

INSPECTION REPORT

**BISHOP CHALLONER ROMAN CATHOLIC
COLLEGIATE SCHOOL**

Hardinge Street, London E1

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 100978

Headteacher: Mrs C Myers

Lead inspector: Mr P Matthews

Dates of inspection: 2 – 6 February 2004

Inspection number: 260956

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of students:	11 – 19
Gender of students:	Girls; Mixed 16 – 19
Number on roll:	1043
School address:	Hardinge Street London
Postcode:	E1 0EB
Telephone number:	0207 790 3634
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Regan

Date of previous inspection: November 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bishop Challoners Roman Catholic Collegiate School is an 11-18 comprehensive school admitting girls only in the 11-16 age range, with a mixed sixth form. The headteacher (and almost all the governing body) also run a new boys' Roman Catholic school on the same site in a quasi-federated manner. The school admits students with very high levels of socio-economic disadvantage; 46 per cent of students are entitled to free school meals and 46 girls are on the Child Protection Register. Both these indicators are high. The school is subject to regular, very serious attacks by vandals from outside the school. On entry, students have attainment levels well below the national average. There are 50 languages spoken by students, 15 per cent of whom have English as an additional language. The number of students identified on the special educational needs register is in line with national averages; the number with a statement of special educational need is below national averages.

There are advanced plans to completely re-build the school (and the associated boys' school) to create "The Learning Village" which will be open to the local population for educational purposes beyond the school day. Funding for this project will come from both the Diocese of Westminster and the Department for Education and Standards (DfES). Work is expected to commence later in 2004. Girls and boys will continue to be educated separately until the age of 16. Currently, boys enter the mixed sixth form from a closing boys' school, Blessed John Roche, (from which they have automatic right of entry) and from other schools in Tower Hamlets and beyond.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bishop Challoner Catholic Collegiate School is a good school which gives good value for money. It has a number of very good and excellent features. Results in Year 11 are in line with those achieved nationally from a background of below average standards in Year 6. Standards are rising in Years 7 to 9. This success is the result of some good and very good teaching in a number of subjects. The headteacher and senior staff have a very clear vision for raising standards further.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- The headteacher provides excellent visionary leadership and overall leadership and management are good.
- Students achieve well by the end of Year 11.
- Procedures for ensuring students' care, welfare, health and safety are very good.
- The school is very inclusive – all students are equally valued but opportunities to respond to students' views are limited.
- Insufficient use is made by teachers of assessment to plan for the needs of higher attaining students, and to inform all students how to improve.
- The management of the sixth form is not sufficiently focussed on raising levels of attendance and the quality of tutoring.
- The spreading of good practice, especially in managing student behaviour, is underdeveloped.

How the school has improved

The school was last inspected in November 1999. It has made satisfactory progress in responding to the key issues in the last report. Recent A Level results show improvement, especially in value-added terms. Attendance is now good for the main school, although still unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Language skills are much more securely developed across the curriculum but lesson planning still does not focus enough on individual needs. The school has greatly improved its provision for ICT which is now good. It has also successfully started a new boys' school under the same leadership.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Students achieve well by the end of Year 11. Their performance in relation to their achievement by the end of Year 9 is excellent, but standards have not historically been high enough at this point. Results, however, have improved in 2003, especially in English where students now achieve in line with national averages and are improving at a rate above the national trend. Results in the sixth form were low in comparison with national ones in 2003, but many students equalled or outperformed expectations based on their GCSE grades. The school sets very challenging targets and inspection evidence suggests the school is moving

towards achieving them in 2004. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language make progress equal to that of other students.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. The school promotes the value of every individual student. Attendance is good. Punctuality is poor in Years 10 and 11. The students' positive attitudes mean that there is little bullying and few racial incidents. Exclusions are consequently very low.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

Most teachers are knowledgeable and manage student behaviour well. Teaching is more effective in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form than in earlier years where some lessons are unsatisfactory because of inadequate behaviour management. Relationships between teachers and students are good. Although the school analyses student data well, this analysis is used insufficiently by teachers so that the work provided does not always match the needs of high achieving students. Marking does not sufficiently help students know how to improve.

The school provides equal access to a good range of curricular opportunities. However, In Years 7-9, there is very limited time available to teach the physical education National Curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, there is a wide choice of appropriate courses. Opportunities for enrichment beyond the school day are good and well attended. There are insufficient opportunities for students to express formally their views about the school. Sixth form students do not benefit sufficiently from the current tutorial and pastoral programme and are not well linked into the life of the whole school.

Accommodation is good and well looked after. The school cares very well for its students and gives them good support and guidance. Links with parents are satisfactory. The school has strong links with the local and extended community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher, focused on raising standards and on developing a multi school campus in the near future, is forward-looking and excellent. The work of the school with student teachers is excellent. Planning is very effective and the school knows itself well. Subject leadership is good. The chair of governors provides very good support and challenge to the school. There are many newly appointed governors. In the past, governors have been good in planning strategically and in holding the school to account. Financial planning and control in complex circumstances is good. The school complies with statutory requirements with the exception of minor omissions in the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents, and the failure to review one statement of special educational needs on time. The school's contribution to the training of new teachers is excellent. The good range of professional development opportunities does not systematically encourage the sharing of good practice.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Only around five per cent of parents returned questionnaires and very few attended the parents' meeting. This small proportion expressed many concerns, most of which were investigated by inspectors and were judged to be unfounded. For example, complaints were made about reports; they are, in fact, sent to parents termly and give parents a very clear picture of student progress. Students were positive overall about their school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure all teachers make the best use of assessment data in planning lessons, thus providing more challenge for higher attaining students.
- Use assessment more to tell students how to improve.
- Develop further opportunities for students to express opinions and share in the development of the school.

- Enable teachers with less secure behaviour management skills to learn from those teachers in the school who are experts in this aspect of teaching.
- Tackle the poor punctuality to school evident in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensure that the leadership and management of the sixth form has a clear focus on raising levels of attendance, sharpening the quality of tutorials and the pastoral programme, and providing opportunities for the students to be more involved with the rest of the school.

THE SIXTH FORM AT BISHOP CHALLONER RC COLLEGIATE SCHOOL

The sixth form is currently just above average size with 218 students and set to grow to over 300 students over the next few years. There is a wide curriculum offered enhanced through links with two other local schools.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Standards are below average but improving in many areas. Students' achievement is in line with their capabilities. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Leadership is effective but current management arrangements lack sufficient sharpness of focus to provide more rapid improvement to some areas of work. In the sixth form the school is increasingly successful in its commitment to meeting students' needs and to raising their aspirations. The sixth form is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are

- This is an inclusive sixth form where staff work hard to overcome significant difficulties in meeting students' needs.
- Effective monitoring and evaluation procedures mean the school has a clear view of its strengths and areas for development.
- Good teaching in many subject areas ensures students achieve well in lessons.
- A high percentage of students are successful in gaining employment or entry into higher education. The support and guidance provided for university applications are very good.
- Attendance is poor in some curriculum areas.
- The pastoral programme has failed to interest and engage many students; greater opportunities are required for students to be involved in the rest of the school.
- Standards in mathematics are unsatisfactory.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision for English is satisfactory. Teaching is good and students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. They are over-reliant, however, upon their teachers; independent study is underdeveloped.
Mathematics	Provision for mathematics is unsatisfactory. Teaching is unsatisfactory and too many students fail AS Level mathematics.
Science	Provision for biology is satisfactory. Standards are rising. Teaching is good. There is very good capacity to continue to improve provision and results. Provision for physics is satisfactory.

Information and communication technology	Students are achieving well. Teaching is good. Provision is improving. Provision for ICT is good.
Humanities	Teaching and learning are good. The achievement of many students on the AVCE course is very good. Completion rates are too low. Provision in history is good. Teaching is good and students make good progress. ICT is underused. Provision for sociology is good.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Teaching and learning are good and very good in Year 13. Provision for design and technology is good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Standards are good in graphics and satisfactory in textiles (a new course). Teaching is good, as is individual guidance. Provision for art is good.
Business	Good teaching and high quality individual attention enables students to learn well. Provision for business studies is good. Teaching is good; leadership and management are very good. Achievement is good but some completion rates are too low. Provision for media studies is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory, but results are low. There are good plans for further developments.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive good advice and are particularly well supported in their applications to higher education. Arrangements to monitor students' progress are good. The effectiveness of tutoring is too variable.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. There is a good development plan for the sixth form but progress towards its targets is varied because the current management structure is insufficiently focused on them. The quality of teaching has been improved through effective monitoring, review of curriculum provision and the introduction of more rigorous criteria for entry to courses. The school has achieved an appropriate average group size for the subjects it offers.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are positive in their views about the sixth form. In interviews and through questionnaires they confirm that they enjoy life in the sixth form, where they feel they are well respected by staff, are treated as adults and have their views considered. They feel they are expected to work hard and to show independence as learners. They are well taught and given clear guidance regarding their progress. Students would welcome more opportunities to express their views formally.

All feel relaxed and comfortable when in school. The relationships between students are very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students achieve well and standards are in line with the national average by the end of Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well by the end of Year 11.
- The 2003 GCSE results showed that students made very good progress from their test results at the end of Year 9.
- National Curriculum test results for Year 9 students have improved significantly since the last inspection and at a more rapid rate than the national trend.
- Results were low in the sixth form in 2003, but standards are improving this year as a result of targeted action by the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.6 (34.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	33.2 (30.7)	35.4 (34.7)
science	31.3 (30.0)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 164 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

The students have well below average standards of attainment on entry to the school and cohorts tend to be stronger in English and science than in mathematics. The National Curriculum test results for Year 9 students in 2003 were below the national average overall, with English being in line, mathematics below and science well below. Students did not make as much progress through Years 7 to 9 as in other schools with students at a similar starting point in Year 7. Their progress was comparable with students in schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals, however. Inspection evidence shows that standards are continuing to rise in mathematics and science as a result of improving leadership and management leading to improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and the school is moving towards achieving the very challenging targets set for 2004.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	45 (46.7)	51.5 (49.9)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	85 (86.1)	90.5 (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (99.4)	95.9 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	31.4 (31.9)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 170 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Results at GCSE are improving at a rate that is comparable with the national trend. In 2003 they were in line with those achieved nationally, but well above those achieved in similar schools. The proportion of students gaining at least one A*-G grade placed the school in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. Results were well above the national average in art and design and sociology and students performed well in these subjects compared with their other subjects. Students performed relatively poorly in English language and religious education. A high proportion of students achieved the equivalent of higher GCSE grades in ICT GNVQ courses, although a high proportion of students did not get a pass grade. Inspection findings confirm that students in Years 10 and 11 are continuing to work at about the same level as in the 2003 GCSE results and that their achievement is good. Again, the school has set very challenging targets for 2004 and for the following two years.

Strategies to improve the students' literacy are incorporated into their work across the curriculum, as well as in English. Teachers are aware of the need to emphasise correct vocabulary, for example, and key words are displayed in many classrooms. This good focus on language and literacy benefits all students, but is particularly important in supporting those for whom English is an additional language and in ensuring that they make secure progress in lessons and achieve well. The school has identified some variations in the comparative achievement of different ethnic groups of students, in common with other schools in the area. Additional resources and activities, such as concentrating on reading skills and developing the rewards system, are being successfully targeted to support students.

Although standards of numeracy are below average, students are sufficiently competent to enable them to progress in other subjects. The students' ICT skills develop at a very good rate as a result of a very carefully planned programme of work. Computers are increasingly being used well to support and enhance teaching and learning in most subjects.

Individual education plans are no longer produced for students with special educational needs and have been replaced with progress reports. These are less informative about the specific learning difficulties that students have but they do provide a good assessment of students in lessons. It is not yet possible for the school to demonstrate the progress that these students have made towards meeting their targets over a longer period of time. Students with special education needs do progress in their subjects at a comparable rate to their peers as do students with English as an additional language. A wide ranging programme of activities has been developed for gifted and talented students which make a valuable contribution to their broader achievement. Sometimes these higher attaining students need to be provided with greater challenge in lessons to maximise their progress.

Good use is made of data to review the performance of students and to set individual, group and whole school targets. This has tended to focus around standardised tests, but increasing weight is being placed on the students' National Curriculum test results. This development needs to continue so that all departments are consistently using this data to analyse student progress and to ensure that lessons meet fully the needs of all students.

Sixth form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	91	95
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	16.2	36
Average point score per pupil	152.7	263.3

There were 56 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

A Level results were very low in 2002 compared with national averages. Results in 2003 were lower. Most students with low prior attainment at GCSE made satisfactory or good progress through Years 12 and 13 and achieved well. Most other students achieved below expectation. A large proportion of entries were ungraded, across the range of qualifications, including GNVQ. Improved guidance and monitoring of student progress are resulting in a better match of students to courses, including the transition from AS Level in Year 12 to A Level in Year 13. Inspection findings confirm that there is now a better basis for improving results in both years. There has been significant improvement in the provision of some subjects alongside this overall improvement. Typical of this are the science subjects, where improvement in the quality of teaching and learning is resulting in improving standards. This is not the case in mathematics, however, where provision and standards remain poor. Future results continue to be at risk in ICT qualifications because of poor patterns of attendance from some students.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is good. Students' attitudes towards school are satisfactory. Their behaviour is good and there are few exclusions. Students' moral development is good. Students' spiritual, social and cultural development are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 10 and 11 have positive attitudes towards learning and they behave well during lessons and at other times.
- Students of all ages are interested in the wide range of activities provided during lessons and enjoy taking part in the many extra curricular activities.
- There is little bullying and teachers act quickly to resolve any such incidents as and when they occur.
- Teachers manage students' behaviour well and racial incidents are very rare; exclusions are very low.
- Systems for improving attendance in Years 7 to 11 are very effective.
- Too many students in Years 10 and 11 arrive late and this has a disruptive effect on the start of their school day.
- Students have a strong sense of justice and respect for their own and others' backgrounds, but there are missed opportunities throughout the school's provision to enhance their personal development further.

