons.
- Too many students do not attend regularly.

Commentary

15. Many students enjoy their time in the sixth form. They get on well together. Students in Year 13 often share courses and lessons with Year 12 students and this helps generate good relationships between older and younger sixth form students. They develop mutually respectful associations with their teachers. Sixth form students express their ideas with confidence and loyally promote the school's strengths. They willingly involve themselves in the life of the school so that they grow in confidence and maturity during their sixth form career.
16. Too many students, however, fail to commit to regular attendance. A significant minority of students fail to complete either Year 12 or Year 13 courses, despite good efforts by the school to support their regular attendance. Teachers recognise that many students have remained in sixth form study because the school provides a safe learning community and that many of these students would not have continued in education elsewhere. They are therefore sympathetic towards the particular difficulties which some sixth form students experience and which contribute to irregular attendance. Registration systems are not, however, rigorous enough to secure a rapid response to absence. As in the main school, attendance data is not routinely analysed to target improvement beyond that of individual students.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Main school

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are all **satisfactory** and the provision of enrichment activities is **good**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in the main school are **satisfactory**. The assessment of students' work is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching varies considerably in quality, from very good in geography for older students to unsatisfactory in science.
- Teaching and learning are good or better in over half of all lessons, but are unsatisfactory in more than one lesson in ten in the main school.

- Good use is made of assessment to support planning and to guide students on how to improve their work.

Commentary

17. The overall quality of teaching and learning is similar to that reported at the time of the previous inspection. Over half of all teaching observed during this inspection was good or better. Where teaching is good, students learn well. However, too much teaching is unsatisfactory or poor. In lessons where this is the case students are not interested in their work, behaviour declines and students do not learn well enough for them to make the progress necessary. The table below gives details of teaching in lessons seen during the inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 137 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (3%)	21 (15%)	53 (39%)	45 (33 %)	9 (7%)	4 (3%)	1 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages. The figures include 22 lessons which were observed in the sixth form.

18. Teaching varies considerably from one subject to another. It is particularly effective in geography, especially in Years 10 and 11. Students taking this subject learn very effectively so that they achieve very well. Good teaching is a feature of work in several other subjects, including English, design and technology, information and communication technology, history and music. In addition, the teaching of modern languages and physical education is good for younger students. In most other subjects teaching is satisfactory, but it is unsatisfactory in science.
19. In science, the school has experienced difficulties with recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced teachers. As a result, much of the teaching in this department is by unqualified teachers. While these members of staff are doing their best, the overall quality of teaching in the department currently suffers. The school has made arrangements for much of citizenship education to be taught within other subjects. Because not all departments are clear about the contribution they should be making to the teaching of citizenship education, overall teaching of the subject is unsatisfactory. Some of the citizenship education programme is taught within the personal and social education programme and, in these lessons, teaching and learning are satisfactory.
20. Teaching for students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall and is good where students are withdrawn from lessons for specialist tuition. Individual education plans are good and contain well-focused general targets for students, but planning to meet the needs of individual students is inconsistent. There is, for instance, limited further development of targets by each teacher to make them more subject-specific. Assessment procedures for students with special educational needs are good. Learning support assistants provide an effective and caring service for students with special educational needs.
21. Students who are at an early stage of learning English are sometimes withdrawn from normal lessons and are taught by a specialist teacher. This teaching is very good, enabling these students to learn very effectively. When specialist teachers support students in class, or when there is no specialist support, teaching for students who are learning English is satisfactory overall. Subject teachers do not adequately assess the language needs of these students, or try to meet these needs consistently, and this lowers students' achievement across the curriculum.
22. The assessment of students' work is good overall and is better for older students than for those in Years 7 to 9. The school has built up a comprehensive database of evidence on how well students are progressing and this is used by many teachers to good effect in planning work and

in guiding students on how to improve. Assessment is particularly strong in English for all students and in geography and information and communication technology for older students. In this latter case, very good use is made of examination criteria in assessing students' work. The marking of students' work varies in quality, but is notably good in history and somewhat limited in modern foreign languages.

23. Only in science, where it is poor, is the assessment of students' work less than satisfactory. Here, teachers' inexperience means that careful analysis of students' work is not undertaken and hence the information necessary to guide planning and students' progress is not available.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum for all students is **satisfactory**. The opportunity for enrichment, including out-of-school activities is **good**. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources to meet the needs of students are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Key Stage 3 National Strategy² has had a positive impact in several subject areas.
- Provision for citizenship education is under-developed, but developments on work-based learning are good.
- Arts College status provides excellent opportunities for students to extend and develop a wide range of creative skills in addition to other extra-curricular activities.

Commentary

24. Curriculum provision is satisfactory. The curriculum for all students in Years 9 to 11 is being extended to provide a greater choice of vocational courses. A number of alternative curriculum initiatives have also been introduced to provide a more relevant learning experience for those students who find the traditional curriculum does not match their needs. For instance, courses for less able students include an element of work related learning at the local college. The adoption of the aspects of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has involved an extensive review into ways of increasing the effectiveness of learning. This has resulted in the development of programmes targeted at meeting the specific needs of particular groups of students. Other elements of the curriculum are evaluated less thoroughly. The current provision for citizenship education is unsatisfactory, for example, because the steps taken to develop this through work in personal, social and health education, special events, religious education and geography are not adequately monitored to ensure that the school meets all requirements of the subject.
25. The provision for science is unsatisfactory because schemes of work are inadequate and because students are not able to develop their coursework skills effectively. Most Year 10 and 11 students take a vocational GNVQ information and communication technology course but insufficient time is allocated to enable students to reach higher grades.
26. Overall, curriculum provision for students for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory. It is good for those at an early stage of learning English because of the direct support they receive. Specialist support in lessons for students at all stages of learning English is, however, variable in its effectiveness. Where there is no support in subject lessons, provision is sometimes unsatisfactory.
27. Good steps are taken to ensure that all students with special educational needs have access to all areas of the school's activities and to the same curriculum as other students.

² The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. This National Strategy now affects all subjects. It started with English and mathematics in 2001 and now includes science, information and communication technology and teaching and learning in the foundation subjects as well as ensuring that all subject departments contribute to the development of pupils' understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy.

28. Arts College status and improvements to curriculum provision for Years 7 to 11 have been used to ensure that students have access to a wide range of courses. Students are particularly positive about the range of extra-curricular activities on offer. They respond well by taking part in these voluntary activities, and the annual Arts Festival is valued by all.
29. Good general links have been established with some 30 primary schools. Successful curriculum have been established in English, mathematics, the arts and sport but are not so well developed in other subjects. Hence teachers do not always ensure that students quickly build on their primary school learning when they enter the school in Year 7. The school has made good links with the local college to provide vocational courses for less able students in Years 10 and 11.
30. The accommodation to meet the needs of the curriculum for Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory. Generous provision for art and drama is not fully used, whilst classes in business education take place in widely scattered rooms. The learning resource centre is also unattractive and in need of refurbishment.

Sixth form

The quality of education provided in the sixth form is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **good** and the curriculum is **satisfactory**, with **good** enrichment activities.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are **good**. The assessment of students' work is also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers tailor lessons well to the needs of individuals.
- Good relationships help students gain confidence in their ability to learn successfully.

Commentary

31. A major strength of teaching in the sixth form is that teachers know their students well and hence tailor lessons to students' individual needs. As a result, students learn successfully and make good progress. Details of the lessons observed in the sixth form during the inspection are given in the table below.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 22 lessons in the sixth form

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	10	7	5	0	0	0

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

32. In the subjects that were the focus of the inspection, teaching is very good in media studies. It is good in English, business education and information and communication technology. In the one lesson seen in mathematics, teaching was very good. In chemistry, teaching is satisfactory. Many classes are relatively small and teachers use this to advantage to encourage students to work closely together. Hence students develop their communication skills successfully. Occasionally classes are too small for this to be possible and, in these lessons, students are encouraged to develop their independent learning skills. Good relationships between teachers and students are common and students thus gain the confidence to seek support and help when needed.

