

INSPECTION REPORT

OAKS PARK HIGH SCHOOL

Newbury Park

LEA area: Redbridge

Unique reference number: 133405

Headteacher: Mr S Wilks

Lead inspector: Mr M Beale

Dates of inspection: 6 – 9 October 2003

Inspection number: 259381

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-18 (currently 11-14)
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	675
School address:	45-65 Oaks Lane Newbury Park Ilford Essex
Postcode:	IG2 7PQ
Telephone number:	020 8590 2245
Fax number:	020 8590 2246
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr K Nichols
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This new school was built with private finance initiative (PFI) funding and opened for students in temporary accommodation in September 2001 before moving into the new buildings in September 2002. There are currently 660 students in Years 7 to 9. Their attainment on entry has fallen in each of the three years and is broadly average overall. The intake is ethnically and culturally diverse and has average socio-economic characteristics. Just under half of the students are from white-UK backgrounds. The other major group is of students of Indian heritage, although there are also significant numbers of students from black-Caribbean and Pakistani families. A small proportion of the students are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The proportion of students with special educational needs is close to the national average, but the school has a high number of students with statements for a wide range of needs. There has been very little student mobility during the two years in which the school has been open.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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14214	Jill Smith	Lay inspector	
1963	Sibani Raychaudhuri	Team inspector	English; English as an additional language
6044	Roger Perkins	Team inspector	Mathematics
30563	Jackie Pentlow	Team inspector	Science; religious education
8052	Ken McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
18261	Tony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design; special educational needs
31345	Kay Arthur	Team inspector	Design and technology
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	History
12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	French; Spanish
23268	Kevin Corrigan	Team inspector	Physical education
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION SUBJECTS AND COURSES	18
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 3	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The strong and highly effective leadership of the headteacher and governors has established Oaks Park as a very good school in a comparatively short time. It has deservedly earned a high reputation within the local area. Staff work as a very effective team and are committed to continuing their professional development so that they can provide the best possible opportunities for all students. Achievement is good overall and the students attain standards that are above average by Year 9. This is largely because teaching is very good overall and the students put much effort into their learning. **The school provides very good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There is much very good and at times excellent teaching that inspires the students to try their hardest.
- The headteacher and staff have established a very positive ethos and a harmonious atmosphere in which strong relationships are based on the mutual respect of staff and students.
- Leadership at all levels is sharply focused on raising achievement and improving teaching.
- Targets in individual education plans (IEPs) for students with special educational needs are not sufficiently sharp to inform teachers' planning or to enable them to evaluate the students' progress.
- Management processes are very effective although, because of the previously small size of the senior management team, procedures to monitor the work of staff and evaluate standards have not been put on a formal basis until this year.
- The students participate with considerable enthusiasm in the wide range of activities that staff provide.

This is the first time that the school has been inspected.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Students achieve well overall and particularly so in mathematics, art and design and information and communication technology (ICT). There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or of students of different ethnic backgrounds. Attainment is above average in English, mathematics, science and ICT by Year 9. The students have varied experiences in their primary schools and attainment in subjects other than English, mathematics and science is below expected levels when the students enter the school. This means that in spite of good progress, students' attainment by Year 9 in subjects such as art and design, geography, physical education and religious education is lower and is only average. Attainment in other non-core subjects is above average. The attainment of students on entry to the school has fallen over the three years of intake. The students in Year 7 and Year 8 make good progress and attain average standards. Students with special educational needs or English as an additional language make similar good progress as others.

The students' moral development is excellent, their social development is very good and their spiritual and cultural development is good. The students' attitudes are very good and their behaviour is good. Attendance and punctuality are very good. The students are very keen and interested in their learning and participate in large numbers in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that the school provides.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good, as is teaching. The students achieve well in most subjects and learning is very good in a significant number of lessons. The students learn new ideas rapidly, apply themselves conscientiously and work well co-operatively in pairs and small groups. The curriculum is carefully planned so that the key skills of literacy and

numeracy are promoted well. The students are also provided with good opportunities to use their ICT skills in other subjects. Staff give very good attention to the health, safety, care and welfare of the students. Assessment of students' work is thorough and teachers use the information well in many subjects to set targets for each individual. Strong and effective links have been established with parents and with the main local primary schools in spite of the school only being open for two years.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The tireless efforts of the headteacher, governors and staff have been instrumental in the school's development to date. The headteacher provides a very clear direction for the work of staff. He has established a strong identity for the school. The work of staff is sharply focused on the drive for improvement and raising achievement. Other leaders have been very successful in establishing their teams and in identifying the priorities for their development. Governors have had considerable involvement in shaping the direction for the school and have assisted in preparing carefully planned action to meet the next stages in its development. A considerable burden was placed on all by the problems associated with opening the school and operating for the first year in temporary accommodation while the buildings were under construction. This has resulted in some action being delayed, such as introducing procedures to monitor formally the work of staff.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very much in support of the school. They acknowledge the hard work and effort of the headteacher in seeing the school through its difficult start. They value the very regular information that they are given and are happy that the school seeks and listens to their views. Students are proud of their school. They are positive about what it has to offer particularly the wide range of extra-curricular activities, although some feel that the dining hall is cramped and will not be large enough as the school expands. This is equally a matter of concern to governors and the headteacher.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- implement plans to monitor the work of staff and evaluate standards.
 - ensure that IEP targets are sharply focused on learning needs.
- and, to meet statutory requirements:
- by providing a daily act of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

The students achieve well overall in relation to their attainment when they enter the school. As a result, standards are above average in English, mathematics, science and ICT by Year 9.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good in mathematics and a considerable number of students are working at above average levels in each year group.
- The students' progress in developing ICT skills is considerable.
- Standards in Year 7 and Year 8 are not as high as in Year 9 as the attainment of students on entry to the school has fallen.

Commentary

1. The current Year 9 students entered the school with National Curriculum test results that were slightly above average in mathematics and science. Results further above the national average in English. Standards in these subjects for Year 9 students are now securely above the national average. Some students have not made quite the same progress in English as they have in mathematics and science because of staffing difficulties when in Year 8. This problem has been rectified. With much teaching that is good or better and the application that they show to their work, the students are now achieving well in lessons in all three subjects. The attainment of students on entry has declined since the school opened, particularly in English. The students in Years 7 and 8 are achieving well but not attaining the standards of Year 9. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in mathematics and science, but girls are doing better than boys in English.
2. Some students have made quite outstanding progress in mathematics largely as a result of the well-organised and skilful teaching. The very good attention paid to developing numeracy brings its rewards and the students apply these skills well in other subjects. Staff also promote well the skills of investigation and enquiry. This results in the students being able to tackle problem-solving and practical tasks with confidence. Group work and discussion are also having a significant impact on improving the students' speaking skills. Many speak clearly and fluently, giving thoughtful responses to questions. Staff also focus well on developing the students' literacy in virtually all subjects. This is also paying dividends as reading and writing skills are both developing well.
3. The school has allocated two hours each week to teaching ICT skills in Year 7. The students also have many opportunities to develop and apply their skills in other subjects. As a result, their achievement is very good. From attainment that is below expected levels when they enter the school, overall standards are above average by Year 9. Not only do the students have good ICT skills, but they also use these skills to good effect to enhance their work in many subjects.
4. The students had a wide variety of experience of the other subjects in their primary schools. This resulted in their attainment on entry not consistently reaching expected levels. However, achievement is good in most subjects and standards improve to above average in French, design and technology, history, music and citizenship. There are some exceptions to this good achievement for Year 9 students in physical education and religious education because of some factors which held back their progress in earlier years. For example, when in Year 7 the accommodation for physical education was inadequate and the students' progress suffered. In religious education, some of the teaching until this year has been from non-specialists. These

factors have been eliminated as the school has grown and achievement now is good in lessons in both subjects.

