

INSPECTION REPORT

BAYLIS COURT SCHOOL

Slough

LEA area: Slough

Unique reference number: 110074

Headteacher: Mrs Maureen Ball

Lead inspector: Michael Merchant

Dates of inspection: 23rd – 26th February 2004

Inspection number: 259400

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

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Terms used in this report

*Students in Years 7 to 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **Sixth Form**, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what these pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth Form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).*

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by pupils and students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils and students of the same age nationally. The pupils' or students' **achievements** reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time.*

*In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those in which pupils attained similar standards at the end of Years 6 and 9.*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern (non selective)
School category:	Community
Age range of Students:	11 – 19 years
Gender of Students:	Female
Number on roll:	652
School address:	Gloucester Avenue Slough Berkshire
Postcode:	SL1 3AH
Telephone number:	01753 531760
Fax number:	01753 553719
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Jon Reekie
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Baylis Court is a smaller than average sized secondary modern school, educating 652 girls aged 11 to 19. The number on roll is about the same as at the time of the last inspection. The school is situated in a mixed residential area in the north east of Slough, in Berkshire, and is the only single-sex non-selective school in the town. Most pupils live close to the school, but many travel from all over Slough and beyond to attend. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is consistently very low in English and mathematics and well below average overall. There are pockets of significant social and economic deprivation in this urban area and many pupils come from comparatively disadvantaged backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The school population is made up of a very rich cultural mix and comprises:

- Asian or Asian British – Pakistani (57.7 per cent)
- White – British (13.7 per cent)
- Asian or Asian British – Indian (12 per cent)
- Black or Black British – Caribbean (3.7 per cent)
- Mixed – White and Asian (2.3 per cent)
- Asian or Asian British – other (2 per cent)
- Black or Black British – African (1.6 per cent)
- Mixed – any other (1.5 per cent)
- Mixed – White and Black Caribbean (1.5 per cent)

The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very high, at nearly 80 per cent (521 pupils); 27 of them are at the early stages of learning English. The main languages spoken, other than English, are Urdu and Punjabi. The school receives funding from the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant (EMTAG) for two bilingual teaching assistants. The number of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, is above average. Special needs include dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and hearing and visual impairment.

The school attained Artsmark and Sportsmark Status in 2003, Investors in People in 2000 (reaccredited in 2003) and a Healthy Schools Award in 2000.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27368	Michael Merchant	<i>Lead inspector</i>	
9478	Linda Callaghan	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
3258	David Bain	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics in the Sixth Form
15485	Roger Butler	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education
8859	Tom Dodd	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design technology
19135	Derek Ebbage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics
8873	Charlotte Evers	<i>Team inspector</i>	History Citizenship
30215	Helen Feasey	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography
20832	Mohindar Galowalia	<i>Team inspector</i>	Community languages
10060	David Gutmann	<i>Team inspector</i>	Business education
31335	Rachel Hobson	<i>Team inspector</i>	English
2971	Kathy Hooper	<i>Team inspector</i>	Health and social care
31983	Debra Makin	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education
23188	Jenny Maunder	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science
8360	Frank Peacock	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music Special educational needs
20533	David Rogers	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Art and design
24887	Yvonne Salmons	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
6364	Geoff Strack	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Information and communication technology

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Baylis Court is a good and effective school; it provides a good quality of education for its pupils. It has transformed itself over the last three years and is now a happy, harmonious community of learners. The school is an orderly place in which to learn, because the inspirational leadership by the headteacher, well supported by governors and other key staff, has ensured that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and the very large numbers of pupils for whom English is an additional language, achieve well. Teaching and learning are good in all years and much teaching is very good and excellent. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The imaginative and exciting teaching in the majority of lessons means that pupils achieve well and attain standards that are average overall. Teaching and learning are good in most areas of the school, with much that is very good or excellent.
- The determined, inspirational and highly effective leadership of the headteacher has provided the unremitting drive to push up standards.
- Pupils' behaviour has been transformed and is good throughout the school. Attitudes to learning are very good, because staff give pupils the confidence to learn.
- The school makes intelligent use of assessment information both to evaluate its work and to set clear targets for improvement for its pupils.
- A creative and enterprising curriculum caters well for all pupils and prepares them well for life.
- The school cares for, guides and supports its pupils very well.
- The school has forged effective partnerships with its parents, other schools and the community, all of which contribute to its success.
- Achievement is not high enough in science, because there is too much unsatisfactory teaching and learning.
- There is an unsatisfactory match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum in mathematics.

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards of achievement are good and there is far more good and very good teaching. Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour around the school have both been transformed for the better. All the key issues from the previous inspection have been fully met; there is much improved provision and support for those pupils who require language or special needs support, standards in mathematics are better, there is better co-ordination of assessment and recording and reporting, and statutory requirements for teaching information and communication technology (ICT) have been met.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - very good; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; E* - very low.*

For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Pupils' achievement is good. From overall well below attainment when they enter the school, pupils achieve well, to reach standards that are below average overall by the end of Year 9 and average in Years 11 and 13. Pupils' English language and literacy skills are above average, but their competence in mathematics is well below average. Standards in the use of ICT skills are average. Gifted and talented pupils, those with a special educational need and those whose first language is other than English achieve as well as other pupils in the school.

Personal development, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is generally good. Attitudes to learning are very good and behaviour is very good. The school is an orderly and pleasant place in which to learn. It is a testament to the school that, with such a rich and diverse range of cultures demonstrated in pupils' backgrounds, the school is completely devoid of any racial tension or harassment. The school is a model of a completely harmonious community. It has worked hard to raise the self-esteem of pupils and is succeeding in building their confidence as individuals.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are good overall and the use of assessment is very good. This is a very real reflection of the school's ethos, which incorporates a relentless drive to improve achievement. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons that capture pupils' interest, so that pupils are eager to learn. There have been significant improvements in the curriculum since the last inspection. The breadth of curricular opportunities is good and opportunities for enrichment are very good. Accommodation is satisfactory in the main school and unsatisfactory in the Sixth Form. The school has very effective care and guidance systems that support pupils very well. A very good induction programme helps new pupils settle well into school life.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good and the leadership of the headteacher and her deputy is very good. The governance of the school is good. The headteacher is well supported by her senior staff, who provide good leadership. Together, they ensure that the effectiveness of management is good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents who returned the inspection questionnaire were happy with the school. A significant minority felt unhappy with the way the school fails to seek their views on aspects of school life. The inspection evidence does not support this negative view. The school tries hard to work closely with the parents, while agreeing that some school events are poorly attended. Only three parents attended the inspection consultation evening.

Pupils are very happy with the school. When interviewed, pupils felt that the school deals with issues such as bullying or poor behaviour fairly and effectively.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in science and mathematics and thus improve achievement.
- Continue to strive for a better match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum in mathematics.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Sixth Form is good but it is not, as yet, cost effective. Numbers in the Sixth Form are small, but growing. A Sixth Form consortium has been established under the umbrella of Herschel Grammar School to allow courses to be delivered at three main sites in Slough. The courses at each site are, in general, aimed at its own students and delivered by staff from that site. The courses are open to all students, giving them a wide choice of courses. Standards in the Sixth Form are broadly average, as they are in the main school, and students' achievement is good. The school is having a very big impact on the lives of these 16 to 19 year-olds, because, without this Sixth Form provision, most of the girls would not continue in full-time education.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards of achievement, in this fully inclusive Sixth Form, are high in art and design, ICT and business education.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, with much that is very good.
- Inadequate accommodation inhibits independent study.
- Sixth formers have access to very good advice, guidance and support.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is satisfactory . The quality of teaching and learning is good, but provides too little opportunity for students to work collaboratively. Achievement is sound. A delightful group of students are motivated well to achieve.
Information and communication technology	Provision in ICT is very good . Students achieve very well because of consistently very good teaching and learning.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art and design is very good . The very good achievement of students reflects the very good teaching they receive.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in physical education is good . Much good teaching leads to good achievement by most students.
Business	Provision in business education is very good . Very good achievement results from teaching and learning that are very good.
Health and social care	Provision in health and social care is good . Teaching and learning are good, which leads to good achievement.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school provides **very good** guidance and support for its Sixth Form students. The small size of the Sixth Form means that staff have substantial personal knowledge of every student.

There is a regular programme to help with UCAS¹ submission forms, which helps pupils to draft their applications. Very good procedures are in place to identify students who are in danger of underachieving, and to monitor them closely. The good relationships in the Sixth Form are beneficial in both raising pupils' confidence and preparing them for the next stage of education or for work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management in the Sixth Form are **good**. There are very good links between the head of Sixth Form, subject leaders and pastoral staff. This facilitates a very good use of assessment data, which tracks students' progress carefully and greatly reduces underachievement. The consortium management is very well led at this early stage, with very clear vision and effective action.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students feel that the school is responsive to their views and that they are able to assume a good level of responsibility. Students give termly feedback to the head of the Sixth Form in order to evaluate their own performance and that of their teachers. The views of students are valued and acted upon. Students overwhelmingly enjoy being in the Sixth Form and feel that teaching is challenging and that their work is helpfully assessed. They also feel they receive good guidance when choosing their courses and that their progress is well monitored. Students had no major concerns.

¹ The University Admissions System

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AND STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is **good**. From overall **well below** attainment on entry to the school, pupils achieve well to reach standards that are **below average** overall by the end of Year 9, and **average** by the ends of Years 11 and 13. Pupils' English language and literacy skills are **above average**, but their competence in mathematics is **well below average**. Skills in the use of ICT are **average**. Gifted and talented pupils, those with a special educational need and those whose first language is other than English achieve as well as other pupils in the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The below average standards attained by pupils by the end of Year 9 represents good achievement.
- Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are average, and this represents good achievement overall.
- Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities achieve well and make good progress towards their personal targets.
- Pupils at the early stages of acquiring English as an additional language achieve well.
- The very good achievement of pupils in English is at the forefront of their overall good achievement in school.
- In science, achievement is unsatisfactory because there is too much unsatisfactory teaching and learning.
- Some girls of White – British origin do not always achieve as well as they could.
- In mathematics, by the end of Year 9, pupils are achieving satisfactorily; standards of work seen are well below national averages.

Commentary

'Pupils are achieving well because they are given every opportunity, support and encouragement to succeed.'

1. Standards in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below average compared with those of all schools nationally, but average compared with those of similar schools. These results were slightly better than the 2002 results and showed a continuation of the big improvement seen over the last three years.

2. Pupils' achievement up to the end of Year 9 was satisfactory overall in 2003. This, however, masked very big differences between the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In English, pupils achieved very well to reach standards that were just below average. In mathematics and science, however, where shortages of specialist staff interrupted the learning of many girls, achievement was satisfactory and poor respectively.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.4 (32.4)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	31.4 (30.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	29.3 (29.2)	33.6 (33.3)

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

3. GCSE results in 2003, as measured by the average points pupils attained in these examinations, were average overall when compared with those of all schools and very high compared with those of similar schools. This placed the school in the top five per cent of similar schools in the country. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C in 2003 was average compared with all schools, but very high compared with similar schools. These results represented very high achievement for these pupils, in relation to their test results at the end of Year 9. The school, as the focus of its improvement, has pushed up standards relentlessly in Years 10 and 11. Standards have continued to rise year on year.

4. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average in English; a remarkable achievement, in the light of pupils' very low standards when they join the school and a testament to the excellent leadership of the subject head. Results in mathematics were well below average in GCSE examinations in 2003 but there has been an improving trend. Results improved in 2003 and achievement was satisfactory. In science, GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national average for all and for similar schools, and pupils' achievement was unsatisfactory. Results were above average overall in Urdu, Punjabi and French and these standards are maintained in the present Years 10 and 11.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	56 (37)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	89 (92)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	35.6 (29.1)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 114 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Standards seen up to Year 9 during the inspection were better than those indicated in the test results of 2003. Overall, standards are now below average; they are average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. Pupils are achieving well overall, despite weaker achievement in mathematics and science, because of the rapid gains in literacy skills they are making in English and most other subjects of the curriculum. Here, they are given every opportunity, support and encouragement to succeed.

6. Pupils enter Baylis Court with well below average standards of prior attainment. Nearly a third of pupils have a special educational need and a very large proportion (80 per cent) of pupils speak English as an additional language; reading, writing and speaking skills are poorly developed (some pupils have a reading age which is less than half of their chronological age). The below average standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 therefore represent good achievement overall and this conclusion is fully supported by results of ability tests that the school carries out when pupils enter the school. This is a testament to the very effective leadership of the headteacher. She has transformed the school by putting a very clear emphasis on giving the girls at Baylis Court the confidence to learn in a community in which they feel valued, thus raising achievement.