Commentary

1. As part of the inspection, parents were asked to complete a questionnaire that requested their views about numerous areas of school life. Only around five per cent of parents returned their form; this level is well below average. Of the few that did express a view, almost half were concerned about the standard of students' behaviour. Inspectors, however, do not feel there is cause for concern. Although a few students of all ages challenge their teachers' authority, the behaviour of students in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and students in Years 10 and 11 behave well. The positive attitudes of the older group are also reflected by comments made during formal and informal discussions with inspectors. Students say that they feel well looked after during the school day and that their teachers are helpful and supportive. Their 'can do' attitude to learning helps them to make good progress in their work. Many students of all ages also enjoy taking part in the wide range of extra curricular activities and clubs, such as dance and football, are especially popular.
2. One section of the students' pre-inspection questionnaire enquired about the level of bullying and racist abuse in the school. Two out of three who responded stated that such incidents do indeed occur, indicating a high level of concern. Inspectors followed this up during formal and

informal discussions with students and staff and through examination of the school's records. When asked about this, students say that many of the incidents to which they were referring were not really bullying. They were, in fact, referring to occasions when friends fell out or had a disagreement. They also said that incidents of sustained bullying are, in fact, relatively rare and that teachers act quickly to resolve such situations. Examination of the school's records supports their view. The school enjoys an atmosphere of very good racial harmony. Students of all ages represent a very wide range of ethnic groups and racial incidents are exceptionally rare; indeed, there have been only two such incidents over the last year. The college excludes students as a very last resort and the number of exclusions is very low. This is a reflection of the school's commitment to the education of all its students and teachers' determination to meet their individual needs.

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	363	1	0
White – Irish	9	0	0
White – any other White background	48	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	37	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	18	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	17	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	33	2	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	145	4	1
Black or Black British – African	231	2	1
Black or Black British – any other Black background	48	2	0
Chinese	16	0	0
Any other ethnic group	54	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	1	0

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

- Students with special educational needs generally have positive attitudes towards their work and often behave well in lessons. When they are withdrawn from lessons, due to behavioural problems, to work in the learning support unit, they generally behave very well.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.7	School data	0.8
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

4. Attendance is good for students in Years 7 to 11. Punctuality is unsatisfactory overall: it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and poor in Years 10 and 11.
5. Attendance has been improving at a steady rate over the last three years, in line with the national trend in improvement. This is a considerable achievement for a school which serves an area of significant social deprivation. The attendance of students in Years 10 and 11 has improved markedly since the last inspection, when it was well below the 90 per cent threshold. Their good attendance contributes to the good progress they are able to make in their GCSE and GNVQ courses. The school has put in place very successful measures to follow up and monitor absences; for example, it makes very good use of a computer program which automatically telephones parents asking them to explain why their child is not attending school. Staff work very well in partnership with the Education Social Worker to devise strategies for improving the attendance of individuals and the school is fully supportive of the borough's new policy of not authorising any term-time holidays. Arrangements to improve students' punctuality have met with some success in Years 7 to 9, but have not been effective in Years 10 and 11 where punctuality remains poor. The continuous stream of late arrivals to registration periods and assemblies has a negative impact on provision at the beginning of the day. The school is fully aware of the issue and is working on further strategies; for example, it is appropriately planning to start a breakfast club.
6. Students' personal development is satisfactory. Provision for their moral development is good and it is satisfactory for their spiritual, social and cultural development. Students show a good awareness of fairness, are proud of the ethnic diversity in the school and their place in it, and work well together, for example in performing arts and sporting activities. A few subjects – notably design and technology, but also others such as dance and sociology – build on these attributes well to give students purposeful opportunities to debate and reflect on issues, to celebrate different cultures and to take responsibility and initiative in their learning. Most subjects make a satisfactory contribution to students' personal development but do not always seize the chances offered by the schemes of work and the richness of cultures within the school to enrich students' experiences to the greatest extent possible. For example, in art and design in Years 7 to 9 there are some opportunities for self-reflection but beliefs are not a focus, no moral issues are discussed, and most cultural references are to western European artists. Provision for students' spiritual development in assemblies and morning registration periods is often restricted because of the number of latecomers and a sometimes mechanical approach to saying prayers. Social development is hampered by the lack of a formal structure for students to undertake responsibilities within the school, contribute to school developments and have links with the sixth form.

Sixth form

7. There is a calm and purposeful ethos in the sixth form. Relationships between students of all ages are very good, embodying an impressive degree of racial harmony. Relationships between staff and students are also good. Behaviour is good with any incidents dealt with quickly and firmly by the school. The sixth form common room and private study areas are well maintained by the students.
8. The students are willing to accept responsibility. A sixth form council meets regularly. Students are involved in mentoring roles in the main school and undertake lunchtime supervisory duties in the dining area. They are keen to have greater opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and to expand upon the current programme of social activities.
9. Attendance is unsatisfactory overall. Several initiatives developed by the school mean that it is better than in previous years and good in many subject areas. However, it is unsatisfactory particularly in some vocational subjects and in PSHE lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Provision for the care, welfare and health and safety of students is very good. Teaching is good for students in Years 10 and 11; these students make very good progress. Opportunities for students to contribute their views about school matters are largely missing.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the main school and the sixth form. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All teachers have good, often expert, subject knowledge and produce well structured and, in many cases, creative and stimulating lessons.
- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 where teachers plan differentiated activities to meet the needs of all students.
- Teaching is very good in design and technology.
- Very good lessons are characterised by challenge, stimulating activities and high expectations.
- Teaching is generally unsatisfactory where lively students are not managed effectively.
- In some subjects marking does not sufficiently help students to improve.

Commentary

10. The overall effectiveness of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are knowledgeable, many having an expert knowledge of the subject content and assessment requirements. In Years 7, 8 and 9 the least successful lessons are those where teachers do not plan lessons which accommodate the wide spectrum of attainment of students and where there is a lack of engagement of potentially lively students in appropriate and stimulating activities. However, some teachers do plan effectively and produce differentiated activities in some subjects, for example in history and modern languages, and teachers make particularly good use of learning support assistants in art and design. Teachers generally work productively with learning support assistants, although not in science, to ensure that students with special educational needs make progress and achieve as well as their peers. Homework is set regularly and generally marked by all subject staff.
11. Several excellent lessons were observed in personal, social and health education (PSHE), music and design and technology where expert teachers taught inspiring lessons which catered for all abilities, enthused students with a desire to learn and ensured all reached their full potential and in the latter subject with breathtaking outcomes in terms of students' learning. Two very good Year 7 art and design lessons were characterised by challenge and high expectations and in the four very good dance lessons observed, the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject, expert teaching and carefully planned lessons inspired students' performance. As with the several good physical education lessons observed, it was only a lack of opportunity for self and peer evaluation which prevented the lessons being deemed outstanding. Very good planning in history lessons on Northern Ireland and the Roman Empire, in Years 10 and 7 respectively, were characterised by the teacher's very good planning which included a number of differentiated activities to ensure all achieved well. Good English lessons are characterised by interesting and well planned activities which engage the students in their learning. A very good Year 11 Spanish lesson on healthy living was conducted entirely in Spanish and as a consequence provided a challenge for students, to which they rose.

12. Where teachers fail to stimulate students and lessons lack pace and challenge, students do not make the necessary progress in the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. This was evident in the six unsatisfactory lessons observed in geography, maths, dance, French and music across Years 7, 8 and 9. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed in Years 10 and 11. Unsatisfactory lessons are invariably characterised by poor student management where lively students are not stimulated with relevant activities, where there is poor use of time or where the teacher spends too long talking at the students, as in a Year 9 geography class on France. A Year 10 English lesson on Romeo and Juliet was judged poor where the teacher made little attempt to engage the students and disruptive behaviour was not challenged.
13. Teachers are aware of the students with special educational needs in their classes through a combination of informal and formal methods. Specific information about individual students is sometimes provided. Individual education plans are no longer produced and have been replaced by progress reports, which are less informative about specific difficulties. They do, however, provide good on-going assessment of students in lessons. Some teachers plan their lessons well and adapt teaching strategies and resources for students with special educational needs. However, this practice is variable. Teaching assistants provide good and sometimes very good support. They are developing expertise within subject areas and are usually placed in the smaller, lower sets. Some teachers plan well for their use and work closely with them, but others do not. There are good links with a range of outside agencies to provide information about individual students.
14. As a consequence of the above, learning overall is satisfactory. Students' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is good although their application and productivity, and their capacity to work both independently and collaboratively are only satisfactory. In many lessons, opportunities for independent learning and evaluation are limited especially where teachers do not integrate student-centred activities into their lessons. Teachers in English, dance, history, ICT and music place a particular focus on students' literacy skills which develop well. Students can apply numeracy skills appropriately in, for example, science and graphics lessons.
15. Assessment is satisfactory overall. It is particularly effective in ICT and design and technology but in English, science and modern foreign languages marking places too little emphasis on how students might improve their performance.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory**.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 173 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (3%)	25 (14%)	66 (38%)	66 (38%)	9 (5%)	2 (1%)	0

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

Sixth form

16. **Sixth form teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.** The school has done much recently to improve the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observation and feedback to teachers, professional development opportunities for key staff and school based in-service training.
17. Good and very good teaching was observed in many subjects. In English and history effective teaching is based around very good relationships with students, clear and well-structured

lesson planning and well timed, challenging tasks. In design and technology, good teaching challenges students to be creative and critical in their work. In chemistry, biology and sociology, teachers use questioning well to challenge students in their thinking, to focus them on research tasks and to be confident in the application of their knowledge in their responses. In many lessons teachers work hard to support and guide their students. For example, potential language difficulties are identified and addressed at the beginning of lessons. Opportunities are provided for students to learn through visual and practical approaches. Teachers' subject knowledge is good in all curriculum areas and is a key element in enabling them to provide good quality lessons. Resource provision is good in lessons. ICT provision for students is good but not fully exploited by some teachers.

18. Teaching is unsatisfactory in mathematics. Some recent staffing difficulties have disrupted the continuity of teaching and learning. Where other teaching has been satisfactory at best, teachers have failed to create sufficient varied opportunities for students to engage fully in the lesson. Consequently, the students have become over-dependent upon their teachers.
19. In most lessons students respond well to the good teaching provided. They are keen to progress, quick to respond to questioning and work effectively in group and individual activities. Most are confident and capable of working with some independence (for example in physics) but some remain over-dependent upon teachers. Some also hinder their progress through poor attendance and occasional lateness.
20. Students benefit from regular feedback from their teachers about the progress they are making and any improvements needed to achieve to their full potential. Opportunities for self and peer assessment are varied across subjects and, overall, underused.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** in the main school and **satisfactory** in the sixth form. Opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities are good. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. Staffing is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of courses at Years 10-11 with an increasing number of vocational options.
- An impressive range of curriculum enrichment activities.
- Accommodation has improved, is well looked after and is enhanced by the attractive way in which the school grounds are planted.
- There is a good range of AS and A Level courses.
- Continuing attention is required to the developing of alternative pathways in the sixth form.

Commentary

21. The school provides equal access to a good range of curricular opportunities. The curriculum is regularly reviewed formally by the curriculum committee of the governing body but also through annual consultation and faculty or departmental reviews. The curriculum provides a good range of opportunities in Years 7 to 9; students begin ICT examination courses Year 9. However the physical education curriculum is unsatisfactory as it is skewed to dance and provides very limited time to teach the physical education National Curriculum. The curriculum in Year 10 and 11 offers a wide range of choices including dance, media studies, economics, sociology, and business studies and students are able to take 10 examination subjects. If too many students wish to take an option then the school sometimes provides it as an after school

option as has happened with dance. The overall curriculum is well suited to the aptitudes and interests of all students.

22. Students with special educational needs generally have access to the whole curriculum including extra-curricular activities. They are withdrawn infrequently for particular interventions, focused on the development of literacy. The effectiveness of these interventions has not yet been evaluated.
23. The school makes good use of additional funding to provide extension opportunities for gifted and talented students and there is open access to activities for all those who wish to take part.
24. Opportunities for enrichment are good with a varied and interesting programme of experiences for all students. Most subjects have a range of clubs, some, including sport and musical activities, attracting large numbers of students. During the inspection there were some exciting, high quality experiences for students in dance and sport. Students spoke with pride about their involvement in the school 'musical' and a growing number now participate in the school orchestra and choirs. Visits by external speakers, including leading politicians, are well established and valued. Frequent trips are organised out-of-school, including several visits to higher education institutions for students in the sixth form. Participation by students in an annual retreat contributes significantly to their spiritual development.
25. The accommodation overall is good and it is well looked after. Attractive displays in classrooms and corridors provide areas of interest for students to look at as well as celebrating achievement. The library stock was undergoing complete overhaul during the inspection in order to enhance it as a learning resources facility. Indications are that this was long overdue. The school has managed to maintain specialist staffing overall in the face of challenging recruitment difficulties. There is, however, a lack of specialist staffing in geography. Curriculum resources have improved and are satisfactory or better in all faculties except art, where there is a lack of ICT and visual resources. ICT facilities have improved dramatically, as has technology, which is spoken of with pride by the students.