5. The very good focus that many staff place on literacy, considerably benefits the students with English as an additional language. They are able to participate fully in lessons and many use their skills as bilingual learners to very good effect. The result is that they achieve as well as others in their classes. There is also no discernable difference in the overall attainment of students from the various minority ethnic groups.
6. Students with special educational needs generally make good progress in lessons and over time, although there are some occasions where teachers do not focus sharply enough on their particular needs. The students' IEPs outline valuable strategies to be adopted but do not always provide clear and precise targets. This makes it difficult for staff to evaluate and assess the progress that is being made. The school has recently identified students who are either gifted or who have talent in a particular subject. An analysis of the assessment data for these students shows that their achievement is good, although no specific extension programmes have been provided for them since the school opened. In many cases they have made very substantial progress from the results of their Year 6 National Curriculum tests, particularly in mathematics.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students behave well and their attitude towards school is very good; there are very few exclusions. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Attendance is well above the national average and students' punctuality at the start of the school day is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good attitudes towards learning and are very proud of their school; they thoroughly enjoy taking part in the wide range of available opportunities.
- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and most of the students respond by behaving very well during lessons.
- The school manages incidents of bullying or harassment very effectively and the number of exclusions is well below the national average.
- Relationships between students and with adults are very good;
- Students' personal development is very good; provision for their moral development is excellent.

Commentary

7. Attendance is well above the national average. The overwhelming majority of students arrive in good time for the start of the school day and this helps them to make the most of their time at school.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.7	School data	0.0
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

8. As part of the inspection, students were asked to complete a questionnaire. Almost everyone agreed that they enjoy coming to school and they think it is very well run. During discussions,

students of all ages spoke of their school with great pride and students said that the teachers and other classroom staff are very approachable. Relationships are indeed very good and are based upon mutual trust, respect and consideration; this makes a major contribution to the school's very harmonious atmosphere. Students particularly enjoy the many extra-curricular clubs and other activities. Levels of interest are very high, with participation in sport and musical activities being particularly strong.

9. During lessons, the majority of students behave very well. All members of staff insist on high standards of behaviour and the overwhelming majority of students willingly comply. The number of fixed period exclusions is low compared to other schools and there have been no permanent exclusions since the school opened. Analysis of students' questionnaires, however, paints a different picture; one third of the students feel that behaviour is not good and almost half say they knew of incidents of bullying and racist abuse. The inspection team explored this issue in formal and informal discussions with many students during the inspection. Students were surprised at the response to the questionnaire and said that although such incidents occur from time to time, the school deals with them immediately. Teachers constantly encourage students to report any incidents of harassment and the system is working well. During discussions with inspectors, students from ethnic minority groups said that they felt well looked after and that members of staff handled any such incidents very effectively.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	195	1	
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	22		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	13		
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	7		
Mixed – any other mixed background	11		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	62		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	26		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	5		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	27		
Black or Black British – African	6		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	18		
Chinese	2		
Any other ethnic group	17		
No ethnic group recorded	7		

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

10. Although the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship, staff foster the students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, very

well. There are plenty of opportunities for students to voice their opinions and to become involved in the many activities. Students respond very well and they develop into confident and sociable young people. They increasingly understand the importance of considering each other's needs and they respect different cultures and faiths. Students are quick to use their initiative. The year councils are held in high regard and have helped to bring about numerous improvements to school life. For example, representatives have successfully lobbied for the installation of a chilled water vending machine so that they can have a drink without having to queue up in the dining room.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good, as is the assessment of the students' work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Much of the teaching is from highly expert staff who make their lessons interesting and imaginative and who motivate the students to work hard.
- The best teachers are able to teach difficult concepts and ideas so that the students are challenged and work to the limits of their capabilities.
- Staff use performance information to very good effect to set challenging targets for the students.
- Teachers generally plan to meet the needs of all students well, but because IEP targets are not always sufficiently sharp, teachers do not focus closely enough on the students' specific needs.
- Teachers pay good attention to promoting the key skills of literacy and numeracy. They also develop the students' ICT skills well.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 93 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactor y	Poor	Very Poor
4 (4%)	38 (41%)	35 (38%)	16 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

- From the opening of the school, staff have focused sharply on teaching and learning. Training and professional development have successfully focused on adopting a shared approach to many aspects such as lesson planning, teaching styles and the achievement of high standards of behaviour. One consequence of this is that no unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection and almost half was either very good or excellent. Parents and students are of the opinion that teaching is good and that staff have high expectations, a view that the inspection evidence confirms.
- Teachers have successfully adopted many of the principles of the National Key Stage 3 strategy. Lessons have clear starter activities, many of which are innovative and interesting. These help to capture the students' attention from the outset and focus their minds. The objectives for each lesson are displayed, discussed and reviewed. The students then have a very clear picture of what they are going to learn; how the lesson is to proceed and, at the end of the lesson, how successful their learning has been.
- Much of the teaching is lively and inventive, undertaken by teachers who, by and large, have a very good command of the material. Most lessons are taught by subject specialists. On the

very few occasions where this is not the case, teaching is still at least satisfactory because of the teachers' skills and the support and guidance that they are given by others. Teachers have high expectations of the students and many drive learning forward at a very brisk pace by varying the activities and giving time limits for their completion. Most students respond very well to this by trying their hardest, although some find the pace too much at times. The teachers are mostly sensitive to this and try to ensure that these students are not left floundering. Teachers are also adept at pitching the work at just the right level so that individuals are suitably challenged. Their questions are carefully targeted so that higher-attaining students are extended and work is often provided at different levels of difficulty. This is not consistently the case and is a weaker aspect of some lessons. Teaching assistants are usually carefully deployed. They make a significant contribution, particularly to the learning of students with special educational needs. In some cases, the IEPs for these students have vague and imprecise targets. This results in their specific needs not being suitably tackled by teachers. Teaching of students with English as an additional language is well planned, jointly with the English department. The quality of this work is effective and students make good progress.