7. Overall, girls of all levels of attainment are achieving well. Within the very wide range of ethnic groups at the school, those who are achieving most highly are girls of Asian or Asian-British Indian origin, whereas some girls of White – British origin do not always achieve as well as they could. The school is very aware of these differences in achievement and has adopted a number of strategies with the Education Action Zone to help increase the motivation of White – British girls. The introduction of vocational elements into the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is one such example and is proving to be successful. There are no significant differences between the achievement of other ethnic minority groups or the very large number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. This is because teachers are sensitive to the needs of all. Pupils with special needs are achieving well because they are fully included in lessons.

8. In English, standards are average in Year 9 and pupils are achieving very well in relation to their very low literacy levels when they enter the school. The very good achievement of pupils in English is at the forefront of their overall good achievement in the school at large. The department is ambitious for pupils to succeed, an ambition driven by the excellent leadership of the head of department.

9. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily in mathematics to Year 9, where standards of work seen are well below national averages. This is because the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent across the department.

10. In science, the majority of pupils enter the school with well below average levels of attainment. This low attainment persists in many classes in Years 7 to 9 and achievement is unsatisfactory. The major reason for this is that, although the school has worked tirelessly to find suitable science teachers, there is still too much unsatisfactory teaching and learning. However, the new head of department, in post for only a few weeks, has shown she has the capacity and the commitment to be effective in raising standards. Significant changes have taken place very recently, indicating that necessary improvements can be made.

11. In ICT in Year 9, pupils are now attaining standards that are close to average and their achievement is good. Pupils work confidently with a range of ICT applications and are doing better than could be expected. Improved access to ICT across the curriculum is raising the motivation of many girls and helping to foster their good achievement.

12. The achievement of pupils in modern languages, including Spanish, in Years 8 and 9, is very good overall. In the Asian languages, pupils make very good progress in acquiring formal language. In French and Spanish the development of reading and writing is very good. In other subjects across the curriculum in Years 7 to 9, achievement is satisfactory in citizenship, good in music and geography and very good in all other subjects.

13. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are average and this represents good achievement in relation to pupils' standards in Year 9. This may not appear to be as good as the achievement indicated in last years' GCSE results, which were very high, but it must be remembered that pupils in the current Year 10 and 11 achieved higher standards when they were in Year 9 than did those pupils who sat the GCSE examinations last year.

14. Pupils whose home language is not English range from those with little or no literacy to those who are confident and fluent users of the language. The pupils at the early stages of English language acquisition make good progress in their general learning and achieve well. The pupils at the advanced stages of English generally make progress similar to that of other pupils, and their overall achievement is good.

15. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities achieve well and make good progress towards their personal targets. This is because of the co-operation and planning that takes place between teachers and teaching assistants. Since work is well adapted to match pupils' needs, many improve their learning. All pupils with special needs leave school with recognised qualifications.

Sixth Form

16. The small numbers entered in 2003 make comparison with national averages inaccurate. Only 19 students were entered for external examinations in 2002. Results in this one examination, business education, were very high and placed the subject in the top 5 per cent of schools in the country in relation to standards in this subject. However, students only followed this one AVCE course and so the average points score attained by them was well below average.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	100 (n/a)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	57.9 (n/a)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	170.9 (n/a)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 19 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

17. The Sixth Form has now grown to 44 students (three of whom are boys from the consortium schools), and pupils' overall achievement is good. Students are following advanced courses in three subjects: art and design, English and ICT. Business education and health and social care are studied at intermediate level, in addition to GCSE mathematics and recreational physical education. In addition, a group of students are following an AS English course in their spare time. Standards overall are broadly average and students' achievement is good in relation to their attainment on entry to the Sixth Form. Achievement is very good in ICT, art and design and business education, where teaching and learning are consistently very good.

18. In English, students are making excellent progress as a result of imaginative teaching methods and a tenacious approach to reinforcing literary terms. Students are following a modular course in mathematics, but some joined the course after the first module had been completed. Most students are highly motivated. The limited time to cover the course, over what has amounted to only six months for many students, is hindering achievement. In ICT, independent learning skills are well established and in art and design students have learnt to manipulate their chosen materials with imagination, inventiveness and confidence. In business studies, students carry out effective research on the Internet and in their own part-time jobs in local businesses. Students show excellent attitudes to work, individually and in groups, where students of different ethnic groups collaborate very well.

19. The very good support, guidance and monitoring that students receive in the Sixth Form mean that nearly all students stay on their courses, and those who do leave are tracked very carefully by the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes to learning are **very good** and behaviour is **very good**. Aspects of personal development, including students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are also **very good**. Attendance is **satisfactory**. Punctuality is generally **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The ethos of the school is very good.
- Pupils are well motivated and are proud of their school.
- Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Behaviour throughout the school is very good.

Commentary

'The school is a model of a completely harmonious community.'

20. The school is an orderly and pleasant place in which to learn. The school has worked hard to raise the self-esteem of pupils and is succeeding in building their confidence as individuals. Staff have high expectations of the pupils and do all they can to motivate them to do well; pupils therefore believe they can do well. All staff show respect towards pupils, who, in turn, come to school eager to learn and to work hard. Pupils are bright, cheerful and friendly, and speak with

pride about their school. It is a testament to the school that with such a rich and diverse range of cultures expressed in pupils' backgrounds, the school is completely devoid of any racial tension or harassment. The school is a model of a completely harmonious community.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	98	11	0
Asian or Asian British Indian	75	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	349	10	0
Asian or Asian British – other	5	1	0
Any other ethnic group	125	3	0

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

21. Behaviour in and around the school is very good. There is an effective system of rewards and sanctions in place and pupils are commended for good behaviour or good work. In lessons, pupils are co-operative and collaborate well with one another, sharing ideas and urging one another to do well. This creates a harmonious atmosphere. The rate of exclusions is average.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.6	School data	1.7
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.

22. The overall attendance rate at the school is satisfactory and broadly in line with national averages. The school has introduced a computerised registration system from which it is able to obtain data with which to target pockets of poor attendance. An administrator who has the skill of speaking home languages has been appointed, to convey to parents the importance of regular attendance. The school is doing as much as it can in conjunction with outside agencies, such as the education welfare officers, to improve attendance.

23. Punctuality is good and has improved over time. Punctuality at the start of school and between lesson changes is good.

24. There are opportunities for pupils to take responsibility by becoming peer mentors, prefects, form captains or sports captains. Pupils regularly take assemblies and give presentations on a range of issues. There are regular meetings of the school council. There are many extra-curricular activities, such as drama, homework, music or sports; all are very good, aid learning, and are much enjoyed by the pupils.

25. Pupils with learning difficulties are happy in school and generally behave well. Because teaching assistants present good role models, pupils' personal development, self-esteem and confidence improve. Pupils whose home language is not English have very good attitudes to learning and are very well integrated into the school community.

26. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Opportunities are given for discussions on a range of complex issues, such as poverty, racism or cultural traditions. Shakespeare is studied across the school. In English lessons, pupils maturely debated and wrote about the nature of evil, by studying Lady Macbeth and the possible reasons for her actions. There is a rich vein of cultural influences clearly to be seen in the art and textiles designed by the pupils.

Creative and imaginative writing arises when pupils study famous paintings or poetry from various cultures. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning both European and Asian languages; they gain deep insights into their own cultures and those of other countries. Displays of writing in all the languages reinforce the whole school commitment to promoting the Asian and European cultures.

Sixth Form

27. The personal development of students is very good. Students are expected to contribute to whole school activities. They feel that the school is responsive to their views and that they are able to assume a good level of responsibility. Sixth Form students are active members of the School Council, take assemblies or help to run charity appeals: they help run a lunchtime stationery shop as part of the Young Enterprise programme. They provide good role models for the rest of the school.

28. Students have positive attitudes to study and high aspirations for themselves. Good relationships, established over time, contribute to the friendly and mutually supportive atmosphere in the Sixth Form, where students grow in confidence. They are prepared well for tertiary education by the time they leave school. Half of the students have applied to go to university; the remainder hope to take up the offer of a modern apprenticeship.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**, and the school's use of assessment to drive up standards is **very good**. The breadth of curricular opportunities is good, as are opportunities for enrichment. The school cares for and guides its students **very well**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** and the use of assessment is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall and there are many examples of outstanding practice.
- There is very good teaching and learning overall in English, art and design, design and technology, history, European and community languages, physical education and religious education.
- Teaching and learning are at their least effective in science, where they are unsatisfactory.
- The school has highly successful systems for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of teaching and learning.
- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a range of activities which are exciting, relevant, and keep pupils interested and motivated.
- Pupils' interest and motivation in lessons are kindled by teachers' imaginative and diverse methods.
- In a small minority of lessons, planning is weak, and the level of difficulty inappropriate to the needs of pupils of differing attainment levels.
- Assessment is used intelligently so that teachers know individual pupils' needs.
- Teaching and learning in the Sixth Form are good and this is why students are achieving well.

Commentary

'At the heart of this picture of much improved teaching and learning is the powerful ethos of the school, strongly driven by the headteacher, and the relentless drive to push up achievement.'

29. The quality of teaching and learning has significantly improved since the last inspection. The overwhelming majority of lessons in nearly all subjects are good or better and there are many examples of outstanding practice. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in only a small number of lessons, mainly in science, where the school has found great difficulty in recruiting suitable teachers.

30. At the heart of this picture of much improved teaching and learning is the powerful ethos of the school, strongly driven by the headteacher, and the relentless drive to push up achievement. This is particularly reflected in the school's highly successful systems of monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Pupils' attitudes to learning have been transformed by improved teaching, which is innovative, energetic, and encourages all to work at full pace. The school's active involvement in the Education Action Zone has significantly raised teachers' expertise and confidence in introducing new methods of teaching and learning, such as the highly effective 'brain-gym'. The school has carefully analysed the different ways in which pupils learn. Many teachers now use this analysis to plan lessons carefully to help pupils learn in a way that is best for them. Lessons are characterised by a strong focus on well-structured planning, pace, challenge and innovation, with the result that learning is exciting and fun. All these factors are contributing to standards rising significantly.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 131 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
9 (6.9%)	45 (34.4%)	47 (35.9%)	22 (16.8%)	8 (6.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

31. In Years 7 to 9, the best teaching and learning are in English, art and design, design technology, history, European and community languages, physical education and religious education, where they are very good. Here, the school has empowered staff to be creative, so that pupils are excited by the imaginative and dynamic teaching. It is the strength in teaching in these subjects, particularly in English, that is the real driving force behind the school's success in improving standards and achievement.
32. The least effective teaching is in science, where it is unsatisfactory. This subject has been without subject leaders for some time. The new head of science, appointed in early 2004, has a good awareness of the department's strengths and weaknesses and has already put in place suitable plans to tackle underachievement and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The new head of mathematics, in post since 2003, monitors teaching rigorously and makes a determined effort to help teachers improve their classroom performance, although the advice given is not always heeded.
33. Teaching and learning are strong in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are very good in English, art and design, design technology, history, geography, European and community languages, music, and religious education. As in Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning is satisfactory in mathematics and unsatisfactory in science.
34. In English, teachers know their subject very well. They are very aware that pupils learn in different ways, and plan an exciting range of activities that keep pupils very interested and motivated, for example by including drama, movement, visual images and discussion. In mathematics, teachers expect pupils to work hard, but teachers' command of mathematics varies significantly and this affects their ability to enthuse pupils. Most science teachers have high expectations of behaviour, and effective management of pupils. However, recently the school has experienced great difficulty in recruiting suitable science teachers and this is depressing the quality of teaching and learning in the subject.
35. Teaching and learning are very good overall in the European and Asian languages. The bilingual teachers of Urdu and Punjabi use the target language effectively in lessons, resulting in pupils' very good progress in speaking and listening. In French and Spanish, pupils make very good progress in reading and writing, but have little contact with native speakers; consequently, in these languages, pupils' speaking skills are slightly weaker. Exemplary teaching was seen in Punjabi and French.
36. Because of carefully planned teaching programmes, pupils with special educational needs learn well and their achievement is good. This is because individual education plans (IEPs) help pupils to reach their targets and teachers take great care to ensure work is matched to pupils' needs. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 who have low literacy skills benefit from the fast trackers' literacy programme, which builds up their confidence and boosts their reading and spelling skills. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the progress of pupils with a statement of educational need, and this enables them to enjoy a full curriculum with other members of their class.

37. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a range of activities which are exciting, relevant, and keep pupils interested and motivated. In this way, teachers have inculcated very good learning patterns in pupils, which enable them to achieve very well. Invariably, these lessons begin with a strong focus on what pupils are expected to learn, and have crisp, catchy introductions that set the scene for the learning to come. Pupils are often prompted to work at full pace as a result of quick-fire, probing questions and expert use of interesting and relevant material, which bring the lesson to life.