Sixth form

26. The school offers a wide range of courses to meet the diverse needs of its students. Statutory requirements are met. Links with two local schools have been established to further broaden provision.
27. Much has been done to develop a curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students. A range of vocational courses has been introduced in recent years. Some AVCE courses have proved unsuitable. The school has recognised this and has begun to develop several BTEC courses and is currently seeking status as a BTEC centre. Planned provision for 2004/5 will see a broad curriculum offer in place, developing pathways from Years 7 to 11 into the sixth form. A good range of AS Level and A Level courses are taught. Provision for those students with special educational needs is good. The curriculum time for subjects has been increased this year. It is now good and benefiting teachers and students. The school has suffered from poor retention rates in recent years, particularly in some vocational subjects. Through improvements to guidance arrangements and curriculum developments the situation is much improved, particularly amongst Year 13 students. However, unsatisfactory completion rates remain in some subjects.
28. Key skills are taught within curriculum areas with an appropriate emphasis upon developing students' basic skills and ICT capability. A range of enrichment opportunities is provided, again within curriculum areas. Several subjects provide relevant visits. At the time of the inspection, one group had just returned from Paris, on a business education study trip sponsored by the European Parliament.

29. Extra-curricular provision includes sports teams and coaching opportunities. Overall, however, provision is limited. The PSHE programme, offered through weekly tutorial lessons, is ineffective. The planned programme is appropriate and resources have been developed to support tutors. However, some students show little interest and attendance to lessons during the inspection was poor.

Care, guidance and support

Procedures for ensuring students' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. The school provides good support, advice and guidance for students in Years 7 to 11. Arrangements for seeking the views of students and involving them in the school's work and development are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works very effectively to secure the protection and well-being of its students.
- Students have access to a very wide range of adults and agencies who are available to help them with personal difficulties and to guide them to fulfil their potential.
- Systems for consulting, listening and responding to students' ideas are weak, with the result that half the students believe that the school is not interested in their views.

Commentary

30. Arrangements for child protection have improved significantly since the last inspection. All staff are now trained to recognise signs of abuse and understand the referral mechanism. The designated teacher for child protection is very experienced and skilled in dealing with the high number of stressful cases. The school provides good advocacy for the most vulnerable students and ensures that they are able to complete their education. The quality of the school's child protection procedures is enhanced by the close liaison with external agencies such as the Education Social Worker and the police. A similar level of commitment to the welfare of students is shown by the premises staff who are vigilant and conscientious in making sure that the buildings and site are safe, clean and well-maintained and that equipment is regularly checked. Healthy living is promoted well in the curriculum, for example in science and Spanish.
31. There are many strengths in the school's arrangements for guiding students from transfer from primary schools through to taking public examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11 and making career choices. For example, the school employs its own learning mentor to visit primary schools and support targeted students, including those with special educational needs, who find the transition to secondary school difficult. Teaching assistants are sensitive to the changing needs of students with special educational needs and provide good, and sometimes very good, support in lessons. A learning mentor employed by the borough's new Excellence in Cities project is used very well to support students in Year 9 who are identified as potential underachievers ahead of the National Curriculum tests. Students benefit from a good programme of careers education provided by the school and impartial guidance provided by external agencies, so that by the time they reach the middle of Year 11 most are clear about what they want to do when they leave school and how they are going to achieve it. Academic guidance by subject teachers is more effective in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 because it is better focused on the requirements of the public examinations.
32. Although the school has a high proportion of students with English as an additional language, few are early stage learners. There is grant funded support for 240 students but only 18 receive targeted support. Initial assessments are carefully undertaken. Progress is carefully monitored but there is no strategic plan for support across the curriculum, although teachers and teaching assistants offer extra help. There is no discrete base for students who are withdrawn from lessons and resources are very limited; no use is made of ICT in support.
33. A third of the students responding to the inspection questionnaire said that there is no adult in the school that they can talk to if they have a problem. This was a huge disappointment to the school which immediately took steps to remind students of the wealth of people and services available to them. Inspectors found that some students are concerned about the confidentiality of some of the external services provided, but also that these services, such as the new drop-in sessions provided by the school nurse, are greatly in demand. In discussion, students agreed that their first port of call is usually a teacher whom they can trust, and a reasonable proportion of form tutors were seen to have positive relationships with their tutor groups. The five year leaders are dedicated to helping the students in their care to overcome any barriers to learning and to achieve as well as they can. Each year leader brings particular strengths and new initiatives to the role.
34. Students put forward suggestions from time to time to their year leaders who act on them when feasible and within their remit, for example organising a talent show in Year 7. Students' views about setting up a breakfast club were canvassed but they are uncertain as to what the school is doing about it. The local education authority conducts an annual 'attitudes' questionnaire for a single year group but the results are released too late to be of great use and it is not clear how the school acts on the results that it does have. There are no systematic structures for encouraging students to debate issues which are of concern to them and to the school nor for involving them in electing representatives who can put forward their views on

their behalf. Students with statements are invited to attend their annual review, although not all do so.

Sixth form

35. Care, guidance and support are good. The school works very hard to enable many of its students to overcome the difficulties they face as students. One example of this is the school's participation in the pilot scheme to offer financial support to some students and the perseverance teachers have shown to succeed in implementing the scheme.
36. Overall, the quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance given to students are good. Arrangements to inform and guide prospective students are satisfactory. The school has recently reviewed its guidance for students entering both Year 12 and Year 13. Clear and appropriate entry criteria are now applied to ensure students follow appropriate courses.
37. Arrangements to track the academic progress of students are good. Students are given target grades. Teachers and tutors monitor and report on their students regularly and procedures are in place to support those not progressing well.
38. There are very good relationships between staff and students. Students are treated with respect at all times. When interviewed all students felt comfortable and relaxed when in school. All confirmed there was at least one adult in school whom they know and trust.
39. The quality and effectiveness of tutoring is varied and dependent upon the capabilities of individual tutors. Arrangements for student registration are unsatisfactory. Induction arrangements are satisfactory. Students and their parents are involved in information sessions and interviews. Study skills support is provided both within tutorials and by subject staff.
40. Careers guidance is good and support and guidance for university applications is very good. Much is done within this work to raise the aspirations of students and the school has had considerable success regarding the number of students moving on to higher education and gaining employment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, other schools and colleges are satisfactory. Links with the community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is successfully establishing links with the local community and makes very good use of its strong links with business to support students' learning.
- The school keeps parents well informed about the progress their children are making.
- Links with other schools are good.

Commentary

41. This school takes students from a wide area and relatively few live nearby. It is nevertheless working hard to develop links with the local community, for example, through its Village Club initiative. This is designed to provide diverse opportunities for contact between students of the college and local young people. For example, increasing numbers are regularly participating in Saturday 'Village Club' football games and coaching. In addition, the school is providing adult education classes that are designed to appeal to the local community and more courses are planned. Although it is early days, these efforts are proving to be successful and it is hoped

that, over time, the local community will increasingly see the Collegiate School as an important focal point for the area.

42. The school makes very good use of its strong links with the wider community. For example, it is successfully using sport as a medium through which it can support students' reading and mathematical abilities. Innovative links with football clubs such as Arsenal enable students to develop their academic skills within a sporting context and these initiatives are proving to be very successful. There are also long-standing links with Leyton Orient Football Club and it provides specialist coaches. There are very strong links with the local Education and Business Partnership. It arranges for over 80 mentors from industry to come into school each week in order to help students with their reading and mathematics. This project is very well established and students and mentors alike derive great benefit from their regular sessions. In addition, undergraduate students from Queen Mary College come in each week to help during lessons and students in Year 10 undertake work experience placements during the summer term.
43. As part of the inspection, parents were asked to complete a questionnaire that requested their views about numerous areas of school life. Only around five per cent of parents returned their form; this level is well below average and this means that the views expressed may not be representative of parents as a whole. Analysis of their responses shows that they are dissatisfied about many aspects of the school's work. Inspectors disagree with many of their concerns. For example, around one in four of those who responded is dissatisfied with the information received about their children's progress. Parents receive a written report each term about their children's progress and these provide a very clear picture of how they are getting along. In addition, parents have a formal opportunity each term to speak with their children's teachers and members of staff always make time to speak with individual parents if they have a particular concern.
44. There are good links with Mulberry School and Stepney Green School. Students get together for visits to the theatre and visit each other's schools for lessons and sporting activities.

Sixth form

45. The sixth form prospectus provides good information for parents. Parents are encouraged to attend interviews to ensure students are placed on appropriate courses both as they enter the sixth form and move from Year 12 into Year 13. Communications with parents over issues of concern have been improved and are satisfactory. In questionnaires and discussions, parents are positive and supportive of the sixth form.
46. The school has developed effective curriculum links with two local schools. Whilst this has improved curriculum provision it has had a detrimental impact upon some time-tabling arrangements. The school is aware of this and is seeking to review the situation with its partners.
47. In the past, links with the local community have not been strong. However, the recent appointment of an Ethnic Minorities Community Officer and the launching of a soccer coaching programme linked to two professional clubs are significant examples of the school's efforts to improve the situation.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governance of the school is satisfactory. The quality of leadership is good. Management is good. The school enables students with below average attainment on entry to achieve well by the end of Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the good management from other key staff support effective and inclusive learning.
- The innovative arrangements the school uses for recruitment includes excellent provision for Initial Teacher Training.
- The provision made for continuing professional development is good although the dissemination of good practice internally is underdeveloped.
- The use of data by classroom teachers is under-developed and needs to be improved.

The headteacher's leadership skills are particularly effective and imaginative in relation to the wider world whilst equally focused on the school's core purpose.

Outstanding leadership is often associated with charisma and larger than life behaviour. However, this headteacher has quietly and very determinedly fought for the best for the students of this, and its associated school. She has doggedly pursued high level officials in the Diocese and DfES to create this boys' school and has obtained accommodation and funding to make it a success. She has shown remarkable vision to pursue the concept of "The Learning Village" and its associated re-building to encompass real community use. Yet, despite the drain on energy that this, and the running of two schools inevitably takes, it is to her that students turn, naturally and happily when she takes the lead inspector on a tour of the school. Students know her, and she knows them – by name, whether they be gifted, troublesome or "average". In her pursuit of excellence and equal opportunities for all, the headteacher has a profound influence on the lives of all her students and, in many cases, their families too. Her accessibility and visibility given her strategic work are remarkable.

48. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body has very recently been re-structured following decisions by the Diocese of Westminster, taken in the light of the Nolan report, in relation to the number of terms of office that foundation governors may serve. Because of this, governors' detailed knowledge of the school currently is low. There is clear evidence, however, that, previously, the governors were very effective in shaping the school's vision, particularly in relation to the planned re-building. They regularly held the school to account asking detailed questions of senior managers through their curriculum committee. The chair of governors, who is very experienced in the role, provides very good support and challenge to the school. He and the headteacher have a shared vision for raising further standards of achievement. The large number of new governors are of good quality and, under the leadership of the chair of governors, they will be able to continue to be effective. The school has an effective Race Equality Policy and the governing body has clear arrangements for monitoring its implementation.
49. There are a small number of minor statutory requirements that are not met:
- There are minor omissions in the school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents.
 - One statement of special educational need was not reviewed on time, partially because of circumstances affecting the family of the student concerned.
50. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. The leadership team has created a good and inclusive climate so that the school is an effective learning organisation. The clear vision held by the team is communicated well to and shared by all adults in the school. The headteacher's inspirational leadership sets a clear vision for the future of the school as a highly innovative and outward looking institution. She brings a passion that all children can achieve and that education can make a significant difference to young people's lives. Throughout the school good role models motivate and influence both students and staff. The day-to-day interactions between staff (both teaching and other members of staff) demonstrate the mutual respect for each other. Each student is clearly known well by at least one member of staff. Staff are successful in including all, even those who may not respond well to school. Other key staff provide good support for leadership. Subject leadership is generally good in all subjects.