33. Teachers take good care to assess students' work carefully. This is particularly the case in English and information and communication technology. Again, close working relationships between teachers and students are central to ensuring that students receive good feedback and guidance on how to improve. Teachers carefully review assessment information and use the outcomes of this review to plan relevant work. It is this ability to target tasks and activities that has contributed to the good progress of many students in their sixth form studies.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum to meet the needs of students in Years 12 and 13 is **satisfactory**. Curriculum enrichment, including out-of-school activities, is **good**. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources to meet the needs of the sixth form curriculum are **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of courses is offered in Year 12, but fewer are available for Year 13 students.
- A good variety of enrichment activities are much appreciated by the students.
- Vocational courses are very popular and successful but timetabled provision for some vocational programmes is inadequate.
- Sixth form students have poor accommodation.

Commentary

34. The school has successfully increased the number of students in the sixth form. It has also recognised that many of its students would not have continued in full-time education if relevant courses were not available to them at the school. It has thus produced a satisfactory range of courses to offer to students. Its strategy to achieve this has been to extend the number of courses available and to provide courses at different levels. The range of courses now includes both academic and vocational options, alongside some developing basic skills courses. A recent review of curriculum management means that the school is now in a strong position to develop a coherent programme of curriculum provision for students aged 14 to 19 years. Currently some courses run only because Year 12 and Year 13 students work together on them, thus making the courses viable, and this helps maintain the breadth of choice available. Some students use Year 13 to undertake further AS level study, rather than completing courses to A-level. This means that many A-level groups in Year 13 are very small, limiting the range of learning activities possible in those groups.
35. Because the school does everything in its power to meet individual needs and aspirations, the programme of courses actually running each year changes. A shortage of teachers sometimes means that relatively little time is devoted to advanced business courses so that these courses are difficult to sustain and enrich through developing links to the local community. The school is currently piloting key skills in communication and mathematics courses, linked to vocational study. These are showing early signs of success and it is intended to extend these further. Courses to meet the needs of sixth form students with low literacy skills, behavioural problems or English as an additional language are under-developed.
36. Students take part in the many enrichment activities provided and they are encouraged to organise activities for themselves, supported by their teachers. These activities, which take place both at school and in the wider community, make a good contribution to students' personal development. Work experience has successfully been integrated into the health and social care courses. This raises students' confidence and provides excellent links with the local community.
37. Accommodation for the sixth form is inadequate, with little space for independent learning or social activities. Sixth form students are accommodated in temporary classrooms with inappropriate school furniture and no access to networked computer systems.

Care, guidance and support

Main school

The school's provision of support, advice and guidance for students is **good**, as are arrangements for involving students in the school's work and development. The procedures for ensuring students' care, welfare, health and safety are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment information and a well-integrated pastoral system successfully guide students' academic and personal progress.
- Induction arrangements for new students and careers advice are good.
- Processes for seeking the views of students and involving them in the work of the school are good
- Support for students through the teaching of personal, social and health education and citizenship is inadequate.
- Students with special educational needs are well supported and cared for.

Commentary

38. Statutory requirements for health and safety are met. Risk assessments are conducted regularly and are now in the process of being fully implemented in science. The school's health and safety policy is comprehensive and classrooms, workshops and laboratories are safe and secure. Proper procedures for child protection are carefully followed and known by teachers, though not adequately documented. Key members of staff have received the relevant training.
39. Procedures to provide good support and guidance for all students are effectively co-ordinated. Teachers and tutors know and respect students well. Monitoring of students' academic progress is done well by tutors, whose pastoral care of students is carefully evaluated by senior management, and by teachers in nearly all subjects. Consequently, students are clear about how to improve. There is always an adult that students can turn to for help and guidance. Tutors, year co-ordinators, the learning support department and the resident educational welfare officer work very closely with outside agencies to meet the needs of individual students. However, citizenship and personal, social and health education lessons are not used effectively to promote students' personal, social and academic development.
40. Students with special educational needs are particularly well supported. The care provided for students for whom English is an additional language by the assigned learning mentor is very good. Students turn to her readily for advice and help in integrating into the school, and feel welcome and part of the school. Their achievements are celebrated together with that of others.
41. Induction arrangements of students who arrive from primary schools are well established and help students settle well into school. Students entering the school at other times, and especially those from minority ethnic backgrounds, are supported very well by their own individual learning mentors. Careers education and guidance for students in Years 9 to 11 is good, and all Year 10 students have a well-organised work experience with an effective follow up in school.
42. Teachers listen to students and respect them so that students feel that their views are taken into account and acted upon. Students are consulted through the well-organised and valued year and school councils. These consultations have resulted in improvements in facilities for students. Students also feel involved by evaluating their own performance, for instance at action planning days and by their involvement in the wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Sixth form

The provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth form students is **good**. Arrangements for involving students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships between students and teachers, together with small classes, help students feel well supported in their studies.
- Monitoring of academic progress is good and students know their targets and how to improve.
- Students are encouraged to become involved in the life of the school and their views are sought and valued.
- Students receive good and impartial careers guidance as they enter and leave the sixth form.

Commentary

43. Teachers in sixth form lessons establish very good relationships with their students and this enables students to feel confident about seeking help. Students' academic progress is carefully monitored, both by subject teachers and tutors, and they are given clear and effective guidance on how to improve their work. A benefit of small classes is that teachers know their students very well and give them individual attention. Consequently, students feel well supported and this has been an important factor in raising achievement in the sixth form. However, not all Year 12 students attend the weekly personal, social and health education sessions. This limits tutor contact on a group basis and means that this element of support is not provided for all students.
44. The school has been successful in making students feel that their views are sought and valued. This is due to the close relationships with teachers and an effective sixth form committee, which enables students to contribute positively to whole school activities and to make their views felt. As students feel well supported they, in return, are very supportive of the school and are ready to become involved in its activities. Many students have a strong sense of responsibility towards the younger students and have volunteered to become mentors for Year 7 students. They also contribute effectively to whole school sport, dance and fund-raising for charity. All of this involvement helps develop sixth form students personally, preparing them for life in adult society.
45. Good and impartial careers education and guidance is available before students enter the sixth form and as they prepare to move on from school. Advice on university applications and entry is well organised and students are encouraged to attend university open days. New Year 12 students are very well inducted into the sixth form through a well-organised residential weekend.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with the community and other schools are **good**. The school has **satisfactory** links with parents.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Arts College status activities promote good links with other schools and the community.
- The school works hard to include parents in their children's education.
- Good links are forged with the parents of students with special educational needs.
- Some annual reports for parents lack sufficient detail.

Commentary

46. Students are actively involved members of various communities because of the productive links established with local organisations. They are enthusiastic, for instance, about their involvement in the annual Balham Festival that promotes their multi-cultural understanding well. The school regularly uses local people with particular skills and interests in school activities,

especially in the arts and sports. All of this community involvement, coupled with regular outside visits, contributes well to students' learning.

47. The school also contributes well to aspects of work in local schools. Links with primary schools are good. Students and teachers share their expertise with primary schools in the arts and sports. Students settle quickly at the school because transfer arrangements are good. Students make informed choices about their future education and careers because the school has a carefully devised programme of guidance and support. This includes good links with local colleges for Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory links with other providers of courses for sixth form students. Strong links exist with a local specialist science college and this has been very helpful in limiting the damage caused by the departure, last summer, of several science teachers.
48. Parents value the school's approach to communication with them. The school keeps parents well informed about school activities and encourages parental support for these. Annual reports to parents are satisfactory overall, but some teachers give too little detail about what students can and cannot do. Guidance in reports about future improvement is also too variable. The school is in the process of improving reporting arrangements to parents.
49. The school deals quickly and effectively with parental concerns. Members of staff alert parents promptly when problems arise at school. They help parents who experience difficulty supporting their children's education. The school is keen to increase the level of involvement of, and consultation with, parents. It works very well with parents over the induction of students with English as an additional language into the school. Learning mentors work closely and effectively with parents and with community organisations such as the Somali Society and Albanian Youth Action. Both formal and informal links with parents of students who have special educational needs are good. Parents and students are involved in the review process where this applies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are both **satisfactory**. Governance of the school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has high aspirations for the school.
- The commitment to ensuring that the school provides equally well for all groups of students is strong.
- Governors help shape the school's direction and understand what needs to be done to improve further.
- The school is committed to using teacher training as a means of overcoming staff shortages.