38. These highly successful lessons are characterised by high expectations of behaviour and by effective management of pupils. Pupils' interest and motivation in lessons are kindled by teachers' imaginative and diverse methods of teaching. There is invariably careful intervention by teachers to support and encourage independent learning, and work is marked helpfully, with teachers indicating clearly how pupils can improve. In most lessons, particularly in English and European and community languages, the level of challenge is high and not a moment of learning is lost.

39. Pupils enter most classrooms knowing that they are expected to learn for the full 60 minutes. Pupils who are gifted and talented respond well to this high level of challenge and are often motivated to work flat out and thus achieve well, as was seen in a Year 9 French lesson described below.

Example of outstanding practice

In a fast moving Year 9 French lesson, the pupils, many of whom had entered the school with low levels of literacy, learned how to speak and write in French, in well-structured sentences, about their food and drink preferences.

The teacher's excellent understanding of pupils' learning needs and her own enthusiasm for French underpinned all her teaching. Excellent lesson planning showed clear steps in learning and very good teaching methods. In the initial presentation of new language, the teacher's excellent use of colourful illustrations, using the overhead projector, gave all pupils - including three pupils at the early stages of learning English - unhindered access to meaning. Her imaginative use of repetition and mime enabled pupils to absorb, remember and enjoy using French expressions for food and drink. Pupils' very good progress was evident in their confident speaking in paired tasks, and all felt involved and valued because of the teacher's good use of praise as she monitored their work. The teacher's well-structured reading and writing sheet gave full opportunities for able and middle-attaining pupils to use French creatively, while those with special educational needs, and pupils at the early stages of English language learning, copied, and then formed, simple sentences in French. Finally, the teacher referred back to the clearly written lesson objectives and shared with pupils her own pleasure in their progress. All pupils left the classroom with high self-esteem.

40. In the least successful lessons, teachers' command of their subject varies significantly and this affects their ability to enthuse pupils. Although several lessons were seen which followed the recommendations of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, some teachers in mathematics and science do not always leave enough time for a thorough summary at the end of the lesson. In these lessons, teachers do not always break learning into manageable parts and check carefully at each stage that pupils have understood new concepts. A few teachers rush into new work without checking sufficiently on what has already been learnt. In some science and mathematics lessons, teachers talk too much and pupils are often denied access to the more demanding tasks and activities. Pupils become uninterested, and behaviour tends to deteriorate. This is because the pace of the lesson is slow, planning weak, and the level of difficulty inappropriate to the needs of pupils of differing attainment levels.

41. Clear school guidelines ensure that teachers make very good use of assessment data and IEPs to set high expectations for pupils' achievement and to tailor their teaching to meet pupils' needs. Assessment is used intelligently, so that teachers know individuals' needs and pupils know how well they are doing. Teachers take steps to make sure that pupils are involved both in the assessment of their work and in deciding what they need to do next. In many subjects, and particularly in English, teachers make excellent use of examination board guidance to help pupils improve their coursework and prepare for written tests and examinations.

42. There is a comprehensive policy and assessment system for pupils at the early and intermediate stages of English. However, the school's awareness of pupils' needs at the advanced

and bilingual stages of learning English is not always sufficiently high. In the European and Asian languages, pupils have very good awareness of their progress, because of regular testing and target-setting linked to the National Curriculum and GCSE requirements.

Sixth Form

43. Overall, teaching and learning in the Sixth Form are good and this is why students are achieving well. The best teaching was seen in business education, where very well-structured, relevant and topical lessons kept students well motivated. Teaching and learning are also very good in ICT and art and design.

44. A high degree of interaction between teacher and students characterises most lessons in the Sixth Form. Teachers expect and achieve a high level of independence in the way the students work. In an excellent business education lesson, for instance, students gained a thorough understanding of the differences between primary and secondary research, using many examples. Teachers are invariably enthusiastic and very knowledgeable, and so keep students well motivated.

Curriculum

There have been significant improvements in the curriculum since the last inspection. The breadth of curricular opportunities is **good** and opportunities for enrichment are **very good**. In the small Sixth Form, curriculum opportunities are **good** and are improving. Accommodation is **satisfactory** in the main school and **unsatisfactory** in the Sixth Form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and flexible, with a strong focus on motivating all pupils by responding positively to their needs.
- Innovative ideas for developing the curriculum contribute significantly to the school's drive for further success.
- Strategies such as an alternative curriculum for some pupils in Years 10 and 11 provide opportunities for all pupils to succeed.
- Support for learning and for enriching pupils' experience in school is very good, particularly in physical education.
- Very good provision in English contributes to pupils' learning in other subjects and to many aspects of school life.
- The school works creatively to minimise the impact of unsatisfactory accommodation on standards. There are very few opportunities for practical work in science, with the result that pupils' experience of the subject is severely limited.
- Difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff have meant that a substantial proportion of teachers have moved within the last two years, and this has created deficiencies in a number of subjects.

Commentary

'At the heart of curriculum planning is the desire to create opportunities for all pupils, whatever their culture or ethnic origin, to enjoy their work and become confident, successful learners.'

45. The school is justly proud of the way in which it has improved the structure and content of the curriculum since the last inspection. A good balance has been achieved between ensuring that statutory requirements are met and incorporating special features tailored to the particular needs of pupils in the school. At the heart of curriculum planning is the desire to create opportunities for all pupils, whatever their culture or ethnic origin, to enjoy their work and become confident, successful learners. Curriculum organisers listen to pupils' requests and take them seriously. New ideas are grasped with enthusiasm. There are bold and radical plans in hand for improved ways of providing

the best possible learning for all pupils in future, for example through an integrated programme of study in Year 7.

46. At the beginning of Year 7, pupils take part in a very good short programme of activities designed to raise their self-confidence and boost their expectations. As a result, they settle down quickly and are ready to take part in all that the school has to offer. The required curriculum in the first three years is enhanced by additional physical education, as well as drama and ICT lessons.

47. The school prepares pupils very well for the choices they make in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' individual requests are accommodated as far as possible and an extensive consultation process between pupils, teachers and parents takes place. In addition to the full range of standard subjects, vocational options are available in leisure and tourism, health and social care and ICT, together with a good balance of European and Asian languages. A very successful humanities course deepens pupils' awareness of their own and other cultures and supports their learning in other subjects.

48. The school has benefited from, and contributed to, the Slough Education Action Zone, and this has had a big impact on curriculum design and development. By sharing the expertise of staff in neighbouring schools, the school has made very good progress, for instance in its planning for citizenship.

49. More flexible studies are available for a small group of pupils for whom the standard curriculum is less appropriate. They are able to follow a rich mixture of youth awards and key skills courses, while taking a reduced number of subjects for examination. This greater degree of flexibility also enables several pupils to follow a performing arts course at a local college. The school is working hard to extend this successful development.

50. The balance in the provision of European and Asian languages reflects the school's strong commitment to the language learning needs of all its pupils. Spanish is an emerging strength in the languages department. All pupils study French from Year 7. In addition, higher attaining pupils study Spanish from Year 8, and pupils can choose to study Punjabi and Urdu from Year 9.

51. Overall, provision for pupils learning English as an additional language is good, in spite of the continuing vacancy for a co-ordinator. The dedicated acting co-ordinator and staff benefit from the expert involvement of the LEA consultant in maintaining the support system.

52. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE), including careers education and citizenship, is good. All the required topics are included in a series of very well produced units, which are monitored and evaluated regularly. Teachers choose to work in small teams on aspects of the PSHE curriculum in which they are particularly interested. This provides expertise and very good support for form tutors. Sexual and relationships education, and alcohol and drugs misuse, are handled sensitively and well. All the PSHE lessons observed during the inspection were good or better. One excellent lesson on improving revision techniques was seen.

53. Careers education and preparation for further study or employment is organised very well. However, support from the careers service and business partnerships is not always reliable. The school encourages pupils to be ambitious in their choice of career options. There are programmes of visits and presentations from outside agencies, work experience, and 'taster days' at school for pupils to experience subjects they have not studied before. By such means the pupils are able to broaden their horizons.

54. The contribution of the English department to the school's curriculum is outstanding. Improvements in literacy support learning in many other subjects. Excellent strategies for identifying and developing the most able pupils result in very good achievement at the highest levels. Throughout the school, most pupils achieve well. However, their progress is limited by

inconsistent arrangements for setting pupils in modern languages in Years 7 to 9 and by large class sizes and groups split between two teachers in science. There are also very few opportunities for practical work in science, so that pupils' experience of the subject is severely limited.

55. Because there is good provision, pupils with special educational needs have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The SENCO² liaises well with teachers and there is a close working relationship with the local authority agencies. In view of this, pupils with a statement of need are given good support to improve their learning and personal development. There is a flexible learning programme for older pupils for whom a full range of GCSE subjects is inappropriate. For those pupils who are gifted and talented, the school has a stimulating programme of challenging activities, visits and residential opportunities.

56. The provision of learning and enrichment activities outside lessons is very good. The school monitors attendance at all activities closely. The contribution of sport is outstanding, with at least half of all pupils involved in a wide range of activities. The department advises other schools on girls' participation in sport and is in contact with external groups to encourage the full involvement of all pupils. Music is in evidence around the school, for example in its use in classrooms as a beneficial aid to learning. Pupils take part in concerts, festivals and music workshops in the local area. There are many examples of ways in which the English department enriches school life, for example through theatre visits, poetry roadshows and the Young Journalists club. Many departments organise effective clubs and revision and coursework activities in the lunch hour and after school in order to stimulate interest and prepare pupils for examinations. Educational visits to support learning in history and religious education are too infrequent.

57. Provision for extra-curricular sport is very good. Teachers work hard to offer a wide range of activities, which are very well supported by pupils. Hockey and athletics teams are very successful in local and area competitions and there are a number of individuals who have achieved great success at national level.

58. The recruitment and retention of staff has been a significant challenge to the school. A substantial number of teachers has moved within the last two years, creating deficiencies in a number of subjects. Recruitment has been difficult, but the school has drawn widely from qualified teachers from overseas, and new entrants to the profession, and is supporting further qualification of existing teachers on the staff. The school invests considerable time and effort in recruiting teachers of good quality. Its success is evident in that many who move on do so in order to gain promotion. Recent appointments have addressed many of these shortages, but in mathematics and science the lack of suitably qualified teachers affects pupils' standards. The school has developed a thorough induction programme and an on-going system for monitoring teaching and learning. Senior managers monitor classroom practice, discuss progress with teachers and use the monitoring exercise to identify further training needs.

59. Since the last inspection, the school has worked with inventiveness and determination to improve its accommodation further; all pupils now benefit from learning in bright, clean and welcoming classrooms. Cloakrooms and some toilets have been converted to offices and meeting spaces. Relocation of some departments has allowed greater flexibility in teaching and greater efficiency in the use of available space. A remodelled dining room and easily stored furniture have provided additional space for dance and in-service training. All science laboratories have been completely refurbished and one enlarged; accommodation in mathematics is very good and, in ICT, new rooms have been provided. Additional desk access for physically impaired pupils has been made available in both departments.

² special educational needs co-ordinator

60. The school recognises that the library remains too small a resource, despite doubling its size in recent years by annexing part of the original reception area. Despite all its innovative work, the school acknowledges that it is still short of space. This is particularly the case in geography, which uses three non-specialist rooms. In physical education there is an absence of courts and only one indoor area.

61. The range and quality of learning resources has improved since the last inspection. They are very good in English and ICT and adequate in most other subjects. They are unsatisfactory in design technology, where supplies of resistant materials and ICT provision are both insufficient. The school is committed to further improvements and is currently drawing up plans for further alterations and extensions to enhance the quality and efficiency of the environment.

Sixth Form

62. The school is poised on the brink of a significant extension to its Sixth Form curriculum next year as part of a consortium of local schools. Plans are already in place for new subjects, such as sociology, psychology and travel and tourism. Research within the school shows that many pupils are interested in staying into the Sixth Form. Following on from the recent significant improvement in the school's GCSE results, there are now opportunities to introduce a much broader balance of academic and other studies.

63. Sixth Form pupils have benefited from the range of improvements achieved through the relocation of some subjects and improved specialist resources in other areas. Physical education provision is enhanced by use of off-site resources. Accommodation for common room, study rooms and bases for vocational courses is unsatisfactory. Funding is currently being sought to improve this provision.