14. There are many highly skilled teachers whose lessons are regularly lively, interesting and stimulating. These teachers are particularly adept at putting across difficult and quite challenging concepts. Their questioning is skilled at drawing out thoughts and ideas from the students, and at assessing how much has been understood. These staff respond quickly to the understanding shown by the students and they adapt their style and the work to meet changing circumstances as the lesson progresses.
15. Teaching assistants provide generally good and often very good levels of support for students with special educational needs in lessons. However, not all subject teachers plan effectively with the assistants; where they do, the support is particularly effective. Teaching in withdrawal lessons is exemplary.
16. A common feature of virtually all lessons is the successful and creative promotion of literacy. Key subject-specific vocabulary is displayed and referred to, the students' writing skills are developed in a variety of ways and speaking skills given great prominence. Group-work and discussion are a particularly strong feature of many lessons. The students find these sessions interesting and enjoyable and they collaborate well with each other. The skills of independent research are generally fostered well, but could be given greater prominence in some areas. Developing and applying the students' numeracy is not given quite the same prominence, but even so it receives good attention. Many teachers use ICT to very good effect to interest the students and to enable them to apply their skills in extending their learning.
17. A thorough programme of assessment is in place throughout the school. Staff use information to focus sharply on how well students are doing. Departments set challenging yet realistic targets for students, closely matched to National Curriculum levels. The school has developed a very effective computer-based system, which provides an easy means for recording and analysing the students' performance. Students are fully involved in the process, including thorough self-assessment and peer-assessment in some subjects. The marking of students' work is also generally helpful and informative so that they have a clear picture not just of how well they are doing but how they can improve.

The curriculum

The school provides a very good curriculum, which is greatly enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The school is well staffed, has a very good level of learning resources and benefits from very good accommodation.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning of all subjects puts a strong emphasis on developing the students' thinking skills and problem-solving; this supports independent learning very well.
- The National Key Stage 3 strategies have been implemented well, particularly promoting literacy skills very effectively through all subjects.
- Provision for ICT is very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is a significant strength of the school and an important means of extending students' interests and learning outside lessons.
- Specialist accommodation and a high level of resources create a stimulating learning environment for students.

Commentary

18. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is admirably broad and balanced, embracing the full range of subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and citizenship. In addition, students are taught drama, a second modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9 and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The provision for ICT is very good, but its use through other subjects of the curriculum is not always as strong as its discrete teaching.
19. Developing skills in teaching and learning and the promotion of literacy across the curriculum have been priorities of the school since its opening, and have met with very much success. Investigation and problem-solving feature strongly in mathematics, science and design and technology; enquiry and research are an integral part of history and geography; and all subjects provide very good opportunities for speaking and listening, reading and writing.
20. There is good equality of access and opportunity. The school considers carefully the needs of different groups of students who have not yet reached the expected National Curriculum level in a core subject. The provision under the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) is good. A part-time teacher supports students whose home language is not English and minority ethnic students who are at risk of underachievement. The teacher works very closely with the English department to plan support for these students. Although good provision is made for students with special educational needs, their IEPs do not have clear learning targets. Overall, the curriculum provides a very clear focus on supporting the development of students' literacy, numeracy and social skills. The focus on individual students and their needs results in all being fully included in the life of the school. The curriculum content and teaching reflect students' experiences and cultural backgrounds well to prepare them effectively for an ethnically and culturally diverse society.
21. The students benefit from a very wide range of clubs and activities, before, during and after school hours. These are very well attended and almost every subject is represented in the programme. Sporting and musical activities are very much appreciated, giving students many chances to demonstrate and develop their talents. These opportunities make a very significant contribution to students' learning and personal development.
22. The students' learning is hugely enhanced by specialist accommodation with a wide range of resources in all subjects. They take pride in their school, which is kept very clean and free of graffiti.
23. The school has made considerable progress in planning a flexible curriculum for Years 10 to 11 and beyond. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are working very hard to find ways to offer a good range of subject choices, which include vocational courses for students who are not engaged by the academic subjects of the curriculum. The provision of vocational courses and training is currently under consideration at all levels of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure students' care, welfare and health and safety are very good. Students receive very good support, advice and guidance and the school involves them very well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- This school looks after its students very well; health and safety and child protection procedures are comprehensive and very effective.
- Well-planned and thoughtful induction procedures help new students to settle quickly.
- The school actively seeks students' views and, whenever possible, acts upon their suggestions and preferences.
- The school does not have its own playing fields; health and safety issues arise as a result of open access to the land used for physical education.
- Space within the dining room is limited and facilities are barely adequate for the number of students currently on roll.

Commentary

24. Students are very well looked after during the school day and members of staff provide very good personal support and guidance. Students feel safe at school because they are well known to their teachers and child protection and health and safety procedures are well understood by the relevant members of staff. The school building is very newly built and parts have been in use for only a few months. Several teething problems with the building remain to be sorted out. Two issues in particular are causing concern. Space within the dining hall is limited and students say they spend so long queuing, they have little or no time left to eat their meal or have a drink. In addition, the school does not have its own playing fields and it uses a nearby public park for physical education lessons. This has led to the some disruption to lessons. Several health and safety issues arise as a result of the unrestricted access of the public to this area.
25. Members of staff work as a very good team and students speak warmly of the support provided. Inspectors agree with their positive comments. Links with external agencies are good and there is very good support for students who are facing particular difficulties. A high standard of personal care is backed up by very good procedures for monitoring students' achievements, in and out of school. The marking of students' work is very clear and provides students with very good guidance on how they can improve. Assessment information is used very well to pinpoint any underachievement so that specific individual guidance and support can be provided. Students who are talented in particular areas, such as music, art or sport, are clearly identified and teachers provide very good opportunities for them to challenge and extend their learning.
26. Very good liaison and transfer arrangements with the contributing primary schools ensure a smooth transition when students enter the school in Year 7. Although it has not yet been possible to provide a summer term induction day, Year 6 students are able to visit their new school on a number of other occasions. This helps them to get to know the building, each other and their new teachers. Students who joined the school a few weeks before the inspection say they received a warm welcome and that teachers set work that is closely matched to their previous experiences and ability. This helps them to settle in quickly and make good progress from the moment they arrive.
27. The school actively seeks students' views and, wherever possible, acts upon them. Students and teachers alike hold the year councils in high regard and recommendations have brought about several improvements. Issues recently discussed have ranged from the introduction of a summer uniform to the need for more litterbins in the corridors.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are very good. Although the school is only two years old, it has already established good links with the local community. Liaison with contributory primary schools is very good and links with other secondary schools and colleges are developing well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents support their children's learning very well and links between the school and parents are close and mutually supportive.
- Very good links with contributing primary schools help teachers to set work that is well matched to the students' needs.
- Parents receive good information about their children's education and the many day-to-day events and developments within school life.
- The school actively seeks parents' views and, whenever possible, acts upon their suggestions.
- Links with the community are good and support the curriculum well.

Commentary

28. The school is keen to involve parents closely with their children's education and they respond by providing very good practical support. Parents hold the school in high regard and an analysis of the pre-inspection questionnaire indicates that there is very little they would like to change. Parents do their best to ensure that their children attend regularly and their wholehearted commitment is reflected in a level of attendance that is well above the national average.
29. Links with contributing primary schools are very good and help to ensure that incoming Year 7 students settle quickly once they transfer. Close liaison helps teachers to set work that is well matched to the incoming students' needs and abilities. As a result, little time is lost and students are helped to make good progress from the moment they arrive. Links with other secondary schools are steadily evolving, as are links with the local further education college. The school is, therefore, well placed to meet the growing needs of students as they move into Years 10 and 11 and eventually into the sixth form.
30. Parents are kept well informed about many aspects of school life. For example, the school website and the weekly newsletter keep parents up to date with arrangements for extra-curricular clubs and details of fund raising events. Parents also receive advance details of the work their children will undertake and this puts them in a good position to be able to help them at home. As well as the annual report, parents receive a brief, but informative, interim report each term. This lets parents know how their children are getting on in different subjects, as well other aspects of their conduct, such as the standard of their behaviour and attitude during lessons. There are two formal opportunities each year for parents to speak with their child's tutor. During the autumn term performance review day, parents review their child's progress and help to set targets for the forthcoming year. Parents are also invited to attend a second consultation meeting during the spring term. These meetings are very well attended and parents' wholehearted support encourages their children to work hard and to do their very best. Links with parents of students with special educational needs are especially close and their attendance at review meetings is very good. Students' annual reports, however, do not always give a clear assessment as to whether students are making the expected amount of progress and exactly how they can improve the standard of their work.
31. The school actively seeks parents' views and provides an annual questionnaire. Great importance is placed upon their comments and suggestions and parents are very pleased with the way the school responds to their views. The parents' association is very well supported and funds raised are helping the school to finance additional resources, such as the school minibus.

