

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **RUSHEY MEAD SCHOOL**

Leicester

LEA area: Leicester City

Unique reference number: 120282

Headteacher: Mrs Carolyn Robson

Lead inspector: Mr Denis Pittman

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> March 2004

Inspection number: 260787

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. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. 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, students 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 the 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**).

Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The 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 with a comparable level of attainment at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 16 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1380
School address:	Melton Road Leicester Leicestershire
Postcode:	LE4 7PA
Telephone number:	0116 2663730
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Ann Albert
Date of previous inspection:	15 <sup>th</sup> March 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Rushey Mead is a larger than average comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 16 and is situated on the outskirts of Leicester City. The school is heavily oversubscribed with 1380 students on roll. There are elements of significant social deprivation in the local area; the socio-economic background of most students is well below average. The school is part of the Excellence in Cities initiative, being actively involved in the programme for gifted and talented students and the behaviour support programme. A high proportion of the school's students (90 per cent) do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of students with special educational needs, including those with a statement special educational need, is broadly in line with the national average. Students' attainment on entry is below average; many have weak literacy skills.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16976	Denis Pittman	Lead inspector	
13786	Susan Walsh	Lay inspector	
12499	Marie Durkin	Team inspector	English
10782	Henry Moreton	Team inspector	Mathematics
3937	John Seed	Team inspector	Science
30690	Gordon Allison	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
8090	Frank Turns	Team inspector	Art and design
23891	Peter Slape	Team inspector	Design and technology
22042	John Challands	Team inspector	Geography
10895	David Wasp	Team inspector	Citizenship, history
17404	Judith Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
11626	Malcolm Goldring	Team inspector	Music
4676	Mary Griffiths	Team inspector	Physical education
17868	Eileen Metcalfe	Team inspector	Religious education
8216	Geoffrey Binks	Team inspector	Special educational needs, English as an additional language
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Rushey Mead is a very good school** with some excellent features. It provides a very good quality of education and gives very good value for money. Standards in comparison with similar schools are well above average at the end of both key stages. Students achieve very well as the result of very good teaching. The quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher is very good. Students' personal development is significantly enhanced by an ethos that reflects care, support and racial harmony. The staff show a strong commitment to the shared objectives of continuing improvement. Relationships are very good; this is reflected in high standards of behaviour and the developing maturity of students.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in tests and examinations are significantly above the standards for similar schools.
- The school is very effectively led and managed; the leadership of the headteacher reflects her enthusiasm, commitment and vision.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good; this promotes very effective learning amongst students.
- Given the initial background of low literacy skills, the students' achievement is very good.
- Pastoral care is very strong and supports the very positive relationships within the school. The behaviour of students and their attitudes to learning are very good.
- The overall curriculum provision is good; the enrichment programme through its range of extra-curricular activities is very good.
- The provision in French, the citizenship programme, the range of support for students who have English as a second language, the commitment to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students and community links are excellent.
- There is a lack of consistency in the application of some subject assessment procedures and some reports do not include sufficient information about students' progress.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have been on an upward trend. The quality of teaching continues to be a strength of the school. The provision and the procedures used in supporting students with special educational needs have improved. The citizenship programme has opened up many opportunities for students to show initiative and take responsibility. A significant refurbishment and building programme has dramatically improved the learning environment for students. The improved provision for information and communication technology (ICT) facilities has helped promote more independent learning for students.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	C	C	C	A*

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

The National Curriculum test results show an improving trend over time. Overall standards at the end of Year 9 were above average in the tests, and in comparison with similar schools standards were very high. **Achievement is very good**; students make significant progress given their below average standard of attainment on entry to the school. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. The results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were in line with national averages but were very high (top five per cent nationally) when compared with those in similar schools. Students' performance was particularly strong in media studies, French and Gujarati. It was well below average in design and technology. Standards in lessons by Year 11

are above average and are better than the performance reflected in the GCSE examinations. The pace and challenge of lessons in Years 10 and 11 have contributed to this improvement. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls, and all groups of students, including the most able, those with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English, continue to make very good progress.

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and the incidence of exclusions is now low. Students attend school well and regularly and arrive on time at lessons. **The schools' excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development encourages very good personal development.** Relationships between students and with the staff are very good. Students' enthusiasm for schoolwork and mature attitudes promote very good achievement.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education provided by the school is very good.** The school is very effective in supporting and developing the individual needs of students. The overall quality of **teaching is very good** and helps promote high standards of achievement. Teaching in French is excellent. In all subjects teachers' detailed planning and subject knowledge help to promote and develop students' skills very well. The school successfully enables effective learning; it is based upon high expectations and positive working relationships. The active encouragement of teachers helps to motivate students and leads to high productivity. Students work hard and are keen and interested learners. The overall quality of assessment is good; staff are provided with high quality information but there are some inconsistencies in the application of procedures within departments.

The breadth of curricular opportunities is good overall. The school provides a very good range of enrichment activities. The provision for accommodation is very good and for learning resources is good. The provision for citizenship and personal, social and health education is excellent. The school has a very effective pastoral system. Students are very well supported and any underachievement is quickly identified. Very good care, support and guidance contribute significantly to students making significant gains in academic achievement and personal development. The provision for careers education is excellent.

The school is popular, oversubscribed and enjoys a very good local reputation. The school has very effective links with parents and excellent links with the local community. It also has very productive links with other schools and colleges

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**The school is led and managed very effectively.** The leadership of the headteacher is very good. She has created a strong team ethos, which is particularly impressive given her relatively short period in post. Long-term planning is very good and effective systems have been put in place to manage the school very well. The leadership and management of senior managers and other key staff are very good. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive and have a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school although are not sufficiently challenging about strategic issues.

## PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with almost all aspects of the school. They feel that they that they are well informed and are comfortable about approaching the school. The quality of reports is generally satisfactory but they tend to comment on attitudinal features rather than what students can do and understand, especially in Years 7 to 9. Students enjoy being at the school. They feel that they are taught well and they are very helpfully supported in their academic and personal development.



## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The things the school should do to improve are:

- Ensure greater consistency in the implementation of assessment procedures within departments.
- Improve the quality of written reports

And meet statutory requirements by:

- Making appropriate provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses**

The National Curriculum test results show an improving trend. In 2003, overall standards were above average. Achievement at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 is very good, given students' prior attainment. Standards in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 were in line with the national average. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls and all groups continue to make very good progress. Standards on entry to the school are below average; students start with weak literacy skills.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in comparison with similar schools are well above average at the end of Year 9 and very high by the end of Year 11. The value added is very good given students' attainment on entry.
- Standards by the end of Year 9 in English and mathematics are above average.
- Results in GCSE examinations were particularly strong in media studies, French and Gujarati. Achievement in design and technology was unsatisfactory.
- Overall, achievement is very good, reflecting the hard work of students and staff.
- Standards have continued to improve since the last inspection.

#### **Commentary**

##### **Attainment at Key Stage 3**

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.3 (30.6)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.5 (34.5)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.8 (32.5)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 277 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

1. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, the combined results were above the national average. In English and mathematics, standards were above average and in line with the national average for science. Overall standards in these subjects were very high (top five per cent) when compared with similar schools. The overall trend of improvement in test performances is broadly the same as the national picture. In general, students achieve very well and make significant progress in their studies.

## Attainment at GCSE

### Standards in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	53.0 (51.0)	52.0 (50.0)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94.0 (94.0)	91.0 (91.0)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99.0 (98.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	36.4 (35.3)	34.7 (n/a)

*There were 245 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- Overall standards in GCSE examinations are in line with national averages, but in comparison with similar schools they were very high. The results in 2003 for the five or more grades A\*-G were above average. Examination performance in most subjects was broadly in line with, or above, national figures, with well above average standards being achieved in media studies, French and Gujarati. Students' performance in design and technology, home economics and English language was relatively weaker. Overall achievement in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is good. The targets set for 2003 were successfully met; they have been realistic and appropriately challenging.

### Standards seen during the inspection

- Standards seen in lessons in Years 7 to 9 and in the samples of students' work match the test results closely. By the end of Year 9, overall standards are above average, being particularly good in French. Given that students' attainment on entry is below average, with weak literacy skills, their achievement by the end of Year 9 is very good. Teachers have high expectations and challenge students to think for themselves. Outstanding teaching in modern foreign languages leads to high achievement and very good learning in lessons. Achievement in design and technology is improving and is promoting higher standards.
- Standards seen in lessons for Years 10 and 11 are above average. This is better than the performance reflected in GCSE examinations. The pace and challenge of lessons in Years 10 and 11 have contributed to this improvement. Standards are particularly good in science, French and Gujarati. Students build successfully on secure foundations established in their earlier years in the school. Generally, their achievement is well above expectations. Value-added measures indicate very good improvement through the successive key stages.
- Gifted and talented students are very effectively challenged by the work in their lessons and are able to reach their potential. They are well catered for out of school, with many initiatives to broaden their experiences. The progress made by some students at the earliest stages of learning English is very good. The achievement of most students on the register of special educational needs is very good.

### Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and the incidence of exclusions is now low. Students attend well and arrive on time at lessons. The school's excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development encourages students' personal development very well.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Student's work very hard and apply themselves well and this results in very good achievement.
- Students are encouraged to respect their own culture but also learn to appreciate many other cultures.
- There are many opportunities for students to be enterprising and take responsibility.
- Excellent provision for citizenship and personal, social and health education, together with a programme of community service for Year 10 students, results in students who understand and fulfil the responsibilities of living in a community extremely well.
- Assemblies are of a high quality and tutor time is used extremely well to promote students' personal development.

