

INSPECTION REPORT

ACLAND BURGHLEY SCHOOL

London NW5

LEA area: London Borough of Camden

Unique reference number: 100053

Headteacher: Mr M Shew

Lead inspector: Mr M Pavey

Dates of inspection: 15 - 18 March 2004

Inspection number: 262645

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1259
School address:	Burghley Road London
Postcode:	NW5 1UJ
Telephone number:	020 7485 8515
Fax number:	020 7284 3462
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Pat Cattell
Date of previous inspection:	20.9.1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Acland Burghley School is a large, mixed community comprehensive school of 1259 students aged 11-18. There are many more boys than girls. Most students come from the London Boroughs of Camden and Islington. The school is multi-cultural in population. At present, there are 70 per cent of students from White heritage backgrounds, 15 per cent Black, five per cent Asian, and fewer than two per cent Chinese. There are small numbers of students from other backgrounds, or backgrounds which have not been declared. The proportion of students whose first language is not English, 20 per cent, is high; however, only 12 students are at an early stage in learning English. There are 166 students, including nine in the sixth form, on the roll of those with special educational needs (SEN). Of these, 58 (4.6 per cent) have statements of SEN, a far higher proportion than average. The level of ability on entry to the school is average. Though the socio-economic background of the students is average overall, one of the school's characteristics is the great variety of backgrounds it attracts. Some students come from homes with many advantages, others from homes with few. More students are entitled to free school meals in this school than average. The school has a large sixth form of 355 students, and is a member of a sixth form consortium, named *La Swap*, from the initials of the four schools which comprise it. In total, the consortium has some 1200 students. The school has gained specialist status as an arts college and participates in the Government's Excellence in Cities initiative.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17650	M Pavey	Lead inspector	Special educational needs
9724	B Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector	
16950	C Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15971	M Pye	Team inspector	Physical education
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Art
4351	J Strickland	Team inspector	Performing arts
14573	H Wareing	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) for Years 7-11
28097	S Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics
1779	D Leonard	Team inspector	Science
10060	D Gutmann	Team inspector	Business education Sociology
20497	V Williams	Team inspector	Geography Media studies
1782	A Lyons	Team inspector	Design and technology English as an additional language
12121	J Mallinson	Team inspector	English
8052	K McKenzie	Team inspector	Citizenship Information and communication technology (ICT) for Years 12-13
15472	P Andrews	Team inspector	Music
3258	D Bain	Team inspector	Psychology
33162	J Ward	Team inspector	History Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school with many strengths. It also has several areas for further improvement. Standards are average in Years 7-11 and above average in the sixth form. Students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in more senior years. Overall, teaching is good and students learn well. Leadership is good overall, and that of the headteacher and deputy headteachers is very good. The school is well managed. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Much teaching, particularly of older students, is good or very good. Teachers are highly committed to their students and give them positive support.
- Relationships are good. On most occasions, everyone in this large, multi-cultural school gets on very well together. The school succeeds in including all its students in the process of education very well.
- When younger students join the school, many need help in how to learn effectively. This sometimes creates problems with behaviour, which can render teaching less effective. Younger students do not achieve as highly as older ones.
- The headteacher and deputies lead the school very well. Their very good new initiatives to improve behaviour, teaching and learning, and assessment need more time to improve standards for younger students. Governors lead very well in most respects.
- The large and successful sixth form is well led and a strength of the school. Results are good at this level.
- Attendance and punctuality need further improvement, especially in the sixth form.
- Art is a very strong subject throughout the school. Music is poor.
- The school provides a very good range of activities beyond lesson time.
- The school is not yet doing enough to promote the skills of numeracy across the curriculum.

Since the last inspection, improvement has overall been satisfactory. The school has largely achieved the main improvements it was asked to make. Improvement in access to information and communication technology (ICT) and in issues of leadership and management has been good, though not enough has been done to improve numeracy across the curriculum. The school was advised to consider three other issues – punctuality, provision of religious education in the sixth form and collective worship – but has not resolved these issues satisfactorily.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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 students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Overall, students' achievement is good.¹ Results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science, taken at the end of Year 9, are around the national average. Students' achievement in Years 7-9 is satisfactory. Overall GCSE results in Year 11 have been close to the national average in recent years. Standards seen were average in Years 10-11 and students' achievement is good at this stage. Results in the sixth form A2-level examinations in 2003 were above the national average. Achievement in the sixth form is good.