Commentary

50. The headteacher provides good leadership of the school. She has a strong commitment to the students and is clear about what she wants to achieve. She justly has confidence in the support of staff and governors, who work hard to ensure that the school provides equally well for all groups of students. This is particularly important in a school that serves students from a richly diverse range of cultures and backgrounds. Staff and governors have created a welcoming, lively and dynamic school where students are happy together.
51. The school's commitment to improving academic success is strong and has recently been rewarded with some improvements in examination success. The school is equally committed to the wider personal development of students and is successful in this as well, not least through the good range of activities provided for students to take part in outside lessons.

52. Strategic planning in the school is satisfactory. A clear and well-articulated plan for improvement takes the school's overall targets as the starting point for defining necessary improvements. It also takes account of a range of national initiatives and priorities. The plan recognises the need to improve management structures to reflect better the school's emerging priorities. Recent re-structuring of senior management is beginning to strengthen a team approach to meeting new initiatives, such as the provision of a coherent education programme for students aged 14 to 19 years.
53. The leadership and management of key teachers are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the teams of tutors is good, enabling them to provide effective support and guidance for the students in their tutor groups. The leadership of subject areas is very variable, however. In some subjects it is very good, whilst in others, such as science, it does not ensure satisfactory provision. The school has been creative in supporting leadership and management in science with the help of staff from a neighbouring specialist science college. Other steps to support this department have been effective, with the head of another department being re-deployed to provide some good management of a new team. The lack of subject expertise within the school has, however, meant that leadership has been unsatisfactory. The other area where leadership and management have been unsatisfactory is provision for citizenship education. Although some plans have been put in place to teach this subject, the lack of clear, insightful, leadership and effective management means that citizenship is not yet being properly included in the curriculum.
54. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has shown very good leadership in the implementation of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs and in training staff for it. She has also shown very good management in setting up the necessary procedures and administration for effective special educational needs. Overall management of provision for special educational needs is, however, only satisfactory. Planning and teaching are still inconsistent across subjects and classes. The deployment of support staff lacks the necessary creativity to make the best use of them. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has limited time available to develop her role as an adviser to teachers in the classroom.
55. The leadership, by senior managers, of provision for students for whom English is an additional language is good. There is a clear vision of what needs to be done to make support for students more effective and better co-ordinated. Management of the support is, however, not well coordinated.
56. The school has a very detailed programme for the review of all aspects of its provision. It has built this around an evaluation scheme which is accredited by the local education authority. Extensive documentation demonstrates the wide range of aspects of the school's work that is kept under review. The programme includes departmental reviews and classroom observation of teachers, designed to identify and share good practice and to guide teachers to further improvement. These reviews and observations have undoubtedly helped the school to move forward and provision in subjects such as geography is now very good as a result. However, the overall rate of progress has slowed because sometimes the focus of review has been more on what is being done rather than on the impact it is having on students' achievement.
57. Significantly, governors recognise this. They have identified, for instance, that teaching can only be really effective if students are learning well. They realise that, in the past, this link has not always been made strongly enough and that this has slowed improvement. This is just one example of a governing body that has a good grasp of what is happening in the school and of what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. Governors fulfil their roles as supporters and critical friends well, though they do not ensure that all students take part in a daily act of collective worship.
58. Good steps have been taken to use the funding from a range of national initiatives to help meet some of the identified priorities within the school. Approaches to financial and resource

management are good, with very good systems for ensuring that the school manages its budget carefully and in the best interests of the students.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4 371 416	Balance from previous year	93 827
Total expenditure	4 179 664	Balance carried forward to the next	191 752
Expenditure per pupil	4 465		

59. Some development in the school is slowed by difficulties in the recruitment and retention of teachers. This has recently been a particular concern in science, where standards have fallen as a result. The school makes a strong commitment to the training and development of teachers. It is successfully involved in several schemes associated with the initial training of teachers and has, through the graduate teacher training programme, helped to solve a teacher shortage in science. This commitment to the training of teachers is also reflected in the in-service training and development of staff in the school, the programme for which has helped many teachers build up their expertise well. The commitment to the professional development of teachers is reflected in the fact that the school has Training School status.

Sixth form

The leadership of the sixth form is **satisfactory** but management is **unsatisfactory**. Governance of the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Student numbers have increased and results have been better than expected.
- The co-ordination of some aspects of sixth form provision is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

60. The headteacher, staff and governors have successfully built up numbers in the sixth form in recent years. At the same time students completing sixth form courses have achieved well, producing results that are better than expected. The school is committed to providing courses for all students who wish to remain in the sixth form and has been successful in providing courses for those who might otherwise not have continued in education. This has been challenging, both because some courses have been run with relatively few students and because changing student requirements from year to year make forward planning difficult. However, careful planning, coupled with the combining of Year 12 and Year 13 students in some subjects, has enabled the sixth form to remain viable and cost-effective whilst meeting the needs of students.
61. There are some shortcomings in sixth form management, however. Many students, having made a commitment to sixth form study, do not attend regularly and some do not continue with their courses. Many are also frequently late for school and for lessons. Arrangements for monitoring attendance by tutors and other staff are not good enough to improve this situation. Similarly, the lack of effective organisation means that some students do not attend their weekly personal, social and health education lesson with their tutor. This means that regular contact to support students in their studies is lost and failure to take part in these lessons weakens the school's contribution to the personal development of these students.
62. The co-ordination of the sixth form, and particularly of the curriculum, has not been good enough to ensure that all aspects of sixth form work are equally well led and managed. The leadership and management of some subjects in the sixth form, such as media studies, are very good, whilst leadership and management of chemistry and management of mathematics, are unsatisfactory. In both these latter cases the problem has been exacerbated by difficulties

in the recruitment of suitably experienced teachers, but the impact has been a slowing of development in these subjects and thus of the sixth form curriculum as a whole.

63. Recent changes in the management structure indicate that shortcomings in sixth form leadership and management have been recognised. The appointment of both a deputy head and an assistant head to oversee developments in provision for students aged 14 to 19 years, coupled with the production of a detailed and helpful 14 to 19 action plan, have laid the foundation for improvement.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is effective and teachers share a common goal to raise standards.
- Students learn well because lessons are well-planned to meet individual needs.
- Classes to meet the needs of less able students improve results.
- Assessment of work is thorough and teachers provide written targets to help students improve their work.
- Students are encouraged to read a variety of books, articles and poems which celebrate diverse cultures.

Commentary

64. Students enter the school with below average standards in English. Those who attain the lowest National Curriculum levels are quickly identified and provided with specialised classes which help them to improve their literacy. Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was below average, though better than in similar schools.
65. Results in the 2003 GCSE English examinations were below average for both boys and girls. English results have steadily improved since the time of the last inspection and are better than in many other subjects in the school. Because many students arrive at the school with long-standing difficulties with literacy, fewer students gain A* to C grades in English literature than in English language, whereas nationally the reverse is true. Students currently in the school are working at average standards.
66. Students are achieving well in English, which is better than at the time of the previous inspection. The department takes good account of the needs of individuals, so that those with special educational needs are provided for very well. Good attention is also paid to the needs of students from different ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is not their mother tongue. As a result, all these students achieve well. Teachers improve students' literacy by providing books, articles and poems which celebrate diverse cultures and provide a good grounding in important works of English literature.
67. Teaching in English is good so that students learn well, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Lesson planning is thorough so that teachers are able to help students make progress through a variety of tasks. Students are encouraged to relate each task to the requirements of the National Curriculum and to evaluate their own progress throughout lessons. Teachers generally take care to adapt lessons and homework to the differing abilities of students, with more able students undertaking more challenging activities. Occasionally, however, teachers do not provide enough challenging work for the most able students, though they take good care to provide well for the least able students in a class. Students use computers successfully in their own creative work. Because teachers guide them well, students become aware of the importance of citizenship and of moral and social issues in their reading and in discussion. Very good working relationships in most lessons mean that students concentrate quietly and purposefully on the tasks in hand. Occasionally, however, calling out and general restlessness by some students disturbs learning. Students take part in many activities outside the classroom which stimulate their imagination. Marking is thorough and students are given clear pointers about what they must do to improve their work.