51. Planning is very effective. The school knows itself well. Very good development planning enables the school, supported by very effective self-evaluation, to appropriately identify what needs to be done and achieved in the future. The development of the federation of two schools, and the plans for 'The Learning Village', attest to this. The school improvement plan is comprehensive, contains appropriate targets and is closely linked to department plans. Planning for improvement at department level is generally good. The school leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning well and use the outcomes to support weaknesses where they occur. The quality of monitoring is more variable amongst subject leaders.
52. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Management throughout the school is good. The work of heads of department in managing their subject areas is generally good.
53. The school's leadership provides well for enrichment opportunities for all students beyond the school day. They have also provided a wide range of appropriate options for students in Key Stage 4 and have enabled most students to gain 5 or more good GCSE grades by so doing. The headteacher takes decisive and rigorous action when there are shortcomings in the quality of teaching or management.
54. The school has a large number of student teachers, who come from a wide range of institutions. It is able to report that almost all enter the teaching profession successfully. This extensive provision has also led to a number of appointments from Newly Qualified Teachers, who having learnt their craft with the school, have been keen to take their first posts at the school. The school's contribution to initial teacher-training has been excellent.
55. Although the school has a large number of unqualified teachers almost all are those with overseas teaching qualifications. Once again the school has been able to successfully induct these colleagues into the school. These new staff are complemented by a large number of teachers with considerable experience: over 50 teachers have spent more than two years at the school and over 30 teachers more than four years. More than 60 teachers have five years or more teaching experience. There have been, and continue to be staffing difficulties: governors have attempted to fill deputy headteacher vacancies to no avail on several occasions. They find it very difficult to attract candidates with the necessary Roman Catholic background. As a consequence there are a number temporary senior leadership posts. Some middle management posts have been difficult to fill, in particular mathematics and ICT. Overall, in very difficult local circumstances and climate, the school has been very successful in recruiting and retaining teachers.
56. The school has fully embraced workforce reforms. This is a developing area but a number of initiatives have been enacted. These include, for example, lighter teaching loads for new staff, meetings restricted to one hour per week and the use of staff other than teachers to invigilate public examinations. Those returning from a period of ill-health are interviewed so that their return is more comfortable.
57. All staff undertake a good range of continuing professional development. Several members of staff are completing masters and doctorate degrees and three members of staff are undertaking headteacher qualifications. Performance management has been carried out well and includes non-teaching staff. The provision for staff development is very good and influential in retaining good staff.
58. Financial planning and control are good. The school's financial arrangements are unusual and complex because of the existence of the quasi-federated boys' school under the same leadership and management. Because of this, the school sensibly commissioned an independent audit. The report was very affirmative of the arrangements and minor matters to be addressed are completed or clearly in hand. The balance of expenditure on staff, resources are carefully planned and variances from local education authority averages are appropriate. The bursar has a very good grasp of the complexities of the work and shows

initiative in developing clear accountable systems to cope with these complexities. The school has demonstrated a clear grasp of the principles of best value in commissioning services. The school has also planned well to provide excellent ICT provision which is still developing further. All those who support the school's work administratively do so effectively and efficiently.

59. The school gives good value for money because students achieve very well at the end of Year 11, having entered the school with well below average attainment, and because of the very low socio-economic background from which the students come.

Sixth form

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

60. The current leadership team has been in place for one year. The school has a very clear vision for the future development of the sixth form. This is based upon effective monitoring and evaluation, recently undertaken by the school, the local education authority and external consultants. Consequently, the school has a very clear understanding of its current strengths and areas in need of development.
61. Planning to improve identified issues is good. The current development plan is sharply focused and sets out clear targets for improvement. Progress towards these targets is varied. This is because the current management structure does not enable sufficient speed of response to some issues and does not facilitate long term strategic development. Progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching in the sixth form, in reviewing and improving curricular provision and in ensuring more rigorous criteria have been developed and applied for entry onto courses. Students' progress is monitored effectively and support given where required.
62. The sixth form is cost-effective. The school does not subsidise its provision from other parts of the school income and carefully plans for the most effective group sizes in the post-16 sector.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,853,517
Total expenditure	4,603,732
Expenditure per pupil	4,307

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-215,284
Balance carried forward to the next	34,496

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

Quality of provision in English is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Positive student attitudes to learning and a supportive working atmosphere in classrooms.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students achieve well in all years.
- Although planning is clear, the range of strategies employed to meet the needs of higher attaining students is insufficient.
- There is a shared vision and commitment to high standards in the department but management structures need to be more firmly established to be effective.

Commentary

63. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory overall. In 2003, results indicated that students were achieving very well in comparison to national averages and students' performance in writing exceeded that of reading in contrast with the national trend. The proportion of students achieving Level 6 and above was above average in comparison to students in similar schools and taking into account prior performance. However, teacher assessments were considerably below the results achieved in the test.
64. In lessons and in work scrutiny in Years 7 to 9, standards are in line with national expectations. Students can write in a range of contexts, have a good grasp of sentence structure and develop a growing vocabulary. They read aloud competently and often confidently though expression is lacking at times. The progress of students aged 11 to 14, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language, is good.
65. Standards in lessons in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory, but in 2003 results in GCSE English dipped well below national averages for girls. Results in English Literature, however, although still below national averages, are considerably better and this result included almost three-quarters of the students in the year group. The attainment of more able students is below expectations and the number of students gaining A – A* at GCSE is low. By the end of the key stage, students continue to gain in confidence in speaking aloud and are increasingly able to adapt their tone and register appropriately. With the focus of the GCSE syllabus, students learn to respond to literature in an increasingly sophisticated way and their vocabulary and style in written work develops satisfactorily. Progress across the key stage is good as a result of both good teaching and good student attitudes.
66. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is good with some very good elements in Years 10 and 11. There are many strengths, most notably a clear structure given to all lessons, which ensures that learning objectives are shared with students from the outset of the lesson. Classroom management is good and the very positive relationships with students contribute to a good working ethos. Students know what to expect and this helps in making good progress. Teacher subject knowledge is good and teachers are enthusiastic and committed to the teaching of literature and this is a factor in the success of this area. Schemes of work include

a range of activities and have a strong literature focus. In a very good Year 10 lesson on "Romeo and Juliet", the teacher engaged and motivated students through the use of an overhead projector highlighting the importance of props and stage directions in Act 3 scene 5. The improved understanding gained from this activity helped students to plan a practical performance which was to follow in the next lesson. Marking is generally positive and supportive but the lack of evaluative comments to guide students on what they need to do to improve, limits the further progress they could be making. The range of strategies employed to ensure that tasks meet the needs of students of all abilities is limited. As a result, at times, more able students are insufficiently challenged and there is too little guidance for students undertaking writing tasks in specific genres. This often results in a drop in pace in lessons as students move with more difficulty into independent writing activities. Information and communication technology contributes to students' language skills, but is not fully utilised.

67. Drama is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE. In the lessons observed, the standards achieved in Years 7 to 9 were below average and although students enjoyed the subject and the process of creating a story, they made little progress in developing a performance. Insufficient attention was given to the appropriate movement and voice skills necessary to develop character and there was little awareness of audience. The standard observed at GCSE was better as the teacher, through questioning, focussed students more directly on performance skills. However, self-evaluation was not sufficiently developed.
68. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a vision and commitment to high standards alongside a caring and supportive ethos for students and excellent relationships within the department. The department reflects the aims of the whole school and after a difficult period of staffing changes, has the capacity to move forward and develop further. The department's documentation lacks detail and the informality of whole school links, for example with special educational needs, English as an additional language, and cross-curricular literacy, means it is difficult to ensure cohesion and consistency. Monitoring and evaluation, although taking place, lacks the rigour to ensure that resources are effectively focused for maximum effect.
69. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. National Curriculum test results in 2003 rose significantly in comparison to previous years though results at GCSE were below those achieved at the time of the last inspection. The department has embraced the changes brought about by the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and focuses well, particularly on the development of students' vocabulary. The majority of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good or better which is similar to findings in the previous report.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

70. The National Literacy Strategy is incorporated into work in English, and is implemented into the school curriculum. Subject areas have recognised the strategy in their schemes of work, and in the planning and teaching of lessons. For example, in history, the schemes of work and lesson plans have a particular emphasis upon literacy skills and are used to good effect in both class and homework. Students' standards of writing are generally weak on entry to the school. Teachers are aware of the need to emphasise correct vocabulary, and key words are displayed in some classrooms. For example, in music, teachers regularly reinforce spelling, punctuation and specialist vocabulary in lessons. In ICT, much of a Year 7 lesson had a literacy slant and focussed on the meanings of words related to the use and purpose of documents. Successful strategies to develop students' literacy skills include the provision of creative writing classes by the English department, and the reading support programme, including reading partners. The literacy strategy is supported by advice from the local education authority. Procedures to monitor and evaluate the application of the school's literacy policy and its impact upon standards of students' literacy have yet to be fully established.

71. Students generally read fluently, although often without sufficient tone and inflection to emphasise meaning. Most students speak confidently and listen well. They are responsive to teachers' questioning, convey their opinions clearly, and appropriately use specialist terminology. Most students by Year 9 are beginning to use Standard English in formal situations and this continues well in Years 10 and 11. Students' writing is generally varied and interesting, and spelling and punctuation accurate. Dictionaries and thesauruses are well used in English lessons. Students' literacy skills develop throughout their schooling, and benefit by the planned intervention in many subject areas.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In most lessons, especially in Years 10 and 11, teachers have excellent command of the language and use it consistently, but in some lessons observed in Years 7 to 9, this did not apply.
- The teaching of students with lower prior attainment is good, but there is not enough challenge for higher attaining students.
- ICT is included in schemes of work, but has not yet made an impact on the quality of students' work or motivation.
- The department makes insufficient use of attainment data either to give feedback and guidance to students or to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of provision.

Commentary

72. The number of candidates for French GCSE has fallen considerably in recent years to a level even lower than at the time of the last report. The percentage of entrants who gained grade C or better was above average in the three years leading to 2002, the last year when candidates entered the exam, but the school did not analyse how well candidates achieved in comparison with their other subjects. Current achievement is satisfactory overall. Students with low prior attainment receive well-focussed attention in small groups and make good progress. The achievement of girls with higher prior attainment, taught in much larger groups, is satisfactory, but they lack concentration in class. While teachers normally challenge this effectively, the girls make less progress than they should. There is no difference between the achievement levels of students from different ethnic backgrounds, but bilingual students do well, as they make full use of skills acquired outside school.
73. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Students with low prior attainment learn well because of the good relationships between teachers and students, combined with good strategies for promoting literacy. The teaching of students with higher prior attainment is weaker: they learn less well because they receive too little challenge and do little independent work, in either speaking or writing. Most lack confidence when using French in unpredictable situations. Teachers often use the foreign language in lessons and this benefits all students, especially those who have English as an additional language. This practice is not used consistently in all lessons, but is better in Years 10 and 11 where teaching and learning are good. Students gradually increase the amount of independent work they do and the course work they have completed recently indicates that standards are rising. The numbers who have chosen French in the current Year 10 suggest that language learning is increasing in popularity. Opportunities for using ICT to support language learning are now included in the schemes of work, but the evidence available in students' written work shows that these have not yet made an impact on their learning. Students have some knowledge of how well they are doing, but not of how to improve.

74. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The departmental team, two of whom have only been in post a few months, works well together. The development plan is carefully constructed, with appropriate, measurable targets and sensible strategies. It projects an ambitious vision for the development of the department, focussing on raising attainment. Teachers understand the importance of improving the quality of teaching and have planned good strategies for doing so. They have built in mechanisms for monitoring, calculated costs and have planned to develop the use of new technology. The time-scales for monitoring are not precise enough and the process has not yet had impact because there is not enough feedback to teachers, especially on raising expectations of students who have higher prior attainment. Teachers do not analyse data on students' performance in sufficient detail and the targets students set for themselves have too little focus on the content of their courses.
75. Students have learned Spanish in alternate years recently and provision is satisfactory. The first group entered the GCSE examination in 2003, but there were only four candidates, one of whom gained a grade higher than C. No generalisations can be inferred from such small numbers, but the school's predictions indicate that results were in line with expectations. Standards observed in lessons in Year 11 are below the national average, with several students still unfamiliar with past and future verb tenses, reflecting a lack of continuity of teaching in recent years. The department is now fully staffed and the numbers choosing Spanish in Years 10 and 11 are increasing, with about 30 students currently in Year 11.
76. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The department has dealt successfully with several weaknesses mentioned last time. Students are now better motivated, teaching is better matched to the needs of students, especially those with lower attainment, schemes of work are more focussed and the time allocation is more favourable. Other weaknesses remain. Students still lack confidence when speaking and most still do not choose languages in Years 10 and 11.

MATHEMATICS

The overall provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' high expectations contribute to raising standards.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is impacting on practice.
- Skilful questioning provides opportunities to promote understanding and develop literacy skills.
- Use of ICT by individual teachers is developing but needs to become embedded formally in the faculty's work to benefit teaching and learning fully.
- Teaching strategies lack variety to maintain interest among more boisterous groups.
- A more formal use of IEPs would benefit the students involved.

Commentary

77. Results in National Curriculum tests in Year 9 are below the national average. During a period of considerable staffing difficulty, results have been improving at a faster rate than nationally and are now close to the national figure.
78. In Years 10 and 11, while results are below the national average, the level has been maintained. Given the below average ability of the intake on entry to Year 7 students who achieved A* or A grades reflect the efforts made by teachers to help the most able students to realise their potential.