32. Links with the local community are good. Although the school has been open for only two years, it has established links with several local businesses. These enrich practical subjects such as design and technology and have helped the school to obtain additional computing equipment.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good at all levels in the school. The headteacher is a very effective leader and has placed the school on a very secure footing. Staff are firmly focused on improving teaching and learning in their pursuit of high achievement for the students. Governors fulfil their role very well and have made a very significant contribution to the school's success.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has established a clear direction for the school and strong teamwork from highly committed staff who share his drive for high achievement.
- The small size of the senior management team during the school's first two years has meant that the systematic monitoring of the work of staff is only now starting. In spite of this the headteacher has a very clear understanding of their strengths and has taken firm action to eliminate weaknesses.
- Governors have been instrumental in enabling the school to become so well established in a short time in the face of many difficulties. They have adapted well to the changing priorities, have high expectations of the headteacher and his staff and are closely involved in strategic planning for the school's future.
- Leadership is strong at all levels in the school and staff with management responsibilities are making a significant contribution to establishing not only their areas of responsibility but also to the positive ethos within the school.
- Management processes are highly effective. They have been instrumental in securing the smooth running of the school.

Commentary

33. The school owes its successful start in no small part to the drive, enthusiasm and determination of the headteacher. Although the school has faced many difficulties, the headteacher, governors and staff have ensured that there has been no long-lasting detrimental effect upon students' achievement. Parents think very highly of the headteacher and value the effort that he has put into the establishment of the school. They admire his hard work and are pleased that he is a visible presence around the school.
34. The school's income, based on student numbers, has not reflected some of the expenditure needed during the first few years of the school. For example, the costs of maintaining the site will not increase in line with rising student numbers over the next few years. This has required very careful planning and a delay in establishing a leadership team of more than the headteacher and deputy headteacher until this year. These two individuals have carried a heavy burden as they have introduced procedures and practices for a new school. They have dealt with problems during the building stage, such as spending the first year in temporary accommodation while the main accommodation was being built around them. They have prioritised their time wisely, but have still not been able to do all that they had intended. It is a testament to their skills and efforts that they have produced a strong and united staff team who share their vision for the future and commitment to the highest possible standards.
35. Members of the new leadership team have settled into their roles well and are already making a significant impact on the work of the school. They are taking some of the burden from the headteacher and deputy headteacher who are now able to focus more on the school's strategic development. Teamwork has benefited from a small staff complement over the first few years.

In many cases the subject team leader has been the only teacher in a department. This had the advantage of providing a great deal of cohesion and sense of a common purpose but the disadvantage that the burden of developing teaching programmes has fallen on to the shoulders of few staff. They have handled this well and are now keen to see their areas expand from the sure foundations that they have built.

36. School and team leaders have inspired the staff to strive hard to improve their teaching through professional development and dialogue. Staff also present very good role models to the students. They treat students with respect and they are generally treated with respect in return. This has helped to establish the strong relationships on which the school's harmonious and trusting ethos is firmly built. Staff are also strongly committed to educational inclusion and successfully translate this into practice in many areas of school life.
37. Governors have high expectations. They have set the headteacher a challenging agenda to meet their goals for the school. Governors have worked tirelessly along with the headteacher to give the school the best possible start. Where they were able to exert influence, they dealt successfully with many of the difficulties that arose during the planning and building stage as well as some of the problems with the PFI contract specification. They successfully helped the headteacher and staff to manage the opening of the school in temporary accommodation, its operation during the first year and the subsequent move to the new buildings. Many governors gave unstintingly of their time, attending a considerable number of meetings, trying to get the best for the students. They have now adapted their structure wisely to reflect the changes in the stages of development of the school. This has enabled them to remain close to the school, to be involved in its development and to establish secure procedures to evaluate its performance. Conferences have enabled staff and governors to reflect on the progress made and to establish a shared view of the priorities for the immediate future. The plans that have emerged have identified clear and appropriate priorities for the next stage of its development and well-considered action to meet the challenges ahead. Best value principles, although not formally adopted are used well in financial decisions. All statutory responsibilities are met with the exception that the school does not fulfil statutory requirements for collective worship, thus making governance unsatisfactory overall.
38. The care and attention paid both to appointing staff who share the headteacher's vision and to inducting them into the school has paid dividends. While there is great consistency at present in the way school policy is implemented, senior managers are aware that more rigorous procedures will be needed to monitor the work of staff as the school grows. Data is now being gathered on student performance. Staff are starting to analyse this to help them to evaluate the success of the actions that they have been taking. Informal monitoring of staff and line management meetings have enabled the headteacher to gain a clear picture of the skills of his staff and to take action to improve teaching. The formal management of their performance has also been used to set targets for individual staff that reflect the main priorities such as the 14-19 curriculum and developing leadership skills.
39. That the school has come such a long way in such a short time is down to the quality of leadership and management at all levels. This bodes well for the school's future. It is well placed to meet the demands that will face it as it grows towards its full capacity in four years time.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,569,253	Balance from previous year	119,193
Total expenditure	1,595,876	Balance carried forward to the next	92,570

Expenditure per student	3755.00
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PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong innovative leadership is helping to develop the department and its work.
- Provision for literacy is a significant strength of the school as literacy skills are developed very well in all subjects.
- The curriculum puts a strong emphasis on speaking and listening, with very good provision in drama.
- Teaching is stimulating and imaginative and engages students effectively, but activities are not always closely enough matched to students' needs.
- Assessment and tracking of performance are good, but they do not support precise target-setting.

Commentary

40. Standards are above average in Year 9. The students' achievement is satisfactory. This is a judgement that takes into account how well the students have done over time in relation to their above average standards on entry to the school. The school has managed to sustain these standards, even though the frequent changes in staffing in the English department have affected students' achievement. However, achievement is improving as the department now has its full specialist staffing in place. Most students made good progress in the lessons seen during the inspection.
41. Teaching follows well the effective schemes of work, based on the objectives of the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy. A particular strength is the way the teachers use discussion to help the students learn. Consequently, standards in speaking and listening are above average by Year 9. Students of all ages speak confidently and well. They readily volunteer to answer questions and to read aloud in class. They support each other and co-operate with each other well and they participate in paired and group talk very well to refine and extend their ideas and explore new ones. A Year 8 class, where teaching was excellent, was seen vigorously debating the significance of the albatross in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. The students, who were from different cultural and religious backgrounds, argued exceptionally well about the presence of God in the poem.
42. Standards in reading and writing are also above average in Year 9. Teaching generally moves at a very brisk pace and offers students activities that engage and motivate them well. Students show very positive attitudes to their work and to each other. The result is that learning is good and the students move on quickly in their understanding. Early in Year 9, the higher-attaining students are already working at levels above those expected at the end of the year. In Year 8, the students are achieving well and many are working towards higher levels. Although, the newly arrived Year 7 students make good progress in lessons, their overall standards are below average. Students in all year groups enjoy reading. There are opportunities for whole-class reading where teachers join in, thus becoming good role models. In Year 9, most students are readily able to draw on implied meanings and conclusions from their reading of a variety of texts. Lower-attaining students are supported well in reading and writing by specialist staff.