68. The head of department's leadership and management of the subject are very good. She is very well supported by committed and skilled teachers who share her ambition to raise standards. Priorities for improvement and the action to be taken are set out in a thoughtful development plan. By requiring that all teachers concentrate on teaching the requirements of the GCSE examination, the head of department ensures that there is no drop in standards following tests taken at the end of Year 9, as was the case in the previous inspection. The analysis of the subject's performance is undertaken rigorously and systems to monitor and evaluate students' progress over time are effective. Teachers review the way they teach and are improving their performance as result of monitoring provided by the head of department. Newly qualified teachers are provided with considerable and helpful training within the department.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

69. Provision is **good**. A good programme of support and guidance ensures that all subjects place a strong emphasis on improving standards in written and spoken English. The effective introduction of this programme has resulted in greater clarity of lesson planning, teaching and assessment in many subjects. Words which are especially important to individual subjects are displayed in most classrooms. Students are encouraged to speak about what they have learnt and to listen to the views of other students in a wide range of subjects. In subjects such as drama, students take literature as their starting point. In others, including history, students are encouraged to write in different styles and are given help in improving literacy.

Modern foreign languages

Overall, provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 9 though unsatisfactory by the end of Year 11, leading to below average standards.
- Overall, teaching in all four languages is good in Years 7 to 9.
- Leadership and management are good.
- The provision of four foreign languages enriches the curriculum.

Commentary

70. Standards in French and German are below average by the end of Years 9 and 11. In 2003 the standards at the age of 14 in both languages were below national averages. In GCSE examinations in 2003 results were also below average. In part, the results at the end of Year 11 reflected the difficulties caused by staffing problems in previous years. Standards in Spanish and Italian in Year 7 are average and in Italian in Year 8 they are above average. At present Spanish and Italian are not taught in Years 9 to 11.
71. Achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory in French. In Spanish and Italian in Years 7 and 8 it is good. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Students for whom English is an additional language often speak more than one language already. Most make good progress in the languages they study during the first three years in school. The achievement of students by the end of Year 11 is unsatisfactory because they do not make enough progress from earlier years, especially in speaking and writing. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and sometimes they are very good.
72. The teaching of all four languages is good overall. During the inspection, all teaching was at least satisfactory and much was good. Teaching is more effective in stimulating students' learning in Spanish and Italian, and in lessons in French and German where students are engaged in activities that help them to apply their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary actively. The introduction of ideas from the Key Stage 3 National Strategy is proving successful in ensuring that lessons are well structured and enable students to consolidate their skills of

comprehension, speaking and writing. Teachers use their assessment of students' progress well to set targets and motivate students.

73. The modern languages curriculum is enriched by visits, exchanges with a French school, correspondence with pen friends, study weekends, and the contribution of the two foreign language assistants for French and German. Although teachers and assistants use available resources well, the department has too few up-to-date textbooks.
74. The leadership of the department is good. The head of department has created, within a relatively short space of time, a cohesive and enthusiastic team who share teaching strategies and support development with consistency. The new scheme of work and the introduction of the Key Stage 3 Strategy are effectively improving teaching. Management of the curriculum, extra-curricular activities and of resources is good. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. In leadership and in teaching, improvement is good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students completing Year 9 in 2003 underachieved in national tests.
- The leadership of the department is good but management is only satisfactory.
- The range of teaching methods used by teachers is limited and ICT is not used enough to support learning.
- The procedures for monitoring and review are good.
- The management of students' behaviour by teachers is inconsistent.

Commentary

75. In 2003, the standards attained by students in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were well below those for all schools and below those for students from similar schools. When the test results are compared with the attainment of these students at the time of entry to the school, they represent unsatisfactory achievement. Results were an improvement on those for 2002. For the past three years overall standards attained by boys at the end of Year 9 have been higher than that of girls. The achievement of students currently in Years 7 to 9 is better than that of previous groups and is satisfactory overall.
76. GCSE results in 2003 for students at the end of Year 11 were significantly below the national average. The results were an improvement on those of the previous year, with more students being awarded higher grades. The proportion of students gaining at least a G grade was average. Students perform relatively less well in mathematics examinations than in their other subjects.
77. Teaching is satisfactory across all year groups. The best teaching is in lessons that are well structured and take account of the different abilities of students. Occasionally excellent teaching occurs, and this is when planning creates a variety of learning experiences for students, including those where they work individually and collaboratively. One such lesson observed in Year 11 used a well-designed worksheet that effectively took account of the differing abilities of the students. The high expectations of the teacher, linked with an energetic and stimulating teaching style, encouraged students to work with enthusiasm and interest to make significant progress in their learning. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs in lessons for younger students when teachers fail to acknowledge the different abilities and needs of students. This means that, in these lessons, teachers either offer little challenge or do not make the learning objectives clear. Little progress has been made since the time of the last inspection to broaden the range of learning opportunities through the use of information and communication technology. This is recognised by the department and plans are in place for this to be improved.

78. Overall, the attitudes and behaviour of students are good. Unsatisfactory behaviour, however, occurs in those lessons that are unchallenging because the teacher has low expectations. In some cases unacceptable behaviour is inadequately challenged and there is inconsistency amongst teachers in the management of this aspect of teaching. The behaviour of students is best when teaching includes a variety of challenging learning experiences. Students respond well to praise and achieve well in lessons where teachers give them good encouragement to succeed. The marking of students' work is thorough and frequently includes encouraging comments, together with specific targets for improvement.
79. Leadership of the department is good. As a result of an unfilled vacancy, an advanced skills teacher is successfully filling the post of head of department on a temporary basis. Due to the long-term absence of the second in department, aspects of management are only satisfactory. The policy for monitoring and review is implemented effectively by both the acting head of department and a deputy head who has overall responsibility for the department, and this has a positive impact on teaching and learning within the department.

Mathematics across the curriculum

80. Mathematics is successfully used and applied in several subjects across the curriculum including science, geography and music. A particularly interesting and unusual application was seen in a Year 9 English lesson. Here, the students applied graphical skills to plot the progression of Macbeth from hero to villain by using co-ordinates to match his heroism against the acts of the play. These examples apart, less progress has been made in the development of mathematics across the curriculum than in the development of literacy across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in tests and examinations are poor.
- Leadership of the department is unsatisfactory, though management by the acting head of department is good.
- Teachers lack either experience or subject knowledge, resulting in unsatisfactory teaching.
- The assessment of students' work is not detailed or accurate enough to guide teacher's planning or to tell students how to make progress.
- Links with a specialist science school are good.
- Teachers demonstrate scientific thinking and language well.

Commentary

81. The science department has not made any improvement since the last inspection. The leadership, management, teaching and outcomes for students have declined. Science results in Year 9 tests in 2003 were well below average, and well below the average for similar schools. Similarly, results in 2003 GCSE examinations were well below average. In both cases, results in 2003 were lower than in the previous year. Schemes of work that help teachers to make sure that students covered all the areas of science that they needed to and at the right level of difficulty were not in place at that time. Procedures to assess students' work were not accurate so that teachers underestimated what students were capable of achieving.
82. Most of the science teachers, including the head of department, left the school before September 2003. The headteacher has successfully recruited some teachers who are new to teaching or who are currently training to become qualified teachers, but has not yet been able to appoint a new head of department or to replace all the teaching posts with permanent staff. The acting head of department is not a science teacher. New teachers are working hard, under the good management of this acting head of science, to develop a new department. Their lack of

experience is, however, slowing the pace in overcoming the poor perceptions of science by students and the unsatisfactory progress that many students have been making.

83. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, resulting in unsatisfactory achievement. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, students are not helped to join in answering questions and discussion. In other unsatisfactory lessons teachers allow the lesson to be interrupted by unacceptable behaviour. Where teaching is poor, teachers do not know enough science to be able to teach it clearly and accurately, or do not gain the attention of students by making the purpose of activities clear. Some students are immature learners, having poor concentration or limited listening skills. Teachers' responses to this are inconsistent. Where they are effective, teachers set clear expectations and plan effectively to improve these skills. Teachers are aware of the needs of different groups of students and take these into account when planning lessons. As a result students with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to other students in each group.
84. A good feature of some teaching in the science department is the way teachers demonstrate good scientific thinking and the correct use of scientific language. Students respond to this by being lively in their discussions and asking challenging questions and expressing their ideas with confidence, using specialist language. Where this happens students make satisfactory or better progress. Students in Year 11 did not complete coursework during Year 10, and hence expressed concern about the quality of teaching they received. Teachers are now providing additional revision sessions for Year 11 students, the success of which is demonstrated in modest improvements in standards for these students who had re-taken modular examinations.
85. The curriculum is unsatisfactory. Schemes of work are not in place for Years 7 to 9 and information and communication technology is not currently being used in science. The certificate of achievement course has been introduced in Year 10 for less able students, but further work is required to provide an alternative to the double science course for some students. The new teachers, working with colleagues from another school that specialises in science, have written a scheme of work for students in Years 10 and 11. They are preparing to develop a scheme of work for younger students. The good partnership between the two schools has enabled new teachers, who would not usually be expected to take the lead in developing this work, to be successful.
86. The assessment of students' work is unsatisfactory. Teachers do not yet have the experience to make accurate assessments of students' work. Half-termly assessment tests have gone some way to improve this, but the week by week marking of books does not give students enough detail about what they need to do to make progress. Targets set for able and average ability students in Year 9 are at least one level below where they should be, based on their results at the end of Year 6. The outcome of the mock GCSE examinations was well below the school's target for students achieving A* to C grades in science. The depth of the analysis of information from marking, tests and examinations is not good enough to guide teachers when they are trying to identify and help students who are not achieving as well as they could.
87. The school's leadership team and the acting head of department have put in place a development plan that is regularly reviewed. The plan is well focused on the immediate requirements for securing a basic standard of provision in the department but does not look beyond the summer term of 2004. The school does not have the capacity, without an experienced science teacher to lead the department, to provide satisfactory leadership for teachers in the science department and their students.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan a good range of activities to help students learn.
- Not enough time is given to the examination course in Years 10 and 11.
- Students are given clear guidance on how to improve their work.
- Too many students are not keen to learn.
- Good leadership has built a strong teaching team.

Commentary

88. On entering the school students have below average standards in ICT. They make satisfactory progress during their first three years in school so that standards at the end of Year 9 remain below average. Students currently in Years 7 and 8 are now achieving more because of the introduction of a new course, incorporating ideas and approaches from the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. Students in Years 10 and 11 also achieve satisfactorily though the standard of their work is below average. GNVQ results in 2003 were below the national average, with students from all ethnic backgrounds doing equally well. Students in the early stages of learning English as an additional language achieve at the same rate as others when their language needs are supported in class, but this is not always the case.
89. Teaching is good at all ages. Good lessons combine a range of activities to maintain interest. Year 11 students revised effectively for an examination as team members in a short quiz, then wrote answers to examination questions and finally used a computer simulation. In almost every lesson teachers inform students exactly what they need to be able to do for each level or grade. When marking work, teachers tell students what to do next to improve. In spite of this good teaching, students' learning is only satisfactory. A significant minority of students do not want to make an effort. In some lessons up to half of the students in the class do not give the necessary attention to their studies. Teachers work hard to persuade these students to work but this takes time away from helping others. Such students do not help their classmates learn because they do not participate in discussions. In a small number of lessons for younger students teaching is unsatisfactory because the work is not challenging enough for them and so they do not improve.
90. The imaginative range of courses and the strong team of teachers reflect the good leadership of the subject. The school is a Microsoft Academy and this has led to it offering a course to staff and students which is taken by many people working in the ICT industry. Good improvement has taken place since the previous inspection because the National Curriculum is now taught and this has led to a rise in standards. Management is satisfactory. Not enough time has been given to the GNVQ course in Years 10 and 11 and so, despite the good teaching of this course, students are not able to achieve as well as they should.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

91. The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory overall and the school has sufficient computers. Students have the required ICT skills when computers are used in lessons. However, the use of ICT in subjects varies greatly and coordination of this aspect of the school's work is not robust enough to bring about improvement where there are gaps in provision. In art, computers are used to excellent effect. One example is graphics produced for display in the national headquarters of a trade union. Students use ICT to good effect in geography, incorporating digital photographs and charts in studies of a river. In mathematics, students would learn more by using computers more. Science teachers do not use the computer equipment they have.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching is good throughout the school.
- Assessment procedures are used well to target improvement in Years 10 and 11, but less so in Years 7 to 9.
- The subject is well led and important innovations have been introduced, but the monitoring of teaching and learning is not fully developed.
- Computers are not fully used as a resource.

Commentary

92. Standards in Year 9 are below average. This represents good progress, given that students enter the school with skills in history that are well below average. Students understand and record key events satisfactorily. More able students in Year 9 write effectively at length and are learning to critically analyse sources. Their ability to explain the different interpretation of events is, however, undeveloped and their factual recall is often weak.
93. GCSE examination results have been well below average in recent years. Girls have outperformed boys at a significantly higher level than nationally in the last two years. However, standards are now improving to below the national average as a result of effective changes to teaching, resources and the curriculum. Students are now achieving satisfactorily in Year 11. Year 10 students are progressing well as they are benefiting from the recent stronger emphasis on skills development. However, skills of analysis and interpretation are still below expectations for the majority of students. Students with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well in history as other students throughout the school.
94. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their good knowledge and high expectations to plan lessons thoroughly, with sharply timed and well focused activities. Students are stimulated to learn well because teachers set them a wide range of challenging tasks, using good resources. However, the use of computers has yet to be fully developed as a resource. The strong emphasis on developing students' literacy skills promotes students' abilities in enquiry, recording and source analysis. Good learning results from good teachers' relationships with students and effective classroom control. Marking is done well, especially in Years 10 and 11, and provides students with good advice about how to improve. Analysis of assessment results and target setting are good in Years 10 and 11, but undeveloped in lower years.
95. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The newly appointed head of department provides a clear vision and strong direction. Teachers work well together in joint planning and sharing of good practice. However, formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are undeveloped. A recent critical evaluation of standards in Years 10 and 11 has prompted a positive response, although the improvements have not had time to improve GCSE results.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good, leading to well above average standards and GCSE results.
- Students generally behave well in lessons and have very good attitudes to work.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Marking is not as good in Years 7 to 9 as in Years 10 and 11.
- In Years 7 to 9 teachers do not always take sufficient account of the needs of lower attaining students when planning work.

Commentary

96. Results have improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average, with boys and girls performing equally well.

97. Standards of work are above average at the end of Year 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11. Standards have risen considerably since the previous inspection. Assessments indicate that students enter the school with below average attainment. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11, with boys and girls doing equally well. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other students. Less able students do not always achieve quite as well in Years 7 to 9 because teachers sometimes do not plan to cater for their individual needs as well as they might.
98. By the end of Year 9, students have acquired an extensive geographical vocabulary and a thorough understanding of patterns that occur throughout the world. By the end of Year 11, students extend their factual knowledge and vocabulary in preparation for GCSE. The use of case studies and field courses is very good and students develop very good independent learning and research skills as a result. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.
99. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching has improved substantially since the previous inspection. This is the most important factor in the overall improvement that has taken place. There are slight differences in the quality of assessment. Marking of students' work is very good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9 marking is still thorough but its use to set students' individual targets is not so strong. Very occasionally teaching is unsatisfactory and occurs when the teacher does not have effective strategies to deal with the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of some students in the lesson.
100. Leadership of the subject is very good and management is good. A strong, committed team of teachers is in place and the subject has made excellent progress since the previous inspection. Geography makes a very good contribution to students' personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The department benefits from good self-evaluation and this has been the major reason why the department has improved. The deployment and use of support staff is not as effective as it should be.

Religious education

The provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good new system has been put in place for assessing students' progress in the subject.
- Leadership and management of the subject are both good and excellent new documentation is supporting improvement.
- Recent examination results show significant underachievement in the subject.
- Some teachers lack the necessary specialist subject knowledge.