¹ Note: Achievement answers the question, 'are standards for individual students high enough?' This means the level students have reached, based on the progress they have made in relation to how capable they are.

Students' attitudes and behaviour are good overall, and improve as students go through the school. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of students' personal development are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides an education of good quality. Teaching and learning are good overall, being satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in the higher years. The sixth form is a strong element in this good provision. Teachers' use of assessment is satisfactory and improving. The curriculum is good, although the school needs to conform with legal requirements in two areas. The sixth form curriculum is good and there is a wide variety of activities at all levels of the school. Procedures for students' care and guidance are good. The school has a good partnership with parents and the community, and the links it makes with other schools through the *La Swap* sixth form consortium are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteachers is very good. Governors give very good leadership in most respects, but have not ensured that statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship are met. Good management at all levels is starting to have a positive effect on behaviour, attendance and assessment – all areas where new policies have recently been introduced.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have high expectations of the school and are well satisfied on the whole. Almost all felt that teaching was good, teachers expected their children to work hard and that the school was well led. Almost all felt comfortable in approaching the school. A minority did not think behaviour good or that the school sought parents' views. In several interviews held, students were very supportive of the school and its atmosphere. They felt that bullying was not a problem and greatly appreciated the school's anti-bullying campaign. Inspectors agree with these views.

Questionnaire responses from students in Years 7-11 were largely positive. Those from sixth formers were positive on most issues, but a large minority was dissatisfied on matters of advice and guidance, which inspectors find good. Sixth formers interviewed were very positive. They enjoy the school and consortium, and say they derive huge benefit from being in the sixth form.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to focus on the improvement of standards in Years 7-9, so that achievement is as good as that of older students.
- Concentrate on making younger students better learners as soon as they join the school, to lessen problems with behaviour, help them make better progress, and help teachers teach more effectively.
- Improve the quality of leadership, teaching and learning in music.
- Further improve attendance and punctuality at all levels, and especially in the sixth form.
- Improve the teaching and learning of numeracy across the curriculum in Years 7-11.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide courses of religious education in the sixth form and Year 11, to meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.

THE SIXTH FORM

The very large sixth form, with three other local sixth forms, is part of the *La Swap* consortium which provides a wide range of academic and vocational courses.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a good education. Results in 2003 were above those attained nationally and reflect good achievement by these students. The quality of education provided is good and provides increasingly well for all of its students through a wide range of academic courses and a growing number of vocational choices. The sixth form is well led and, overall, management is good. The school works hard to value all students and to establish an ethos of freedom, trust and responsibility. Despite this, learning for some students is hindered by erratic attendance and punctuality. The sixth form is effective and provides satisfactory value for money. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good overall, with good subject knowledge and good relationships with students.
- Through strong and supportive links with nearby schools, the consortium provides an extensive range of courses and the freedom for students to take responsibility for themselves.
- Students have positive attitudes to the sixth form, which is a well integrated and harmonious community where individuals are valued.
- Links with higher and further education institutions are very good. Such links are excellent in the arts.
- Students are too frequently late for lessons or absent and monitoring arrangements are not effective enough to minimise this.
- Students benefit from very good study facilities in the school's City Learning Centre.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form at Acland Burghley 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. Some, not listed here, were sampled.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good in English: teaching and learning are both good. Large numbers of students take the AS and A2 courses and very few drop out. Satisfactory in French: teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Mathematics	Satisfactory in mathematics: students who complete the course enjoy mathematics and make steady progress. A significant number of students do not achieve well enough in AS mathematics.
Science	Good in chemistry and biology, in which enthusiastic teaching enables students to achieve well.
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory in ICT: teaching is good and standards are improving.
Humanities	Very good in sociology: students achieve well because of very good teaching. Good in geography, in which teaching, learning and achievement are good. Good in psychology, where good teaching leads to well above average standards.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Satisfactory in design and technology (product design textiles and graphics): despite good teaching, erratic attendance affects the students' achievement, which is satisfactory overall.
Visual and performing arts and media	Excellent in art and design: students benefit greatly from excellent teaching and achieve very highly. Very good in art and design (vocational course): teaching is very good and students are making very good progress. Very good in media studies: learning and achievement are very good; students work very well in partnership with their teachers Good in Drama and Performing Arts: good teaching encourages students to achieve well.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Business	Excellent: as a result of very good teaching, achievement is excellent and standards are among the highest nationally.
General education	Good: the critical thinking course supports able students' academic learning well. The very wide range of enrichment opportunities allows students from all disciplines to widen their cultural and educational experience.