Care, guidance and support

The school has **very effective** care and guidance systems that support pupils **very well**. A **very good induction** programme helps new pupils settle well into school life. Sixth Form care and support is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very good induction programme for Year 7 pupils.
- Pastoral care provided by the school is very effective.
- The system of peer mentoring throughout the school is effective in enabling pupils to have confidence in themselves.
- Child protection issues are very well managed.

Commentary

'The school is a caring and inclusive environment for learning.'

64. The very good support and guidance and level of care effectively ensure that all pupils make informed choices about themselves, others, and their education. The school is a caring and inclusive environment for learning. This is a key strength.

65. The very high level of pastoral care provided by all staff at the school creates the ethos that underpins the drive to raise academic standards. Pupils' welfare needs are very well met and they appreciate the security of knowing that they are cared for in a safe, family atmosphere.

66. The arrangements for induction are very good. A three-day programme of lessons and activities is held in the summer term, in order for the pupils to master the daily routines of the school

and to settle quickly into school life. Staff visit local primary schools to foster good relations and to smooth the transition of pupils from the primary to the secondary phase of education.

67. Pupils new to the school are assigned a peer mentor (an older pupil), who supports them throughout their first year. Older pupils are trained by staff in this mentoring role and, in turn, they train other pupils. The new arrivals first meet their peer mentor in their primary school and this relieves many fears that the younger girls may have about coming into secondary school.

68. The arrangements for child protection are very good. The senior manager charged with overseeing the safeguarding arrangements of vulnerable pupils ensures that regular training takes place and that all new staff are inducted swiftly.

69. Good and effective relationships with outside specialist agencies contribute to the quality of support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs. Annual reviews and IEPs are good in their provision for assessing pupils and for informing the next stage of learning as they move through the school.

70. Specific arrangements are in place to deal with pupils who are unwell and the care of them is a priority. Staff are trained in first aid and there are effective arrangements for health and safety.

71. Pupils in the early stages of learning English receive excellent personal and cultural support, especially from the bilingual teaching assistants. The care, guidance and support of pupils with a special educational need are very good. This is because teachers and teaching assistants know individual pupils well and there are trusting relationships that develop self-confidence. The well-run lunchtime homework club allows pupils to talk informally to staff, do homework, play games or just relax. The breakfast club provides a social and learning opportunity for the small number of pupils who attend; peer mentors listen to pupils read. All pupils have regular reviews of their progress. However, the progress reports from subject teachers do not always make it clear what pupils are able to do. Pupils play an important part in their own development by contributing towards their targets. The close relationships with the feeder schools ensures a smooth transition for pupils moving to the secondary stage.

72. The school values the views of pupils. When interviewed, pupils felt that the school deals with issues such as bullying or poor behaviour fairly and effectively. There is a school council which provides positive ideas to improve school life.

Sixth Form

73. The school provides very good guidance and support for its Sixth Form students. The small size of the Sixth Form means that staff have substantial personal knowledge of every student. Academic mentoring by an experienced teacher takes place every two weeks, and careers advice is given through the PSHE programme. There is a regular programme to help with UCAS submission forms, helping students to draft their statements. Personal advisers are provided under the Young Enterprise scheme.

74. The head of the Sixth Form, together with the academic mentor, identifies students who are underachieving and monitors them closely. The focus is always on the needs of the individual student and on ensuring that any barriers to learning are removed. The good relationships in the Sixth Form are beneficial both in raising students' confidence and in preparing them for the next stage of education or for work.

75. Students give termly feedback to the head of the Sixth Form, evaluating their own performance and that of the teachers. The views of students are valued and acted upon.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** links with parents and **very good** links with other schools and colleges and with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works hard and does much to involve parents.
- The quality of information provided through school documents and regular meetings is good.
- Links with local schools and colleges are very good.
- Some parents have reported they are less than satisfied with the way the school seeks their views.

Commentary

'The school is a valuable part of the local community and is well thought of in the local area.'

76. Most parents who returned the inspection questionnaire were happy with the school. A significant minority felt unhappy with the way the school seeks their views on aspects of school life. The inspection evidence does not support the negative views that some parents have of the school. The school tries hard to work closely with the parents, while agreeing that some school events are poorly attended. Only three parents attended the inspection consultation evening.

77. The quality of information provided through school documents and regular meetings is good. The headteacher holds a private meeting with every new parent and there are termly, three-way interviews, involving teachers, parents and pupils. Home Reward Cards are sent to draw parents' attention to some special accomplishment their daughter may have achieved. Newsletters are sent twice a term and there are 'pupil planners', designed to enable two-way communication between home and school. Interpreters are available to speak with parents in home languages. School reports contain appropriate information about the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils have acquired over the year, and targets are set for the next stage of learning. School staff are accessible to all parents who wish to make individual arrangements.

78. Links with local schools are very good. The school is a valuable part of the local community and is well thought of in the area. Pupils are proud of their school. The school participates in the Education Action Zone and has benefited by many initiatives, such as residential trips, designed to raise self-esteem.

Sixth Form

79. Links with local colleges are very good. There is an emerging consortium with Herschel and Westgate schools, as well as good links with Reading University, Royal Holloway and Thames Valley University. The consortium of three schools is in the early stages of development, but is already benefiting students with an increased range of courses available. Unlike many consortia, students will always have a main base, and travelling will be minimised for students and unusual for staff. All three schools are clearly working together to ensure that maximum benefit is provided for all students within the consortium. An appropriate cycle of reports and consultation evenings keeps parents suitably informed of students' progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governance of the school is **good**. The headteacher's leadership is inspirational and is **highly effective**. Other key staff provide **good** leadership and together they ensure that leadership and the effectiveness of management are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The determined and inspirational leadership of the headteacher has created an extremely clear vision for the school.
- The governing body has made a strong contribution to the success of the school by carrying out its role as a critical friend in full.
- Middle managers are effective and have created a strong ethos for sustained improvement in their subjects.
- There is a highly effective improvement plan, the key focus of which is to nurture high standards through effective teaching.
- The highly effective monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, and intelligent use of assessment information, has contributed greatly to the school's very good improvement.
- The strong link between the school's development plan and its financial planning enables the school to evaluate its spending with accuracy.

Commentary

'Under the inspirational and highly effective leadership of the headteacher, the school has developed into an ambitious, open institution. It is completely devoid of complacency and sets itself challenging targets.'

80. The high quality of leadership and management of the school is one of the main reasons why standards are rising so quickly. The headteacher has successfully developed an extremely clear vision for the development and improvement of the school. This vision has been driven by a clear focus on the individual pupil and an appreciation of the pivotal importance of teaching and learning as the motor that drives up standards. The fruits of this vision are now being realised in the greatly improved results at GCSE. The headteacher's determination to drive standards was not, at first, shared by the entire school community. Nevertheless, she has not shied away from the many difficult decisions needed to improve the quality of teaching and learning and thus drive up standards. She now has won the support of the overwhelming majority of staff and the total support of her effective team of senior managers. In particular, the very good leadership and management of her energetic deputy headteacher have played a very big part in the school's success.

81. With very good support from a well-informed and, when needs be, critical governing body, the headteacher's goals for an improving school are now being realised. The school's vision is very well expressed in the school's improvement plan, which is entirely appropriate, with its key focus on nurturing teaching and learning as a means of sustaining high standards.

82. Under the inspirational and highly effective leadership of the headteacher, the school has developed into an ambitious, open, yet self-critical institution. It is completely devoid of complacency and sets itself challenging targets. As a result of the headteacher's successful interpersonal and coaching skills, staff have a great belief in themselves and in what they can achieve for the school. One of her great skills is the ability to build effective teams, then delegate real authority to them, so empowering them to reach their goals. The senior leadership team is one such example. The skills of the members complement one another perfectly, and the team has proved to be influential and effective in supporting the headteacher's drive for higher standards. For instance, through their lead in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and their exemplary use of assessment, the members of the team have played a significant part in contributing to the school's very strong improvement.

83. Middle managers are an effective group. Very good leadership is now seen in English, art and design, design technology, history, geography, European and community languages, music, physical education, religious education and business education. These very effective subject leaders have taken their lead from the headteacher and created a very real ethos for improvement in their subjects. Subject teams have led the way in developing innovative approaches to teaching and learning, imaginative use of assessment data and sensitive, yet highly effective, methods of ensuring high quality in their subject areas.

84. The SENCO has a clear vision of support for learning and the team of teaching assistants is managed well and shares good practice. The link governor has a good understanding of special needs and liaises well with the department.

85. The governing body, well informed by the senior managers, is highly supportive, but also asks the critical questions, and so holds the school to account. Its committee structure works well and governors have developed very strong links with individual teams in the school and so are well aware of the school's strengths and any areas that need improvement. They have ensured that all statutory requirements are met. By playing a central role in shaping the overall strategic direction of the school, governors have made a very strong contribution to the school's success. For instance, they have been fully involved in the school's decision to aim to become a specialist college and are very active in formulating and reviewing the school's improvement plan and financial planning.

86. Good financial planning helps the school achieve its educational priorities, which are clearly focused on raising standards through improving the quality of teaching and learning. The school is clear about the costs of development and budgets systematically for all expenditure. The principles of best value are very well applied in all areas of expenditure, at whole-school and team level. For example, the quality of services, such as grounds maintenance, catering, technical support and insurance, has been significantly improved at a much reduced cost. Financial control and administration are effective. Grant funding is very well targeted to meet the needs of pupils.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,569,099	Balance from previous year	-16,428
Total expenditure	2,456,045	Balance carried forward to the next	93,624
Expenditure per pupil	3,998		

Sixth Form

87. Leadership and management in the Sixth Form are good. There are very good links between the head of Sixth Form, subject leaders and pastoral staff. This facilitates a very good use of assessment data, which carefully tracks students' progress and greatly reduces underachievement. The consortium management is very well led at this early stage, with very clear vision and effective actions in place. Management systems are an integral part of the main school systems, which are very good.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well as a result of very good teaching and learning.
- The excellent leadership of the head of department is driving up standards.
- The very good work in English is making an important contribution to whole-school literacy provision.
- Although ICT is competently used, teachers are not making maximum use of their very good ICT resources to improve learning.

Commentary

88. The Year 9 national curriculum test results in 2003 were below average compared with all schools, but well above average when compared with similar schools. Pupils achieved very well. These results were a little below those of 2002, but were better in English than in mathematics and science. The GCSE results in 2003 were well above average in both English and English literature and they represent very good achievement for those pupils. GCSE results have risen dramatically since the previous inspection.

89. Current standards are average in Year 9 and pupils are achieving very well in relation to their very low literacy levels when they enter the school. By the end of Year 9, pupils write reasonably accurate, extended pieces, usually using paragraphs and punctuation correctly. Higher attaining pupils, for example, can explain the themes and important aspects of the characters in Macbeth well. They understand and can use the basic vocabulary of literary criticism and recognise and explain the use of metaphors and images. Lower attaining pupils write shorter, less developed pieces and make more spelling and punctuation mistakes.

90. In Year 11, standards are well above average and pupils are achieving very well. They are introduced to an appropriate range of literature and can explain aspects of characterisation and plot well. Highest attaining pupils write essays that are well structured and of appropriate length and a small number are attaining the highest grades, writing confidently and stylishly. One excellent essay was seen which explored the character of Shylock in 'The Merchant of Venice'. It was detailed, showed perceptive insights and the writer clearly enjoyed using language creatively. Lower attaining pupils can analyse a piece of literature effectively, but they write shorter, more straightforward accounts and sometimes fail to appreciate underlying themes. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve very well, as other pupils do. Pupils get good support in lessons from teaching assistants and teachers plan very effectively to support their learning. The great majority of pupils can express their ideas in discussion clearly and confidently. They use a good range of vocabulary and can speak more formally when appropriate. Higher attaining pupils read aloud with confidence and assurance. Lower attaining pupils read with much less fluency; they stumble over unfamiliar words and lack expression.

91. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers know their subject very well and they often plan an exciting range of activities that keeps pupils very interested and motivated. They are very aware that pupils learn in different ways and they plan varied learning methods, for example, by including drama, movement, visual images and discussion. They have high expectations of what pupils can do. Work is marked helpfully, with teachers indicating clearly how pupils can improve. Pupils are prepared extremely well for tests and examinations. All these features are contributing to very good learning, together with pupils' own very positive attitudes. The department has some very good ICT resources, but these are not used to their full potential through the more creative use of 'smart boards' and by ensuring that pupils develop presentations of a higher standard for themselves.