79. Work seen in books in Years 7 to 9 was in line with expectations, continuing the trend of improving performance, and a little below in Years 10 and 11. Books were regularly marked with appropriate comments of correction and encouragement. Presentation across the school was good.
80. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school with some good lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Relationships are good. Students work well together. The lack of tension between the children is a major contribution to the secure atmosphere in lessons which aids learning.
81. In the good lessons, effective planning ensures good use of time with pace well judged to allow opportunities for good learning. Plenary sessions are well used to review learning. Homework is set regularly to support classwork. Teachers' expectations are high so work set provides a good challenge. As a result, able students in Year 10 can simplify algebraic fractions at higher GCSE level and are happy to demonstrate this in front of their classmates. Those in Year 8 are able to deal with equations with the unknown on one side. A low ability Year 7, however, could not deal with numeracy problems using decimals comfortably. Firm class control and students' good attitudes mean they respond well and take a pleasure in achieving clearly stated lesson aims. Students know about the levels they were aiming for. In these lessons students make good progress.
82. In the majority of lessons where teaching and learning are satisfactory, imprecise use of time, usually with too much planned for a session, allow insufficient time for learning. The more boisterous students then lose interest. There is often insufficient use of materials appropriate to the range of ability in the class. Achievement overall is satisfactory.
83. Access to ICT facilities is good. Use of ICT as an aid to teaching and learning is used well by individual staff. However, to utilise the opportunities offered by ICT fully its use needs to become formally embedded in the work of the faculty.
84. Good work with support staff ensures that students on the school's special educational needs list make the same progress as their peers. However, more use needs to be made of individual education plans before the students involved gain full benefit from their lessons. Those students with English as an additional language are making good progress.
85. Literacy skills are developed well. Correct vocabulary is insisted upon with care being taken to ensure understanding through skilful use of questions. Speaking skills are developed when students are encouraged to explain answers in front of their class, which they do with confidence.
86. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The school has managed a very difficult period of staffing recruitment well. Many staff in the faculty are new to teaching in England. Effective support from senior management, together with good relationships, is helping them to become established. Faculty documentation shows that teaching is monitored thoroughly; lesson observations confirm its impact on practice. There is good use of assessment to benefit teaching and learning. A very recently appointed Head of Faculty is proving to be a good role model with his calm, effective approach. He has clear ideas about how to develop the subject, ideas clearly focussed on teaching and learning, which are being incorporated into the faculty action plan.
87. Staff are very committed to helping their students succeed. They give freely of their time in after school classes to prepare for examinations. Take up for these is good. Classes are run during holidays to assist with coursework and to offer further support in the preparation for public examinations.

88. Accommodation is satisfactory, although the need for staff to use a variety of teaching rooms is inefficient. The faculty is well provided with resources, including text books.
89. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Results in Years 7 to 9 are improving; steps have been taken to improve results at Year 11; text book situation has been improved; access to ICT is now good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

90. Students' mathematical skills are used in the various areas of the curriculum as expected, using graphs in science or tessellations in graphics for example. While those skills are below average they are good enough to permit progress in the different subjects. The development of mathematical skills using the opportunities occurring across the curriculum would bring real benefits to learning. Plans to do this should the present staffing position be maintained, have much to commend them.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong and effective leadership has provided a clear focus on raising standards so that results are improving, although they were still below those in similar schools in 2003.
- Good teaching and the students' positive attitudes to work ensure that achievement is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Students' progress is effectively monitored in order to set individual targets for improvement.
- Work is marked regularly but standards of marking vary between teachers and students are not always given enough advice on how to improve.

Commentary

91. Standards in the 2003 National Curriculum tests for Year 9 students were well below average and below those in similar schools. The results were similar to those in mathematics and below those in English. However, standards have been rising faster than the national average over the past three years. GCSE results were also well below average. Comparison with similar schools is difficult because the students in this school took separate biology, chemistry and physics examinations whereas most similar schools enter students for the double award science GCSE. However, the proportion of students gaining at least one science pass at the higher grades was around average compared to such schools.
92. The good leadership and management provided by a strong head of faculty have concentrated efforts on raising standards and achievement. Teachers are well supported and given good guidance on teaching methods so that they can plan lessons that meet the broad range of needs found in many classes. Teaching is monitored and good practice is shared in order to improve quality. As a result of these factors, standards have risen steadily over the last few years although they are still a little below average by Years 9 and 11. This represents satisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9 and good achievement in Years 10 and 11. Students with special educational needs achieve well.
93. Most students have positive attitudes to the subject, responding well to good teaching. The most effective lessons are well managed, interesting and challenging with a good variety of activities that keeps students engaged in their work. Skilful questioning tests their

understanding and extends their thinking. Practical work is carried out responsibly and confidently. In a minority of lessons, mainly in Years 7 to 9, the pace is not quick enough or the level of challenge not high enough to prevent some students from becoming restless or distracted. However, teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good teaching. Students in all years can remember the basic facts and ideas involved in work they have done. They carry out experiments effectively, although their ability to analyse and evaluate results is not as high as their other skills. The students have good enough skills in English, mathematics and ICT to cope with their science work but many use imprecise language instead of the correct scientific terms when answering questions.

94. The students are helped to make good progress by effective assessment that is used to set individual targets for attainment. They are well aware of their target grades and keen to do well. Routine marking is regularly done although standards vary, with some teachers giving insufficient advice about how to improve.
95. Effective leadership has ensured good progress since the last inspection, with rising standards and an improved curriculum that offers more appropriate choices for students in Years 10 and 11. Booster classes are helping to raise standards further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strategic planning for ICT is very good.
- The percentage of students achieving A*-C grades in ICT is above average.
- The leadership and management of the ICT department are good.
- Most of the teaching is good or better.
- All students follow an ICT examination course from Years 9 to 11 which ensures that all requirements are met, although the current accreditation is unsuitable for the least able students.

Commentary

96. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average and continue to improve. All students follow a GNVQ course in ICT which enables them to attain up to four GCSEs. Results are some way above average for A* to C grades which represents very good achievement for many students. The current accreditation does not, however, cater appropriately for all students. About one quarter would benefit from a more suitable alternative.
97. Standards seen in lessons from Years 7 to 9 were at least satisfactory overall and often good, across a range of software applications. One group of students demonstrated good keyboard skills when creating business documents to which were added imaginative letter headings and business logos created using several pieces of software to good effect. The curriculum is based upon the National Key Stage 3 Strategy for ICT in years 7 and 8. By Year 9 students are in a strong position to begin work on their examination course because of good teaching in almost all lessons.
98. Standards in the examination course, which were seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11, were good overall, and some very good work was in evidence in lessons and student files on the computer network. Teachers ensure that the GNVQ criteria are covered well by the majority and some particularly good student work was seen in the use of software for "on screen" presentations and the construction of Web pages. Students have developed a very

good sense of audience, which ensures that appropriate information; images and animation effects are used well. Many of these are collected from the Internet where students work confidently using good search techniques. Some demanding spreadsheet work was also seen being effectively completed by enthusiastic students.

99. Well-developed schemes of work, thoughtful teacher support and an appropriate range of resources ensure that all students are able to make good progress in relation to their abilities. In some lessons the time allowed for tasks should be made more explicit to help students plan their work more effectively. Appropriate assessment procedures are well established and meet GNVQ requirements, students are well informed about progress and what needs to be done to improve. However, the nature of the examination course, which is completed in Year 11, makes it difficult for some students to have their achievement recognised. Additional or alternative accreditation is under consideration and an early decision would be beneficial. The department, which has seen significant staff and management changes in recent years, has made good progress since the last inspection and has the capacity to improve further.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

100. The use of ICT across the curriculum is good and improving further. There are numerous opportunities to use ICT in almost all subjects. The use of computers can be exploited to good effect because students have good ICT skills and knowledge which are developed in their ICT lessons in all years. ICT use is promoted very effectively at senior management level, where there is a very clear vision of future needs and developments. The curriculum has been mapped to identify opportunities for the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning in all subjects.
101. National Curriculum subjects are meeting their obligations to use ICT appropriately in schemes of work. The very good level of resources makes it possible for subject departments to have access to computers in most parts of the school. Most teachers have had training in the use of ICT for teaching in recent years but the turnover of staff provides a continuing challenge. The use of ICT is particularly effective in all aspects of design and technology. Very good use is made of camcorders for assessment and the analysis of movement in dance. Digital technology is also used to very good effect in the physical education curriculum. There is very good access to the Internet throughout the school for research. The use of ICT is currently limited in the art department but computers and specialist software were already in school at the time of the inspection and are soon to be deployed. The use of ICT in the music curriculum is underdeveloped.
102. As part of the school's vision to promote greater use of ICT in subjects, several class sets of portable computers have recently been made available for use around the school and more interactive whiteboards are being installed. As with other ICT resources these are very well supported by efficient ICT technicians.

HUMANITIES

History

The provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students respond well to good teaching.
- Students are keen to take an active part in lessons and work at good pace.
- Basic historical skills such as interpreting sources and understanding of political issues are developing well.
- Teachers do not always provide learning materials on different levels when there is a wide range of ability in a class.
- Good contributions to students' literacy are made through extended writing.
- The department works well as a team because they collaborate well over lesson planning and assessment.

Commentary

103. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average and achievement is good because students acquire a satisfactory knowledge of history. They can understand and interpret sources well. They can for example, give a balanced view of issues such as those that led to the English Civil War. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average and achievement is good because students develop good knowledge and understanding and can use it effectively for example, to identify the main issues in the Nazis rise to power.

104. Teaching is good because teachers' explanations are clear and learning is good because students pick up key words and concepts quickly. In a Year 8 lesson on the Jacobite rebellion, the teacher's very incisive questioning technique ensured that students had to think hard and respond well. In Year 7 lesson on the Roman Empire, the students' powers of evaluation were tested well because they had to explain which Roman invention is the most useful or important to us today. There is good emphasis on developing literacy in classwork and opportunities for extended writing in homework are used to good effect.
105. In a Year 10 lesson, less able students were given a prompt sheet to help them identify the causes and consequences of the Northern Ireland troubles, whereas more able students had to work with less structure. Students of all abilities, therefore, were able to do the task and were challenged at their own level. Resources are produced that particularly help less able students and challenge more able students. However, in a Year 9 lesson on the causes of World War 2, where all tasks had to be attempted, one task was too easy for some and another task too hard for others.
106. Written work is well presented, showing that students are conscientious and motivated. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher used a spider diagram effectively and students worked at a good pace, thinking, writing and responding well to the teacher's questions.
107. Leadership is good because teachers work well as a team to ensure that lessons are planned for sufficient variation and interest. Assessment is thorough. There is a comprehensive assessment profile on each student, reinforced by counselling if targets are missed. Progress is reviewed formally every half term and students are shown how they can move from one level to the next.
108. Management is satisfactory because although planning is effective in providing interesting lessons and assessment is thorough, this is not used to such good effect in producing learning materials suitable for all abilities. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Key Stage 3 results are well below national average.
- Enthusiastic and energetic leadership and management are having a positive effect on standards.
- Teaching and learning in GCSE classes is good.
- Teaching in Key Stage 3 is not sufficiently focussed on challenging learning objectives.
- ICT is not systematically used across the department and fieldwork investigation skills are not well developed.
- Improvements to the curriculum are beginning to make the subject more relevant and interesting for students.

Commentary

109. Standards shown by teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average in 2003. GCSE results for a small cohort were just below the national average and have remained static since the last inspection. Standards of work seen in lessons in both key stages are showing signs of improvement. The current group of students studying for GCSE are expected to attain above the national average and inspection evidence confirms this. Results are expected to improve in Year 9 but there are still weaknesses in students' ability to

use geographical terms accurately and to offer detailed explanations for geographical patterns and processes. ICT skills are not systematically developed in the curriculum.

110. Students achieve as well as expected in Years 7 to 9. They arrive at the school with relatively low levels of geographical skills and with good teaching make satisfactory or better progress especially in upper sets; however, in some sets students' achievement is hindered by a lack of rigour in the teaching so that insufficient progress is made. In Years 10 and 11 students are achieving as well as expected or better. Their written work is very well presented and maintained and includes very detailed notes and relevant articles. In Year 11 for instance students draw on knowledge from earlier teaching on the EEC to relate to farming issues in Brazil.
111. Teaching and learning throughout the school was satisfactory with some that was good or very good. The best teaching was at GCSE level because it placed emphasis on high standards, was pacy and used a range of up-to-date and relevant resources within a very well structured and planned learning environment. Some of the teaching in the department, however, was insufficiently focused on tasks which demanded that students had to think hard, was not insistent on high enough standards of behaviour and failed to capture students' interest. Where teachers encouraged paired or group work students responded positively, especially when instructions were clear and students were interested.
112. The current head of department is providing enthusiastic and energetic leadership and management which is focused on improving the curriculum offering by making it more relevant and interesting and on improving teaching in order to improve standards. Departmental monitoring has identified deficiencies in teaching, which are being addressed through a programme of support including from an local education authority consultant. This is slowly beginning to remedy some of the deficiencies.
113. The department has had a turbulent staffing position since the last inspection. Standards remain the same, A Level take up has fallen away and the quality of teaching remains satisfactory overall. Fieldwork is being introduced into Year 7 and ICT facilities and access has improved.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective assessment tracking that helps students to raise their attainment.
- A strong team of specialist staff that challenge students creative problem solving.
- Exemplar high profile displays that celebrate success and raises self esteem.
- A Year 7 induction course which enables secure value added measurement.
- Very good use of computers that raise standards across all technology elements but access is restricted in food and textiles technology.
- Limited range of accreditation at the end Year 11 that impedes choice.

Commentary

114. In 2003 standards measured by teachers at the end of Year 9 were below national average. However, during the inspection work seen matched the national average. Standards have

improved because teachers have modified the schemes of work and assessment is understood, therefore achievement is good.