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

Good: Students' progress is well supported by subject teachers and the tutorial programme. The induction programme is very well planned. Students understand how they are doing through regular reviews of their progress. Information about sixth form courses is very good, as is the quality of advice offered in preparation for further study. However, improvements are needed in the monitoring and improvement of attendance. Very effective links, particularly with institutions offering future pathways in the arts, provide students with very good career opportunities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Good leadership and management, overall: Leadership is strong, governance and overall planning are very good. However, a weakness of otherwise good management is the inability to account on a daily basis for attendance, although individual students can be tracked through students' registers. Absence and lateness are limiting the effectiveness of provision. Students' progress and outcomes are monitored thoroughly. Planning for the developing 14 to 19 curriculum is very good. Finances are managed well.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive about the sixth form. In particular, they appreciate their teachers' commitment to support their studies and their considerable subject expertise. They recognise the benefits of the very wide enrichment programme, even if they do not always avail themselves of it. The strengths which the students identified in their questionnaires are justified, but the concerns expressed by some students are not. The apparent lack of guidance on sixth form choices arises from the experience of students joining the sixth form from outside the consortium schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Note:

Attainment answers the question, 'how high are standards?' This means the actual standards students have reached, when compared with the national average in tests and examinations. It is also used to explain the average level expected nationally on entry to the school, or the level of work seen during an inspection.

Achievement answers the question, 'are standards for individual students high enough?' This means the level students have reached, based on the progress they have made in relation to how capable they are.

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 have been generally in line with the national average in recent years, but were below average in 2003. In lessons seen in these years, students' achievement is satisfactory. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results have been close to the national average in recent years. Standards seen were average and students' achievement was good at this stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment and achievement are not as high in Years 7-9 as in other years.
- Gifted and talented students, and those with special educational needs, make good progress.
- Standards of numeracy across the curriculum are not strong enough.
- By the end of Year 11, standards are above average in English, science, history, design technology and art. Standards are below average in work seen in music.

Commentary

1. When students join the school in Year 7, their attainment is average overall, with the attainment of girls generally lower than that of boys. Over the last three years, overall results have been close to the national average, though girls' results have been below average over this period, particularly in mathematics. Results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 were overall below average in 2003. Over recent years, overall attainment in these tests has been rising at a faster than average rate, with boys making the clearest gains.
2. Overall, in their work seen during this inspection, students' achievement over Years 7-9 was satisfactory. Comparing the 2003 test results with scores in tests at the end of Year 6 in their previous schools, achievement is well below average. However, compared with the achievement of students in schools with a similar social context, results for these students are above average.
3. Although students' achievement over the first three years is sound overall, parents, school and inspectors agree that it could be better. A fuller evaluation is given in later sections of this report (particularly sections on attitudes and behaviour, teaching and the curriculum). Further improving achievement over these years is an important priority for the school.
4. Attainment and achievement improve in Years 10 and 11. GCSE graded results in 2003 and over the last three years have been close to the national average, but overall performance (in terms of total points scored) has risen faster than the national trend in recent years. Boys have performed better than girls over a three year period, but girls scored higher than boys in 2003, and made better progress than boys over the 2001-03 GCSE course. No particular differences were seen in the achievement of boys and girls, in any year, during the inspection. Overall, during the GCSE years students achieve well. Based on their attainment in tests

taken at the end of Year 9, and when compared with students in similar schools, results in 2003 were well above the national average. The school achieved a good 'value-added' score for the GCSE results in 2003.