43. As teaching is imaginative, all students are encouraged to write in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes. Currently Year 9 students are writing a charity leaflet on the dangers of homelessness, based on the fiction they are reading. The work is linked to the department's contribution to citizenship. Most of them can write expressively, using correct grammar, punctuation, appropriate vocabulary and a range of writing styles. By Year 9, lower-attaining students can also write at appropriate levels, using appropriate language.
44. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good or better, but work is sometimes not matched to the needs of lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs. All students are generally offered the same work, and they produce different outcomes, but feedback is not always given according to their needs. Furthermore, although assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good, this is not used to tell students exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to reach the next step.
45. Subject leadership is very good; it displays both vision and an innovative approach to developing and improving the subject. However, the management of the subject is only satisfactory as target-setting and the monitoring of teaching and learning have not been sufficiently developed to achieve greater consistency in teaching and to raise the standards further.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

46. The provision for literacy across the curriculum is very good. The very strong management of provision in this area ensures that literacy is included in the departmental plan of each subject and that there is an action plan for its development. Teaching and learning in this area are carefully monitored. Consequently, students' speaking, listening, reading and writing are developed very effectively in most lessons. They learn to use specific language and the vocabulary required in each subject. For example, in physical education, students are encouraged to learn 'words for the week', and there is very good and extensive vocabulary in citizenship. There is also ample evidence of teachers using subjects such as art and design, design and technology, history, geography, religious education and science to develop reading and writing skills.

French and Spanish

Provision in French and Spanish is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and acquire good study skills.
- There is a rich programme of clubs and activities to help students learn.
- Very good assessment procedures make students aware of the levels they reach.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- Students do not use ICT enough to help them learn languages.
- The foreign language is not used consistently enough in all lessons.

Commentary

47. French is the main language taught in Years 7 to 9 and the oldest students in the school attain levels which are above the national expectation. Spanish is only taught in Years 8 and 9 and students now in Year 9 are working at levels which are in line with national expectations. There is no difference between the attainment of boys and girls. In the case of both languages, these results represent good achievement over the time that the students have been at the school. Achievement at some levels is particularly good; for example, when students start Spanish at the beginning of Year 8, having learned French for a year, their progress is rapid. Those who have learned English as an additional language progress very well in both French and Spanish

because teachers help them to benefit from their linguistic awareness. Students with special educational needs progress as well as others because teachers usually provide them with appropriate work to do and they are well supported by teaching assistants.

48. Teaching and learning are good. Students learn well because teachers show them how to organise their studies and give them opportunities to work independently. Teachers manage behaviour well and give students work to do which matches their ability levels and gives them a sense of achievement. Students know that their work will be carefully marked and that they will often receive guidance on how they can improve. Teachers keep thorough records of the levels students attain and measure the progress they make. These procedures enable teachers to help students set targets for themselves and develop independent learning skills. There are many valuable activities outside lessons, some of which are run by the foreign language assistants who are an asset to the department. Students receive regular homework and are encouraged to use the Internet to help them learn, but they do not have enough opportunity to use computers for language learning at school. While extensive use of the foreign language by the teacher is a very good feature of some lessons, this practice is not consistent across the whole department.
49. Meeting the needs of students is a central focus of the department. The team leader takes a creative and innovative view of the tasks of teaching and learning, ensuring that the national strategy for literacy has been put to particularly good use within the subject area. Staff communicate well and systems for monitoring each other's work are well embedded. The department has established clear procedures and routines for teaching and all members of staff follow them. Teachers analyse students' performance data to ensure that all are making the progress they should. The targets set for students are of variable quality; some are too general and the department recognises the need to link the process more closely to the work they have already done on helping students to understand the level they have attained.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is very good as a result of the very good teaching and they reach standards that are well above average overall.
- Leadership and management are very good, although the delegation of responsibilities and formal monitoring of teaching are at an early stage.
- Data on students' performance is rigorously monitored to maximise their potential.

Commentary

50. Students' standard of attainment in the early part of Year 9 is above the national average overall. Students in the upper sets are performing well above the average while those in lower sets are completing tasks that are around average. Many students are confident in their work in algebra and geometry. They use and apply the mathematics that they know to various investigative activities in a very effective way. For example, the work more able students completed on an 'overlapping squares' task showed impressive algebraic and geometric skills in formulating a general result. A good number of lower ability students in Year 9 are competent in using geometric instruments to construct triangles.
51. The students enter Year 7 at a level close to the national average in mathematics and make considerable headway to reach a level above the national average by Year 9. The high quality teaching and learning experienced by students over the period is the main factor in this success story. The other element is the strong focus on monitoring students' performance through regular and rigorous assessment. The results of formal assessments are analysed to measure the progress that they have made. Different ethnic groups of students are equitably

represented within the setting structure employed by the mathematics department, as are boys and girls, and there are no discernible variations in achievement.

52. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good command of mathematics, explaining new ideas in ways that make sense to students thus enhancing their knowledge and understanding. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and are able to interest, encourage and engage their classes. The students are very positive about mathematics. They are highly challenged by tasks that are set and tackle these with aplomb. For example, in an excellent Year 9 lesson on interior angles of polygons, the teacher very skilfully steered students to an investigational approach that they readily pursued to determine a general formula with significant success. The use of a designated support assistant in mathematics classes to help students with special educational needs is effective. It provides continuity for students and sustains regular contact with mathematics teachers.
53. The constant focus on raising students' achievement pervades the work of the department so that teachers and students alike work diligently to improve standards. The Key Stage 3 strategy is established to a large extent and methods derived from this, such as routine use of personal whiteboards, help all students participate fully in lessons in a productive way. The use of plenary sessions though remains to be developed further. Literacy in mathematics is evident in the way in which key words are highlighted and discussed in some lessons. Information and communication technology is used well to support the mathematics curriculum. For example, in a lesson in a computer room Year 9 students explored geometric constructions individually using some published software. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. At present, staff responsibilities are evolving and the monitoring of teaching is informal. This works successfully at present but the department recognises that it will need to become more structured as the school expands

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. The use and promotion of mathematics by other subjects are good and students' standards of attainment are above average. Teachers have profited from training to enhance the contribution from different subjects. There are examples in several subjects where mathematical skills are promoted well. In science, Year 7 students use bar charts to represent data and Year 9 determine lines of best fit in scatter diagrams. On some occasions students are inaccurate in labelling units. In geography, Year 8 students use stop-watches and deal with calculations that arise. Year 9 students draw and interpret temperature and rainfall graphs. In physical education there is a 'number of the week' theme. In French and Spanish oral work, students complete mental calculations in the language. Students consider geometric shapes in various Islamic patterns in their art and design lessons.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is contributing to the above average attainment of Year 9 students.
- The concentration on investigative methods develops the scientific understanding of students well.
- Students' work is regularly marked but comments are not always followed up and an indication on how the level of the work may be raised is not always included.
- The good use of a range of ICT enhances the achievement of the students.