## Commentary

7. Students are enthusiastic and keen to work hard. They listen respectfully to teachers. Teachers show students how to take responsibility for managing their own learning from an early age. This approach helps students to do well in examinations. There are many opportunities for students to be enterprising and to develop responsibility. Students are encouraged to represent the school and to speak in front of large audiences. This, together with very good provision for group work, research and presentations in lessons, results in students who are confident and well prepared for the next steps in education.
8. Students are keen to come to school. They report that they enjoy school and feel safe in an atmosphere free from racism and harassment. Students report that form tutors and heads of divisions deal with minor bullying issues effectively. Students appreciate the Friends against Bullying group but the involvement of learning mentors in developing a range of anti-bullying strategies is more limited than those often seen in similar schools.
9. Behaviour in classrooms and around school is very good. Break times and lunchtimes are pleasant and relaxed and it is very unusual for behaviour to have a less than positive impact in lessons. There were some parental concerns about declining standards of behaviour but their concerns were found to be unfounded. However, the school has grown in numbers and some smaller corridors are extremely crowded, which can result in a very misleading impression of disorder. Most students respond extremely well to these difficult circumstances.
10. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is excellent. The school very successfully encourages students to develop both self-awareness and an understanding of the world around them. During the enrichment programme and in many other lessons, students are encouraged to examine issues from their own cultural and moral perspective but also to develop a broader understanding which allows them to empathise with the viewpoints of others. It is this broader perspective that results in students sensitively questioning different approaches to a very wide range of issues within a multi-cultural framework and makes spiritual, moral, social and cultural education in this school outstanding. As a result, students' values and behaviours are based on openness, fairness, honesty and justice and they take a well-informed stance on many current issues. Prejudice is not accepted. Excellent social education, including community service, citizenship and elements of careers, results in students being enthusiastic about playing an active role in society. Parents appreciate and talk about the well-rounded education that their children receive.
11. Assemblies are of a high quality and there is often active student participation. The school meets requirements regarding a daily act of collective worship because of its imaginative use of 'Thought for the day' during registration periods. During the inspection, work centred on International Women's Day and many form tutors worked hard to explore women's role into today's society. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues were all addressed in an interesting and informative way. Great care is taken to ensure that a very wide range of religious festivals is acknowledged and respected.

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	3.9
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	2.9
National data	1.1

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

12. Most students have good attendance records and their regular attendance, together with hard work and very good teaching, results in them being able to make very good progress. The school's systems are effective in identifying and supporting those students whose erratic attendance is affecting their schoolwork. Students try very hard to be on time for lessons even when they have to travel relatively long distances between buildings. Most lessons start very promptly and the minimum of time is wasted.

### Exclusions

#### Ethnic background of students

#### Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	91	32	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	16	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	15	4	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	6	13	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1157	74	1
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	21	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	31	1	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	12	10	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	4	0
No ethnic group recorded	9	1	0

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

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Students achieve very well because of the very good quality of teaching. The commitment to learning, which is shown by students' attitudes to work, is conducive to high standards. Staff are provided with good quality information about the comparative achievements of students.

## Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching is very good and consistently promotes high standards of achievement. Students are keen and interested learners. Assessment procedures are generally good but there are some inconsistencies in the monitoring of students' progress.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very effective planning and subject knowledge help to promote and develop students' skills and learning very well.
- Students are willing learners; levels of achievement are high.
- The active encouragement of teachers helps motivate students and leads to high productivity.
- Teaching methods are very effectively geared to students' different levels of ability.
- The management of behaviour is very good and is built upon the very good relationships that exist in most classrooms.
- The overall quality of assessment is good but there are some inconsistencies in the application of procedures within some departments.

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 139 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
9 (6%)	56 (41%)	53 (38%)	21 (15%)	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.*

### Commentary

13. Students are taught very well throughout the school. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, with a few examples of excellent teaching. The overall quality of teaching in French is excellent; it is very effective and stimulating. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen.
14. A particular strength is the consistency of the quality of teaching across subjects. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to the students and the school. The school has a very effective programme for teachers' professional development and training. Each member of the leadership team supports other teams of teachers. The school has set clear targets for improvement in teaching and learning.
15. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, and expertise and show enjoyment of their subject, which is often enthusiastically shared with their students. The very good relationships between teachers and students ensure the lessons proceed at a good pace. The high expectations of staff result in very good learning and high standards. In the best lessons, teachers set suitably challenging tasks. Another strength of the teaching is the teachers' use of discussion and other activities, enabling students to express their own views and ideas. In a Year 8 English lesson, the teacher inspired students to produce excellent work because of her outstanding knowledge, subject enthusiasm and careful planning. The students and the teacher wrote excellent poetry based on their enjoyment of a poetry workshop earlier in the week. Students were encouraged to recognise and understand their own culture and to have a high regard for human achievements. As a result, their work was culturally diverse, celebratory and moving.
16. The very good teaching evident in lessons enables and consolidates students' learning. Explanations are clear and questioning is effective in moving students' learning forward and helping them to recall previous learning. Starter activities promote an interesting beginning to the lessons. Building on what students understand and know is a positive feature of most lessons. Good management of students, regular review throughout lessons and expectations of students to use the correct terminology result in very good progress.

## Example of outstanding practice

In a Year 9 French lesson students made excellent progress in improving the standard of story telling through the use of connectives and time phrases. After a very clear presentation using an overhead-projector, students identified, explained and applied patterns to construct their own phrases in the past tense. They were given frequent opportunities to practise key phrases and develop listening and speaking skills through games. They responded enthusiastically and displayed clear enjoyment in activities. Students experienced success and grew in confidence at each stage of the lesson because activities and resources were very well matched to their previous experience and capabilities and although the level of challenge was high, students progressed through short, manageable steps in learning. They were then confident in producing a detailed account of different sections of a narrative in groups before reporting back to the whole class. They responded enthusiastically to a high level of challenge and were not afraid of making mistakes because of the very supportive atmosphere in the lesson.

17. Homework is purposeful, challenging and used well to reinforce learning. Good opportunities are provided for extended learning in lessons. The most able students are challenged and encouraged to extend their thinking beyond the confines of the syllabus. The evidence from students' work over a period of time confirms the consistency of the very good teaching students receive.
18. Students with special educational needs follow the full school curriculum, with very few exceptions. Small numbers of students receive some intensive help with the development of their reading and writing for a short time each week. Most of the support, however, comes from a team of five teachers teaching their targeted students within other classrooms. The most effective support teaching comes in lessons where both teachers have planned collaboratively and play an active role in the teaching of the whole group. Good evidence of this was seen in the Year 8 English lesson identified above.
19. Most teachers are able to identify students at the early stages of learning English in their classes. Many give high priority in their lessons to language development when introducing new technical words and ideas. They speak with clarity and give thoughtful explanations drawing on students' prior knowledge. Inspectors observed good practice by teachers in helping English language early learners in lessons in English, geography, ICT, mathematics, music, religious education and science.
20. Students are keen to achieve well. They make clear advances in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Their intellectual, physical and creative efforts are developing well.
21. The overall quality of teaching and learning has been sustained and built upon since the last inspection. The major development is largely due to the way the school has focused on students' learning. Staff training has been directed towards encouraging students to think about how they learn and to be fully involved in their learning.
22. The overall quality of assessment is good. The school has committed significant resources to this aspect of its work and assessment is very well managed at a strategic level. The quantity of data collected is comprehensive. It is used well to identify the achievement of students. In this way it informs departmental planning and helps to identify the needs of individual students. Where it is used well students are involved in the assessment of their own progress. They reflect on their work and use this information to set themselves targets for future development.
23. The overall quality of teachers' marking is good. Testing is regular and consolidates effective learning. In most departments assessment is used well. In several subjects, including English and mathematics, regular assessment is used to place students in class sets according to their abilities. In science and modern foreign languages, assessment is used very well. However, there is some inconsistency in the use of assessment within subjects such as art, geography, history, ICT and music.



24. Further development in the use of assessment by teachers across the school will be enhanced through their increasing competence in the use of the software, as well as greater reliability of the physical systems. At the last inspection, procedures for monitoring students' academic achievement were thorough and comprehensive. Good progress has been made since then because there is now a coherent whole-school overview.

## **The curriculum**

The breadth of curricular opportunities is good overall. The school provides a very good range of enrichment activities. The provision for accommodation and learning resources is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 meets the needs of students well.
- The provision for citizenship and personal, social and health education is excellent.
- The school provides a good range of vocational and work-related courses for students in Years 10 and 11.
- Students have very good opportunities to pursue activities outside lessons, including a range of sporting activities.
- There are good procedures for departments to access resources related to their priorities for improving students' learning.
- Resources are used very well in music, citizenship, and in the language development base room for students with English as an additional language.
- There is a good level of ICT resources, but in physical education some of the gymnastic equipment is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

25. The quality and range of learning opportunities throughout the school are good. The school provides a good breadth and balance of curriculum, which broadly meets statutory requirements and provides sufficient time for delivery of the programmes of study. The exception is religious education in Years 10 and 11 where the time allocation is inadequate to teach the agreed syllabus. Some moral elements are taught within the enrichment programme but it is not sufficient to meet requirements. A very strong curriculum in English provides a wide range of out-of-hours opportunities for students through poetry, writing, drama and booster classes. There is outstanding provision for citizenship together with personal, social and health education. Citizenship is very well planned over five years and is a model of good practice. The fact that there is no second European language for able linguists restricts opportunities at the next stage of education.
26. The curriculum and its impact upon students' achievements are closely monitored and evaluated. It is having a positive impact on students' attitudes towards their learning and on their behaviour. The curriculum is regularly audited to ensure equality of opportunity. Co-ordinators in English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9 meet together regularly and are currently developing links with contributory primary schools. ICT in these years is taught largely through humanities but also across other subjects. A concerted effort to focus on learning as opposed to teaching is taking place in Years 7 to 9 where there is a strong move towards developing more independent learning.
27. The school has well-developed curriculum programmes that serve the majority of students in Years 10 and 11. There is a good range of courses, which go beyond the usual National Curriculum pattern; these include sociology, economics and drama. The school is being proactive in monitoring its curriculum to ensure there is appropriate breadth and provision for the full ability range of students. For example, the proposed re-location of a sixth form college will enable the provision for students from 14 –19 to be closely linked to that of the school.