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	53 (48)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88 (89)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (93)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	35.4 (34.7)	33.9 (34.7)

There were 172 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. At both these stages, students who are gifted and talented achieve well. They are well provided for, and respond well to all the opportunities the school provides. GCSE results for those on the register of gifted and talented students are high. Students with special educational needs achieve well also. They make good progress in the special lessons provided for those needing extra support, particularly in improving their skills of literacy, thanks to good teaching by specialist staff. Because everyone gets on very well together and staff are warmly supportive of all their students, there is no particular difference in the achievement of students from the many heritage backgrounds in the school. The 12 students who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language progress overall in line with others; some learn English speedily, while others take more time because support is only available in certain lessons. Students whose families have refugee status progress equally well, while students in public care are overall making good progress because their particular needs are well recognised and provided for.

The following table gives a summary of attainment and achievement in each subject:

Standards in:	Attainment Years 7-9	Attainment Years 10-11	Achievement Years 7-9	Achievement Years 10-11
English	average	above average	satisfactory	good
Modern languages	average	average	satisfactory	satisfactory
Mathematics	below average	average	satisfactory	satisfactory
Science	average	above average	good	good
ICT	average	average	satisfactory	good
Geography	below average	average	satisfactory	good
History	average	above average	satisfactory	good
Religious education	average	average	good	satisfactory
Design and technology	above average	above average	good	good
Art	average	above average	good	very good
Music	below average	below average	poor	poor
Physical education	average	average	good	good
Citizenship	average	average	satisfactory	satisfactory

6. The school set realistic targets for achievement in the tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, but did not achieve them. In GCSE, the school exactly achieved its target of 53 per cent for achievement in five or more subjects at levels A*-C, a result just above the national average. It also met its target for points scored, again the national average figure. Its 2004 targets are around the national average, and students are on course to meet them.
7. Since the last inspection, improvement in standards has been satisfactory overall. There has not been enough sustained improvement in attainment for Years 7-9, but GCSE results have risen steadily over a five year period and show good improvement over this time. Among schools with specialist college status, the school has received particular recognition for the improvement of its GCSE results.

The sixth form

Results in the A2-level examinations of the General Certificate of Education (GCE) in 2003 were above the national average. Achievement in the sixth form is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well, making good progress overall.
- Results have been improving in recent years. Girls performed more highly than boys in 2003.
- A2 results in 2003 were particularly high in art and design, drama, history, psychology and sociology.
- A2 results were below average in 2003 in geography, mathematics and music.

Commentary

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	92.6 (91.6)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	41.3 (38.3)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	244.2 (215.5)	261.4 (232.9)

There were 127 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

8. Overall results in the sixth form AS, A2-level and vocational examinations were above the national average in 2003. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, students achieved well, making good progress in class and over the many courses. Results were highest in A2 examinations in art and design, drama, history, psychology and sociology. They were lowest in mathematics and music. In vocational subjects, results were high in business studies, but low in performing arts, the subject in which students achieved least. The proportion of students remaining on A2 courses varied widely over 2002-03, from 100 per cent in five subjects to only just over half in mathematics. Overall, the retention of students on these courses was good.