115. At the end of Year 11 in 2003 GCSE accumulative design and technology results were just below national averages, mainly because of staffing issues in textiles. Between 2002 and 2003 the examination results overall improved by eight per cent, showing good value added impact from the department and indicating achievement was good.
116. Students with special educational needs, those from different cultural backgrounds with limited English, plus students termed gifted and talented, achieve in line with their individual education plans. They match the work of their peers because teachers give careful attention to individual student profiles and group profiles. Match of work is also improved by feedback during lessons, good marking and a wide range of teaching and learning styles that engage all students in their learning.
117. In Years 7 to 11 students build up a good range of practical skills and designing techniques. An induction module allows the technology team to identify a fast track group which reflects the needs of gifted and talented students. Good analysis of existing products encourages students to appreciate other designers' work and learn how to improve their designs. Design and make assignments in Year 7 to 9 are more controlled and miss the opportunity to prepare for the freedom of designing expected in Years 10 and 11. GCSE accreditation limits choice, as vocational options are not available. High quality computer work in graphics and resistant materials makes an impressive impact on designing and making. In food and textiles computers are used, but limited access constrains the quality of outcome. Literacy and numeracy are very well planned improving accuracy and presentation. They are integrated through the 'toolkit' for effective learning.
118. Overall teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a wide range of complementary skills. Teachers are dedicated to their subject and to students' learning. They work well as a team and take responsibility for introducing sparkle and enjoyment as well as rigour into lessons. Students are very clear about teachers' expectations of standards of work, behaviour and homework, which promote urgency into their learning. Challenge is the watchword of the department. Teachers plan to inspire by using very good resources and artefacts. They demand a personal engagement from students that focuses learning.
119. Leadership is excellent. The head of faculty is a dynamic leader and sets the pace through personal action; at present she is unable to delegate many responsibilities within the department. All staff, including technical support, understands their role in the team and strive to meet expectations. This is often difficult because the department rooms are spread across two sites. Management is good. There are good strategies in place and monitoring of teaching and learning is established. However, the structure of the policies in the handbook lacks a sharp focus to enable monitoring.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching inspires and motivates girls to be enthusiastic students.
- All students achieve well due to the high quality individual care and attention they receive from teachers.

- Inadequate resources adversely affect students' knowledge and understanding about artists' work.
- Provision for developing work using computers is inadequate.

Commentary

120. In 2003 by the end of Year 9, students were working at a level above that expected nationally according to teacher assessments. This was not supported by work seen during the inspection.
121. The percentage of students gaining A*-C grades at GCSE in 2003 was above the national average, with a higher proportion of A* and A grades than expected nationally. For most students their highest GCSE grade was in art.
122. According to work seen during the inspection, students in Year 9 are working below the level expected nationally. Students in Year 11 are working at an average standard.
123. The high proportion of A grades at GCSE in Year 11 last year was due to the dedication of the former head of department working extra hours with students outside lessons. Achievement has, however, been unsatisfactory in the last few years through Years 7 to 11 due to staff inconsistencies, and the quality of experience varied widely from group to group. However, a new, stable team of committed and enthusiastic teachers has made a huge impact on progress this year with students of all abilities achieving well as a result.
124. Students in all years, including those who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are making good progress due to an overall good quality of teaching across the department. All teachers are art specialists with very good knowledge of their subject. They are enthusiastic and convey this to their students. Girls respond well to teachers' high expectations of both work and behaviour and are inspired and motivated as in the large paintings on canvas and the external murals that Year 7 have produced. Some high attaining students in Year 11 show their skill in painting their self-portraits whilst others create exciting abstract composition inspired by observational drawings of Indonesian artefacts. Some students in Year 11 lack independence due to previous learning habits. Teachers are overcoming this by providing varying amounts of support according to the needs of the individual student in an effort to encourage them to become more independent. Extra care in the preparation of lessons is necessary to overcome the present inadequacy of visual resources.
125. The quality of leadership and management is good. The new subject leader has a clear vision of the future, an effective team has been created and an orderly environment established. There is a good working atmosphere and students are inspired and keen to work in the department at lunch times and after school. Good systems and schemes of work are used to ensure progressive acquisition of basic skills and knowledge and understanding of artists' work.
126. There are inadequate resources in the department. In the past there have been considerable resources to use, but these belonged to the previous, long-standing subject leader. These resources are no longer available. There are insufficient books; no slides or projector or any means of showing large images to whole groups and reproductions of artists' work are poor quality and mostly black and white photocopies. Critical historical appreciation is at a serious disadvantage because of this. There are insufficient artefacts of quality, especially from other countries. There are no facilities for creating or developing work using computer technology. The lack of a technician is affecting the breadth of the curriculum offered owing to the logistics of time management. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, because achievement has been maintained but standards have dropped, and there were no other issues to address from that report.

Physical Education

The provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the head of department are very good with a clear vision for the development of the subject and high expectations of students.
- The provision of extra-curricular clubs and teams is very good.
- Students achieve well by the end of Year 9 as a result of knowledgeable and authoritative teaching.
- GCSE results are well below the national average but achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good.
- The timetabling and curriculum arrangements for teaching the subject are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

127. The current head of department has made enormous improvements to the provision of physical education at the school, setting high expectations of students in terms of participation, performance, attitude and dress. All students are expected to attend lessons in correct kit and play a full part in the lesson activities. Appropriate schemes of work for each activity have been designed which provide a clear structure for teaching the subject, are clearly referenced to the National Curriculum and assist in monitoring the progress and attainment of students. As a consequence, all students, including those with special educational needs, can be supported appropriately in lessons and over time.
128. While the National Curriculum activities are taught to all students, the single period of physical education is insufficient curricular time to teach any one of them to sufficient depth. While students also receive one period of dance, with periods of just 50 minutes this is below the recommended guidance of two hours per week. The single period of 50 minutes' duration inhibits the development of individual and team skills, particularly in games. However, the provision of the many excellent extra-curricular clubs and teams provides opportunities for students of all abilities to participate in sport and for the most able to extend their skills development. As a consequence, many talented students have gone on to win representative honours for the school, for example in football and athletics. However, the vast majority of the girls' physical education lessons are taught by one member of the staff, the head of department, which inhibits further development of the subject.
129. Students generally achieve well by the end of Year 9 and are in line with national expectations this time. This is as a result of knowledgeable and authoritative teaching, for example in a Year 7 hockey lesson where the teacher demonstrated clearly the basics of passing and controlling the ball and worked these effectively into skills practices and game situations. Students' learning is good and they generally work productively both as individuals and in pairs. Lively students are handled well, particularly in Years 10 and 11, where some students do not have the positive attitude generally seen in Years 7, 8 and 9. While teaching overall is good, lessons could be more productive, and indeed more enjoyable for students and the teacher, if more opportunities were given to students to lead activities and praise for contributions was more explicit.
130. GCSE results are well below the national average with only 27 per cent of students achieving A*-C in 2003 compared to 57 per cent nationally, although students generally attain the result that is expected of them. Current students are performing similarly. In the Years 10 and 11 practical lessons on football, only a few students could pass, shoot and control the ball

accurately and consistently and appreciated the need to find space to receive the ball, although all participated with enthusiasm. In the theory lessons observed, students were supported and guided well by the teacher but there were few student-centred activities to reinforce understanding of basic terminology. Teaching and learning are hindered by the lack of a dedicated physical education classroom for the teaching of theory lessons to provide an appropriate working environment for students. Generally, the internal facilities are adequate for the teaching but the external facilities are limited to shared hard areas and with lessons of only 50 minutes duration there are limited opportunities to travel off-site to facilities. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The inspired teaching and vision of the head of faculty and the complementary strengths of the music teachers provide many and varied opportunities for all students to participate in worthwhile music making.
- Staff have good relationships with the students, which helps to promote good learning.
- The school offers free instrumental tuition which increases opportunities for worthwhile musical experiences.
- The shortages of ICT are having a negative impact on the breadth of curriculum available to all students.
- Not enough opportunities are given to the more able students in some lessons.
- Length of lesson time results in students receiving below the recommended teaching time for music and is having an adverse effect on standards.

Commentary

131. Teachers' assessments show that by the end of Year 9 in the summer of 2003, the attainment of the large majority of students was below average. The proportion of students attaining A* to C grades in the GCSE examination was below average. Both these results, however, show an improvement on the results of previous years. The GCSE results were well above the predicted grades for all students. For some students, the music GCSE result was their highest mark.
132. Inspection evidence shows that standards at the end of Year 9 are now in line with national expectations. As students' attainment on entry is below average, the standards at the end of Year 9 represent good achievement. Standards in Years 10 to 11 are also in line with expectations and these also represent good achievement. Some older students do not complete homework which not only hinders completion of their coursework, but has an adverse effect on the progress of the remainder of the class. All students do not have enough opportunities to work with ICT and this is having an adverse impact on the achievement of many of the musically less able students. The 50 minute lesson is too short for students to benefit fully from the learning available. The reduced time for lessons on Wednesday mornings results in these classes not receiving the recommended curriculum time. This is having a negative effect on the teachers' efforts to improve standards.
133. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11. They are excellent in some lessons. Both teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and are able to pass this on to the students in an easily intelligible manner. They make good use of questioning to probe students' knowledge about the learning from previous lessons and give clear instructions so that the students know what is expected of them. However, in the less successful lessons there is not enough planning to enable students to approach tasks purposefully. For example in a Year 7 class, the groups lacked the necessary collaborative skills to tackle the interpretation of the graphic score. In the majority of lessons students sustain interest because of the enjoyable nature of the varied but related learning activities. Good relationships between the teacher and students help to promote good learning. The more musically able students benefit from instrumental tuition provided by teachers both privately employed and from the Centre for Young Musicians. Homework in Years 7 to 9 is effectively used for short areas of research or for learning vocabulary.

134. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Since the last inspection there have been several changes of staff which has resulted in a lack of continuity in teaching and learning and a loss of status for the department. Much of the present success is due to the previous head of department who joined the school in September 2001. His excellent teaching and vision have revitalised the subject. He is now head of the performing arts faculty and there is a new head of department. Together they have acquired new resources, regenerated interest in the subject, increased the number of students taking instrumental lessons and music at GCSE, and gradually improved standards. The curriculum is nearly complete and contains many examples of exemplary units of work. Assessment does not clearly tell students how to improve. A significant number of students participate in musical productions and concerts. These include “Cats”, “Jonah Man Jazz” and “Ebenezer” as well as several successful concerts and performing arts presentations. The main classroom is too small and there are not enough practice rooms for group work and instrumental lessons. There are not enough computers to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and there is a shortage of multi-cultural instruments. As well as a series of regular extra-curricular activities, the curriculum is further enhanced by workshops run by professional musicians and visits to concerts and operas in the locality.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for personal, social and health education is **good**. Provision in **citizenship** is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is generally good and promotes positive attitudes and relationships among students.
- The school provides enrichment activities that enhance PSHE and citizenship education.
- Citizenship is not yet covered at Key Stage 4, or woven systematically into schemes of work in other subjects.

Commentary

135. Personal, social and health education, and citizenship are taught on a weekly basis by form tutors. At Key Stage 3, students follow a comprehensive scheme of work that covers a wide range of topics from bullying and drugs awareness, to health and sex education. They develop their knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens and are beginning to develop their skills of enquiry by participating and taking responsible action. Students at Key Stage 4 and at post-16 level pursue a more limited course, with more emphasis on preparing for work or university.

136. In lessons, students demonstrated high levels of achievement, promoted by good teaching. At best they were developing critical thinking skills in discussing moral issues. Attitudes and relationships are positive, there is much enthusiasm for the topics covered and students in Years 7 to 9 are encouraged to reflect on aspects of citizenship. Most non-specialist teachers make good use of time, are well organised, build their lessons on carefully crafted plans and teach a brisk pace with varied activities. Lessons are less effective when there is insufficient time for students to discuss ideas, develop their enquiry skills, or when teaching lacks flexibility.

137. The school continues to enrich personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons with the frequent use of guest speakers and a range of activities. These include study clubs, religious retreats and fund raising events, which are shared with the boys' school. During the inspection Year 11 students presented a special assembly based on the preparation of progress files, which reinforced aspects of developing organisational skills. Although there is a

School Council, it has not yet reached its potential of enabling students to take significant responsible action.

138. While the programme of work promotes good teaching and learning, there is hardly time to cover all the requirements of citizenship as well as personal, social and health education in the short lessons. Citizenship issues are evident from time to time in other subjects, but they are not yet woven systematically into the scheme of work.

Opportunities for Enrichment, including through Extra-Curricular Provision

139. Opportunities for enrichment are very good with a varied and interesting programme of experiences for all students. Most subjects have a range of clubs, some, including sport and musical activities, attracting large numbers of students. During the inspection there were some exciting, high quality experiences for students in dance and sport. Students spoke with pride about their involvement in the school 'musical' and a growing number now participate in the school orchestra and choirs. The school makes good use of additional funding to provide extension opportunities for gifted and talented students and there is open access to activities for all those who wish to take part. Visits by external speakers, including leading politicians, are well established and valued. Frequent trips are organised out-of-school, including several visits to higher education institutions for students in the sixth form. Participation by students in an annual retreat contributes significantly to their spiritual development.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Communication Studies	5	80	92.7	0.0	30.5	20.0	36.3
ICT	9	55.6	78.0	0.0	20.8	14.4	28.4
Art and Design	7	42.9	92.5	0.0	47.2	17.1	41.0
English	5	60.0	94.9	0.0	38.7	18.0	39.4
Other Social Studies	11	27.3	85.2	0.0	35.5	6.4	35.1

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Communication Studies	13	100	98.3	15.4	36.8	70.8	81.1
English Language	9	100	98.3	0.0	36.5	60.0	80.1
English Literature	8	97.5	98.3	25.0	43.7	65.0	84.3
ICT	9	88.9	98.5	0.0	22.4	46.7	64.1
Mathematics	5	80.0	93.3	40.0	52.2	44.0	84.7
Other Social Studies	15	80.0	94.3	13.1	38.9	58.7	77.7

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Sociology	5	80.0	95.4	20.0	39.6	60.0	79.1
Business	23	82.6	87.1	8.7	16.5	48.7	60.1
Health/Social Care	6	100	90.1	0.0	16.3	46.7	62.1
ICT	25	96	84.3	24.0	24.5	69.6	64.3

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' relationship with their students is very good, and it helps students develop good attitudes towards their work.
- The teachers' subject knowledge is good, lesson objectives are made clear, and the questioning of students is challenging.
- There is a shared commitment to raise standards, but the analysis of performance is underdeveloped.
- There is insufficient independent study to broaden and develop the students' critical awareness.
- Little use is made of information and communication technology.