Vocational courses at nearby colleges include farm skills, and taster courses in carpentry, catering, electrical installation and engineering. Students have opportunities to obtain NVQ qualifications in catering, construction, electronics, engineering, equestrian studies and sport. A flexible 'routes system' has recently been designed which is intended to lead to a full or short course GCSE and other accreditation in each subject. Opportunities are available each week for students to spend time in the world of work.

28. Students receive appropriate sex education and guidance on alcohol and drugs misuse. A wide range of issues is covered through an effective tutorial system as well as through religious education and science. Careers education and guidance also feature very effectively in tutorial sessions.
29. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is excellent. It is achieved through a consistent approach through many subject areas plus excellent provision in enrichment lessons and high quality assemblies and tutor times. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects are very much intertwined, for example, through the visits of exciting poets in English lessons and the thorough explorations of set poems at GCSE levels, such as *Search for my Tongue*. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural facets are all explored equally thoroughly. The school does not shy away from differences in cultures and examines the interfaces very well. In art lessons, a whole range of different cultures is explored in addition to using the students' own rich cultural heritage. Many subject areas, including modern foreign languages, physical education and geography positively encourage group and paired work and students learn to co-operate very well with each other. An atmosphere of mutual respect is created and students are very willing to learn from one another. A good range of visits also supports wider aspects of personal development; students are actively encouraged to look outwards as well as inwards.
30. A generous time allowance for the enrichment programme has resulted in the recent development of an excellent programme to deliver citizenship whilst still continuing to deliver excellent personal, social and health education. All these elements make an extremely valuable contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and promote the very good personal development of students.
31. Students are very well prepared for their next stage of education or employment. They are able to take advantage of a very well organised programme of work experience that includes a very good range of work-based opportunities. The excellent careers programme, combined with very good links with local colleges and universities, gives students a very good awareness of the appropriate courses and job opportunities available to them. Very good personal development, the encouragement of study and research skills, especially in enrichment lessons, result in students whom colleges report are well organised, hard working and well prepared for study at a higher level.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

The school-based programme for careers education is excellent. There is curriculum time dedicated to a well-planned careers education programme in Years 9, 10 and 11. Subject specialists usually teach lessons but form tutors also have some input during form time, which enhances personal support. Access to careers resources is very good. Students are shown how to use computer software in lessons and have good access to computers and book-based information in the very comfortable and attractive careers library. There is equal access into school for a very broad range of local colleges of further education and as a result students have access to high quality information that allows them to make sensible and well-informed choices about their next stage of education. Students attend the 'Making Opportunities' conference which is held at a local university and students are able to speak to representatives from a very wide range of local employers and colleges. The 'Aim Higher' project and gifted and talented provision ensure that students are very well informed about opportunities in higher education.

32. Overall provision for students with special educational needs is good. The department has developed very good resources to encourage independent learning, including a library of listening activities, which are effective in both supporting and extending learning.
33. The school is very successful in providing for the learning needs of all students whose first language is not English. Students who are new arrivals from outside the United Kingdom are assessed quickly to ascertain their knowledge of English and their general educational strengths. At the moment 22 students benefit from an intensive English programme for part of the week with four of the older students having individual study programmes. The school is particularly successful in providing access to the whole curriculum for all students. Teachers have detailed information of students' backgrounds and most plan lessons carefully to ensure that language skills develop alongside subject skills. A strong feature of the curriculum is the way in which members of the language development team work in partnership with subject colleagues in art and design, English, humanities, mathematics, music and science to plan sections of the curriculum. Very good examples were seen of collaborative partnership teaching in Year 9 English and Year 11 mathematics during the inspection week.
34. Many of the bilingual students would benefit from having the opportunity to learn a second modern foreign language in order to broaden opportunities at a later stage of their education. Most Gujarati speakers learn only English with Gujarati. They have the necessary linguistic skills to benefit from learning another European language.
35. Enrichment opportunities outside of lessons are very good. Lunchtime and after-school clubs cater for students' interests in drama, music, art, ICT, reading and poetry, and cater for all age groups. Music opportunities include an instrumental ensemble, a drum club, a keyboard club and a singing club. A good range of sporting activities complements the taught programme although currently there are no opportunities for students to pursue their interests in dance or gymnastics. Students have good access to extra help from teachers during the lunch hour. A learning support 'drop-in' club provides opportunities for low attaining and other students, particularly in Year 7, to play board games and use computers to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and to access websites. Students who do not speak English as a first language also have opportunities to attend lunchtime clubs for ICT and language development.
36. Accommodation is very good. This is particularly true for those subjects taught in the newly built Margaret Berridge Green Academy. Accommodation for Gujarati and the school library is excellent. Accommodation for all other subjects is good as a result of recent extensive refurbishments of the older buildings. The dramatic improvement in the quality of accommodation, criticised in the last Ofsted report, reflects the tremendous amount of work undertaken in recent years.
37. Resources for learning are good. The procedures for allocating resources are good. Most departments have good quality textbooks and appropriate specialist equipment. However, some of the gymnastic equipment in physical education is out-dated. Music, citizenship and the base room for students with English as an additional language have very good resources. Modern foreign language teachers have written an extensive range of original resources that are used very effectively. ICT resources are good. In addition to the ICT specialist rooms there are several computer suites, some of which are within departmental areas such as design and technology and art and design. Science has its own set of laptop computers that are used effectively by staff and students. The whole-school ICT network allows students good access to their work in several locations.
38. The match of teaching and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. The vast majority of staff are well qualified to teach their specialist subjects. Opportunities for professional development contribute to the effectiveness of all staff. The school values its staff and this is reflected in their positive attitudes to the school.

## Care, guidance and support

The school has effective procedures to ensure students' care, welfare and health and safety. Very good advice and guidance are supplied, based on effective monitoring of students' achievement and personal development. Students' views are listened to and, if appropriate, are acted upon.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The 'division system' (similar to 'House groups') works very well and continues to provide high standards of care.
- Tutor periods are used very well to promote students' personal development.
- Provision for careers education is excellent.
- There is very good work to support gifted and talented students.
- Learning mentors could be better used to provide more effective support to a greater number of students.
- The school council is of a high quality and ensures that students' views are aired.

### Commentary

39. Well-established systems are in place for child protection. Although they are generally effective, they have not been reviewed for some time. Recent changes to pastoral staff have resulted in some of the personnel involved not yet having completed appropriate training. Although many staff have a good awareness of child protection procedures this is not consistent for all staff. Procedures to ensure students' health and safety are well thought out and thorough. There are effective arrangements to ensure the safety of students when using the Internet.
40. Induction procedures are good and students soon settle into secondary school life. The system of divisions work very well and ensure very good continuity of care. Family members are usually members of the same division and this ensures that students are very well known to pastoral staff and enables very good relationships to be established with parents and carers. Heads of division and form tutors have very good relationships with students and develop a very good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. This work is being enhanced by better use of data. Students appreciate the good support they receive from pastoral staff and subject teachers. Form time is used very well. A well thought out programme, including discussion about 'Thought for the Day' and careers work, further enhances the relationship between form tutor and students and contributes towards students' personal development.
41. Support for gifted and talented students has been very good and has filtered through to raise the levels of achievement and aspirations of a much greater range of students. Learning mentors have provided valuable support to some students who have a variety of barriers to learning but, at present, a disproportionate amount of time is spent on meetings and paperwork. There has been insufficient group work and where it has occurred it has often been supported by outside agencies.
42. Provision for careers education is excellent. In addition to a well thought out formal programme of careers education in Years 9, 10 and 11, students also have access to a wide range of events, visiting speakers and visits. The careers library is of a high quality and the school works well with Connexions. The Aim Higher project and provision for the gifted and talented students are well integrated into this work and result in students having very high but appropriate aspirations. Students are very aware of how GCSE option choices together with post-16 choices may affect their future career decision.
43. The school respects the views of students. The school council provides an excellent forum where students can air their views and concerns about the school and local issues. Effective campaigns have led to improvements in school and have influenced events outside school.

### Example of outstanding practice

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The student council is a model of excellent practice in terms of student democracy and citizenship initiatives. Elections to the council are held by secret ballot in form tutor time and students also elect male and female consuls to serve on the council. There are regular opportunities for council members to consult with other students and feed back council decisions to their peers. The council has made a difference to the school and to the local area in a number of ways, including a successful campaign to preserve local library services and the Books for Africa project that collected more than 3,500 books throughout the school. The council has built up a local and national reputation for its work. Members run training sessions on student democracy for other local schools and colleges and six members recently delivered a keynote address to teachers at a national conference on citizenship. The student council is a vibrant and successful body and its members are excellent ambassadors for the cause of student representation in schools. The ethos of participation and social responsibility engendered by the council and by the active citizenship programme permeates the whole school.

44. The school provides good support for students with special educational needs. Systems of assessing and recording progress of students with particular needs have improved since the last inspection.
45. The school has developed very thorough and helpful procedures for the induction of students for whom English is not their first language. The assessment of language needs is undertaken with great care on arrival. Language development staff support the newest arrivals with very little English, very well. With class teachers, teachers and assistants monitor carefully the progress of over 120 students on the lower stages of the English language fluency register. The school encourages students to support others who share the same home language. It also provides materials printed in Gujarati and in some other languages to assist learning.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has a very effective partnership with parents and excellent links with the local community. The school's links with other schools and colleges are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a very good relationship between parents and the school.
- Provision for community service is excellent.
- The school works very well with local colleges and universities to ensure that all students get access to appropriate provision when they leave the school.
- Reports do not always tell parents enough about their children's academic achievement.