The following table gives a summary of attainment and achievement in the work seen in each subject fully inspected:

subject	attainment	achievement
English	above average	good
French	average	satisfactory
Mathematics	average	satisfactory
Biology	average	good

Chemistry	average	good
ICT	average	good
Geography	average	good
Psychology	average	good
Sociology	above average	good
Design and technology	average	satisfactory
Art and design	very high	excellent
Art and design (vocational)	above average	very good
Drama and theatre studies	above average	good
Performing arts	average	good
Media studies	well above average	very good
Business education	well above average	excellent

9. In terms of ethnicity, the school has analysed its results very carefully. In order to create large enough groups to make a valid comparison, it has analysed results across all four schools in the consortium. Turkish and White European students did comparatively well in 2003, but Black British, Pakistani, Indian and other Asian students did not do so well. Results at this school show a similar pattern. No particular strengths or weaknesses were apparent among different groups during the inspection.
10. Boys were ahead in the A2-level examination results in 2002, but were overtaken by the girls in 2003. In the 2003 examinations, girls' results were well above the national average for girls, and boys' were above the average for boys.
11. Since the last inspection, progress in improving results and in maintaining the achievement of students has been satisfactory.

Standards on work-related learning courses throughout the school

12. Standards on the vocational courses vary considerably. On the ICT course leading to the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ), for example, about 20 per cent of students last year failed to complete their course, so did not achieve an award. On the very newly introduced applied art and design GCSE course in Year 10, standards are below average because students have high levels of special educational need. The behaviour of this class is extremely challenging, even for very able teachers. Students' attitudes to learning are often poor, so they are not making the progress of which they are capable. Students with special educational needs on the skills for working life course achieve well, because their attitudes are very positive and, whilst standards are well below average, they benefit from very good teaching and are making good progress. Students doing the leisure and tourism GNVQ course are also doing well and achieving standards which are in line with the course expectations. The newly introduced Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) course in art and design in the sixth form has been very successful in raising standards to above average even, after just six months, for students whose attainment was below average on entry to the course. These students are achieving very well indeed.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory, though recent work to improve levels has brought some improvement. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good overall, though some younger students lack self-discipline. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of students' personal development are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' relationships with each other are good. The school promotes racial harmony very well.
- Students' confidence and self-esteem are very high.
- Cultural development is promoted well through the arts.
- Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory.
- Some younger students have not yet learned good work habits. Their behaviour is sometimes unsatisfactory, diminishing the chance to learn well.

Commentary

13. Considered overall, students have good attitudes to their studies. They are confident and articulate individuals, ready to play an active part in their lessons and in the life of the school. Many take advantage of the wide range of activities on offer at the end of the school day. By contrast, a number of younger students, especially boys, have not yet learned how to work. In a third of lessons in Years 7-9, groups of students – often boys – did not settle readily in class, so restricting the learning of others. These attitudes change quite rapidly when GCSE courses start and students work with a greater sense of purpose.
14. Students' behaviour reflects their attitudes. Overall, standards are good in lessons for older students and satisfactory for those in Years 7-9. In these junior years, a significant amount of silly behaviour was seen, contrasting with the more sensible and mature behaviour noted in Years 10 and 11. Getting younger students ready to learn effectively, and so to improve their achievement and progress in Year 7-9 is now an important priority for the school. Younger students are often very willing, and are very positive about their school, so a concerted programme to teach them good attitudes to work should be well worthwhile. Around the school, standards of behaviour are largely friendly and informal. While cases of bullying do happen (mainly name calling, according to students interviewed), anti-bullying has a high profile, so students are confident that cases will be reported and dealt with. The level of permanent exclusions is low. The number of fixed term exclusions is still above average, though the level is falling, but there are valid reasons for exclusions. In proportion to their number, the level of exclusions is higher among black students.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	698	64	1
White – Irish	34	4	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	35	2	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	20	2	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	42	2	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	82	25	0
No ethnic group recorded	26	3	0

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

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.4	School data	2.4
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.

15. The rate of attendance at the school is lower than the average for schools nationally. There is also more unauthorised absence. The school has recently given attendance a much higher profile, with a 'traffic light' approach to monitoring the attendance of individual students. Early results show improvement, but this needs to be sustained. Punctuality is also unsatisfactory. Too many students arrive late at the start of the day and come late to lessons. Much work has been done by the school to improve punctuality, yet the problem persists with a number of students moving casually between classes and wandering into lessons late.
16. Provision for students' personal (spiritual, moral social and cultural) development is good. Students from many different backgrounds mix together harmoniously. Students interviewed praised the sense of community within the school and the good relations that exist among students and between students and members of staff. Inspectors noted the generally very good relationships and the school's positive, inclusive ethos, despite some problems of behaviour among the younger students. As part of the curriculum, there are opportunities for students to explore a range of values and beliefs. More time needs to be found for reflection on wider issues; at present, this aspect can be rushed or omitted. In contrast, the school provides a wide range of cultural benefits and students gain from the activities which are provided as part of its arts college status. The school has maintained the good standards of personal development reported at the last inspection.