Commentary

55. Students enter the school with standards in science that are above the national average, but with weaker skills in investigative science. Their progress through Years 7 to 9 is good and the

students achieve well. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of students.

56. Teaching is good. The good relationships and the gentle but firm management of students enable learning to take place in a purposeful environment. Students are involved in scientific investigation in virtually all lessons. In all lessons seen students worked well as individuals, in pairs and in groups. The good behaviour and positive attitudes make a positive contribution to students' good progress within lessons. Lessons have a good level of challenge and most staff make good use of the time available. They provide materials at different levels of challenge so that the lessons meet the needs of all students. Their books are marked with encouraging comments but constructive evaluations are not always used and then are not always followed up. This means that opportunities for consolidation and clarification of understanding are missed. The use of homework is generally good with the work following on from, and developing, the work of the lesson. This good teaching is leading to good achievement.
57. The science department is rapidly growing in size and one outcome of this is that practices within the classroom vary from teacher to teacher. Strategies for consistency are needed if all students are to continue to achieve at the same rate. Throughout the work there is an emphasis on the use of technical vocabulary and reminders about grammar are given. Students use graphs to present data in relevant situations. The curriculum is enhanced by the extra-curricular activities that are provided and the wide use of ICT. Data-logging equipment is in use and students use and develop their ICT skills in a variety of ways.
58. Leadership and management of the department are good. The teacher in charge of the subject has securely established this new department and has a clear vision of the way forward. The staff are well supported and the new science laboratories provide a bright, light working environment that encourages a positive attitude in the students. Available data is well analysed and used to identify areas that require improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is well planned and provides interesting and challenging activities.
- Assessment is very thorough and is used to inform planning; students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.
- The favourable level of ICT resources and staffing enables students in Year 7 to have two ICT lessons each week; this provides a significant boost to their ICT skills and knowledge.
- ICT is used well in many subjects to enhance teaching and learning, but insufficiently in geography, art and design and modern foreign languages.

Commentary

59. Students make very good progress as a result of a well constructed scheme of work, good and often very good teaching supported by very thorough assessment which enables students to understand what they need to do to improve further. Standards in ICT are above average. The favourable time allocation for students in Year 7, together with good and frequently very good teaching, ensures that their skills and knowledge develop quickly. Work seen during the inspection indicates that students have made very good progress in the first half term of Year 7. Very good achievement was seen in all years as students developed their skills and knowledge in a range of interesting and challenging contexts. Students' confidence increases and by Year 9 they have become very competent users of a wide range of software applications producing work which is ahead of national expectations.

60. Several examples of the students reaching high standards and working to their capacity were seen during the inspection. For example, students in Year 7 were creating interesting, well planned presentations for a specific audience using animation software. In Year 8, students were working successfully on different ways of recording and presenting information from surveys. Students in a Year 9 class were carefully guided and well supported in using several different pieces of software, including the Internet, as they focused on the reliability and validity of information. In this activity the students examined information for possible bias in a range of challenging topical issues. Internet research skills are generally well developed and used effectively. Plans are now in place to increase existing opportunities for control and measuring using computers.
61. Teaching in the ICT course is very good. Lessons are well planned, learning objectives made clear to students and tasks are well structured. Interesting and appropriately demanding activities provide suitable challenges for the whole ability range. Students are encouraged to work in groups and the sending of e-mails between members is used very successfully to assemble group presentations. Specialist rooms have very good wall displays and appropriate stress is placed upon the use of key words and subject-specific vocabulary. All lessons ended with effective review sessions, which helped to reinforce learning. Assessment procedures are very thorough and used very effectively to inform teachers' planning and to help students move forward in developing their ICT capability.
62. Leadership and management of the ICT department are very good, ensuring there is a supportive and appropriately challenging environment in which students can make good and often very good progress in developing their ICT capability. All the required content of the ICT programme of study is covered and further developments are in progress to ensure greater depth in some areas such as control technology including computer aided design.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

63. The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning is very good in mathematics and good in most others subjects but there is insufficient use by the art and design and modern foreign language departments. Good use is made of projection facilities and interactive whiteboards in the increasing number of departments where they have been installed. There are ample supervised opportunities for students to use ICT facilities before school, at lunchtime and after school to ensure that all students have access to ICT for homework and research.

HUMANITIES

The leadership of the humanities faculty, which includes history, geography and religious education, is very good. Having overseen the whole of the humanities faculty from the beginning, the head of faculty has developed strategies to enable successful growth of the individual subjects. Teachers are in charge of their individual areas but consistency is maintained in the teaching of literacy skills and in the assessment of students' work.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning promotes good achievement for all students so that standards are above average by Year 9.
- Curriculum planning is very good; literacy and citizenship skills are developed very well.
- Leadership and management are very good and assessment data is used very well.
- Students with special educational needs are very well supported but not all lessons showed an extra challenge for the highest-attaining students.

Commentary

64. Standards in Year 9 are consistently above average and students achieve well because in most lessons attitudes and behaviour are very good. The students work hard, they take responsibility for their learning and enjoy the activities planned for them. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Learning is very good because of these positive attitudes and the very effective teaching that enables the students to develop skills alongside a good level of knowledge and understanding. The highest-attaining students can talk about the differences between various types of evidence very well and showed real maturity when discussing evidence from war poetry. However, they are not always challenged by the provision of higher-level work in class. The majority of students clearly understand that 'context and purpose' are important considerations in evaluating evidence such as about life in the trenches.
65. Most Year 9 students have good research and investigation skills because of the range of teaching activities and the focus on literacy. They write and talk about history topics thoughtfully and are being thoroughly prepared for GCSE work. Lower-attaining Year 9 students clearly understand about conditions in the trenches and can talk about their ideas well because discussion is a key feature of lessons. All lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory or better and some had excellent features particularly in the way learners were encouraged to think and investigate for themselves. Very good use is made of high quality textbooks but students were not observed engaging in really independent research using a wide range of resources. The high quality of support available for those with special educational needs enables them to participate actively in lessons. The focus on literacy also ensures that students with English as an additional language make the same very good progress as others in their classes.
66. Standards lower down the school are not as secure as in Year 9. For example, Year 7 students show good knowledge and understanding of the Norman victory in 1066 although their written work is less accurate. Teachers are promoting skills so well that by Year 8 students clearly understand about the range of sources available and they are beginning to develop skills in evaluation. In a very successful lesson they compared the methods used in portraits of Elizabeth 1 with those of Hitler and learned that some forms of propaganda have been in use for a long time. History makes a very valuable contribution to the students' understanding of citizenship.
67. There is a clear vision for the future and well thought-out decisions have been made about resources and development in a growing department. Computers are being used very well and assessment procedures have been well developed. The information obtained is used very well in planning lessons and setting tasks. Field trips have been much enjoyed and more are planned. The foundations have been laid for a very successful department.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and has a positive effect on achievement.
- Teaching of students with special educational needs is very inclusive, much to the benefit of their learning.
- Leadership and management are very effective with established plans for development, such as providing exemplar Year 10 and 11 teaching materials.
- Extra-curricular and practical work is varied and exciting.