### **Commentary**

46. The school works very effectively with parents to support students' learning. Parents feel a strong sense of partnership and have confidence in the high quality of education that the school provides. Parents receive very good quality information about the work of the school through regular newsletters including glossy productions. Some reports about students' progress contain insufficient information about attainment and progress, especially in Years 7 to 9. Written comments usually focus on a student's attitude to a subject and often do not tell students what they must do to improve their work. However, parents are told how they can support their children in other ways, for example through the very well attended literacy evening, the work experience evening and the high quality information booklets that are specific to the needs of each year group. There is a very active Friends Association which is involved in educational matters such as developing the home school agreement as well as fundraising. Parents are supportive of their children's education; they encourage the completion of homework and regular school attendance.

47. Community links make a sustained and exceptional contribution to students' personal development and are excellent. All Year 10 students are involved in a short period of community service. A wide range of local projects appreciates the support they receive from the school and the strategy results in students having social contact with people from different backgrounds whose needs may be very unlike their own. These links also enhance the school's understanding of local needs and opinions, enabling it to improve what it provides for its own students. Links with local businesses and associated organisations are also of a high quality and result in a widening range of provision. The governors reflect the multi-cultural nature of the school and bring with them a variety of skills and interests.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

The provision for community service is of excellent quality. Year 10 students spend half a term visiting local community projects and providers as part of their enrichment lessons. Time has been spent in local primary schools, playgroups, and neighbourhood projects run by groups such as the NSPCC, women's groups and a local home for the blind. The results in personal development from this work have been outstanding. For example, a group of students visited a school, with all white English pupils, to speak about their own Hindu faith. This event resulted in a very good experience for the primary aged pupils and very good personal development for the Rushey Mead students.

48. The school is very outward looking and is willing to learn from others where appropriate and to help other schools improve educational standards. There are good relationships with primary schools, and curriculum links in English, mathematics and science encourage good continuity of learning. Arrangements to help students choose and transfer to post-16 institutions are particularly thorough. The school has very effective partnerships with a good range of providers and equality of access ensures that students study courses that are particularly suited to their needs. Very effective partnerships with local universities have supported gifted and talented students, enhanced careers education and helped students to raise their aspirations. The school has a particularly strong link with a local special school, which successfully brings together children with very different needs.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The school is very effectively led and managed. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. She has created a strong team ethos, which is particularly impressive given her relatively short period in post. Long-term planning is very good and efficient systems have been put in place to manage the school very well. The leadership and management of senior managers and other key staff are very good. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive and have a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school but they are not sufficiently challenging about strategic issues.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the headteacher is visionary and supportive.
- The monitoring and review of performance data are of a very high standard.
- Senior staff are very experienced and provide very good role models for other staff.
- Strategic planning is very good; this is reflected in comprehensive development plans.
- The high quality of leadership shown in pastoral care adds significantly to the school's ethos.
- The leadership and management of French and the English as an additional language provision are excellent.
- Governors are supportive and committed to the objectives of the school.

### **Commentary**

49. The headteacher provides very good leadership; there is a clear sense of direction for the school. She has instilled an ethos of high expectations which is based in a context of care and support for both staff and students. The school has placed considerable emphasis on improving the quality of teaching, learning and self-review. The school is managed with thoroughness and a clear purpose to bring about improvement.
50. An effective senior management team very ably supports the headteacher. The team works well together and shows a strong commitment to the objectives of the school. It exercises its delegated responsibilities well, conducting monitoring and review activities systematically and efficiently. The quality assurance procedures that operate within the school are of a particularly high standard. This rigorous review of performance for each subject leads to targets being drawn up for both the whole school and individual subjects. Each target has clear criteria so that its success or otherwise can be measured and the level of planning for meeting these targets is particularly detailed. Consequently, the standards achieved by the school have continued to improve. The overall quality of leadership and management of middle management is very good; it is excellent in French.
51. Governors show commitment and are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school's work. They support the school well and have been particularly active in promoting improvements to the school buildings and surrounding environment. Governors have been encouraged to be more proactive in the monitoring role but are not sufficiently challenging about strategic issues or questioning of policy details. The governing body has a very good working relationship with the staff. The information given in the annual report is relevant and meets statutory requirements.
52. Arrangements for performance management overall are good and outstanding in some subjects. Staff are aware of their strengths and weaknesses because monitoring and evaluation are taken very seriously. A structured programme of focused lesson observations, analysis of planning documents and review meetings is in place. This works well in identifying links to learning, which is a priority for senior management. Arrangements for the support and professional development of new and newly qualified teachers are good. The evaluation of the effects of training, on teaching and learning, is well established. Support staff, including financial, library and administrative staff, are involved in training and make a significant contribution to the work of the school.
53. The organisation and management of the provision for the education of students for whom English is an additional language are excellent. The school provides very strong support for students learning English as a second language. This work is effectively organised by the language development team of three experienced specialist teachers and bilingual assistants. Very effective use is made of the EMAG grant.
54. The leadership and management of special educational needs have changed from a 'laissez faire' approach to more rigorous planning and co-ordination. It is now very well led and effectively managed, with much improved systems for in-service training and record keeping, and with annual reviews on time. The school has raised the profile of special educational needs by appointing an assistant headteacher with an overall social inclusion brief. This person also acts as the special education needs co-ordinator. As a result of improved leadership there are signs that support teachers are taking more responsibility for their students and their role. There is very good co-operation within the school between key support workers for English as an additional language and students with special educational needs.

***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4523721	Balance from previous year	326072

Total expenditure	4251203
Expenditure per student	3268

Balance carried forward to the next	272430
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## PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

### SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

#### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

##### English

Provision in English is **good**.

##### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 9 students achieve above average standards because of very strong, focused leadership.
- Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well.
- Very good use is made of the National Literacy Strategy to improve basic skills.
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 are not sure how to improve their written work.

##### Commentary

55. Results and current standards reflect continuing improvement by Year 9 students. Results in the National Curriculum 2003 tests were above average. Overall, students' achievement is good. Standards in GCSE English language examinations were in line with the national average; they were above average in English literature. The head of department has succeeded in developing a shared vision for the improvement of teaching and learning. The teamwork and commitment of the department are remarkable.
56. In work seen, students' attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average and by Year 11 is broadly in line with the national average. This represents very good achievement and improving standards for Year 9 students because when they joined the school their overall standards were below average. Standards in literacy have improved, showing particularly good achievement. This is emerging as a strength for Year 11 students. Most students have a good knowledge and understanding of literacy skills by the time they have been in school for three years. Their oral skills are good in classroom discussion but they are more hesitant in formal situations. Listening skills are good because of very good relationships based on mutual respect. Writing standards are above average; most students have grasped key skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar and their work is well presented. Writing is creative and poetic and students enjoy writing imaginative, descriptive stories. The standards of all students are benefiting from a wide choice in the variety of writing assignments and work that is carefully planned to match the students' needs.
57. Standards in English by the end of Year 11 are average. Students write with understanding of Shakespearean texts and literature from different cultures. They can place texts in an historical and social context and analyse social and moral themes with flair and empathy. This is an outstanding feature. Students evaluate character and theme and structure written work appropriately. A minority of students rely too heavily on the teacher and their work is lacking in detailed understanding and insight. Students with special educational needs and the able and talented achieve as well as other students in the school because work is well planned for them.
58. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good, and very good for students in Years 7 to 9. In a small minority of lessons, students learn less than in others because the students are not involved enough in their own learning and they lack independence. In the vast majority of good, very good and excellent lessons, there is a brisk pace, students are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Students enjoy exchanging ideas with each other and their



teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. Students respond well to their teachers' concern for achievement and this helps develop the very good relationships evident in the department. In a very good Year 11 lesson on media, students evaluated radio schedules in order to understand persuasive language and improve their own writing. They enjoyed exchanging ideas and analysing the best possible structure for their own work. Consequently, they presented their findings intelligently and accurately. The teacher sensitively drew out their ideas and encouraged their thinking. In an outstanding Year 8 lesson, students spoke and wrote poetry movingly because the teacher inspired them and expected the highest standards.

59. The leadership of the department is very good. The head of department has developed a cohesive team who are committed to raising standards as well as making English lessons a pleasurable experience. The head of department has a clear educational vision that inspires both teachers and students. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work and departmental responsibilities; as a result, they are regularly discussing what is best for the students. Links with other areas in the school, notably the library, produce exciting lessons and consequently improve learning. Procedures for assessment are clear and used by the head of department to set individual students' targets. This is not consistent in practice and day-to-day assessment is sometimes lacking in specific targets to guide students' improvement. Some students, especially in Years 10 and 11, are not aware of their standards or targets and therefore are not sure how to improve.
60. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Standards overall have been maintained. Accommodation has improved dramatically and provides a very good learning environment. The use of data to improve the tracking of students' progress has improved.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

61. Management in departments has been effective in putting into practice the improvement of students' literacy skills. This is because the school takes it seriously and is committed to improving basic skills in order to raise standards. A range of texts, in all subjects, encourages the use of technical and specialist vocabulary, especially in modern foreign languages, science and English. The English department has dictionaries available in each classroom and key words are displayed prominently in most classrooms to familiarise students with these words. Carefully censored Internet access allows students to research topics in detail. The library is a valuable resource for improving research skills and reading. Very good relationships between the librarians and staff and students contribute very well to improving learning. Students discuss their work enthusiastically and sensibly in most subjects and in most cases show respect to their peers and staff by listening attentively. More developed discursive and analytical writing is not consistent, however, in subjects where literacy teaching is less emphasised. In a minority of subjects opportunities were missed to correct mechanical inaccuracy. Reading fluency is encouraged and seen to particularly good effect in English and French. Most subjects undertake the teaching of basic literacy skills conscientiously as a means of improving standards.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Provision in French is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average and students' achievement is excellent.
- Teaching and learning are excellent and language learning is fun.
- Attitudes and behaviour are excellent and students have very positive relationships with their teachers.
- Leadership and management are excellent and teachers work as a very effective team.