The sixth form

Students' behaviour and attitudes to their studies are good overall. Some very good examples of these were seen during the inspection, and their personal development is good. However, students' attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have good attitudes to their studies and show a growing maturity in their approach to school life.
- The sixth form is a harmonious community, in which individuals are valued.
- Students are all too frequently late for school or absent.

Commentary

17. Students in the sixth form are articulate and show a growing maturity. They are aware that they need to take on an increasingly active part in learning. Students appreciate the wide range of courses, both academic and vocational, which is available to them as part of the *La Swap* consortium. Among these, they especially value the arts subjects linked to Acland Burghley's arts college status. Students interviewed commented on the friendly ethos of the school, and the good relations that they have with their teachers – the recognition that they are young adults is important to them. Students' personal development is similar to that in the main school. They are ready to contribute to community activities, both within the school and outside, as well as drawing on the benefits available. In this context, it is surprising to note that sixth form attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. Students are too frequently late for school or absent. Current arrangements to monitor this are not proving effective enough. This has an adverse effect on the learning of individuals.

18. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, but punctuality remains an issue for the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides an education of good quality. Teaching and learning are good overall. The sixth form is a strong element in this good provision. Teachers' use of assessment is satisfactory and improving. The curriculum is good, although the school needs to conform with legal requirements in two areas. The sixth form curriculum is good and there is a wide variety of activities at all levels of the school. Procedures for students' care and guidance are good. The school has a good partnership with parents and the community, and the links it makes with other schools through the La Swap sixth form consortium are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. They are satisfactory in Years 7-9, and good for older students. Some younger students have not yet developed secure attitudes to learning, and this shows in difficult behaviour in a number of lessons. Teachers' use of assessment of students' work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject expertise and the very good relationships between teachers and students ensure that learning is productive among older students.
- Not all younger students are well trained in how to learn. Their behaviour and attitudes in class mean that their learning is sometimes unsatisfactory.
- Though there is some unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7-9, often directly linked to students' behaviour, there is very little such teaching above this level.
- Over 75 per cent of teaching seen in Years 10-11 was at least good. This is a good profile.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 203 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9 (4%)	52 (26%)	72 (35%)	58 (29%)	10 (5%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

19. The older the students, the more effective teaching and learning become, and the surer become students' achievement and progress. By the time they leave after A2-levels, a high proportion goes on to university as good learners and valuable, articulate and well adjusted people.
20. Students make a relatively slow academic start in the school. Some students lack good habits of learning and behaviour, and this slows the pace of learning. Though teachers are well informed and care well for their students, they have a lot of work to do before all their classes are ready to learn efficiently. Despite this, much teaching in Years 7-9 is good, marked by very good care for individual students, good subject knowledge, clear lesson planning and high expectations of what students should achieve. At this stage, just under half the teaching in the 51 lessons seen is at least good, including some which is very good.
21. Much teaching in Years 7-9 is satisfactory. Some satisfactory teaching has good characteristics, but is not more effective because in a minority of lessons students do not behave well. They lack the ability to work independently and to collaborate productively. Teachers are then sometimes unable to bring them to cooperate and learn, and a proportion of

lessons, 12 per cent of those seen at this stage, is unsatisfactory. Other factors which affect learning include some lack of well prepared materials for the whole range of ability; the need to provide a closer assessment of students' progress and set clearer targets for improvement; and the mixed ability structure of lessons in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, which makes it hard for all students to achieve enough progress. In English, teachers in some lessons do not provide enough challenge for abler students or adapt their material enough for those of lower ability.