92. The very good achievement of pupils in English is having a profound effect on their general achievement in school. It is making a very good contribution to raising standards of literacy. The department is ambitious for pupils to succeed. This ambition is driven by the head of department, who provides excellent leadership. She has a very clear vision, which is focused on raising standards and achievement, and has worked hard to build a cohesive team. There are comprehensive procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating how well pupils are doing and management of the department is very good. Teaching and learning are monitored very well through a variety of methods, including observing lessons and looking at pupils' work. The department has made very good progress since the previous inspection: standards have risen, particularly at GCSE; the quality of teaching has improved; pupils are achieving better; leadership and management have improved dramatically.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

93. Literacy skills are average by the end of Year 9, a remarkable achievement in the light of pupils' very low levels of literacy when they enter the school. Pupils write accurately, usually spelling words correctly and using punctuation appropriately. By Year 11, pupils' literacy levels have risen to above average and they read widely and write well for different purposes. Most subjects support literacy development very well. For example, there is much attention paid to accurate writing in geography lessons. Pupils write for different purposes, in a detailed and extended manner. Modern foreign language teaching also promotes very good literacy development. Teachers emphasise how language is structured and they insist on high standards of accuracy. In history lessons, pupils produce different kinds of writing, such as imagining themselves in different situations – for example, making a speech in Parliament. There is a strong emphasis on key words and technical vocabulary in most departments. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed. There are opportunities in many subjects for pupils to present their ideas to the group or to use drama methods to extend their learning. In English lessons, teachers build oral work routinely into lessons. There are times, however, when oral skills could be even better developed. In some art lessons, for example, teachers do not draw out of pupils at the end of lessons what they have learnt and in foreign language lessons, pupils lack confidence in speaking in the foreign language. There is good provision for developing the literacy skills of the lowest attaining pupils. There are 'fast-track' sessions, where pupils in Year 7 get good support. There is a breakfast club where younger pupils are paired with older and are helped with their reading. There is also a whole-school weekly literacy focus; during the inspection, this was on verbs and their tenses.

Drama

94. Drama was sampled. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a weekly drama lesson and there is a drama GCSE option. In 2003, GCSE results were well below average. There had been staffing difficulties and the school had been without a specialist teacher. Two lessons were seen during the inspection; in one teaching and learning were excellent and in the other, very good. Pupils learnt very well because the lessons were very carefully structured. They began with an opportunity for them to share news and to explore the dramatic possibilities of situations and events. Pupils were involved in leading warm-ups and when they worked in groups they concentrated very well and worked very hard. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and she explains and demonstrates techniques very effectively. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own and each other's work clearly and

sensitively. They are enthusiastic about drama and appreciate the opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities, such as theatre visits and productions. The subject is providing very good enrichment through links with the local creative partnership.

European and community languages

Provision in European and community languages is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in Urdu, Punjabi and French have significantly improved over recent years.
- Pupils achieve very well in French, Urdu, Punjabi and Spanish because of their strong commitment to language learning and their very good relationships with teachers.
- Teachers do not use French consistently in lessons in Years 7 to 9, thus limiting pupils' development in speaking.
- In all languages, teachers use resources very well, resulting in pupils' high motivation and enjoyment of learning.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.

Commentary

95. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average overall. In French, results were well above average; in Urdu and Punjabi, results were above average. This represents very good achievement in both Asian and European languages. In French, pupils gained above average A* and A grades. In all three languages, pupils' results were above the average of their other subjects. In spite of staffing difficulties over the last few years, the GCSE results show very good improvement and high standards have been maintained.

96. Currently, in Year 9, most pupils reach average standards, showing very good achievement for all pupils, considering the very low literacy of many pupils on entry to the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve very well, as other pupils do. Some get good support in lessons from teaching assistants and teachers plan very effectively to support their learning.

97. In French and Spanish, standards are average and, in Urdu, standards are below average. Pupils make rapid progress in Spanish, and have confidence in speaking, due to the teacher's good use of Spanish in lessons. In Years 10 and 11, pupils study Urdu, Punjabi and French. Towards the end of Year 11, standards in modern languages are above average overall and pupils' achievement is very good.

98. Pupils make very good progress in reading and writing in all years, except in Urdu in Year 9, where insufficient attention is given to thorough consolidation of language patterns. Higher and middle attaining pupils read and write confidently, using a good topic-based vocabulary and a range of tenses. In all the languages, lower attaining pupils use a simpler vocabulary and rely on reminders and revision to remember what they have learned. Teachers' strong emphasis on accuracy of spelling and sentence structure contributes well to pupils' general literacy development. In Years 10 and 11, pupils develop independent learning skills well through the department's good use of ICT, successfully using word-processing for coursework presentation in the Urdu and Punjabi scripts, and using foreign accentuation in French and Spanish. Pupils can readily understand recorded extracts of native speakers in Urdu, French and Spanish. In French in Years 7 to 9, many pupils lack confidence in speaking, mainly because teachers often do not use French consistently in lessons and because pupils have little contact with native speakers. However, in Urdu and Punjabi, the bilingual teachers provide a consistent model of formal language for pupils to copy. Pupils with special needs achieve well, because of good support in lessons. Gifted and talented pupils achieve very well. Pupils have very good relationships with their teachers, contributing significantly to their very good achievement.

99. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers have inculcated very good learning patterns in pupils, which enable them to achieve very well. Teachers use resources imaginatively, motivating pupils with colourful cards and pictures; Lesson planning is very good. Pupils' exercise books show that testing and marking are thorough in all languages, and, in Years 7 to 9, assessment is consistently linked to national curriculum levels.

100. Leadership and management are very good. The temporary departmental head and the teacher in charge of Asian languages continue to promote the high aspirations of the absent head of department through effective planning, which is very clearly focused on raising standards. Since the last inspection there has been very good improvement. GCSE standards, especially in French, pupils' achievement, teaching and learning have all substantially improved. The balance of Asian and European languages is a strength of the department.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The match of teachers to the requirements of the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- The quality of leadership and management is good.
- Teachers do not set aside enough time at the end of lessons for high quality plenary sessions.
- Generally, teachers insist on good behaviour in their classes and, as a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are usually very good.
- Pupils achieve satisfactorily because relationships between teachers and pupils are normally very good.

Commentary

101. Results in tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below the national average. When these results are compared with those of similar schools, they were below average. In relation to prior attainment, middle attaining pupils performed less well than in other, similar schools, but higher attaining pupils performed above the level of those in similar schools. Considering the low attainment levels when pupils arrive at the school, pupils achieve satisfactorily. The highest average points score was achieved in 2003, and results over the last few years are increasing at a greater rate than the national average. Results in 2003 were better than those in science, but not as good as those in English.

102. Results were well below average in GCSE examinations in 2003. There has been an improving trend in the examination results, which increased in 2003. However, pupils performed significantly below the results in other subjects. Pupils achieve satisfactorily, but this again depends on the strength of the teaching, and many pupils achieve well in some classes. This is an improvement on the last inspection, when there was underachievement in most years, and progress was unsatisfactory in both key stages.

103. Pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment in mathematics. By Year 9, standards of work seen are generally well below national averages. Higher attaining pupils understand the general equation of a straight line and the meaning of the gradient and the intercept on the y-axis. They draw accurate graphs. Average pupils show great enthusiasm in practising their numeracy skills. They understand prime numbers well and express numbers as the product of prime factors with good confidence. Pupils with special educational needs understand number sequences and plot coordinates in the first quadrant. Their achievement is satisfactory, but their retention of mathematical concepts is weak. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language achieve satisfactorily, as other pupils do. Some get good support in lessons from teaching assistants, but teachers' planning to support the learning of these pupils is variable in its effectiveness.

104. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are well below average. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 revise questions on shape and space, but are unsure about work which they have covered previously. Their knowledge of mathematics at this level is only satisfactory and is below that normally associated with top sets in Year 11. They have a clear idea about their target grades and the tier of examination for which they are to be entered. Lower attaining pupils struggle with basic numeracy skills. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, considering the level at which they started these courses.

105. The overall quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is satisfactory, but varies greatly within the team of teachers. Almost all the lessons observed were at least satisfactory, with about half being good or better. This is an improvement on the unsatisfactory quality of teaching at the last inspection. Teachers' command of mathematics varies significantly, and this affects their ability to enthuse pupils. Several three-part lessons were seen, which follow the recommendations of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, teachers do not generally leave enough time for a thorough plenary session. This session is needed to confirm knowledge and skills gained during the lesson. Teachers expect pupils to work hard. They control pupils well. This leads to mature behaviour and good achievement in many lessons. Pupils mainly respond very well to challenges from teachers and work enthusiastically. Teachers do not always break lessons into manageable parts and check carefully at each stage that pupils have understood the new concepts. A few teachers rush into new work without checking very carefully on what has already been learnt.

106. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. The department keeps extremely detailed records of test and assessment results; these are carefully analysed to discover areas of knowledge that require further understanding. Targets are set and discussed with pupils.

107. The leadership of the department is good. The head of department clearly identifies objectives for continual improvement. The schemes of work have been totally revised. There is an excellent department handbook, which is issued to all teachers on compact disc. The detail in all department documents shows very clear vision. There are very high aspirations to improve standards further, but, without more suitably qualified teachers, this is unlikely to happen.

108. The management of the department is good. The head of department monitors teaching rigorously and makes a determined effort to help teachers improve their classroom performance. The advice given is not always heeded. Planning and organisation within the department are excellent.

109. The last report criticised the use of non-specialist accommodation, which affected learning. The department now occupies high quality accommodation, which has been transformed into a welcoming and inspirational area that contains lively displays of pupils' work. There is a continual need to recruit more teachers whose first subject is mathematics, so that the initiatives that are being formulated will lead to increased standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

110. A whole school policy on the use of mathematics across the curriculum has been effectively introduced. The ideas in the National Numeracy Strategy are also extended into lessons for pupils in Years 10 and 11 in mathematics. Teachers are becoming more confident in using the three-part lesson. New materials are proving especially useful in helping pupils to think about space and shape. Pupils are working at levels well below national averages.

111. Following whole school in-service training led by members of the mathematics department, other departments have planned for the use of numeracy in their subjects. In science, graphical skills are below average when pupils display their results of an experiment to determine the effect of increasing light intensity on the rate of photosynthesis. The ICT department considers numeracy well in its planning, but the work completed on spreadsheets, graphs and databases does not place enough emphasis on the use of numeracy skills. In design technology, there is satisfactory work in linear measurement, use of symmetry, weighing of ingredients and drawing bar charts to illustrate

the results of surveys. In art and design, pupils use perspective drawing, pattern-making and tessellations and enlarge shapes with confidence. Line graphs to show population statistics are used in history. There is an excellent policy and very good planning in geography, where pupils use numeracy widely in coursework and fieldwork. In a very good lesson, pupils worked in groups and used census statistics on appropriate ethnic themes; they are confident users of graphs and percentages. Simple transactions are used in role-play, for example, connected with shopping and cafes. Calculations using the 24-hour clock are seen in modern foreign languages, with pupils using the target language. Counting of beats and consideration of time signatures takes place in music. The quality of numeracy work in physical education is very good, with GCSE coursework showing examples of graphs and the recording of heart rates after aerobic exercise.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average and represent unsatisfactory achievement by Year 11.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory overall and this leads to underachievement.
- In the best lessons, good relationships and careful planning promote good learning.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and want to do well.
- New leadership and management are influencing teaching and standards are beginning to improve.

Commentary

112. In 2003, results in tests at the end of Year 9 were well below average nationally and compared with similar schools. Compared with pupils' attainment on entry, the results indicate unsatisfactory achievement. Results were considerably lower than in English and below those in mathematics. Standards have improved slightly since the previous inspection.

113. GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national average for all and for similar schools and indicate unsatisfactory achievement. They were an improvement over those of 2002. Pupils do less well in science than they do in most of their other subjects.

114. The majority of pupils enter the school with well below average levels of attainment. This low attainment persists in many classes in Years 7 to 9 and achievement is unsatisfactory, though in a minority of lessons attainment is above national expectations. For example, a Year 9 class could explain the process of photosynthesis in terms of the main underlying chemical changes. They also understood and could explain the effects of varying light intensity and carbon dioxide concentration on the rate of the process.

115. In Years 10 and 11 pupils gain a wider knowledge of materials and physical and biological processes. Where teaching is good, they make reasoned predictions and interpret results qualitatively. However, in most lessons attainment is below or well below national expectations across all aspects of science. Throughout Years 7 to 11, pupils' knowledge is better than their understanding of underlying concepts.

116. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. Middle and lower attaining pupils often make good, and sometimes very good, progress. In successful lessons, achievement is good, because the teacher provides interesting and demanding activities. These are well matched to pupils' differing capabilities, including opportunities to work independently of the teacher. By contrast, some higher attaining groups underachieve, because the work does not build quickly enough on their knowledge and understanding of science. In a significant number of lessons in

Years 7 to 11, pupils are not sufficiently stimulated or challenged and they lose interest. Throughout Years 7 to 11, pupils of all different ethnic backgrounds, including the few at an early stage of learning English and those with special educational needs, make similar progress to other pupils.

117. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory, overall. Teaching ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. The most successful lessons have clear features: high expectations of behaviour and effective management of pupils; detailed planning with a wide range of interesting activities; careful intervention to support and encourage independent learning; briskly paced lessons with clear objectives shared with pupils. In addition, pupils have specific opportunities to improve literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. In these lessons, pupils show interest, ask questions, work co-operatively and concentrate for long periods. Where teaching is just satisfactory teachers talk too much. The carefully structured nature of work, particularly practical work, leaves little scope for pupils' own initiative in selecting methods and resources. Consequently, lessons progress more slowly and higher attaining pupils, in particular, accomplish too little. Pupils are denied the more demanding tasks and activities that are necessary to extend their understanding and develop their investigative skills properly.

118. Where teaching was less than satisfactory, the pace was slow, planning weak and the level of difficulty inappropriate to the needs of pupils of differing attainment levels. Consequently, pupils become uninterested and, most commonly, behaviour deteriorates. The standard of marking is inconsistent, and comments frequently do not show how well pupils are doing or what they need to do to improve their work. Recently the school has experienced difficulty recruiting suitably qualified science teachers and this is greatly affecting standards.

119. Leadership and management of the newly appointed subject leader are satisfactory, with the potential to be good or better. The new head of department, in post for only a few weeks, has shown she has the capacity and the commitment to be effective in raising standards. Significant changes have taken place very recently, indicating that necessary improvements can be made. A good awareness of the department's strengths and weaknesses has already resulted in suitable and new plans to tackle underachievement and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Planning and checking the work in science have been ineffective in recent times to raise standards to a sufficiently high level. These are now changing for the better. More pupils are now showing interest in science. The new schemes of work, though requiring further refinement, provide a good basis for delivering the requirements of the national curriculum. The department recognises the need to improve the ways in which pupils' work and progress are assessed, tracked and checked for improvement. Reports to parents, although containing detail about pupils' attitudes, do not give sufficient detail about their scientific skills, knowledge and understanding, or about how these can be improved.

120. Resources, although new, are unsatisfactory, because there is a shortage of larger pieces of equipment such as microscope lamps, water baths, an autoclave and incubator. There is insufficient software for pupils to use ICT as a tool for scientific and investigative work. These aspects restrict the progress pupils make in science lessons. Several health and safety issues were drawn to the attention of the school, which were being addressed as the inspection ended. The technician provides good support to the teaching of science, but the hours available are low for a school of this size.

121. Overall, there has been unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. There is still a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching and learning, so that overall achievement is unsatisfactory. There has been insufficient movement on many of the minor issues raised at the previous inspection, which, when taken collectively, play a significant part in holding back standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning has resulted in GCSE results that are among the best in the school.
- Good planning and organisation provide a strong basis for teaching and learning.
- Good resources and accommodation improve learning opportunities.
- Under-use of the Key Stage 3 ICT strategy is limiting opportunities to improve standards further.

Commentary

122. Pupils in Year 9 are now attaining standards that are close to average and their achievement is good. Pupils work confidently with presentation software, spreadsheets, databases and publishing applications and are doing better than could be expected in the light of attainment on entry to the school. Opportunities to carry out work in measuring, recording, responding to and controlling events are underdeveloped. There is a good emphasis on improving pupils' literacy through ICT, but much less attention is given to numeracy. In almost all lessons there is an emphasis on key words in ICT and pupils are expected to read out their work. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve well, as other pupils do. Some get good support in lessons from teaching assistants, and teachers plan effectively to support pupils' learning.

123. Standards in Year 11, for those pupils taking GCSE ICT, have remained above average for the last two years. Examination results for ICT show it to be one of the best performing subjects in the school. The reason for this is that there are very good accommodation and resources, good teaching, and teachers are fully familiar with assessment requirements. The achievement of the pupils taking the GCSE ICT course in Years 10 and 11 is good.

124. Teaching and learning are good overall. This is a result of good planning and good organisation that ensures good learning. Lessons start promptly, with objectives and procedures made clear to pupils. The accommodation, the computers and the displays are very good and make a strong contribution to the pupils' learning. These were identified as weaknesses in the previous inspection. Most lessons proceed with teachers presenting the topics in a lively and enthusiastic manner that readily engages the pupils and promotes good learning. On a few occasions there is too much talk by the teacher, pupils do not play an active part and learning is less good. In years 7 to 9, unsatisfactory use is made of homework to extend pupils' learning.

125. Leadership and management are good. Planning and organisation is good and there is good departmental documentation that sets a clear direction for the department. A useful scheme of work is being put in place for Key Stage 3, but does not fully follow the recommendations from the Key Stage 3 strategy for ICT. There is an effective monitoring system that is contributing to the improvement in teaching and learning. The technical support in the school is well organised and managed and makes a strong contribution to pupils' learning opportunities. Good progress has been made in resolving issues raised in the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

126. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory. There is evidence of an increasing use of ICT and there is good use in English, mathematics, geography, music and physical education. Science pupils in Year 11 independently produce good quality reports of their investigations, using a range of software. Most subjects are now planning for the use of ICT, and subject-specific

software has been purchased for this, with e-learning credits. There is good out of class ICT access in the library and in two computer rooms. However, not all subjects are making a strong enough planned contribution to the teaching of ICT skills in Years 10 and 11.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership of the department is raising standards and providing excellent support for teachers.
- Standards of work are above average in Years 10 and 11 and pupils achieve highly.
- Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- Pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships contribute significantly to their learning.
- A shortage of qualified, specialist teachers in Years 7 to 9 limits some pupils' progress.

Commentary

127. In the GCSE examination in 2003, results were above the national average, continuing recent trends. The proportion achieving the highest grade was above average.

128. Pupils enter the school with well below average levels of geographical knowledge and poorly developed skills, such as map reading. By Year 9, standards have risen to be below the average and achievement is good because pupils have very good attitudes to their work and teaching is good overall. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as other pupils. Most receive good support in lessons from teaching assistants, and teachers plan effectively to support pupils' learning. All pupils gain in confidence and enjoy discussing their work. More capable pupils write fluently and accurately about the damage to areas of environmental concern, such as Antarctica.

129. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. These pupils, who have chosen to study geography, are keen to succeed, show great commitment to their work and achieve very well. Independent research, for example, into aspects of global warming, extends their understanding of complex environmental problems. Awareness of local issues develops through individual fieldwork enquiries. In Year 11, expert tuition and detailed marking shows pupils how to use their knowledge effectively in examinations and how to improve the quality of their work.

130. Teaching and learning are good overall and are better in Years 10 and 11, where they are consistently very good, with some that are excellent. Common features of the best teaching are the teacher's high expectations and very good lesson planning, which ensure that all pupils have access to the same learning. The department places great emphasis on knowledge of individual needs and on using resources appropriately adapted to meet them. Lessons are challenging, proceed at a rapid pace and incorporate many different styles of learning. Pupils are then able to share their knowledge and ideas with each other very effectively, for example, in their analysis of tropical cyclones. In years 7 to 9, lessons taught by non-specialists do not reach these very high standards. This reduces the achievement of pupils.

131. The head of department provides very good leadership, with continuous and full support to her colleagues. They all have major commitments to other departments and so rely heavily on her expertise. This adds to her challenge in running the department on a day-to-day basis. She has a

clear vision for the future of the subject and has developed very effective teaching and learning strategies to achieve this. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The appointment of another specialist teacher is central to the department's future success in improving standards in Years 7 to 9.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and leads to very good achievement.
- Almost all pupils show much interest and enthusiasm in lessons and, as a result, learn very well.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The time allocated for the higher attaining pupils in Year 9 restricts the breadth and depth of their curriculum.

Commentary

132. The GCSE results in 2003 were above average, and were significantly higher than those of previous years, when they were well below average. The fluctuations in standards reflects the differing capability of the pupils who choose to take the subject in any given year

133. The overall standard of pupils' work in Year 9 is average. This represents very good achievement in relation to their well-below attainment on entry to the school. Most pupils achieve very well and make very good progress, because they are taught very well. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve equally well, because teachers provide suitable work and use support assistants, when they are provided, very effectively. Most pupils have sound knowledge and understanding about the past. The highest attaining pupils have very good historical knowledge. They write well at length, successfully explaining and prioritising the cause of events. Most pupils are less confident in using historical sources.

134. The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection was average. The pupils who have opted to study history in Years 10 and 11 are achieving very well in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. The majority of pupils in Year 10 have at least sound knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying. The highest attaining pupils have good knowledge. Most pupils research and collect information successfully, but do not identify the key points from their research clearly enough. Many pupils in Year 11 have some knowledge about their topics, but it is often patchy. They do not use and evaluate historical sources well.

135. The very good teaching is a strength of the department. It is the main reason for the pupils' very good learning and achievement. It is characterised by considerable subject knowledge, very effective classroom management, high expectations of behaviour and hard work and a brisk pace. Teachers invariably use a range of short, motivating activities, which interest pupils and keep them actively involved in their learning. Teachers make very effective use of a wide range of resources, including an interactive whiteboard, to provide stimulating images from which pupils learn with interest. The pupils with special educational needs are well supported by their class teachers and by effective learning support assistants. The pupils' very positive attitude to work is a significant factor in their very good achievement.

136. The department is led and managed very well. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The relatively new head of department monitors carefully the performance of the department, and this, together with good teamwork, ensures an ethos of hard work and high expectations. The low time allocation for pupils in the two top sets in Year 9 is restricting the breadth

and depth of the curriculum for the highest attaining pupils.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Due to very good teaching, pupils learn and achieve very well.
- Religious education makes a considerable contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The subject is very well led and managed by the head of department.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have sufficient time to follow the GCSE course.

Commentary

137. In 2003, all pupils in Years 10 and 11 followed the full GCSE course in religious studies in just one hour a week, which is half the recommended time allowance. Nearly all Year 11 pupils were entered for the examination and the proportion of those entered obtaining the higher grades A* to C was average. This represented very good achievement in relation to pupils' standards when they entered the school.

138. Pupils arrive at Baylis Court with well below average standards of attainment in religious education. However, as a result of very good teaching, by the time they reach the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils are close to reaching the standards expected by the Slough Agreed Syllabus.

139. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to make very good progress and most, by the end of Year 11, exceed the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus.

140. Pupils' very good achievement in religious education is not to be judged simply by the knowledge and understanding of religious traditions that they have acquired. Pupils demonstrate sensitivity to other people's beliefs and values and an ability to speak and write about these matters. They develop a skill in distinguishing between matters of faith and questions that can be considered from rational and scientific standpoints.

141. Overall, teaching and learning are consistently very good. Teachers plan thoroughly and include in their plans the need to take account of the different needs of pupils. Lessons are made interesting by a range of different activities that keep pupils from losing interest and take account of the different learning styles of pupils. In lessons seen during the inspection, pupils were given opportunities to experience meditation, to participate in role play, and to make presentations to classmates on the basis of research and using computer presentation software (PowerPoint). Teachers know the pupils very well and support them well so that all pupils can learn in each lesson. Pupils are enthusiastic about religious education, and behaviour in classes is very good.

142. Assessment is thorough and regular. Pupils in Year 10 know their predicted GCSE grades and are challenged thereafter to beat the predictions. Pupils' written work is marked regularly and they are given clear guidance as to how they can improve. In Years 7 to 9 the school has recently begun to assess pupils' work, using levels similar to those used in national curriculum subjects; this is not yet sufficiently well developed for its effectiveness in raising pupils' attainment to be fully realised.

143. Leadership and management of religious education are very good overall. The head of department provides very good leadership for the subject. She has impressive subject knowledge and has produced documentation that offers very clear support for the non-specialist teachers who contribute to teaching the subject. The day to day management of the department is very good. The head of department does not, however, have a role in monitoring the teaching and learning in the few classes in the subject taught by other teachers. There has been good improvement in this subject since the last inspection report.

TECHNOLOGY

Design technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good quality of teaching is having a strong effect on raising standards.
- Pupils achieve very well because of this very good teaching.
- Leadership and management are very strong and have led to very good improvement.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT and the department has insufficient resources.

Commentary

144. In last year's GCSE examinations, results were just below average and this represented very good achievement, given the well below average standards of pupils when they joined the school. Trends over time are rising.