- The lack of opportunity to study a second language disadvantages able linguists at the next stage of their education.
- Assessment is not used effectively enough in Years 7 to 9 to enable students to take responsibility for their own learning.

## Commentary

62. Standards by Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average. Students are confident linguists; they speak and write at length and in detail to describe events in the past, present and future. Average and higher attainers link their ideas very effectively using a very good range of language and structures, and regularly use time phrases, adverbial phrases and idiom to make their speech and written work more interesting. They create metaphors and similes and write poetry to a good standard. All students constantly strive to improve the quality and sophistication of the language they produce; they have a very good understanding of grammar and can identify, explain and apply patterns in the language accurately and appropriately. There are some errors in spelling in written work which students are quick to put right when they are pointed out. However, this does not inhibit meaning. Students would improve their overall grades in examinations by using a wider range of structures in written work. Students' listening skills are very well developed; they respond promptly and appropriately to questions and instructions delivered at normal speed in French and higher attaining students interpret some more complex or unfamiliar language for others. Students speak confidently and independently, manipulating the language very effectively to meet their needs. This represents excellent achievement in relation to their earlier attainment.
63. In GCSE examinations in 2003, the proportion of students achieving grades A\*-C was well above average. All students, including those with special educational needs, achieve at least a G grade and the vast majority achieve grades A\*-D. All students achieve significantly better in French, by at least one grade, than they do in other subjects. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are average. However, standards seen during the inspection are well above average, which suggests that teachers' assessments were too harsh.
64. Students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent; this is a major factor in enabling them to achieve as well as they do. They listen attentively and maintain high levels of concentration during lessons. They rise to the challenge of using French as the principal method of communication, respond with enthusiasm to the use of games and competition, are keen to participate in activities and show enjoyment in their learning. When asked to work in pairs and small groups they organise themselves well and stay on task. The department makes an outstanding contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; all students are confident in their ability as successful linguists, are supportive of each other and maintain excellent relationships. They are given frequent opportunities to work in different groups and they respond very positively to the teachers' insistence on very high standards of behaviour.
65. The overall quality of teaching and learning is excellent. There is a high level of consistency across the department. Teachers create a very supportive yet challenging atmosphere in lessons. Expectations are very high and activities and resources are very well matched to students' previous experience and capabilities. Planning is excellent, enabling students to move from passive understanding of new language to active use through a series of very well sequenced and manageable steps in learning. This approach enables students to build confidently on previous learning and frequently experience success. Teachers' command of French, subject knowledge and understanding about how students learn are excellent. French is used routinely as the main means of communication. The language used is very well matched to students' experience and capabilities and this is very effective in consolidating learning and developing listening and speaking skills. Higher attaining students are challenged to interpret some unfamiliar language for others and most students are keen to stay as much in French as possible during lessons. Presentations are very clear using *PowerPoint*

presentations and the overhead projector; students therefore rapidly understand and use new language themselves. Sensitive use of questioning enables all students to respond successfully. Teachers consistently use games and competition to encourage students to use the language themselves and this is very effective in increasing students' confidence and competence. Above all, language learning is fun and students are enthusiastic and keen to participate. Students are given frequent opportunities to work informally in pairs and small groups and this is very effective in increasing their confidence. Opportunities for them to use the language to give and gather information are sometimes missed.

### Example of outstanding practice

Year 7 students made excellent progress in understanding and using new language in French through the imaginative and very well planned use of a *PowerPoint* presentation. New language was presented very clearly through visual prompts so that students rapidly understood and recognised new vocabulary. They quickly moved from recognition through to active use because of the imaginative way the resources were used, with very well sequenced steps in learning enabling students to grow in confidence based on success. Students showed enjoyment in memorising language and predicting what was going to appear next. Students were entirely engaged by activities and responded enthusiastically to the humorous use of animation and fading in and out of visuals. The competitive nature of activities encouraged students to participate in oral work, made learning fun and allowed them to increase in confidence and competence throughout the lesson.

66. Leadership and management are excellent. The joint heads of department have a very clear view of strengths and weaknesses and work very effectively together to raise standards and to constantly improve teaching and learning. The department has made excellent progress since the last report. Standards have improved significantly and extensive work has been done to improve the use of ICT. This has had a significant impact, not only in supporting and extending students' learning but also in spreading best practice, ensuring continuity and a very high level of evaluation to further develop teaching and learning. Teachers work very effectively as a team, sharing ideas and good practice. Assessment information is used very effectively to meet students' needs and to enable them to achieve their potential but could be used more effectively to enable students to evaluate each other's work and set more precise targets, especially in Years 7 to 9. Access to ICT facilities is limited and this makes it difficult for the department to develop independent learning strategies fully. Accommodation has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now very good, although poor acoustics make listening and speaking activities difficult in some rooms. Students do not have the opportunity to study a second language; this puts able linguists at a disadvantage in the next stage of education.

## Gujarati

Provision in Gujarati is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are native speakers and have very good subject knowledge.
- Teaching is very good overall.
- GCSE examination results in Gujarati were well above the national average in 2003.
- The accommodation is excellent which creates a very good teaching and learning atmosphere.
- Students' behaviour is excellent and they are very keen to learn.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to enhance learning.

### Commentary

67. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above the national expectations. Students start to learn Gujarati in Year 7 with limited understanding or prior knowledge of the language. Students have to master the script in order to write words, phrases and sentences. Considering that students

have to learn a new script, their achievement is good. With continued hard work the majority of the students can write phrases, sentences and short paragraphs in Gujarati by the end of Year 9. In some cases students produce extended pieces of work. For example, in Year 9 some students have written their autobiographies, which include several topics such as 'myself', 'my family', 'daily routine', 'education', 'hobbies', 'interests and games', 'holidays' and 'my ideal partner'. Students' listening and speaking skills are well developed as was seen in lessons when they responded confidently to the teacher's questions.

68. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above the national average. The GCSE examination results at grades A\*-C were well above the national averages in 2001 and 2003. Results at grades A\*-C in 2002 were in line with the national average but nine students were entered for the AS level examination as they scored grade A\* in their GCSE examination a year early. The results for A\*-G were above the national average during the last three years. In a Year 11 class, the majority of the students were able to read a text in Gujarati and answer questions about it, and in a Year 10 class, students were able to answer questions after listening to a text in Gujarati. Overall, achievement is very good.
69. Students at an early stage of learning English make very good progress because in most cases they have learnt Gujarati in India before coming to this country. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented make good progress as they receive good support in lessons.
70. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are very well planned and paced and contain a variety of activities which motivate students to work hard and learn. The strong relationships that teachers establish in the classroom enable students to learn very well. Teachers are native speakers, have very good knowledge of their subject and use the language well to promote students' learning.
71. Gujarati is a part of the modern foreign languages department and both teachers are fully supported by the heads of department. The relationships in the department are very good which has a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning. However, there are inadequate facilities for ICT and television to enhance the quality of teaching and learning further.
72. Since the last inspection, the quality of accommodation and other facilities, such as storage space, has improved greatly and this has a very good effect on the quality of teaching and students' attitude to learning. Examination results are as good as they were before. Overall there has been good progress since the last inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at the end of Year 9, when compared with similar schools, are very high, placing the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally.
- The achievement of students is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students are very well behaved and try hard.
- Reports are not sufficiently clear as to what standards students are working at.

### **Commentary**

73. Students' achievement is very good overall. The results of the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above national averages. These standards were significantly above schools with similar levels of attainment on entry to Year 7. In 2003, the GCSE

examination results at grades A\*-C were above the national average. There has been a steady improvement in standards since the last inspection. Lesson observations and examination of students' work show very good progress. Students come to lessons expecting to work hard and behave very well. Teachers have high expectations. In most lessons, students made very good progress. The standard of students' current work by Years 9 and 11 is above average.

74. The overall quality of teaching is very good in both key stages. The atmosphere in most lessons seen across the years and ability groups is very well ordered. Relationships are positive and respectful. Lessons are very effectively planned and the activities provide a very good structure for students' learning. In a Year 9 lesson on algebraic relationships, there was a good pace and the work was challenging for students. The method used was well chosen and included group, whole-class and independent work. The teacher quickly saw how well the concepts were being understood and intervened appropriately. In a lesson with lower attaining students in Year 11, the teaching assistant was very effectively deployed in a 'team teaching' situation. Marking is regular and gives a clear indication as to how students can improve. Assessment records are detailed and clearly set out areas for students' improvement. Students are fully involved in evaluating their own progress.
75. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. No teaching is less than satisfactory. Teaching assistants and other staff are used effectively. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, a senior teacher and a less experienced teacher worked well together, both sensitive to the needs of the students, who responded well. In a Year 11 lesson, the teaching assistant made a very good contribution, as enthusiastic as the teacher in challenging and encouraging the lower attaining students.
76. Leadership and management are very good. There is a positive drive to raise standards. Effective use is made of assessment information to group students into classes by ability. Reports to parents are not always clear in setting out what standards students are working at. Very good improvement has been made in accommodation since the last inspection, when it was poor. Most teaching is done in specialist mathematics rooms. Storage is now adequate. The environment for learning is now very good.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

77. Students' mathematical skills are below average when they enter the school. There is a detailed numeracy policy and staff have received relevant training. As a result the support for students in the development of their mathematical understanding is good. For example, students interpret and analyse hydrographs in geography, manipulate data in citizenship and measure accurately in science. Additionally, the younger students benefit from regular opportunities during morning tutor activities when they work through numeracy materials.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in public examinations are rising and the GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above national averages and very high compared with similar schools.
- Very good teaching and students' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve very well and make good progress.
- The subject is very well led and managed. Teachers and support staff work very well together in the interest of raising standards.
- Assessment and marking are very good. Students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.