Commentary

68. Students are attaining standards close to the national average from a below average base. Knowledge and understanding is sound, for example in Year 9 students can explain differences between countries and the impact different peoples have on each other through the tourist industry. Students use a range of techniques to portray data; this reinforces their numeracy skills. There is evidence that attainment is rising with the increase in subject specialist teaching now available. There were no significant differences in the standards attained by students of different ethnicity or gender.
69. The observation of students in lessons and an analysis of their work show achievement to be good and the result of very good teaching. Students with special educational needs make very good progress and they are fully integrated in the lessons. All students have very positive views about the subject. Enrichment activities like Indian cookery at lunchtimes to complement the Goa project and fieldtrips, whether mapping the local area or visiting the Thames Barrier, make lessons come alive and reinforce classroom learning.
70. The quality of teaching is very good and, as a consequence, students learn well. Lessons are very well planned with considerable variety of activities and provide appropriate challenge at all levels. There are high expectations in literacy, a particular strength of the department. Practical work, whether measuring rain infiltration rates through a variety of substances including a roof tile, a breeze block and assorted soils, role-play with a travel representative or deducing from a series of clues why Mrs Potter had to move out of her home one winter, enliven the learning and ensure students' attention. The teaching is at all times confident, enthusiastic and positive, leaving no doubt about the high standards of work and behaviour expected. Assessment of work is good giving students targets for improvement; peer and self review are in place. The very good resources are well managed in well equipped teaching rooms and the excellent display rewards and encourages achievement.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is resulting in rising standards.
- The strong emphasis on the learning from religion stimulates the interest of students.
- The use of constructive comments that give the students specific ways in which they can raise their work to the next level is inconsistent.

Commentary

71. Students join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. The students come from a large number of schools, some of which do not follow the same syllabus. Much of the work previously covered has dealt with the factual aspects rather than the applied understanding of their learning. The students in Year 9 are reaching standards that are broadly in line with the expectations of the agreed syllabus. Their progress is good but as several are capable of a higher level, achievement overall for the current Year 9 is satisfactory. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or of students of various ethnic backgrounds.
72. Teaching is challenging and has good a pace and vitality that stimulates the students' interest. There are also several very good and excellent features that support the students in studying emotionally sensitive areas, such as suffering and belief. Teachers encourage the students to express their views and to give reasons for their answers. Staff use good planning, knowledge and understanding to stimulate and maintain interest in the lessons by devising a variety of ways of approaching the topics. In the best lessons, support materials are available for students with weaker literacy skills. In all years the marking of the students' books gives

encouragement but the lack of use of constructive comments means that the students do not know how to improve the quality of their work. Very good teacher-student relationships ensure that the students feel confident in expressing personal views. Attitudes to religious education are always at least good and usually very good; this contributes to the students' good progress. The curriculum is enhanced by the use of a good range of artefacts and the use of speakers in lessons, although visits to places of interest have not taken place. The subject makes a very good contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, which is embedded in all they do.

73. The leadership and management of the department are good. There is a clear vision for moving the department forward and the newly appointed teacher in charge of the subject has already started implementing developments. The department has a very good base for rapid improvement.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

74. In addition to inspecting art and design, design and technology, physical education and music, a small sample of **drama** lessons were also observed. The drama curriculum is very good. It not only helps to develop students' knowledge of dramatists and practitioners, but there are also regular planned opportunities for the exploration of important social and moral issues, such as violence and injustice. Teaching in the lessons seen was very good. Lesson planning was thorough, and activities were both challenging and rewarding. The teacher has very good subject knowledge, high expectations of all students and often inspires them to try new ideas and techniques. This gives them the confidence to experiment for themselves. Students are involved in the assessment process. They know how well they are doing and how to improve their performance further.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership is helping to build a strong and effective team.
- Very good teaching in all years is leading to very good achievements in lessons and very good progress over time.
- The positive attitudes and very good behaviour of students is making lessons enjoyable and productive.
- The department makes a very good contribution to the development of students' literacy skills.
- The department's resources for ICT are unsatisfactory and there is insufficient development of computer art.

Commentary

75. Standards in work seen during the inspection are broadly in line with national expectations, confirmed by the very good assessment records kept in the department. Students arrive in Year 7 having had a range of different experiences in their primary schools and with standards overall a little below national expectations.
76. The team leader has set up the department very effectively, building a very good team in a planned way over the past three years. She has written schemes of work that cover a broad curriculum, utilising the varied subject skills of the team. The only weak area lies in the development of computer art, a development hindered by the lack of department based computers and appropriate software. The team leader is a very good role model for staff and students alike. Her high expectations are shared by colleagues who are working to drive up standards. Students have very positive attitudes to work and rise well to the high expectations

of the staff, shown in their very good behaviour and application to work. The ceramics trained technician manages the clay area very well and tutors students, bringing important skills and knowledge to the department.

77. Teachers have an excellent command of their subject areas. They teach confidently and enthusiastically, enabling students to achieve to the best of their ability. They are sensitive to the different backgrounds of students and their special educational needs, including all students effectively in the learning process. They draw students into the lessons by valuing their views on their own and other's work and ensuring that all are included in discussions and demonstrations. This is particularly effective in the 'gallery sessions' at the end of most lessons. Staff have high expectations of written work, such as accounts of visits, the annotation of work and note taking, correcting students' work as appropriate. Sketchbooks are a very important tool for learning, which the students are encouraged to use for both class work and homework. Girls in particular enjoy presenting their sketch work to a high standard.
78. The department has come a very long way in a short time and is now ready to move into the demanding area of public examinations, The very good records that are kept of students' progress indicate a subject in which students have the potential to achieve examination grades above national averages in the next three years.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and motivates students to work hard and achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good and ensure effective teaching of a curriculum which supports learning for all students.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are good and make a positive contribution to their very good learning.
- Performance management and self-evaluation do not focus sufficiently on review and evaluation.

Commentary

79. Students enter the school from a very diverse range of primary schools with varied experience in design and technology. Standards on entry are below the national expectation for students of their age. Throughout Years 7 and 8 all students have equal access to a very broad and balanced curriculum. Teachers ensure the content of lessons is appropriate, expectations high and the pace challenging. Students respond with enthusiasm and interest, so that by the time they reach Year 9 standards have improved significantly and are above national expectations. Achievement is good; it is well supported by knowledgeable and competent teachers. Students behave well and have very positive attitudes to their learning. Achievement of boys and girls is similar. The curriculum and assignment work appeals equally to both, ensuring high levels of motivation for most students. Support for students with special educational needs and English as an additional language is good.
80. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan and resource lessons very well and use the three-part lesson consistently. The use of ICT in teaching is good. Students have access to a range of projects which enable them to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in a wide range of software applications. Literacy is well taught with good use of key words, a full range of speaking and listening activities, reading for meaning and writing for a range of purposes. Citizenship is well planned and students participate in a good range of activities to develop this aspect of the curriculum. Numeracy is not sufficiently focused in planning. Teachers balance practical work, designing and investigative research work across each project and use assessment very effectively to identify and support students' next steps for

learning. Students' learning is good; they use self evaluation and peer evaluation effectively and with confidence, setting personal targets and suggesting how others may improve their work. The pace at which students are expected to work is challenging and appropriate for most; however, some find it too demanding and there is evidence of unfinished work, which hampers progress.