145. Standards seen up to Year 9 are average overall and much was seen during the inspection that was above average. Pupils are interested in their studies and they work hard; consequently, they achieve highly. The evidence of design folders and workbooks indicates that pupils make good progress throughout the year, as they develop important planning and making skills. They are introduced to the process of designing through a series of structured assignments. In Years 7 and 8 pupils use a very effective system of workbooks, which provides them with a framework within which they can personalise their work. Work is well presented and the use of a range of graphical skills is an important feature. Practical work is enjoyed, and pupils take care to achieve an appropriate quality of finish and presentation. Assessment criteria are clear and pupils are aware of their progress and levels of attainment. Teacher comment is constructive, and written to provide maximum support for future work. Opportunity is also provided for pupils to comment on their work and make judgements on how it can be improved. There is some use of ICT but this important aspect is not yet sufficiently developed.

146. In Years 10 and 11, standards seen are also average and evidence of design folders and part-completed work indicates that much work is above average. Much work is innovative and many pupils are developing a distinctive personal style. Folders are well presented and care is taken to present ideas with a range of graphical and other techniques. Many pupils use ICT skills in a variety of contexts but, overall, insufficiently, especially in design and manufacture. Pupils demonstrate their developing study skills and confidence in handling new problems and achievement is good. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language achieve very well, as other pupils do. This is because they get good support in lessons from teaching assistants and teachers plan very effectively to support pupils' learning.

147. The teaching team has experienced a number of changes and difficulties, which has affected the continuity of some courses. However, the current team has worked hard to retrieve the situation and their commitment and flexibility is to be commended. Teachers manage lessons very well, meticulously organise resources and provide many interesting assignments for pupils. Overall, the quality of teaching during the inspection was very good.

148. There is a clear focus on pace of learning, high expectation, structure and enjoyment. Relationships are good and the team has provided important support for the new head of department. Considerable change has been brought about during the last year and the foundations have been laid for further improvement. The team is well supported by two experienced and competent technicians.

149. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. The department is led by an enthusiastic, hard-working and effective teacher. Administrative procedures are in place and the revision of documentation has been meticulous. There are some shortcomings in the accommodation and considerable benefits would be achieved by upgrading and refurbishing the facilities. A high priority is the need to develop ICT provision, especially in CAD/CAM, to enable pupils to use these skills within the context of their subject studies. The department has insufficient resources to carry its plans further in the short term. Display is an important factor in providing exemplar and stimulus material, and staff are to be congratulated on the present very high standard.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good, leading to very good achievement.
- Standards in the GCSE examination in 2003 were above the national average.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 are close to the national average.
- Pupils behave very well and have very positive attitudes.
- Opportunities for the creative use of ICT are underdeveloped.

Commentary

150. GCSE results in 2003 were above average and pupils achieved very well as the result of very good planning and teaching. These standards maintain an upward trend in recent years.

151. Standards on entry are well below average. Standards seen up to Year 9 during the inspection are average and pupils are achieving very well. Pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language also achieve very well, because of the good support they receive in lessons from teaching assistants and teachers. In recent years this upward trend has been maintained and has on occasions exceeded the national average.

152. From pupils' early days in school, teachers have adopted a rigorous approach to the teaching and practice of drawing skills and use of colour. Because of this, pupils learn to draw using a variety of materials, to mix and apply colour and to manipulate clay with increasing ability and confidence. These skills are consolidated by a double period in Year 9. The pupils also learn about the characteristics and style of famous artists and other cultures, which influence their own work. They also learn to write about their work and to evaluate its worth.

153. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are working at levels that are above the national average and continue to achieve very well. This is a result of very high levels of expectation and very good teaching.

154. Pupils learn to develop good skills in drawing, painting and three-dimensional materials, such as plaster. With encouragement and direction, they develop an ability to organise their own research and learning. Many demonstrate high levels of presentation in their work. They take great care in their finished work, which is influenced by a strong personal or cultural theme.

155. Access to computers as a means of supporting and extending work is very restricted in all years. More planned opportunities for using ICT are needed for those in all years who have been identified as gifted and talented.

156. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils. Planning is very thorough. Assessment procedures inform pupils of their progress. Target setting helps them to improve their work. Homework is set and marked regularly to extend classroom learning. Teachers create a stimulating and ordered environment for learning to take place. There is a good programme of additional learning opportunities. Attitudes and relationships are very good. Pupils have a very positive attitude to learning as a result of good teaching strategies. They behave very well because they enjoy their lessons. Art makes a very good contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. It also contributes well to the ethos of the school through the range of good displays in art rooms and public areas.

157. The subject is very well led and managed by an experienced and enthusiastic specialist who sets and maintains high standards. Organisation and planning are very good. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. United under strong leadership, a team of diverse but complementary specialists have established a fertile learning environment in which art education can flourish.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high standard of teaching encourages pupils to learn well.
- The department takes part in many joint musical ventures with other schools, which helps to raise the profile of music.
- Because standards are rising, all pupils passed the GCSE examination in 2003.
- Computers are not being used enough in lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

158. All pupils passed the GCSE examination in 2003 and results were average overall. However, the proportion of those obtaining the higher grades was below average. This represents very good achievement and is an improvement over previous years, when standards were very much lower.

159. Standards in Year 9 are below average. Considering that the majority of pupils enter Year 7 with very few musical experiences, this represents good achievement. In Year 11 standards are average and pupils' achievement is very good compared with their prior attainment. This is because the very good teaching is a key factor in improving the quality of learning. Pupils with special educational needs and who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as other pupils do. They get good support in lessons from teaching assistants, and teachers plan effectively to support their learning.

160. Pupils learn well in Years 7 to 9 because teaching is good overall. This also has a positive influence on their attitudes and behaviour. Although class music is new to many pupils in Year 7, standards rise by the time they reach Year 9. This is because there is a wide programme of rhythm work, singing, group work and world music projects that motivates pupils to learn and make progress. Verbal and written assessment of pupils' work ensures that they know how well they are doing and how to improve. No pupils were seen using computers.

161. Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to a strong commitment from pupils to learn and make very good progress. Although none have regular instrumental lessons, many pupils have built up a basic understanding of harmonic and melodic style, which comes through in their compositions. Because of the high standard of teaching, most pupils feel secure in using music software to layer and edit their work. Pupils of all abilities talk confidently about their musical ideas and use musical language well.

162. There are many large-scale projects sponsored by the Education Action Zone in which the pupils take part. There are also visiting specialists who run short-term musical projects. These offer pupils a rich musical diet that adds value to the work that they do in lessons.

163. The department is managed very well and good evaluation of teaching has been done and acted upon. The inspired leadership of the head of department ensures that music has a high profile within the school.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make substantial gains in skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of activities.
- Planning and evaluating skills are well developed.
- Good and very good teaching drives progress and achievement.
- Pupils' positive attitudes, enthusiasm and interest are apparent in their enjoyment of the subject.
- The department copes well with inadequate accommodation and some unsatisfactory timetabling which limits the breadth of curriculum coverage.

Commentary

164. There were no GCSE examination results for 2003.

165. Most pupils enter Year 7 with below average standards. Their backgrounds in physical education vary and the department works hard to ensure that the basic principles of games and movement activities are understood. Overall standards observed are average by Year 9, representing very good achievement. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve very well, as other pupils do. Most receive very good support in lessons from teaching assistants, and teachers plan very effectively to support pupils' learning.

166. The majority of pupils have sufficient mastery of techniques and understanding of game strategies to play games, devise simple tactics, officiate and coach others. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate very good awareness and versatility in hockey, making rapid progress. In dance, standards are more varied, but all pupils copy accurately and show some sensitivity in planning their own dances. In gymnastics, standards are above average. Pupils demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding of movement, linking actions into movement sequences very effectively. They consider their work and try alternatives to improve the quality of performance.

167. In Years 10 and 11, standards are average in all aspects of the subject, indicating good achievement and progress within both the core programme and examination courses. Pupils build effectively on their knowledge, and it is only the lack of subject specific vocabulary which restricts their ability to explain more effectively what they know. Pupils recognise the effects of exercise on the body, name major muscle groups accurately and apply the principles of warming up and cooling down. They work confidently and enthusiastically alone and with others and enjoy their experiences. GCSE written work is good, topics are covered thoroughly and presentation is very good.

168. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. On occasion, teaching is excellent. The very good quality of teaching and learning overall contributes to pupils' very high achievement and progress. Clear procedures, very good planning and excellent relationships are features of lessons. Pupils are keen to be involved; they turn up promptly and wear the correct kit, and are encouraged to take an active role in lessons as umpires, coaches or in working with partners, rather than being excused for illness. As a consequence, all gain from the

work in the lesson. All pupils respond positively to the high expectations, challenging tasks and enthusiasm of the teachers, which contribute to good and very good learning. Assessment is used effectively to track pupils' progress and identify those who need additional help or those who will benefit from additional tasks or challenges.

169. Leadership and management are very good. The recently appointed head of department leads by example and demonstrates very good organisation, planning and team building skills. Teachers work as an effective team with a common vision and have very high aspirations for the pupils. Their focus is on learning and is reflected in the very positive atmosphere and the support they gain from the pupils in both curricular and extra-curricular activities. Issues of timetabling multiple years at the same time are a concern, and the lack of adequate facilities continues to restrict the breadth of activities offered, particularly in racquet games. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

170. The GCSE business education course in Years 10 and 11 was sampled. Teaching in the three lessons seen was very good. Examination results are above the national average and pupils achieve very well when taking on the role of pressure groups, running their own companies to make profits for charity and developing marketing ideas.

Health and social care

Provision for health and social care is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are well motivated by the lessons and they enjoy them.
- Teachers use a good range of strategies to help pupils with weak literacy skills.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to analyse data and other information.

171. This is only the second year of this course. Standards are below average but pupils' achievement, by the end of Year 11, is satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils have a clear understanding of the factors that affect health. They are aware of the skills and experiences needed to work professionally with young children and adults. Pupils with limited literacy skills make good use of ICT to draft and re-draft their work.

172. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers make effective use of a range of strategies to support pupils whose first language is not English and those with learning difficulties. The small group sizes enable pupils to receive good individual support for their learning. As a result, there is no difference in the achievement of pupils with different abilities and backgrounds. Pupils learn particularly well in situations where visitors, for example those with expertise in nursing and child care, take part in lessons.

173. Although pupils are not confident learners, the good leadership of the course ensures that opportunities are well used to promote pupils' personal and social skills. They are encouraged to prepare questions to put to visitors and they report to the whole class the points emerging from group discussions. Pupils are well motivated and enjoy the lessons. However, their ability to research and evaluate evidence objectively is insufficiently well developed. Additionally, there is insufficient use of data analysis, such as computer programs for analysing the diet. As a result the conclusions drawn tend to be superficial. Management of the course is satisfactory. The vocational nature of the course makes it particularly relevant for pupils.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to participate in citizenship activities outside lessons.
- The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is inadequate.
- The co-ordination across all subject departments is inadequate.

Commentary

174. Citizenship is taught as a discrete part of the PSHE course. Because of the timetabling of this course it was not possible to see any citizenship lessons during the inspection. The evidence is based on a small sample of pupils' work, on a meeting with the head of citizenship, on evidence of citizenship in other subjects and on evidence of citizenship opportunities in other areas of the school's provision. Citizenship has developed satisfactorily within the school as an identified feature. The school is in a position to develop citizenship in the school as an important and integrated element in pupils' education.

175. There are no precise norms available for this subject against which pupils' attainment and experience can be measured. The evidence from pupils' written work indicates that pupils' attainment is in line with the broad national picture and that their achievement is satisfactory towards the end of both Year 9 and Year 11.

176. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge of rights and responsibilities. Pupils in Year 7 have a basic understanding of how education is financed in Britain. Pupils in Year 9 show satisfactory understanding of the law and crime and punishment. In a history lesson, pupils in Year 10 worked in groups, researching and presenting a topic, and demonstrated sound skills of enquiry and communication.

177. There are good opportunities for pupils to participate in activities relating to citizenship beyond the classroom. Pupils have practical experience of elections to the school council. The members of the council represent their electors well, and undertake presentations on issues affecting pupils. Many pupils are involved in activities linked with the local community. A small number of pupils have worked on a mini United Nations project, which has provided very good world citizenship opportunities.

178. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The teaching, by form tutors, is organised efficiently by the head of department. She does not, however, have enough time to allow her to monitor this teaching well enough, because she teaches citizenship at the same time as all the other tutors. An audit has ensured that other subjects contribute to citizenship. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of this contribution, so that, whilst most subjects provide opportunities to deepen pupils' citizenship education, the school does not know whether these opportunities are being taken up effectively. The assessment of pupils' work and progress in citizenship is not co-ordinated effectively enough across all subjects.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses in 2002

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Education	19	100	87.1	57.9	16.5	91.6	62.1

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

179. English literature A level was sampled. This is a fast-track course for Year 13 pupils, who are covering the course in a year. It is a testament to the commitment of both the pupils and their teacher that they have made exceptional progress. They come into school during holidays and also have a weekly lesson after school, which augments their two timetabled lessons. In the lesson seen, pupils made excellent progress as a result of imaginative teaching methods and a tenacious approach to reinforcing literary terms. The pupils clearly appreciate this opportunity to take an additional A level. They have excellent attitudes to their learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

180. Overall, standards of literacy and spoken English are above average. In most subjects pupils' reading skills are good enough to enable them to carry out appropriate research. Pupils use a wide range of vocabulary and use very little colloquial expression in either their spoken or their written work. They possess confidence in expressing their views. In both English and business education lessons seen, there were times when good discussion skills accelerated learning. Most curriculum areas stress the importance of developing speaking and listening skills effectively, especially business education and ICT. Spelling and punctuation in written work is accurate.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good, although the capacity for pupils to work collaboratively is under-developed.
- Achievement is satisfactory, given the range of pupils' previous mathematical experiences. A delightful class of pupils are motivated well to achieve.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good. Alternatives to the current course, which might better respond to pupils' needs, are being investigated well.
- Marking of work is insufficiently detailed and gives little indication to pupils as to how to improve.
- The time allocated to the course is insufficient to meet pupils' needs.

181. GCSE mathematics was offered as a Sixth Form course for the first time this year. In recent years, 'Application of Number' has been offered by the key skills department. No candidate was successful in passing this course at Level 2 in 2003. GCSE mathematics was offered instead this year, to provide an opportunity for those who had failed to achieve a grade C or better to improve their grade.

182. Since September, the composition of the group of pupils has changed significantly. One-third of the group is new to the school and has not entered GCSE before. The standard of attainment varies greatly. Some students, new to the country, have a good grasp of number work, but have limited experience of spatial and statistical topics. Pupils' facility to calculate mentally, rather than use written algorithms, is insufficiently developed. Pupils are following a modular course, but some joined the course after the first module had been entered. A quarter achieved grade C in the first module, but in a practice examination for the third module, two achieved grade B and five grade C. Whilst overall standards are below average, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, given their wide range of previous experiences.

183. Most pupils are highly motivated. They are only scheduled for two hours of lessons each week, although two teachers in the department offer additional classes after school to supplement this. The limited time, over what has amounted to only six months to cover the course for many pupils, is hindering achievement. Those educated in another country until recently are not used to the style of GCSE questions, though they can often do the mathematics involved once the question has been explained.

184. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons follow a common format, with an introductory session revising pupils' skills related to the main activity, followed by teaching of the new topic. Good encouragement is given to pupils to develop their own methods for solving problems, while introducing standard algorithms at an appropriate stage. Good help is given to pupils whilst they practise solving questions, and some good informal collaboration occurs to support pupils' understanding. However, while the quality of learning is good, many pupils are too passive, expecting to be told how to answer a question rather than taking responsibility for their own learning. Too little use is made of group activities, encouraging pupils to collaborate and talk about their mathematics, because time to cover the course is limited. Whilst examples are corrected appropriately in class, marking of pupils' written work is rather superficial and gives insufficient indication to pupils as to what they need to do to improve.

185. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Alternative courses, which might meet pupils' needs more fully, are being investigated. The nature of the Sixth Form requires a course which is flexible enough to meet a range of needs. The subject was not reported on at the time of the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

186. The use of mathematics by groups of pupils across their other subjects varies, but is sufficient to meet the needs of their courses. As with younger pupils, data handling is more confident than number manipulation without a calculator but, as the use of calculators is not restricted, this weakness is not a limiting factor, other than in the efficiency with which the pupils calculate.

SCIENCE

No science courses are offered at Baylis Court.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standard of pupils' work is well above average as a result of very good teaching.
- Good planning and organisation provide a strong basis for teaching and learning.
- Good resources and accommodation are improving learning opportunities.

- Out of lesson access to computers is good, which is important for pupils who do not have home computers.

Commentary

187. Year 13 pupils are completing AVCE ICT course work and performing in examinations at standards that are well above average when compared with all schools. There has been no previous entry for this course, which runs alternately at two schools in different years. In Year 12, the Key Skills level 2, IT course pupils are attaining average standards. Good teaching, very good organisation and accommodation and resources have contributed to the success of these courses.

188. Overall achievement is very good. The Year 12 pupils in the Key Skills class show a good understanding of aspects of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act of 1988. There is no difference in the achievement of male and female pupils in this group. Several Year 13 pupils started the AVCE course with low levels of capability in ICT and, in one case, only a limited amount of English. These pupils are now producing at least C grade results and in one case a pupil reached an A grade. The Year 13 pupils are able to describe well the course work that they have completed and identify their strengths and areas for improvement.

189. Teaching and learning are very good. This is as a result of good planning and good knowledge of ICT that ensures good learning opportunities. The examination board has moderated the assessment of pupils' work and the department has been commended for its accuracy. Teachers expect and achieve a high level of independence in the way the pupils work. The accommodation, the computers and the displays are very good and make a strong contribution to learning. These were an issue in the previous inspection.

190. The management and leadership are very good. Planning and organisation is good and there is good documentation that sets a clear direction for the department. An effective monitoring system is contributing to the improvement in teaching and learning. The technical support in the school is well organised and managed and makes a strong contribution to pupils' learning opportunities. Good progress has been made in resolving issues raised in the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

191. This is satisfactory. There is evidence of an increasing use of ICT and it is very good in physical education, where pupils make use of videos to record and analyse activities. In mathematics, pupils are using ICT to create graphs and in the vocational health studies course, pupils use ICT to write up their course work and to create presentations. Through e-learning credits, new software has become available that provides opportunities to plan for further use. Out of lesson times there is good access to computers in the library and in two computer rooms.

HUMANITIES

No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

In this curriculum area, the AS / A level course in art and design was the focus of the inspection.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, teaching is very good; occasionally it is outstanding.
- Achievement is very good as a result of very effective teaching strategies.
- Independent learning skills are well developed and so attitudes are very positive.
- Opportunities for development using ICT are few.
- Timetable arrangements continue to constrain progress in Year 12.

Commentary

192. This is a new course and pupils will be examined for the first time this year. Standards in Year 13 are average, as the result of very good course management and very effective teaching strategies. Numbers in the combined years are low as the new course seeks to establish its position in the Sixth Form. As a result of improved teaching arrangements this year, achievement is very good. Independent learning skills are well established. Pupils have learnt to explore a wide range of solutions to a problem. They experiment in a wide variety of two- and three-dimensional materials. Research and experimentation is prolific in several cases. Pupils have learnt to manipulate their chosen materials with imagination, inventiveness and confidence. In some cases, personal styles emerge and also strengths, in particular media, influenced by a strong personal or cultural theme.

193. The department has a policy of inclusion and accepts pupils who have not always undertaken art and design at GCSE. Thorough preparatory work does not always translate into finished work of a high standard, although it represents very good personal achievement.

194. Teaching and learning are very good and on occasion outstanding. Specialist teachers are enthusiastic, set challenging tasks and have very high expectations. They now combine their skills and share in the teaching of each project, and this has improved learning outcomes and standards. For part of the week, Years 12 and 13 work together and this greatly improves group dynamics, as numbers in Year 12 are very small.

195. All pupils are kept well informed of progress. Weekly presentations to other members of the group and individual tutorials result in targets for improvement.

196. Consortium timetable arrangements continue this year to delay significantly the arrival of Year 12 pupils from a neighbouring school. This constrains students' learning and progress. It also disrupts the continuity of the lesson.

197. Access to ICT within the art room, as a medium of creativity, is very limited. Opportunities to visit galleries enrich the course. The course is very well led and managed and so improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Strategies aimed at nurturing and attracting more able and talented pupils to stay on will help to raise standards and consolidate the value and status of this new course.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

In this curriculum area, recreational physical education was the focus of the inspection.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils demonstrate appropriate knowledge, and have positive attitude and good attendance, all of which contributes to good learning.
- Pupils in Year 13 show increasing evidence of independent working.
- There is no provision for examination study.

Commentary

198. There are no pupils in the school taking examination courses.

199. Pupils start the Sixth Form with average standards. They work well in a range of new and recreational activities and achieve well. In Year 12, students work energetically at fitness activities, and by Year 13, organise their own schedules in the local leisure centre, using more complex equipment. Although standards in squash are modest, pupils enjoy their activity and learn sufficient of the rules to continue in their own leisure time. Pupils of all abilities achieve well and work safely, paying good attention to warming up and cooling down. Those using the leisure centre do so with good consideration for other users from the community.

200. Good teaching and learning in both year groups ensure pupils are actively involved in learning new skills, and in gaining confidence in using other facilities. They organise groups efficiently, are thorough in recording attendance and are sensitive to the needs of Muslim pupils in open areas. They provide helpful coaching advice and encouragement when required. Pupils respond positively, enjoying the opportunity to work at their own pace and selecting their own activity areas.

201. Leadership and management are good. Groups are well organised and their movement off site carefully managed. Attendance records are checked with the school very promptly. There is provision for further academic study of physical education at examination level in the Sixth Form consortium.

BUSINESS

In this curriculum area, the AVCE course in business education was inspected in detail.

Business education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good and pupils develop excellent attitudes to their work.
- Work is marked in detail and pupils are given good targets for improvement.
- Pupils do not always use ICT enough in business tasks.

Commentary

202. In GNVQ intermediate business education in 2003, results show a significant improvement from 2002: all but two pupils passed, and a half gained A and B grades. Pupils achieved very well when results are compared with their well below average attainment on entry from GCSE.

203. Current pupils are working above national expectations and making very good progress in lessons. They develop a good ability to apply taught knowledge to develop communication, number and ICT key skills. Pupils carry out effective research on the Internet and in their own part-time jobs in local businesses. Pupils show excellent attitudes to work, individually and in groups, where pupils of different ethnic minority groups collaborate very well.

204. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very well structured, based on case studies which keep all pupils, including those with special educational needs, interested. Teachers keep pupils well motivated, through class topics and Young Enterprise companies, where pupils successfully make and sell garments. A high degree of interaction between teacher and pupils was seen in an excellent lesson in which pupils gained a thorough understanding of the differences between primary and secondary research, using many examples. Teachers are enthusiastic and very knowledgeable. They use a variety of good, topical materials and occasionally arrange visits to businesses. They assess pupils' work regularly, and detailed marking gives pupils relevant targets to help them improve work.

205. The subject is very well and managed by an experienced teacher with the help of a good newly qualified colleague. Pupils' progress against predicted grades is very well monitored, and this has helped lead to higher standards. Good plans for further improvement include more speakers and increased use of ICT in lessons.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The AVCE course in health and social care was the focus of the inspection in this curriculum area.

Health and social care

Provision in health and social care is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching ensures that pupils know how to improve.
- Learning is well extended by work experience and visiting professionals.
- Pupils' achievement is limited by superficial research.

Commentary

206. The intermediate course has been re-introduced after a gap of a year. Out of eight who started the course, two have dropped out due to personal circumstances. One other attends infrequently. In comparison with other schools nationally, the standards are below average. However, given their low entry grades, Year 12 pupils' achievement is good. Pupils' achievement at the end of the GNVQ course in 2001 was good. Out of six entries, two achieved a distinction, and all the others achieved merits.

207. The teaching and learning are good because pupils are engaged and supported. As a result, pupils develop self-confidence. Teachers have a good understanding of the requirements of the course and their feedback to pupils helps them to improve. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils. As a result, pupils are well motivated and a productive learning environment has been established. Pupils discuss their work responsibly and report that the lessons are interesting and

enjoyable. Throughout the course, pupils develop their personal and social skills. They learn to explain themselves clearly, effectively and confidently when presenting their work to the rest of the class, making good use of computers. They communicate confidently with visitors when finding out about their jobs in the caring professions. Pupils make good use of ICT to word-process their work. However, there is insufficient use of data analysis when carrying out research.

208. Pupils' understanding of physical, social, emotional and intellectual factors that impinge on health and social care are developed well. They relate the theoretical concepts well to their own experiences such as those gained on work placements. Pupils learn to use appropriate information sources and the experiences of others, such as visiting trainee nurses. Pupils know how to improve their work because teachers give good individual support. However, insufficient attention is provided for pupils to learn how to study effectively. As a result, opportunities are missed to develop pupils' critical awareness of different sources of information.

209. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a well-focused development plan that identifies appropriate priorities. The course was not inspected at the time of the last inspection.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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