Commentary

140. The overall standard achieved in GCSE, AS and A Level examinations in English language and literature, and English literature, is below the national average, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. Achievement is satisfactory, given the students' qualifications upon entry to the courses. The number of students, mainly girls, studying these subjects is relatively small.
141. Observation of work during the inspection confirms these standards. Students are keen and participate well in lessons. In a Year 13 literature lesson, the six students being introduced to a selection of "unseen" poetry, were initially hesitant, but encouraged by the teacher, they were able to recognise the features of poetic language. In the ensuing discussion, students became increasingly perceptive of the purposes of the individual poets, although initially their analysis was more descriptive than analytical. Similarly, students in Year 12, studying Shakespeare's "Anthony and Cleopatra" demonstrated a good recall of earlier learning. They were able to interpret the intentions and motivations of the characters, but often without specific reference to the text of the play. Many students exhibit some awareness of the nuances of language. This was also evident in a Year 12 discussion of the language used in James Joyce's short story "The Encounter". In their writing students display a clear grasp of the literary themes. They show a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of a range of texts. They make comparisons, and can sustain an argument. Students are able to express a personal point of view, but much of their writing, although accurate, is pedantic, with insufficient expression and limited vocabulary. The writing of students generally lacks the detail and depth expected of the highest grades. It reflects the limited amount of independent research and study that is generally undertaken. Higher attaining students exhibit more accomplished language skills, and an ability to analyse perceptively with appropriate textual reference. For example, a Year 13 student, analysing Chaucer's "The Merchant's Tale" as a parody of courtly love, strengthened her judgement with apt quotations from the text of the poem. Most students make appropriate use of linguistic and literary terminology.
142. Teachers use their command of the subject well to support the learning process. In a Year 13 lesson on writing for different audiences and purposes, and focussing upon narrative writing, the teacher balanced pair and group discussions with appropriate intervention to make clear the complexity and stages of the process. Teachers have very good relationships with the students, whom they know well. In response to the teachers' encouragement, students are attentive and positive towards their learning. They enjoy the subject. Lessons are planned suitably to meet the needs of the curriculum and of the students. Teaching is particularly

effective where students are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills through challenging questioning and focussed discussion. It is less effective where the students become over-reliant upon the teacher and opportunities for independent learning are not undertaken. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology. Students' work is suitably monitored and evaluated. They know how well they are doing and how they might improve.

143. Leadership and management in English are satisfactory. The department shares a commitment to develop the study of English in the sixth form, and to raise standards. There is planning for improvement, and procedures to monitor and evaluate performance, but these could be more systematically and rigorously undertaken. The curriculum is enriched by theatre visits and opportunities for students to engage in workshops. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

144. The school literary policy has not been applied in the sixth form. In consequence, in subjects other than English, teachers do not always give enough attention to language. Most teachers stress the importance of significant terms and their use, but insufficient attention is generally given to the development of speaking and listening skills. For example, in mathematics and media studies there are few opportunities for students to engage in discussion. The vocabulary of some students is narrow which restricts their shades of meaning. Students are confident of speaking in class, when the opportunity is provided, and group work develops their ability to listen, reason and argue a point. They read with reasonable fluency, although not always with sufficient tone and inflection to extend meaning. They are able to research information independently. Writing is less well developed for the majority of students. Students can use a form and style of writing appropriate for its purpose. They can organise relevant information clearly and coherently, generally using specialist vocabulary where appropriate. Although the writing of students is generally accurate in basic spelling and punctuation, it often lacks sufficient expression, and the vocabulary used is limited.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although the teachers have good mathematics subject knowledge, teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Too many students fail AS Level mathematics and the drop out rate between AS and A Level is high.
- Students have unsatisfactory attitudes: attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

145. The inspection covered the A Level course offered by the school. Two modules in pure mathematics and one in statistics are taken in Year 12 and three modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics are taken in Year 13. The number of students studying mathematics post-16 has been relatively small in recent years. Results in AS Level mathematics in the last few years have been poor. In each of the last three years more than half of the students entered have failed to gain pass grades. A similar situation has prevailed in A Level mathematics, although results were slightly better in 2003 when four out of the five students entered passed. The drop out rate between AS and A Level is much larger than would be found elsewhere. It is clear that the majority of students who start AS mathematics find the course too demanding and give up the subject at the end of Year 12. One factor may be the

choice of Year 12 modules. Most students who take AS and A Level mathematics have gained at least a B grade in GCSE mathematics – a reasonable starting point for studying mathematics at AS and A Level.

146. Achievement in the last three years has been unsatisfactory. Standards seen in lessons are satisfactory, given the students' prior attainment.
147. The quality of teaching overall is unsatisfactory. The department has experienced severe staffing difficulties and some groups have had several teachers. The teaching observed ranged from very good to poor but most teaching was at best satisfactory despite the laudable efforts of the staff, some of whom are unqualified teachers or who were teaching AS and A Level mathematics for the first time during the inspection. The teachers have good mathematics subject knowledge. There are good student records and work is well marked. Good use is made of worked exemplars. The current schemes of work are appropriate.
148. Students' progress is unsatisfactory. This is because the teaching often fails to engage the students' interest. Few opportunities are given for students to discuss the mathematics with their peers, to argue cases and to experience a range of teaching and learning styles. There is limited use of ICT such as computers or, indeed, overhead projectors. Students are not developed as independent learners. They have unsatisfactory attitudes: there is some lateness, undue absence and homework is often not completed. And yet, when the teaching is good, the same students readily engage. In one such lesson (investigating creating a maximum volume box from a set area of card) the students readily asked questions, discussed what might be the best approach and clearly had a good understanding of why finding the first derivative would provide the exact solution. In this lesson the very good teaching demonstrated to the students how mathematics had real life applications.
149. The leadership of post-16 mathematics is unsatisfactory. Staffing difficulties and the several changes of leadership have been the major factors. Insufficient attention has been given to monitoring students' progress whilst on the course and to making certain that they are motivated to achieve highly. Progress since the last inspection has been limited.

SCIENCE

150. Chemistry was sampled and biology and physics were inspected. Teaching and learning in the chemistry lessons observed were secure and students are making satisfactory progress. Careful questioning enabled the students to draw on their prior knowledge and apply it to new, more challenging contexts. Consequently, their understanding developed well.

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is some good teaching and there are good or very good features in all lessons.
- There has been significant improvement in provision over the past year.
- Standards are rising and achievement is now satisfactory.
- Leadership and management are good, with very good capacity to continue to improve provision and outcomes.

Commentary

151. Numbers entering examinations in biology have been quite small and results have been low in recent years, with too high a proportion of students not achieving a pass grade. This was true of both A Level and AS Level in 2003. This represented satisfactory progress for some students, but was underachievement for too many, and overall. Major changes in planning and teaching have been implemented over the past year and the quality of students' work has improved significantly. The standards observed in lessons and in students' previous work are approaching the level expected nationally and achievement is satisfactory, with no significant variation by gender or ethnicity. The students' language and mathematical skills are sufficiently well developed to meet the demands of the course.
152. Teaching and learning are good overall. All lessons having some good features, and some being good overall with very good features. The learning intentions are clear and made explicit to the students so that they know what they are doing and why. Activities are well chosen to deliver the intended outcomes, with a range of approaches enabling all students to engage with the ideas at an appropriate level in a variety of ways. There is a good emphasis on biological language and meaning, and focused and challenging questions require the students to provide responses with the accuracy and depth expected at A Level. These are key elements to ensuring that responses to questions in examinations are more likely to demonstrate a higher level of knowledge and understanding. The students are also encouraged to develop research skills, using targeted web sites for example. They have the confidence to seek clarification from the teacher when necessary and to engage in wide ranging discussions. Teachers know the subject well and manage these discussions with a high level of skill, making learning individual and personal. The teachers' own enthusiasm also captures the students' interest, which helps to make learning more secure.
153. Teachers have high expectations of students and their work and effort. Students are aware of their expected grades and the levels at which they are currently working. They receive good support early on in making the transition from GCSE with, for example, teachers monitoring the quality and coherence of their files while still requiring them to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning.
154. Good leadership and effective management have had a major impact on improving provision over the past year, so that the progress made since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Expectations of what students should achieve have been raised, planning has improved and the day to day organisation is good. The quality of teaching and learning has consequently improved and this is impacting positively on standards. There is very good capacity to continue this level and rate of improvement.

Physics

Provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are achieving well.
- Teaching was good in the lessons seen.
- There has been significant improvement in provision over the past year.
- Leadership and management are good, with very good capacity to continue to improve provision and outcomes.

Commentary

155. Numbers entering examinations have been small and results have been low in recent years, with a relatively high proportion of ungraded entries at A Level in 2003. AS Level results in 2003 were a good achievement for the students and they have carried this through into Year

13, where they are working at levels approaching the national average. They have the necessary mathematical and language skills to cope with work at this level, although reminders and support from the teacher are sometimes required, as when calculating the area under an exponential curve. There is no significant variation in student achievement by gender or ethnicity.

156. Teaching takes quite a theoretical approach. Pictures and models are built skilfully for the students through questions, explanations and discussion. Ideas are built progressively and consistently, so that there is coherence to learning. The teacher's own knowledge and understanding of the subject are good and used well to develop specific and accurate responses from students. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, by making their own notes following discussion for example, and work independently, such as completing set questions for 'homework'. The small numbers studying physics at the moment means that each student receives a considerable degree of individual support and guidance, ensuring that each progresses well.
157. The students speak very positively of the subject and of the teaching they receive. They know the grades that they are aiming for and their progress towards them. This secure base now needs to be expanded by broadening the approaches used, including developing practical aspects of the course more in parallel with the theoretical aspects, and using more visual cues to reinforce key ideas even more.
158. The AS Level is being taught to Year 12 students at a partner school. This is helping to ensure that the subject remains viable and cost effective while numbers are built to more sustainable levels.
159. Good leadership and effective management have had a major impact on improving provision over the past year, so that the progress made since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Expectations of what students should achieve have been raised, planning has improved and the day to day organisation is good. The quality of teaching and learning has consequently improved and this is raising standards. There is very good capacity to continue this level and rate of improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- The achievement of many students taking the AVCE course is very good.
- The sixth form ICT curriculum is broad, catering well for a wide range of abilities and aptitudes.
- Completion rates on sixth form ICT courses are disappointing.

Commentary

160. Standards in A Level ICT courses have been below average. In 2002 all candidates achieved at least a pass grade but results deteriorated in 2003 because of staffing difficulties during parts of the course. AS Level results improved slightly but were still some way below average. The AVCE results in 2003, although below average, represented good, and in some cases very good achievement for some students. In all courses, the number of students who did not complete or who were ungraded was too high.

161. The main reason for this is erratic attendance and, in some cases, poor punctuality by a significant number of students. There have been changes in the teaching staff and in the management of sixth form ICT courses in the past year. Monitoring procedures as well as expectations regarding attendance and punctuality have become more rigorous. However, in some sixth form lessons seen, particularly in Year 13, teachers had to spend time bringing students up to date because of absence or lateness. This interferes with lesson plans and detracts from the support and attention, which regular attenders might expect.
162. Standards seen in A Level ICT lessons in Year 13 were satisfactory overall and some good work was seen in progress. Achievement is generally good in relation to abilities. However, some students who had missed recent work needed significant teacher support. In AS Level lessons in Year 12, there was a wide range of attainment in evidence but the standards demonstrated by regular attenders were satisfactory overall in the second term of the course. Teaching and learning in these courses are good.
163. In the Advanced vocational course (AVCE) the standard of work seen was good overall. Some very good presentational work was seen in Year 12 and imaginative Web design work was seen in Year 13. Students were working on a wide range of topics, most of which were of particular personal interest. This was very motivating, encouraging students to explore more complex and demanding features of the software. Very good use was made of the software "help" facility, and the Internet was used very effectively for a wide range of up-to-date information, images and animations. Students helped one another and created a very productive working atmosphere in lessons. The achievement of students on this course is very good overall. Much progress has been made by regular attenders in the first term and a half of the course in Year 12 and some impressive work was seen in Year 13 as a result of good and often very good teaching which provides the necessary balance between teacher guidance and support and the independent work of the students. Improvement in provision for ICT and the range of courses offered has improved since the last inspection. Attendance remains an issue which adversely affected standards in last year's examination results.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Students enjoy the subject, are diligent and make good progress in lessons.
- Resource provision in lessons is good.
- Self and peer assessment strategies are under-used.
- ICT is under-used.

Commentary

164. The number of students studying post-16 history has been small in recent years. At AS Level in 2002 the A-E pass rate was 100 per cent with three students gaining D grades and one student gaining an E grade. In 2003 the A-E pass rate was 80 per cent. Two students gained C grades, one a D grade, one an E grade and one a U grade. The lack of high grades meant that the students' average points score was below the national average in both years. No students sat the A Level examination in 2002. In 2003 five students were entered. Two gained C grades, two gained D grades and one a U grade. Again, the lack of high grades meant the

average points score was below the national average. In all these results students' achievement has been satisfactory with most gaining grades close to those expected.