- There are not enough opportunities for teachers to share very good practice by observing each other.

## Commentary

78. The results in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in 2003 were in line with the national averages and better than those in 2002. They were well above those of similar schools. Over the past five years the results have been moving upwards in line with the national trend. The proportion of students gaining at least a grade C in a science subject in the GCSE examinations in 2003 was well above the national average and very high compared with the results in similar schools. Almost twice as many students gained the highest grades of A\* and A compared with the national figures. Girls performed better than boys and they also did better in science than in their other subjects.
79. Standards on entry to the school are below average. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. They are well above average by the end of Year 11. Achievement is very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The skills required in scientific investigations develop well to reach the expected levels by the end of Year 11. Students in Year 7 soon learn how to co-operate well with each other and to work safely and productively in a laboratory. Students with special educational needs, and those with language difficulties, also achieve as well as other students. Most are taught in smaller classes and are given appropriate tasks. Teachers give them individual attention when they are able to and in some lessons there is very effective extra support. Support staff are well briefed in advance of lessons. Gifted and talented students also achieve as others. They are given extension tasks and opportunities to participate in other extra-curricular activities. Students have the numeracy skills required to perform simple calculations and take care to use the correct terminology and units. Their ICT skills are developed well. Two Year 11 students prepared a high quality presentation about adaptation of creatures, using a CD-ROM.
80. The overall quality of teaching is very good. A particular strength is the quality of relationships between students and teachers based on genuine mutual respect. Students behave very well, listen carefully and respond willingly. These are major factors, which help them to learn and achieve well. Lessons are very well planned and cater for the differing needs of individual students. Teachers know their subject very well and make it comprehensible by using examples to which students readily relate. Humour is occasionally used very effectively. Questioning is usually skilful and teachers draw out information and check understanding very well. However, teachers do not always fully exploit their very good knowledge of individual students by targeting questions to focus them and keep them on task. Students are managed very well and group activities are conducted in a safe, orderly manner. In the best lessons a starter activity is used to focus students. Objectives are made clear for the main activity. This often involves demonstrations involving students, lively exposition and discussion and group activities. By skilful, challenging questions, teachers check understanding in the final part of the lesson. Most lessons are conducted at an appropriate pace but occasionally the teacher's speech is too quick or students are moved on to the next task before completing the previous one. Marking is a particular strength. Detailed comments on students' work help them to move forward. Teachers do much to develop students' literacy skills. Key words are frequently emphasised and the meanings of new ones carefully explained. Students willingly read aloud in some lessons. Homework aids learning and occasionally provides opportunities for students to develop independent learning and research skills.
81. The subject is very well led and managed. The enthusiastic head of science has established a very effective team of teachers, technicians and other support staff. His classroom practice is a role model for others. Teachers are deployed well, making good use of their expertise with particular groups. Teachers' performance is monitored carefully and classroom observations occur regularly. However, most teachers see very little of the teaching of their colleagues and very good practice is not shared enough. The technicians are very well organised and provide support of high quality.

82. Assessment procedures are very thorough and comprehensive. The information obtained is carefully analysed and used to set individual targets for students. These are regularly updated. The national strategy and a new course are being successfully implemented for younger students. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Following a very recent fire, the school is short of one laboratory. The new laboratories provide very good facilities. The older ones are in need of refurbishment and some of them are too cramped.
83. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. Public examination results have improved and the quality of teaching is better. There is now sufficient time to develop the subject. Assessment procedures have developed well. Much use is made of ICT, particularly with the use of data logging equipment. Some improvements have been made to the accommodation.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching enables students to achieve well.
- Very good student attitudes help them to learn well.
- Students are developing good skills as independent users of ICT because of the very good provision in many subjects.
- The use of assessments to monitor student progress in Years 7 and 8 is unsatisfactory.
- There is insufficient evaluation and analysis of their work by the majority of students.

### **Commentary**

84. The GCSE examination results in 2003 were above the national average. Girls attained higher results than boys. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 indicate standards that are average.
85. By the end of Year 9, standards are line with national expectations. This represents good achievement as they enter the school with below average attainment. Most students use ICT with confidence and are willing to try to find their own solutions. They access the network well but few use folders to systematically organise their work. Higher attaining students have a good understanding of how spreadsheets are used to model outcomes. Most students use desktop publishing applications well to format a page for a newspaper. Students are developing a sense of audience when designing newsletters and posters. Higher attaining students refine their presentations well to reach above average levels. Lower attaining students have below average literacy skills that inhibit their understanding of how to label features on graphs. By the end of Year 11 students' attainment is above average and they achieve well. Those following the GCSE course develop good ICT skills between Years 10 and 11 and have an increased understanding of how to apply these skills in different situations. Most students, for example, produce suitable logos and business cards for a business and can justify their choice of software. However, only the higher attaining students evaluate and analyse their work in detail. Year 11 students who follow the enrichment courses in ICT also make good progress. Most students link information they have found on the Internet with graphics and text to produce a good ICT-driven presentation.
86. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are enthusiastic and know their subject very well. As a result, students are motivated, want to learn and behave well. These very positive attitudes help students make good progress. Tasks are challenging and most lessons move at a good pace so that all students are constantly made to think. Lessons are well planned and include the use of very good demonstrations so students develop their skills

well. Teachers are constantly on the move, checking and supporting students. Students with special educational needs, and those who have English as an additional language, achieve well because of the good support from teachers and learning support assistants. The marking of students' work is good, especially in Year 9, 10 and 11, and gives clear pointers for improvement. Homework is not always used as an integral part of teaching and to develop students' study skills. Many students use the good resources independently outside lesson time to develop their ICT skills further.

87. The department is well led and managed. There is a clear sense of direction with the main focus being on improving standards, a vision that is shared by other members of the department. The greatly improved resources are well maintained by a skilled technical team. Planning is good both at departmental level and for the whole-school development of ICT. The teaching of ICT through subjects is successful but assessing the progress of students in Years 7 and 8 is unsatisfactory. As a result, these students are unaware of their current level of attainment and how to improve. The school has well-formulated plans to remedy this deficiency in the future. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards at the end of Year 11 have improved and students now have greater access to ICT resources.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

88. There is very good use of ICT across the curriculum. As a result students use ICT in most subjects and are developing well as independent users. Most subjects integrate ICT into their teaching and use a wide range of software. There is excellent use of ICT in modern foreign languages where it is used to extend and reinforce students' language skills in a very well planned manner. The Internet is used for research in many subjects, such as physical education and religious education. Word-processing software is used effectively to present GCSE coursework in, for example, geography and history. Students have very good access to a very wide range of software in English including the use of databases. ICT is used well in mathematics to teach graphing skills. Science makes good use of laptop computers for measuring and logging data and analysing information. The resource centre for students with English as an additional language is heavily used throughout the day and after school. Some subjects, such as music, are developing the use of ICT as they receive new equipment.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teaching is good and promotes good achievement.
- Students are taught to think for themselves and learn the skills of analysis.
- Most students have very good attitudes to the subject.
- Currently there is inadequate time given to the subject in Years 10 and 11.

#### **Commentary**

89. In recent GCSE examinations, standards have fluctuated from average to well below average; they were average in 2003.
90. Current standards are at the level expected by the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Year 9. Students know the key features of the major world religions. They look beyond these studies to views of creation that include Chinese and Aboriginal stories. They gain a good understanding



of the use of symbols in religious practice and have a satisfactory knowledge of the sacred writings and their place in worship. Overall, achievement through Years 7 to 9 is good, given students' below average skills in literacy on entry to the school.

91. By Year 11, standards are average. Students taking the full course GCSE examination reach average standards. Those taking the short course GCSE during a lunchtime period have higher standards and show very good commitment to working independently. The students who do not choose to do GCSE are given limited time for the subject. This does not meet the statutory requirements of the agreed syllabus. However, standards are broadly average. Students learn to explore controversial issues such as abortion according to the formal rules of debate. In all years, the higher attaining students can discuss religious attitudes and moral problems in good depth. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs get good support in class and this promotes their learning. Students' spoken answers show better knowledge and understanding than in their written work.
92. Overall, the subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The unit of study on what it is to be a spiritual being makes an excellent contribution.
93. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers show a good commitment to the subject. They encourage students to think for themselves and to see the similarities between different religions and cultures. They create and maintain a very good, calm working environment. They make good provision for independent learning. Students in Year 9 get a good introduction to the use of ICT for research. Assessment and marking are good. Students are shown what they have to do to improve.
94. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject is led and managed within the humanities faculty. There is new leadership beginning in the next term and a clear vision for improvement. Schemes of work are clear and concise and are updated regularly. Students' experiences are extended well by visits to local places of worship and by visiting speakers. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. However, the inadequate time given in Years 10 and 11 has not been rectified.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent GCSE examination results have been well above national averages, especially for the highest grades.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Students acquire historical skills rapidly from Year 7 onwards.
- The attitudes and behaviour of students are very good.
- The subject is led and managed very well.
- There are insufficient procedures in place to monitor students' progress over time.

### Commentary

95. In recent GCSE examinations, results have been in line with national averages and there has been an improving trend. In the most recent examination, for example, the results at grades A\*-C were well above the national average and nearly half the students entered achieved the highest grades of A\* and A. Current standards are above average by Years 9 and 11; this represents very good achievement. By the end of Year 9, students have acquired a wide array of historical skills, such as the use and analysis of historical sources. They write with confidence on a range of topics; for example, Year 9 students produced some very detailed and

well-presented work on the slave trade. This very good progress is maintained in Years 10 and 11 by all students, including those with special educational needs and those in the early stages of English fluency. Students develop their understanding of historical trends in depth and have a clear knowledge of the demands of the GCSE course.