Commentary

101. Overall achievement in religious education is now satisfactory although standards are still below national expectations. Students arrive in the school having had very varied experiences of religious education in their primary schools, but generally standards are well below those anticipated by the local agreed syllabus. During Years 7 to 9 students make satisfactory progress in the subject so that, by the end of Year 9, most are still below their expected level of attainment.
102. In Years 10 and 11 students follow either a GCSE short or full course in the subject. Recent results have been well below national averages and student achievement has, in recent years, been unsatisfactory. However, work seen during the inspection suggests that the achievement of students currently in Years 10 and 11 has improved and that results in examinations will also

now improve, although they are likely to remain below national averages over the next two years.

103. Teaching and learning in the subject are satisfactory. A good new scheme of work sets out what students will learn, lesson by lesson, and newly adopted procedures for assessing students on entry to the school and after each completed unit of work will allow teachers to track the progress they make in the subject. Teachers have good, and sometimes very good, general teaching skills so classes are managed well and time is generally used well in lessons. However, none of the teachers of religious education is a specialist in the subject. Therefore their knowledge of both the religious traditions and the particular approaches to learning that need to be adopted in religious education require development. Whilst teachers in some lessons are able to engage students' interest so that they see the relevance of the subject, others use material downloaded from the Internet uncritically and hence students lose interest because material is not well matched to their needs.
104. Leadership and management of religious education are both good. The current subject leader, whilst not a subject specialist, has made himself fully aware of the requirements of the subject, has produced some excellent documentation and has put in place systems and procedures to improve all aspects of the subject in the school quite quickly.
105. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Although the last inspection report detailed a situation in some ways remarkably similar to the current situation, the subject subsequently went through a turbulent time and has recovered well. The quality of planning and documentation is now much better than was previously the case.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is well led.
- The department provides a good range of stimulating projects for students to design and make.
- Effective teaching results in good learning, assessment and target setting for students.
- A shortage of specialist teachers means that not all students study design and technology in Years 10 and 11.
- Students do not use information and communication technology (ICT) enough.

Commentary

106. Standards are similar to those at the time of the last inspection and have not improved, mainly because of staffing difficulties. They are set to rise because of improved teaching and the provision of a wider range of subjects, including graphics and food technology. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003, students achieved standards that were well below average. In GCSE examinations in 2003, results were also well below average. Standards of work have improved for students currently in the school and are now just below average in all year groups. There has been a notably good improvement in standards in food technology and graphic products since the last inspection. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
107. Many students start in Year 7 with well below average skills, knowledge and understanding of design and technology. Students keep pace with the increasing levels of difficulty during their first three years in school to achieve standards that are better than those at entry. This progress is maintained as students work towards GCSE qualifications. Consequently their achievement is satisfactory in many areas of the subject. Achievement is weakest in acquiring craft skills. Many students are slow to develop their ability to handle basic tools to cut and

shape materials with a proficiency that can normally be expected for their age. The large number of students with special educational needs also make sound progress.

108. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and enthusiastic and talented teachers teach some lessons to a very good standard. Teachers have good expectations for the achievement of the students. Their classroom management is good and they provide clear explanations to the class as a whole and good help and support for individual students. This enables all the students to be fully included in the learning process. Students develop their literacy skills well in design and technology lessons because teachers encourage accurate use of both oral and written language. In resistant materials, for example, they are provided with dictionaries to identify the correct use of technical terms. Numeracy skills are successfully developed in food technology.
109. The head of faculty leads this subject well and teachers work very well as a team. Consequently there is consistency and continuity in the quality of learning between groups of students and as students move from year to year. This corporate effort to improve the quality of teaching and learning is beginning to show in the rising achievement and confidence of the students. Two technicians provide outstanding support for the students during their practical work. They are always on hand to provide additional help and advice when needed. This helps to maximise the students learning experience.
110. The scheme of work is now very good and offers a broad and interesting course. There are many interesting elements designed to capture students' imagination. This is the feature that underpins the good learning seen in this subject. Students are supported by the use of writing prompts and guides which encourage them to record their work fully. ICT is not used fully to enhance students learning, particularly in the presentation and display of project work and comparing data graphically.
111. Continuing difficulties in recruitment of specialist teachers means that the school cannot offer GCSE design and technology courses to all students in Years 10 and 11. There has been an outstanding improvement in the way students are assessed and in the way their targets are discussed and set individually.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teachers and students enjoy good relationships and students benefit from personal tuition and guidance.
- Assessment is thorough in Years 10 and 11 but is under-developed in Years 7 to 9.
- Students benefit from well resourced and specialist accommodation.
- Students' three-dimensional studies are limited in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

112. Students achieve well in art and design in their first three years in school. Having arrived with below average attainment, they reach average standards by the end of Year 9. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were below average, though the work of students currently in Year 11 is average. Both boys and girls make similar progress and teachers ensure that those students with special educational needs or for whom English is not their mother tongue are able to make similar progress to other students. This is because teachers support these students well, enabling them to apply themselves purposefully to their work. The achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. The more able students develop and sustain chosen themes in their work and demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses to their

own and other cultures through the work they produce. Students' preliminary research is often thorough, but the development of the research into finished design is inconsistent. Sketchbooks are annotated and students are able to show some influence of important movements in art and design or of particular artists.

113. Teaching in art and design is satisfactory. Good learning occurs when students benefit by actively engaging in debate about their work or when they are clear about their immediate learning objectives. When behaviour is well managed and sharp teacher questioning is used to ensure the participation of all students, responses are very positive. Where tasks are less challenging or lacking in pace, some students become restless and they learn less well. Teachers are aware of the capabilities of their students and often meet their needs through good quality individual tuition. They use their knowledge and subject expertise to good effect and lesson preparation is good at all stages. More able students in Years 10 and 11 are not always challenged enough to achieve their full potential. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) for research and development benefits students with special educational needs or for whom English as an additional language. Detailed assessment is not always shared with students in Years 7 to 9 and hence they are not always sure what to do next to improve their work. Not enough use is made of working with clay for three-dimensional study.
114. The leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory. Good delegation of responsibilities makes particularly effective use of a skilful and knowledgeable staff. A clear vision of art and design education has led to a strong curriculum of taught skills, and students now make contact with artists and art works, both in and out of school. With stability of staff and a consistent approach to raising standards, this department has the potential to be successful. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with the most notable success in raising GCSE standards and in the use of ICT.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and planning help students to make progress.
- Assessment is used in a formative way.
- Music accommodation and resources are good.
- Learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

115. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement, as the musical skills of the majority of students on entry to the school are well below average. Students in Years 10 and 11, assisted by the teachers' good subject knowledge and the department's facilities, make good progress in their composing work. A few students show considerable flair for this activity. Boys and girls achieve equally well in music, and students with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as other students. No student entered GCSE music examinations in 2003 because staffing shortages meant that a music course could not be offered to this group of students.
116. Teaching is good. Students benefit from the good planning of lessons and the effective use of assessment. Realistic targets are set for each student and regular monitoring of their progress is carried out. Teaching is particularly good in Year 7 and these students are beginning to develop a good facility for singing in parts. Teaching of instruments is good and all students have good access to this activity. Extra-curricular activities are extensive, are of good quality and are popular with students.

117. Leadership and management of music are good. Progress since the last inspection has been good and considerable improvements have been made to music accommodation and resources. Through the commitment of staff and students, music makes a good contribution to the life of the school and its community.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is very effective and teachers share a common goal to raise standards.
- Students learn well because lessons meet individual needs.
- Teachers are knowledgeable about the subject and are keen to share their knowledge with the students.
- Assessment of work is very good.

Commentary

118. In the 2003 GCSE media studies examination, results were below average. Standards in this subject, which forms part of the English department, have risen steadily since the time of the last inspection. Teaching in this subject is good. Lessons are well planned and activities link very well to students' awareness of the media in everyday life, enabling them to learn well, both inside and outside the classroom. Working relationships in the classroom are purposeful and focused on the task. Students become aware of the importance of citizenship and of moral and social issues because teachers emphasise this aspect of students' development in media studies activities. Marking is thorough and students are given targets and clear pointers about what they must do to improve their work.

119. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Teachers of the subject share a commitment to raise standards. Analysis of the subject's performance is undertaken rigorously and systems to monitor and evaluate students' progress over time are effective.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE are lower than they should be.
- There is inaccurate teacher assessment at the end of Year 9.
- Dance provision is good.
- The department provides a very good programme of extra-curricular activities.

Commentary

120. Standards are below average at the end of Years 9 and 11 in physical education. Teachers have been unclear about the criteria for assessing physical education at the end of Year 9 and have therefore tended to underestimate students' performance. Standards at GCSE are well below average, largely due to the academic ability of those choosing physical education as an option.

121. Achievement of students is good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Students with special educational needs and those who are new to the English language make good progress because of the use of demonstration to make instructions clear. More able students are given additional work to ensure they perform to the best of their ability. All groups of students are included well in lessons. The achievement of students taking part in dance is very good throughout the school.

122. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and are good in many sports in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have good subject knowledge and students understand what they are expected to do in order to make progress. Relationships between staff and students are good and this leads to a productive working atmosphere in lessons. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the management of the behaviour of students is the main cause.

123. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The department is well resourced and has clean and attractive accommodation. All policies and schemes of work are in place and are regularly reviewed so that teachers are clear about what needs to be taught. The curriculum is designed to give a good range of activities for all students, despite the lack of outside facilities on the school site. Good use is made of a technician working in the department.
124. A wide range of activities at lunchtime and after school complement and enrich physical education for students. This provision is highly valued by the students, as are the trips that are organised abroad. The dance group has appeared on stage locally, at the South Bank theatre and on television and is highly praised by the community.
125. The department has maintained its standards since the last inspection, despite difficulties with building work and staffing. Dance is still an outstanding feature of the department. GCSE physical education has recently been introduced to provide an examination for those students particularly interested in the subject.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

Provision for business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Hard-working well-organised teachers have maintained high standards of achievement.
- Poor accommodation does not create an effective business environment.
- Teachers use a wide range of activities in lessons to engage and stimulate students.
- Links with the local business community are underdeveloped.
- Teachers do not always challenge and extend student understanding of business concepts.
- Good management strategies have been used to support unqualified teachers.

Commentary

126. Examination results at the end of Year 11 have been very good over the last ten years, and students have consistently done better than in other subjects. Results in 2003 were close to the national average and, given the standards of students on entry, this represents good achievement by both boys and girls.
127. Teaching and learning are both good, and students' work shows a sound understanding of business concepts. Teachers have made good use of aspects of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy to develop writing and reading skills, but they do not always extend and challenge students to the full. There is little evidence of the use of industrial or commercial visits or the use of outside speakers to enhance students' learning.
128. Standards and quality have been maintained in spite of significant changes in staffing. A very experienced head of department retired last year and has been replaced by two young unqualified teachers. They are working tremendously hard to ensure that standards are maintained and have established a very good rapport with their classes, which contain students whose behaviour is potentially very challenging. Their lessons are very well planned and they work hard to ensure that students are thoroughly prepared to meet the requirements of the examination specifications.
129. Marking of work is very thorough and students are given useful information on how they might improve their grades. Teachers are very enthusiastic about their subject but they sometimes fail to identify times when students' answers and written work could be further developed. They use a good variety of approaches to ensure that their lessons are interesting, but there are times when lessons lack pace and challenge.

130. The loss of the head of department could have posed great problems but the school took the imaginative step of appointing a mentor to the two trainee teachers. His support has been crucial in ensuring that the two teachers in training are effective, and means that both leadership and management of the subject are good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Overall, the provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Coverage of citizenship across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- Most teachers do not pay enough attention to citizenship when planning lessons.
- The school 's management of the subject is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

131. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are below those expected, and students' achievement is unsatisfactory.
132. The curriculum is unsatisfactory. The school has chosen to teach the citizenship education curriculum through tutorial work, special events and work in geography and religious education. It does not, however, monitor well enough what is actually happening and thus coverage is inconsistent. Some aspects of the citizenship course are taught within personal, social and health education lessons but here a lack of systematic planning means that students are not covering all the work intended. During the inspection, no personal, social and health education lesson observed contained elements of citizenship and hence it is not possible to make a judgement on teaching and learning.
133. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory because the school has not monitored well enough where the subject is being taught and where it is not. Consequently the school cannot be sure that all students are studying all parts of the course.

Personal, social and health education

134. Provision for personal, social and health education is **satisfactory**. Coverage is mostly within one lesson each week, together with some whole day programmes that focus on particular aspects of the course. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but range from good to very poor. Where teaching is good, personal, social and health education makes a good contribution to students' personal development and their ability to play a positive role in school life. The sex and drug education programmes, included within the course, give good guidance on facts, decision-making and relationships.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, seven 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 2002, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

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
English literature	9	100.0	98.5	44.4	43.7	84.4	84.3
Design and technology	5	80.0	95.3	20.0	35.5	48.0	76.5
Information technology	6	66.7	89.1	16.7	22.4	43.3	64.1
Other social science	7	100.0	94.3	14.3	38.9	71.4	77.7
Sociology	5	100.0	95.4	20.0	39.6	72.0	79.1

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subject in this curriculum area was English.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve higher standards than expected because teaching is consistently good.
- Students' work is thoroughly assessed and their progress over time is rigorously monitored.
- A rich variety of activities is used to stimulate learning.

Commentary

135. Students achieve better than was the case at the time of the previous inspection and thus reach higher standards. Groups are too small for reliable comparisons with national averages to be made. However, standards are currently improving rapidly and over the past two years students have all gained better grades than expected, given their prior attainment. The quality of work seen during the inspection is average, with male and female students achieving equally well. Teachers ensure that the books, plays and poems studied are well chosen to help all students to achieve well.
136. The teaching of English is good. Teachers plan their lessons well and use a variety of teaching approaches to motivate and sustain students' interest. They ensure that students have a secure understanding of the requirements of the examination. Students are encouraged to undertake their own research and to use computers imaginatively to deepen their understanding of the subject. Teachers assess students' work thoroughly and give valuable pointers about what students must do to improve their work and this contributes well to helping good student achievement. Teachers have high expectations of the students, who respond with a commitment to learn.
137. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department provides a strong sense of direction and she and her colleagues have high ambitions for the students. Students' work is effectively monitored and evaluated, enabling teachers to guide and plan activities that help students achieve well. Teachers enrich the quality of students' education by taking them on educational trips and outings, and by inviting groups and individuals to the school to celebrate the cultural diversity of literature.

Key skills in language and literacy

138. The development of students' communication skills is satisfactory. In some subjects, such as business education, speaking and listening skills form an important part of students' preparation for their examinations. In most subjects students discuss ideas and use formal and extended written English. A key skills in communication course, taught by a specialist English teacher, is currently being piloted with one group of sixth form students and has yet to be fully evaluated.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in A-level examinations and are keen and enthusiastic learners.
- Leadership of sixth form provision in mathematics is unsatisfactory, but routine management is satisfactory.

Commentary

139. No student was prepared for the A-level examination in 2003 because no student chose to do the course. In 2002 all four of the students prepared for the examination achieved pass grades but the overall standard of attainment was well below the national average. This did, however, represent good achievement for the students involved, given their attainment on entry to the sixth form.
140. At the time of the inspection, only two students were studying the subject in Year 13 and seven in Year 12. As a consequence of the long-term absence of a teacher, special arrangements have been necessary to ensure adequate teaching so that students in Year 13 can be prepared for the A-level examination in 2004. Students who choose to study the subject at A-level have very positive attitudes and show a keen interest. They are enthusiastic and are interested in the subject. They are known well by their teacher, who offers praise and strong encouragement for them to succeed.
141. The teaching of mathematics in the one lesson seen during the inspection was very good. In this lesson the teacher used his subject knowledge well to provide activities that matched students' abilities and needs. Thus their learning was extended in the lesson. Although groups are small, the teacher devises learning activities that make effective use of the individual skills and knowledge of the students by setting tasks that require co-operation and the sharing of knowledge.
142. A GCSE retake course is provided for those students who wish to improve their grades in mathematics. The attendance of students on this course is erratic and inconsistent and hence results indicate only limited success. As a result of the absence of the teacher normally responsible for this stage of provision within the department, there is limited leadership or direction of course provision within the department. A senior member of the teaching staff is adequately carrying out aspects of management on a temporary basis.