22. Teaching and learning improve considerably in Years 10-11. At this stage, teaching in only two of the 73 lessons seen was unsatisfactory. Teaching was good in half lessons seen, and very good in a further quarter. This is a strong profile, which confirms that, when students have learned how to work positively in class, teachers can deploy their skills to good effect and help students to learn well. This stage marks the start of the assured, productive partnership between teachers and mature students, which leads to good progress and examination results in the sixth form. Teachers now need to grapple with the challenge of how to train the immature, younger students how to learn, and so how best to teach them in order to achieve better progress at an earlier stage. The leadership team has recognised the position and taken steps to improve matters.
23. Teaching of students with special educational needs in the seven lessons seen in the learning development department – mostly for students in Years 7-8 – is good, often very good. Teachers and assistants are adept at responding to the needs of potentially difficult students, who respond by settling well and getting on keenly with their work. Tasks set are appropriate, at the right level of challenge. Students learn well there because staff create a secure, welcoming context for learning, and give firm and encouraging support for individuals. Support in the classroom is equally assured and effective. Subject teachers and support staff work well together and help students make good progress.
24. Support given to students with English as an additional language is good also. Teachers are aware of students' needs and provide as much as they can for them. Specialist staff give well informed support for those at an early stage in acquiring English. They carefully choose their students and the subjects to support, but the amount of support is limited by funds available.
25. Gifted and talented students are generally well taught by subject teachers, who are aware of their needs and often provide suitable materials for them. Challenge for the ablest students is not always as high as it might be in classes of mixed ability, where the range of ability is often very wide.

The following table gives a summary of the quality of teaching and learning in these stages:

subject	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
English	satisfactory	good
French	satisfactory	satisfactory
Spanish	good	good
Mathematics	satisfactory	satisfactory
Science	good	good
ICT	good	good
Geography	good	good
History	good	good
Religious education	satisfactory	satisfactory
Design and technology	good	good
Art	very good	very good

Music	poor	poor
Physical education	Good	good
Citizenship	no teaching seen	no teaching seen

26. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its good level of teaching. The school is aware of the need to improve learning in Years 7-9, a matter not apparent in 1999.

Assessment in Years 7-11

27. Teachers' assessment of students' work is satisfactory, though standards vary from subject to subject. Marking is variable in quality, sometimes inconsistent within departments, but is very good in some, for example, English. Teachers are very well supplied with data on the attainment of their students and are increasingly setting them effective, short-term targets, as in science. In some subjects, for example mathematics, assessment does not lead to the improvement it should. A growing number of subjects, for example art, design technology, English and history, are making good use of assessment data to challenge students to fulfil their potential. This is a very promising development in the school's campaign to improve the results and achievement of younger students.
28. Students' special educational needs are well known to teachers, who have good records of individuals and give them appropriate support. The learning development department assesses all students on entry to the school, compiles very careful records and monitors students' progress at regular intervals. Assessment of the progress of those with English as an additional language is careful and effective. Classroom teachers are aware of the needs of individuals, and good records are maintained by the co-ordinator. Specialist teachers assess the progress well of those who are at the earlier stages of learning English. Good records are also maintained by staff responsible for gifted and talented students, and their progress is carefully assessed and compared with that of other students.
29. The school has made satisfactory progress in improving its assessment procedures in departments, and very good progress in introducing good systems for the analysis of data since the last inspection report.

The sixth form

Teaching is good overall and students learn well. Teachers assess students' work well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in nearly four out of five lessons seen were at least good.
- Teaching is excellent in the GCE art and design courses, and very good in sociology, art and design (vocational), media studies and business education.
- Students learn well, because of very good relationships and their teachers' very good subject knowledge.
- Assessment procedures are good overall, and very good in several subjects.