96. The high standards noted above are a direct result of the quality of teaching and learning which is very good. Key elements of this are high expectations and very thorough planning of lessons. Teachers also use question and answer techniques very well to give students confidence to develop their historical skills, and use a wide variety of techniques to promote very good learning. As a result, students thoroughly enjoy their lessons and show considerable enthusiasm for study. The last inspection report noted that some lessons were too teacher-dominated and that some higher attaining students lacked challenge. This is no longer the case. Lessons are now conducted with pace and rigour and all students are keen to participate in classroom activities.
97. The department is led and managed very well despite the absence of a subject specialist leader during the inspection. ICT is playing an increasingly appropriate part in the department's work, especially in Years 8 and 9. Students benefit from good opportunities to visit places of historical interest and resources are used very well within the subject curriculum. Marking is very thorough but there are insufficient procedures in place to track and monitor students' progress through the school.
98. Overall, the department has made good progress since the last inspection. History is an increasingly popular subject in the school and the challenge now is to build upon the highly creditable GCSE results achieved this year.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching overall is good and is based on the teachers' good knowledge and good relationships with students.
- The attitudes of students are good; they arrive at lessons wanting to learn.
- There is very good coursework on urban land use for GCSE students, which uses ICT and the local environment very successfully.
- Assessment is not used consistently to help students improve.
- The most able students are not consistently challenged in lessons.

### **Commentary**

99. Students arrive at school with below average standards in geography. By the end of Year 9 teacher assessments in 2003 and inspection evidence indicate standards that are in line with the national average. This represents good achievement. GCSE results are also in line with the national average and the achievement of students by the end of Year 11 is good.
100. By the end of Year 9 standards are broadly average. Students have acquired sound geographical vocabulary and have developed skills of analysis and interpretation of data, graphs and diagrams to make appropriate judgements. They can, for example, draw firm and well-founded conclusions from rainfall and temperature graphs to describe climate, and have the appropriate geographical knowledge to provide good reasons for the differences. They also have a good understanding of the reasons for the development of settlements and the distribution and growth of population.

101. By the end of Year 11 standards are above average. The skills learned in Year 9 have been effectively built upon in preparation for GCSE. Their skills of analysis and interpretation of evidence are now far more sophisticated. For example, students are able to use these skills very effectively in their coursework to describe urban land use in Leicester. In this work they also use ICT very effectively to help in both presentation and research. Their work on volcanic activity and earthquakes illustrates a good understanding of the physical processes involved and an appreciation of the environmental consequences. The development of literacy skills is good in geography. The insistence by most teaching staff on the use of key words is a significant factor in the good progress made by students. The opportunities provided by staff for well-focused and extended discussion in all lessons are also important although some opportunities to use extended writing are being missed. The development of numeracy skills is also good, particularly through their use, analysis and interpretation of statistics and graphs. Opportunities for students to develop their ICT skills are good in Year 9 and in coursework in Year 11, but opportunities to use computers in other years are being missed.
102. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The key factors in this good teaching are the good relationships between students and staff and well-informed and knowledgeable staff. The planning of lessons, combined with the use of a range of teaching methods and very good question and answer sessions with students, are also important. Occasionally, too much time is spent reinforcing prior knowledge or repeating previously learnt skills and knowledge. In some lessons, activities to extend the most able students were restricted. In most lessons, the students had opportunities to work on their own and to discuss and develop their ideas with other students. They work co-operatively and are interested in their work. In a very good Year 8 lesson, where students were developing their understanding of the reasons for the location of industry, the class teacher began the lesson by setting very clear aims for the lesson. A very good question and answer session, involving all students and exploring their prior knowledge, followed this. Through the effective use of a range of resources and by clear and detailed explanations by the class teacher, students of all abilities in the group made very good progress. Assessment of students' work is not providing appropriate information to help them improve, and marking of work within the department is inconsistent.
103. An acting head of faculty and a head of department who has only just been appointed are managing the department well. Day-to-day management of the department is good. Schemes of work are still developing but provide good guidance for teaching all units of work for Years 7 to 9 although they do not identify extension activities for the most able students. Arrangements for sharing good practice in the department and throughout the humanities faculty are not yet secure and some opportunities for improving teaching and disseminating other good practice are being missed. The department development plan identifies clear and appropriate areas for improvement, but does not provide enough information on specifically how to achieve improvement.
104. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Teaching rooms now provide good accommodation.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership and management team work effectively together.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, and standards have improved.
- Students did less well in their GCSE examinations than they did in their other subjects in 2003.
- Assessment, monitoring and target setting are generally effective in Years 10 and 11.

- The access to ICT is restricted which has a limiting effect on the production of project work.
- The department contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Where student workbooks have been developed for Years 7 to 9, they are very effective in structuring students' learning.
- Students do not all show how they develop their design ideas.

## Commentary

105. In 2003, the proportion of students achieving the grades A\*-C in the GCSE examinations was well below average and was much lower than the previous year. This was largely due to department refurbishment where specialist workshops were unavailable for about a year, and staffing issues. Standards were broadly similar in most contributory subjects except in food technology where they were above average. In child development, the inclusion of a basic skills group depressed results. Overall, students did less well than they did in their other subjects. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average.
106. Standards of work seen by Year 9 are broadly average. Attainment on entry, which the department reviews, is below average and achievement is therefore good. Students' enthusiasm in Year 7 means they make rapid progress. In areas such as electronics, students' understanding and designing skills are below average. Students work safely and learn skills using a very wide range of materials. The faculty links these excellent experiences closely with art in Years 7 to 9, and this can sometimes compromise students' application of the design process to making 'a product to meet a purpose'. Students do not always apply graphic and sketching skills to show how their design ideas develop.
107. Standards of work seen by Year 11 are broadly average overall, and have improved since last year. Where teacher experience and expectation differ, there is some variation in attainment across teaching groups. In the best examples, coursework follows a clear design process, is well presented and organised, and is above average. In some it is not. Achievement is therefore satisfactory overall. Generally, students research well although they could use a wider range of sources, such as the Internet, more. They use prototyping techniques to develop ideas, but not all students learn how to sketch and record the evolution of their designs. Because of lack of access to computers in classrooms, students do not universally use ICT to improve their work.
108. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 are good overall; they vary from satisfactory to very good in a large department where teachers have a range of experience. In Years 7 to 9, where some teachers have produced structured workbooks and support booklets, students' knowledge and learning about designing and making are enhanced. The pace of learning is less good where students copy up process notes or equipment diagrams. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. This means that some teachers can be used flexibly in a range of specialisms. In Years 10 and 11, teachers' subject knowledge and expertise are generally very good. This means that students learn correct processes and subject terminology. The use of ICT and CAD/CAM (computer-aided design and manufacture) is developing rapidly, but has not yet had a universal impact on standards of work. When teachers encourage students to have a real client or 'user', this helps develop product design and evaluation opportunities. Students achieve well when teachers help them structure their approach to coursework and create an environment in which students work independently and are comfortable with routines. Students show very good attitudes and behaviour in lessons. .
109. Leadership and management are good. The leadership team are keen to take on the challenge of new developments. The department trains and supports new staff well. The application of ICT in students' work varies because of limited access to computers in classrooms. 'Design assistants' are deployed well to support learning. Students of all abilities are supported well, and gifted and talented students are given appropriate challenges. The department makes a very good contribution to students' literacy and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assessment and monitoring of students' work are generally effective in Years 10 and 11, and the department is developing strategies to secure procedures in Years 7 to 9. Curriculum choices are broad in Years 10 and 11, but there is currently no vocational option; industry links are developing. Since the last inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress. A

number of improvements have been made, but standards are now broadly the same as they were, following the unusual fall in 2003.

## **Child development**

110. In child development, students develop well-structured work against each of the expected objectives. They have carried out research with young children, and start to draw conclusions and evaluate their work well. Teaching and learning in the lesson seen were good.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The achievement of students of all abilities is very good.
- The attitude and behaviour of students are very good.
- There is insufficient use of ICT.
- The department does not analyse information about student performance sufficiently well.

### **Commentary**

111. Standards on entry at Year 7 are below national expectations but improve to be broadly in line by the end of Year 9. Achievement of all students is very good because of the quality of teaching. At this age girls outperform boys but the gap is similar to the national picture. The GCSE examination results are usually around the national average for the percentage of students attaining grade A\*-C but are above average for grades A\*-G. Girls outperform boys significantly, with the gap in performance much greater than experienced nationally. Students perform better in art than they do in their other subjects.
112. The department has recently experienced considerable change, in staff and extensive refurbishment, which seriously affected the results in 2002. Standards have now recovered due to very good teaching and are broadly average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
113. Teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives. Students respond very positively to the variety of experiences given and the enthusiasm and expertise shown by all teachers. The work set and the preparation of good resources allow students of all abilities to work to their potential, with individual support given throughout each lesson. Additional specialist language support is used effectively for students learning to be fluent in English. Consequently, the achievement of all students is very good.
114. The behaviour and attitudes of students are very good and often excellent, with teachers expecting and achieving high levels of effort and application. Students have pride in their work as a result of the thought and effort they put in. However, their ability to discuss their work is limited by not having a wide art vocabulary. Much work benefits from detailed study of other artists and cultures from around the world. Drawing standards are in line with the national average. Students have a good understanding of how their work is assessed and what they need to do to improve. Most teachers regularly set homework. The status and use of sketchbooks are not given sufficient priority. Students benefit from visits to both local and national galleries and the artist in residence scheme has been particularly effective in the developing of gifted and talented students. Lessons could be improved by the incorporation of ICT and by more effective plenary sessions.

115. Leadership and management of the department are good. The newly appointed teacher in charge has clear action plans to improve overall provision, broaden the curriculum and develop teacher expertise. She is well supported by her predecessor and head of faculty. The two newly-qualified teachers receive good support and are making a very positive start to their teaching careers. Departmental documentation and schemes of work are thorough and ensure full coverage of the curriculum. Teaching is regularly monitored. There are twice weekly art clubs. Some students benefit from attendance on three-day courses run by Leicester College. The department does not analyse information about student performance and consequently is unaware of how different groups are performing.
116. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. In particular the quality of teaching and accommodation has improved.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average by Year 9 and Year 11 and the achievement of students is good.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities for all students.
- Resources and accommodation are very good.
- The attitudes of students are very good; they behave well.
- Assessment procedures do not always inform teaching.