165. Standards amongst the current Year 12 cohort are above national expectations. In lessons, students demonstrated very good factual recall and satisfactory analytical thinking when examining the reign of Henry VII. Their written work shows confident source analysis skills and essays demonstrate very well developed understanding expressed through fluent, accurate writing. Standards in the current Year 13 group of 4 students are more varied but close to national expectations overall.
166. All students enjoy their work and progress well in lessons. Some able students in Year 12 progress very well. Attitudes to learning are good. Students are keen to succeed and all contribute well to lessons. In paired tasks they are quick to support and learn from each other. Whole group discussions are lively and well informed. Students' files are well managed and show satisfactory research and note taking skills and consistent effort.
167. Teaching is good. Teachers are always positive and purposeful. There is a good pace to learning. They have very good relationships with their students and have high expectations of them. They use their subject knowledge well to plan well-sequenced activities, to offer clear explanations and ask challenging questions. The lack of a range of available texts and poor library provision are overcome through the use of some good teacher produced materials. Support is given to develop students' literacy skills and varied strategies used to ensure the differing needs of students are met. Opportunities to use ICT are infrequent and underdeveloped.
168. Teachers mark work thoroughly and students have a clear understanding of their current standards and the grades they have the potential to achieve. Opportunities for students to assess their own progress and to think about ways to raise their standards further are not fully exploited.
169. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Teachers demonstrate a clear and consistent approach to all aspects of their work. Students enjoy their studies and are very well supported by committed and enthusiastic staff.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well although results at A Level are below average.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good in Year 13.
- Students enjoy their lessons and have very good relationships with their teacher.
- The attitudes of students in Year 13 are excellent and this promotes their learning.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to extend their knowledge through use of external agencies.

Commentary

170. Over previous years attainment in the A Level examination has fluctuated, but has mostly been below the national average. A few students have attained higher grades, but the percentage has been below the national average. However, there is an increasing trend in the number of students attaining A-C grades. This represents good achievement over the two years of the course. The 2003 AS Level results were in line with the national average for A and B grades

and the majority of students did better than predictions based on their GCSE grades. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards show an improving trend and courses are well established and have gained in popularity.

171. Students' work seen during the inspection indicates below average standards in Years 12 and above average standards in Year 13. Students' achievement in Year 12 is good taking into account the low starting base of many students. The achievement of Year 13 students is very good. The wide range of abilities in Year 12 and the poor punctuality of a few students hinder the effectiveness of class discussion and the rate of progress students make. However, over the year they have made gains in confidence and now contribute to group discussion much more readily. Teaching addresses their lack of higher order literacy skills very well by giving students key terminology, sociological definitions and good guidance on writing. Tasks set in lessons, are not always sufficiently matched to the needs of the lower attaining students. Students in Year 13 are confident and articulate and are able to apply previously learnt knowledge to new concepts, such as crime and deviance. They effectively extend their thinking beyond the initial topic and enjoy discussion and independent research. Year 13 students use ICT very effectively in their research assignments and files of all students are well organised and provide a good future learning resource.
172. Teaching is good overall and students of all abilities learn well as a result. Relationships and attitudes are very good and the level of engagement in Year 13 lessons is excellent and shows how much students want to succeed.
173. Students are appreciative of the individual guidance they are given, especially when they are drafting their assignments. Teaching and learning are particularly effective when students are encouraged to research topics for homework and come well prepared to discuss their findings. The teacher does not accept superficial answers and probes deeply to promote full understanding. Very good independent and analytical tasks are set that encourage students to select and research information. Homework is set and marked constructively. However, there are few external visits or speakers arranged to increase the relevance and excitement of the subject.
174. Leadership and management are good. The analysis of assessments, performance data and results is used effectively to ensure individual students reach their potential. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.
175. A small number of lessons were sampled in **psychology**. Teaching was always satisfactory with good features. Both students and teachers were committed and enthusiastic in this popular option.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good assessment strategies to motivate improvement in designing and making.
- Good teaching that enhances creativity.
- Diversity of options that attracts interest from another school.
- Individual support and guidance that meets varied learning needs.
- Limited access to computers in textiles restricts computer aided designing and making.

Two courses in this curriculum area were inspected: product design and textiles. The two courses are reported under one heading of design and technology.

Commentary:

176. The courses are relatively new in the school; 2003 was the first time the graphics AS Level course was examined and the students achieved grades within the A-E band. The disappointing results were due to the students' lack of urgency in meeting deadlines so work was rushed and standards suffered. Female students' results were better than male students. Male students came from a resistant materials background at GCSE and so had much to assimilate in a new subject. Retention rates were over 50 per cent; these students are now working on their A Level examination, while retaking some modules to improve their AS Level grades. In 2003-2004 there has been a positive 100 per cent increase in students opting for the product design course.
177. Textiles is new this year. It is the first time students have attempted AS Level. The group is made up of 50 per cent of students from another East London school and all come from a GCSE textiles background. There have been issues in staffing; now two new teachers teach the new course. There are some tensions in group cohesion, as the two schools learn to work together, and some issues with language difficulties. Attendance is a huge issue. The majority of students find it very difficult to arrive on time or attend regularly which has an impact on the continuity of teaching and learning and impedes standards.
178. Standards are good in graphics and satisfactory in textiles. Students find the move from GCSE to A Level very challenging. Those who have commitment to home responsibilities and jobs outside school find the demands of the course exceptionally stressful. Despite these issues, perseverance from the students and encouragement from the teachers, teamed with effective assessment, produces good quality portfolios of work. Discussion with students and scrutiny of portfolios show achievement in product design is good and in textiles achievement is satisfactory.
179. Male and female students gain incremental skills through good discussion and evaluation. Students are developing good computer skills in product design. In textiles the above average number of students with English as an additional language perform best in practical work. The research and design aspects of the course present problems, which is compounded by limited access to computers.
180. Teaching is good overall with elements of very good teaching in the context of difficult group dynamics. Teachers have highly refined personal skills. Performance management has highlighted future courses for teachers to attend to extend their skills, knowledge and understanding. Planning is good and one to one guidance and assessment is a strong feature of teachers work with individuals. It identifies problems and enables students to evaluate and discuss solutions. Attendance at examination board training has been an essential part of teachers' development. Key skills are integrated well.
181. Leadership and management of the courses are good. They are delegated to senior members of the department. The course managers take effective action when required but there are some consortium issues that are having an impact on management in textiles.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

Provision is **good**.

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- Good teaching enables students to learn well.
- High quality individual attention and good use of assessment guides and supports all students well.
- Inadequate computer facilities affect standard of presentation in journals and the development of ideas.
- Students' work can lack direction if they find working independently difficult.

Commentary

182. Numbers of students staying on to study art in the sixth form have varied year to year from Year 7 to Year 12 since the last inspection. There have been few of the highest grades and standards have been well below those expected nationally, although national comparisons are difficult when group sizes fall below ten. There has been some underachievement especially recently.
183. According to work seen during the inspection, Year 13 are working at an above average level. This is satisfactory achievement given the grades students have achieved at GCSE and AS Level. Technical skills in drawing and painting are more developed than knowledge and understanding. Students in Year 12 are working at an average standard and are achieving much as expected related to their previous learning. Standards in Year 12 vary because some did not take art as an option at GCSE while others gained A-C grades. Achievement overall is satisfactory for all students in both years, due to good quality teaching in recent months.
184. Students learn well in lessons due to the good quality individual attention they receive from teachers, which enables them to develop according to their own needs, whether they are new to the subject or more advanced. Relationships are good between teachers and students. Good use of assessment in tutorial style feedback sessions ensures that each student is quite clear about how to improve his or her own work. Work journals are exciting and innovative and some annotation by high attaining students is perceptive as well as informative but the lack of computer facilities within the art department means that the quality of presentation is adversely affected. Visits to major galleries, such as the Tate Modern, have inspired students' work and are a vital source of context in which to make their own art. Visual resources are inadequate to support learning although there are plenty of good quality materials to use and high attaining students work on large canvases to create lively and well-executed paintings and textured panels.
185. There is good leadership and management of the courses in the sixth form. The subject leader has provided excellent examples of work which inform and inspire students. Teachers have a clear idea about how to raise standards and work as an effective team with students in both Year 12 and 13. Because standards and achievement have been maintained, improvement is satisfactory since the last inspection.

Media Studies

Provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The four A Level students achieved well in 2003.
- Attainment at AS Level in 2003 was very low.
- Accommodation is spacious and resources have improved.
- The quality of teaching is uneven.

- The new head of department has good plans for development.

Commentary

186. Only four candidates took A Level Media Studies in 2003. All passed, three gaining a C grade and one a D. Although their attainment was average or below, it represented satisfactory achievement in relation to their previous grades. Results in the AS Level examination were well below average. Seven students gained A-C grades, 12 Grade E and 12 were unclassified.
187. Few students stayed on to complete the second year of the Media course in 2003. This year the retention rate is better, with 16 students now studying for the A Level examination. Standards seen in Year 13 suggest more attainment at the higher A-C grades, though overall the work remains average to below. Students are gaining technical confidence and competence but many have a narrow range of understanding, reference and vocabulary. This is apparent in both written work and class discussion. In Year 12 the range of standards so far attained is wider, with one or two students already producing work which indicates that they could do well in the examination. Others, as in Year 13, have weaknesses in writing and the organisation of ideas which impede their progress.
188. Teaching is satisfactory overall, ranging from good to unsatisfactory. In one lesson, too much of the time was spent reading notes from a worksheet which students at this level should be able to prepare for themselves. In the good lessons there was appropriate pace and stimulus and some time was allowed for discussion and comment. A small Year 12 group responded well as the teacher took them through the criteria for a film analysis, his sound advice and crisp questioning helping them to feel more confident about their own judgements.
189. Lessons are carefully planned but the plans do not always recognise the need to extend students' range, understanding and ideas through lively teacher input and well managed discussion. Students bring insufficient ideas of their own to the lessons and are reluctant to express opinions or challenge those of others. Students show interest in the subject, but are insufficiently curious and exploratory.
190. Teachers know the requirements of the syllabus well and their assessment of written and other work is constructive and well-informed. At the time of the last inspection, Media Studies was part of the English department and it was mentioned only briefly in that report. It now has improved status as a separate subject within the creative arts faculty.
191. Space for Media Studies is generous and resources are improving steadily. The layout of the two rooms works well when students use the computers and other equipment singly or in small groups, but it does not provide a good space for demonstration and discussion. Students cannot easily talk to one another in the whole group and not enough interaction was seen in the lessons observed.
192. Two teachers share the A Level teaching, one of them the recently appointed head of department. Media Studies is a popular GCSE option in Years 10 and 11, where it is also taught by a member of the senior management team. The teachers are enthusiasts and all have good subject knowledge.
193. Leadership and management are good at this early stage and the new head of department is keen to improve and develop the work of the department. He has produced two introductory handbooks for students taking the subject and is now completing a departmental handbook for staff. There are plans for improved liaison with other departments and more involvement in the school's extra-curricular programme. The team is well placed to take both GCSE and A Level Media Studies forward, improving standards and increasing the contribution the subject makes to students' social and cultural development.

BUSINESS

Business Studies

Provision for business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the department are very good with the head of department having a clear vision for developing the subject.
- Teachers' understanding of the assessment requirements for the vocational courses is very good.
- Teaching is good with many very good features, particularly teachers' subject knowledge and support for students' learning.
- While achievement is generally good, the completion rate for some courses is unsatisfactory.
- The use of ICT by staff and students is very good.

Commentary

194. The newly appointed head of department has made an excellent start, showing very good leadership and management of the department with a clear vision for developing the subject, well structured programmes of study and ensuring very effective teamwork in delivering the courses. The department has produced a number of impressive resource booklets and assessment feedback sheets to provide important subject information for students and as one of several strategies designed to improve the achievement of students. Teachers' understanding of the assessment requirements for the vocational courses is very good and the department has very good procedures for monitoring and assessing students' attainment and progress.
195. While achievement is generally good, the completion rate for some courses is unsatisfactory. In 2003 the nine students who successfully completed the advanced VCE course gained at least a pass, several exceeding their expected grade. However, students on the one year GNVQ course were less successful with only half gaining a pass. The department is now offering, as an alternative, the BTEC First Diploma and in the good Year 12 lesson, students were achieving well and in this particular lesson were able to describe accurately the beneficial effects of good customer service. Students on all courses are competent in the use of ICT and use a range of appropriate software in presenting their work, including PowerPoint presentations.
196. Teaching overall is good with many very good features particularly teachers' subject knowledge and support for students' learning with expert teachers delivering well structured lessons authoritatively. In a good Year 12 lesson introducing the supply curve, students were expertly guided through the process of relating price to quantity supplied. Students' understanding of branding and the effects of advertising was evident in a good Year 13 lesson where the very well prepared teacher used a range of relevant examples to enhance students' learning.
197. Student work is assessed thoroughly and relevant feedback given including what students need to do to improve. The working environment for the business related subjects is good with dedicated computers to assist students learning during lessons. Students appreciate the very good access to teachers to help with their studies as well as access to external mentors and

the opportunity of taking part in business related visits. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