81. The head of department is very enthusiastic for staff and students to succeed. She leads by example, has high expectations and values the work all staff and students do. She has effectively set up the accommodation and resources for this new department. She has also ensured that policy, planning and assessment procedures are well documented and embedded into practice. However, procedures do not currently include sufficient focus on identifying and sharing most effective practice, continuing professional development or curriculum review and evaluation. The subject is very well resourced with excellent equipment, good quality materials, expert staff (including support staff) and excellent accommodation. Staff and student performance is uplifted by the environment and by the commitment they all have to hard work, respect and support for others and a well planned curriculum.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The students are achieving very well and standards are above average in Year 9.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students enjoy music; they join ensembles and choirs in good numbers but do not always work sufficiently independently or creatively.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Commentary

82. Standards in Year 9 are above average in performing and composing and at least average in listening and appraising. As most students enter the school with limited experience and few skills in music, this means that students are achieving very well in this subject.
83. Very good teaching and learning and the students' very good attitudes to music are the reasons why they are achieving so well. Teachers are experts in their subject and as such are very good role models. They plan their lessons very well with links between each varied activity so that students strengthen their understanding. Students of all abilities respond very well to the challenges in lessons. For example, a talented boy in Year 9 was given an individual composition to do while a boy with special educational needs in the same class improvised ably using Frère Jacques over a drum kit accompaniment. Students are developing and using an impressive musical vocabulary. Key vocabulary is defined and the students also have a few opportunities for more extensive writing when they evaluate their work. Students are well behaved because they know and trust the teachers. They are managed very well and consequently work productively with very good concentration. Students keep a record of the National Curriculum levels they achieve and can see their improvement recorded in increasing grades. They are familiar with the levels, and the targets set help them to improve. The lessons are conducted at a very good pace, so fast that very occasionally students are not given the opportunity to develop their musical skills sufficiently by bringing finesse to their work. In some lessons there is a tendency to control students learning too much and not give them sufficient freedom to work independently and creatively for themselves. When they are given the freedom they respond very well, using the good skills that have been so well developed.
84. The department is thriving because of very good leadership, which sees clearly where music in the school is going. The main priority is to raise standards through high quality teaching and learning. The teaching team is effective; they work together very well. The management of the

department is also very good, highly organised and with a strong culture of reflection and self evaluation. Staff are beginning to use information from school assessments to help them analyse why standards are as they are and find ways to improve them

85. There are ensembles and a choir; the good numbers attending these shows the popularity of music in the school. The choir includes several boys and students from different ethnic communities in the school. The new building provides very good accommodation. Resources such as percussion instruments, keyboards and recording equipment are of very good quality. However, the department has insufficient computers with keyboards. This limits the students' progress in composition.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make very good progress in lessons and achieve well over time.
- Teachers set high expectations of the students who have a very positive and lively attitude towards the subject.
- The range of, and the participation in, the many open-access clubs and teams is impressive.
- Assessment of student performance is thorough and informs departmental planning.
- The adjoining recreation ground is an unsuitable area in which to teach the games curriculum.

Commentary

86. Students in Year 9 are currently attaining at the level expected nationally in the two sports observed in lessons, boys' basketball and girls' dance, and in the extensive open access clubs and teams. In basketball, the majority are able to perform basic skills such as passing and dribbling and the more able do this with precision and control. The less able find difficulty in putting these skills together in game situations. There is a wide spectrum of attainment in all year groups, but teachers accommodate this through support and encouragement. As a consequence all students, including those with special educational needs, generally achieve well. On entering the school, Year 7 students appreciate the more formal and structured approach to physical education. Year 8 students are showing very good progress with many talented students excelling in team games and Year 9 students are now beginning to catch up after having limited access to sports facilities in their first year at the school.
87. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is very good overall. Teachers set high expectations of the students in terms of dress, participation, performance and behaviour. In a very good lesson introducing Year 7 students to basketball, the teacher's clear explanations and well-structured practices ensured that the students began to acquire the skills of chest and bounce passing as well as understanding the basic technique and rules of dribbling. Year 9 girls in a good dance lesson were able to understand the effects of the different types of warm-up. They put together interesting sequences using a range of body movements. However, progress in lessons is limited at times because learning outcomes are not clearly linked to teaching methods and activities for the talented students are not always sufficiently challenging.
88. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is greatly enhanced by an impressive range of extra-curricular activities which are enthusiastically taken up by boys and girls of all abilities and background. The subject is well led and managed with the new team leader having a clear vision for the department. This includes striving for sporting excellence, maximising participation for all and developing an effective physical education teaching team. There are strong links with the local primary schools through the School Sports Co-ordinator programme and the local community and sports clubs make use of the excellent indoor facilities. The new teacher in the department is well supported through team teaching and expert advice and guidance. Assessment of the students' performance is thorough, appropriately referenced to

National Curriculum levels and informs departmental planning. Whilst the indoor facilities are very good, the adjoining recreation ground is an unsuitable area as there is unrestricted public access to it during lesson time.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The ethos of the school strongly supports work in citizenship and teaching is very good.
- The skills of participation and enquiry are very well taught and students are confident when expressing thoughts and feelings.
- A deputy head teacher leads and manages the team very well, but the monitoring of teaching does not take place.
- Some areas of knowledge in the citizenship programmes of study are not yet fully planned.

Commentary

89. The performance of students in lessons is above average and the levels they have attained in this subject are also above national expectations. This is because teaching is very good. Written work is well supported by lesson activities and is above average. Students make good progress because they find the curriculum relevant and interesting. They support each other well in lessons and achieve well in a variety of skills, including speaking, writing, numeracy and working with computers. They are well motivated and recognise the importance of these skills in helping them to improve their work in citizenship. They express their thoughts accurately and show sensitivity to the needs of others.
90. Citizenship is taught within the context of the PSHE curriculum, but also occurs in all other subjects. All team leaders have conducted a full audit across each subject area and this has been analysed so that staff can keep track of students' progress. Some areas of knowledge in the citizenship curriculum are not yet covered in any subject area; the school is aware of this and has plans to take appropriate action. The teachers succeed in making the learning environment both stimulating and secure, so that students can learn with confidence, listening carefully to each other and expressing their own views with precision and fluency. Teachers employ a variety of resources, including video and ICT to widen the students' experience. They provide them with both the tools and the understanding to learn independently and carry out research. Teachers adjust learning activities to suit different needs so that all students can progress. Students are aware that their work is assessed according to levels based on National Curriculum requirements for this subject and they know what they need to do in order to improve. They work hard and reflect sensibly and wisely on the issues raised.
91. The deputy headteacher provides very good leadership and management, but the school is now ready to appoint a team leader. The overall ethos of the school is of great benefit to the work which takes place in citizenship. Students' views are often sought and they elect representatives to serve on the school council, sports council and charity council. In this way all students learn first hand about democratic and representative systems of government. The work of individual members of the department is not yet monitored systematically so that good practice can be shared and improvements made if necessary.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	4
Students' achievement	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well students learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets students needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for students	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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