### **Commentary**

117. At the end of Year 9 in 2003, teachers' assessments showed that standards were above average. The number of students gaining Level 5 or above has increased considerably during the past three years. The GCSE examination results in 2003 show similar improvements; standards were above the national average.
118. Overall, standards are above average at the end of each key stage. However, standards on entry are below average. In a Year 7 lesson, few students had an understanding of standard musical notation and so found it difficult to play on a keyboard from a prepared worksheet. But, in a Year 9 lesson, students were able to follow to a great extent a complex multi-notational score and respond to questions about it. In another Year 9 lesson, students were able to draw on previous knowledge and experiences in order to develop and extend their understanding. Achievement at the end of both key stages is good. Students are 'stretched', with high expectations placed upon them; they show clear progress in their learning during lessons.
119. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Lessons have very good pace, with teachers showing high expectations of students. Teachers effectively intervene in group activity in order to aid students' learning. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and employ good questioning techniques. They encourage students to look beyond the expected. Lessons are usually well prepared. Where teaching is less than good, the marking of students' work does not always contribute to learning. For example, in Years 10 and 11, there are insufficient written comments for students to develop their understanding, or to indicate how they might progress further.
120. Overall the quality of learning is good. In a Year 9 lesson, students were able to identify the distinctive qualities of two, similar styles of Indian music; they had a good understanding of the specialist terminology. In Years 10 and 11, students' theoretical knowledge of the subject is secure. A Year 11 student's composition showed clear understanding of harmonic and melodic structures; furthermore, interesting and effective use was made of rhythmic cells, space, time, colour and timbres. Additionally, the composition showed an unusual degree of originality and

creativity, indicating learning and achievement beyond national expectations. Where learning is less than good, students struggle to cope with noise pollution when working with electric keyboards in groups: the absence of headphones for students' use has a negative impact on their learning. Many students struggle with reading and understanding conventional notation: the writing of letter names beneath the notation does little to support students' understanding and application of music reading. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, students were able to play a simply melodic fragment from notation that had letter names added, but were not aware of the different pitches between the same letter names. .

121. The quality of leadership and management is good, and in some areas very good. The departmental handbook is comprehensive, informative and detailed, containing sufficient information to help and inform new members of staff. School policies are sustained and adapted to suit particular departmental needs. The curriculum offers opportunity, access for all students, breadth and depth. Given the cultural make-up of the school's students, a number of activities celebrate diversity but also show how fusing styles can be valuable. All students are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities and to learn a specific instrument. Good use is made of the accommodation, and the extensive resources are used effectively.
122. Since the last inspection, standards have risen significantly and improvement has been good. The quality of accommodation has improved through the building of a new suite of practice rooms and the acquisition of new music technology resources. The former allows small group work and individual instrumental lessons to take place away from the main classrooms. Assessment is now used to predict future levels of attainment in both key stages. However, too many students still find difficulty reading and understanding conventional notation. Whilst schemes of work have been reviewed, they lack clear learning objectives. The department has adopted a new marking scheme that indicates a student's individual progress, but there is little evidence to suggest that teachers use assessment to reflect on their teaching.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is consistently good or better teaching which results in high levels of knowledge and understanding combined with practical ability by the time students take their examinations.
- Very good management of students' behaviour is a strong feature of teaching.
- Teachers have a high level of subject expertise.
- The quality of departmental documentation is excellent and schemes of work are very detailed.
- Planning for students with special educational needs is not yet fully developed.

### Commentary

123. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. The 2003 GCSE examination results were above the national average and have been so for the past three years. However, these results were below those of the previous year when the cohort was exceptional. The last few years have seen an increase in the numbers of students taking the examination, particularly girls. Their performance has improved over this time although currently boys are still performing better. The consistency of high attainment in examinations is due to very good quality teaching. Overall achievement is good but is very good in Years 10 and 11 where a large proportion of students who play for teams achieve high levels of skill. Basketball in particular remains a strong area and the school has topped the local league for the last three years. Students with special educational needs and those students for whom English is not their first language achieve as well as other students and make good progress.



124. By the end of Year 9, average standards indicate good improvement from when students enter the school. Football skills are well developed and students are able to control a ball in a variety of ways at speed. Most girls do not enter the school with good netball skills but soon show an increased level of understanding. They dodge well and can throw and catch accurately. In gymnastics, girls lack flexibility and are reluctant to lift their movements from floor level. They can, however, create simple sequences with a partner and they handle apparatus safely. Agility and speed are demonstrated in rugby as students learn to pass and receive from either side. From an early age boys develop good skills of attack and defence in basketball. In all lessons students apply themselves well and respond well to the challenges they have been set. Because relationships between staff and students are so good, the majority of students are extremely well behaved.
125. By the end of Year 11 standards are above average. Students have experienced a range of activities in netball, hockey and football. An outside coach introduces meaningful activities to improve students' playing skills. Dribbling a ball, with a stick, in a confined space and under control is a skill that many boys achieve. In GCSE theory lessons, students successfully identify the positive and negative effects of the media on sport. They are able to prepare a presentation to the rest of the group but occasionally boys reveal some misguided views of women in sport. All students are encouraged to discuss and evaluate their own work and that of others. This is an area that is very well developed.
126. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is sometimes very good and is occasionally excellent. All teachers have a very high level of subject expertise, enabling them to equip students with good basic skills upon which they can build. Very good management of students ensures that behaviour is rarely less than good, which helps to create an effective learning environment. Commitment to providing all students with worthwhile learning experiences is very strong. This also applies to other members of the school's staff as well as outside coaches, who occasionally teach within the department to make up for the shortfall in specialist staff. Teachers prepare their lessons very well. However, planning of activities and resources for students who have special educational needs is not always evident.
127. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a shared vision to raise the profile of physical education, and to increase the participation rates of students, particularly girls. The quality of schemes of work has improved considerably since the last inspection although the overall balance of the programme currently lacks breadth for students in Years 7 to 9. This is not helped by the fact that the department has to rely regularly on non-specialist help from other teachers. The quality of departmental documentation is excellent. Clear assessment and tracking procedures enable teachers to identify areas of weakness and to correct these through appropriately targeted planning. A good range of extra-curricular activities complements the taught programme and teachers commit a great deal of their time to staffing these on a regular basis. A recently appointed sports co-ordinator has already established good contacts with a number of primary schools and a special school. An audit of provision has supplied the co-ordinator with valuable insight into the difficulties they face and how the school can help them to improve. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### Personal, social and health education

#### Example of outstanding practice

The curriculum for personal, social and health education is excellent. The programme is carefully designed to meet students' needs and to ensure that students are fully equipped to take their place in today's society whilst not losing sight of the very strong moral values that many students bring from home. The programmes of drug education and sex education are very well designed and meet statutory requirements. However, lessons also provide students with other valuable skills that are used to raise attainment in other subject areas. For example, in a drugs education lesson students were learning valuable research and presentational skills, including speaking in front of an audience in addition to learning about risk-taking behaviour. Speaking and listening and general literacy are addressed very well. Students are encouraged to use the correct terminology; during a lesson focusing on environmental issues lists of words including 'biodiversity', 'urbanisation' and 'deforestation' were provided and their use was encouraged and their meanings explored. Students were confident to try using new words and learning was very good. Similarly in a lesson about alcohol, an adult vocabulary was introduced and reinforced. The programme is made more interesting by the use of a very good range of outside speakers, visits and drama presentations. For example, when students were given the opportunity to speak directly to the person who manned a local helpline on domestic violence they were able to get very up-to-date and relevant information about the extent of the problem both locally and as a national issue.

### Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **excellent**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is excellent, planned provision for citizenship within the enrichment programme.
- Students have excellent opportunities to participate within school and in the local community.
- The student council is a model of good practice.
- There are examples of very good and excellent teaching in the subject.
- The subject benefits from excellent leadership.
- Students' attitudes are excellent and students participate fully in lessons.

#### Commentary

128. Standards are above expectations by Year 9 and Year 11 and students achieve very well throughout the age range. In lessons where citizenship was a distinct focus, students show a very good understanding of different aspects of society and develop their skills of enquiry very well. This was evident in an excellent Year 9 lesson, in which students examined their local area in depth in order to determine responsibility for a wide range of issues, such as litter, crime and racism. Analysis of their written work suggests that all students are making very good progress in their communication skills. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. There are examples of excellent teaching in the subject both within the enrichment programme and in other subject areas. Lessons are planned very well and students clearly enjoy the cut and thrust of discussion and debate on a wide range of issues. As a result, students' attitudes towards citizenship are excellent and their behaviour in lessons is very good.
129. There are excellent opportunities for students to participate and take responsible action throughout the school and in a wider context. All Year 10 students undertake a highly valuable community placement in local schools, playgroups and a wide variety of community projects, and there are a number of fund-raising and charity initiatives organised by students, such as the Books for Africa project. The student council is a highly effective channel of communication

for all students and members of the council are excellent ambassadors for their school at national conferences. They also visit local schools to help them develop student representation procedures and have been instrumental in helping to preserve local library services.

130. There is excellent leadership of the citizenship programme and it is managed very well through the enrichment curriculum. Departments clearly identify citizenship opportunities within their schemes of work and there are well-developed plans for assessing, recording and reporting the subject in line with National Curriculum requirements. Documentation of citizenship opportunities in the school is exemplary.
131. Overall, the subject is a significant strength in the curriculum and is a model of good practice. The highly positive ethos that citizenship activities generate permeates the whole school.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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