Key skills in mathematics

143. A pilot course in key skills in mathematics is being taught to a group of Year 12 students studying GNVQ courses in business studies and health and social care. This course is devised to support the numeracy elements of these courses. Teaching is based on tasks relating to the relevant topics from those subjects. The key skills course has yet to be evaluated, but will be offered to other students if it is considered successful. Other subjects help students develop and apply their mathematics skills successfully, with some notable work seen during the inspection in chemistry, art and design and geography.

SCIENCE

The focus subject in this curriculum area was AS-level chemistry. Two lessons in AS-level biology were also sampled. Results in biology in 2003 were well below average and the standard of work seen during inspection was also below average. In the lessons observed the small group of students were making satisfactory progress. Their learning was well managed and supported by a new unqualified teacher who demonstrated excellent subject knowledge which was used to lead students into enthusiastic discussion to help enrich their understanding.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Monitoring and support procedures ensure students make satisfactory progress.
- Those students starting with low standards find course requirements too challenging.
- Students have positive views of the course.
- Good working relationships between teacher and students.
- Leadership and management of sixth form science courses are inadequate.

Commentary

144. The AS-level chemistry course was introduced into the sixth form in September 2003 in response to student needs. Students start the course from a low base of knowledge and understanding of science at GCSE and require considerable support to transfer to the more rigorous A-level standard of working. The standards of work seen during the inspection were below average but represent satisfactory achievement for both male and female students on the course. No additional support is provided to support students' transition to A-level study and current predicted grades are relatively low.
145. Teaching is satisfactory. Students are encouraged to work productively in groups and teachers use good questioning techniques to ensure that all are challenged to develop their knowledge and understanding. Students have a strong commitment to achieve good grades. A scrutiny of their portfolios demonstrated that they carry out independent study and research effectively to solve problems and answer homework questions.
146. The teacher establishes good working relationships with the group. He encourages individuals to achieve their potential by monitoring progress and he uses his good subject knowledge well in giving individual advice and guidance. Students are involved in the assessment of their work, so they know what is expected of them and how to improve. Lessons are well planned but schemes of work need further development, for instance to ensure that students use information and communication technology properly to support their learning in chemistry.
147. The overall strategic leadership and management of the course are unsatisfactory. There is currently no regular contact between the new teacher and other teachers of AS-level chemistry. Hitherto this unqualified teacher has received little support for his professional development. However, this will be solved when he enrolls on the graduate teacher training programme next year.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus for the inspection was the AVCE course in information technology, but a course equivalent to that taken by many people working in the information and communication technology industry was sampled. In a good lesson seen on this course, students learnt how to use spreadsheets. Learning was effective because the teacher encouraged students to explore the software package in ways that developed their confidence.

Information and communication technology

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching means students are keen to learn and thus achieve well.
- Students know how well they are doing and how to improve.

Commentary

148. No student is currently taking the second year of this new course. Standards of work are below average. Students are achieving well as their standards were well below average when they started the course.
149. Teaching is consistently good. Students learn well because they are well taught. Students are full of praise for their teachers. They have very positive attitudes and this also supports their learning. Students especially enjoy exploring the social effects of technologies when exploring, for instance, how ICT can affect the environment for good or ill. However, most students are not yet skilled in presenting both sides to an argument in detail and then reaching an overall conclusion. Teachers make sure that each student knows exactly how well they are doing and

what they should focus upon as the next steps to their learning. Because teachers work closely with individual students, all are able to achieve equally well.

150. Leadership and management are both good. The AVCE course has been chosen well to meet the needs of students. Some students say they would have left education at the age of 16 if they could not have taken this course at the school. Teachers bring their own interests to the course but good leadership ensures a consistency to teaching. This course was not offered at the time of the previous inspection.

Key skills in information and communication technology

151. ICT is used well in some subjects. Where this happens, students develop good computer skills which they apply successfully. Elsewhere, such as in chemistry, students' learning is less effective because they do not use ICT. Although standards are below average overall, students have sufficient skills to meet the needs of their sixth form work.

HUMANITIES

There was no focus subject in this curriculum area.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

There was no focus subject in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus subject in this curriculum area was media studies.

Media studies

Provision for media studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results have improved since 2002, the first year of the course.
- Teachers are skilled and trained in the subject and provide challenging tasks for students.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very effective.
- Students learn well through an imaginative use of computers, film and the written media.

Commentary

152. Results in the 2003 examination at the end of Year 13 showed an improvement over the first set of results in 2002. Students all gained grades A to E and most gained the top three grades. These results were better than had been expected, given students' prior attainment in GCSE media studies and English examinations. All the girls who took the 2003 examination gained higher grades, as did most of the boys, showing that tasks were well chosen to appeal to all students.

153. The teaching of media studies in the sixth form is very good, and this enables students to achieve well. This good achievement reflects the teachers' subject knowledge and planning. Teachers use their subject knowledge well in their planning, so that they provide a variety of challenging and demanding tasks that help students learn successfully. Teachers guide students well and encourage them to undertake their own research and to produce their own work using computers, film and the written media. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and stimulate students' enthusiasm with discussions which explore moral, social and citizenship issues as well as developing their knowledge of the subject.

154. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The rigorous appraisal of the subject's performance over the past two years, coupled with a close attention to the

requirements of the examination, have helped to raise standards. Teachers carefully evaluate their own work and rigorously assess that of the students.

155. Students deepen their understanding of the media by attending a wide range of residential courses, conferences and theatre trips. Attendance in this subject is very good, reflecting a positive attitude on the part of students.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Provision in sports and recreation is **good**.

156. This is a new AVCE course offered in the sixth form, which started in September 2003. There are eight students taking the course, two in Year 12 and six in Year 13. Students taking the course for one year will only be able to obtain a single award for the examination. The scheme of work is well constructed and students' work is regularly assessed. Students were enthusiastic and were revising for a modular test at the time of the inspection. Projected results spanned the whole range of grades available.

BUSINESS

The focus in this curriculum area was on business education.

Business education

Provision for business education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students respond very well to enthusiastic teachers and are eager to learn.
- Teaching is good, enabling students to achieve well.

Commentary

157. Vocational business courses have recently been introduced and results last year were broadly average. Retention rates on the advanced programme are good and are satisfactory on the intermediate course. Work seen during the inspection indicates that achievement is good and students are working at average standards.
158. Teaching by two unqualified teachers is good. A wide range of activities is used to ensure that the pace of lessons is brisk and students are given every encouragement to develop both confidence and the necessary business skills. Both intermediate and advanced students come from a wide variety of different ethnic groups and they work particularly well to support each other's learning. They respond with enthusiasm to paired and group work and presentations are used to increase confidence and ensure that learning is consolidated. Hence all students achieve well.
159. The management of business education is good. The two teachers work well as a team and support for them is provided both by the head of information and communication technology and by a specially appointed mentor. Leadership, however, is unsatisfactory overall as there is no clear structure for future provision. Currently the time allocated to these vocational courses does not allow for more independent learning and the organisation of activities and visits without disrupting other classes. Work experience has yet to be undertaken.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

160. There was no subject focus in this curriculum area during the inspection. Work was sampled in newly introduced health and social care courses which are offered at both AVCE and GNVQ levels. These are making an excellent and very important contribution to the sixth form

curriculum and include work experience. They are taught very well by a former health service professional and represent a very positive step in raising students aspirations and promoting social inclusion.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

161. The school has recently introduced a condensed course in general studies, which students attend voluntarily. Half the sixth form have signed up so far and the course has made a positive start.

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	4	4
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	4	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		4
Attendance	6	5
Attitudes	4	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	4
How well pupils learn	3	4
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupil's needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	5	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	3
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	4	3
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	4	4
The effectiveness of management	5	4

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