Commentary

30. Teaching is good overall and students learn well. At this level, a third of teaching and learning is good and a further third is very good. Of the 79 lessons seen, six were excellent and only one unsatisfactory. This is a strong profile which confirms the effectiveness of teaching, particularly for these older students. All aspects of teaching are good at this level. Planning, the encouragement of students and engagement with them are particular strengths, helped by the very good relationships which are so clearly apparent at this level. Students respond well, acquiring knowledge at a good pace, working productively and collaborating well.
31. Support for students with special education needs is good. The learning development department monitors well the progress of those on the register and with statements, and helps

those who need it effectively. However, there is no support for those sixth form students on the register of those with English as an additional language, some of whom need continuing help in order to succeed in their chosen courses. Gifted and talented students are given many opportunities to develop their interests and expertise further, for example in masterclasses at universities. Teachers are well aware of how to engage their students in lively discussion and encourage them to benefit from the richness which London has to offer.

The following is a summary of the quality of teaching and learning seen in subjects fully inspected at this stage:

subject	Years 12-13
English	good
French	satisfactory
Mathematics	satisfactory
Biology	good
Chemistry	good
ICT	good
Geography	good
Psychology	good
Sociology	very good
Design and technology	good
Art and design	excellent
Art and design (vocational)	very good
Drama and theatre studies	good
Performing arts	good
Media studies	very good
Business education	very good

32. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its good quality of teaching in the sixth form.

Assessment in the sixth form

33. Assessment is good, often very good. Generally, teachers make good use of the detailed and helpful data provided on each student. They increasingly set them useful targets for improvement, based on clear analyses of the grades they should reach or exceed. Marking is often very good, for example, in English and history. Assessment is a strong feature of several subjects seen, including art, business studies, design and technology and sociology. Sixth form assessment has improved considerably since the last inspection.

Teaching and learning in work-related learning courses, throughout the school

34. The quality of teaching and learning on the vocational courses observed on inspection were generally good in the main school. With the exception of the applied GCSE in art, classes are very positive about these opportunities to learn in a different style and respond well. The art class is unusual because almost all this year's recruits have difficulties well beyond the course itself and find learning generally difficult. Despite good teaching therefore, attitudes and behaviour get in the way of students' learning, which does not match the quality of teaching. In the sixth form, the consortium offers a range of vocational provision, with this school's contribution recently extended to include a very successfully introduced double-award AVCE in

art and design, where teaching and learning are very good. Opportunities for students to contextualise their learning through work experience in the arts field are being successfully integrated into this course, but no such opportunities exist for those doing the AVCE business studies course. Business links generally need to be extended so that these students can benefit from such experience by applying their learning. The lack of Young Enterprise in the school means that business students do not experience this type of simulated work experience either. In the main school, all Year 10 students complete a work experience placement in the summer term. This is very well organised, with good links to areas such as literacy. All students write their own letters to the employers to arrange the placement, with follow-up letters of thanks as well as the usual journals of their experience whilst there.

The curriculum

The school provides a broad range of opportunities, including a very good programme of activities beyond the school day. Accommodation and resources for learning are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school offers a very inclusive education, giving students from every background and with a wide range of needs the chance to benefit from the education it gives.
- Provision for activities, particularly in the arts, is very good.
- Innovative planning ensures students are well prepared for further education, work and life.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship, or religious education in Year 11, as required.

Commentary

35. The school provides a good curriculum overall in Years 7-11. Its breadth is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10-11. The provision for ICT, noted as poor at the time of the last inspection, has been improved.
36. The school generally meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. It is aware that the time allocated to personal, social and health education and citizenship is below that recommended, and, though its provision is overall satisfactory, is planning to improve this. Requirements for collective worship and religious education in Year 11 are not met, though the school provides well for religious education in a short GCSE course in Years 9 and 10.
37. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is enriched by drama and dance, but students have less than the nationally recommended time for religious education and ICT. Students are restricted to the study of only one modern foreign language, a situation noted by some parents. However, the school's priority at this stage, to provide a curriculum in line with its arts college status, is well met. Curricular areas are at various stages of development with regard to the National Strategy for Years 7 to 9, but this has already brought about some improvements in standards, particularly through the use of well-planned three-part lessons.
38. A wide range of academic subjects is offered in Years 10 and 11, complemented by a number of vocational subjects, including the recently implemented applied art and design course. The school has begun to explore further alternative qualifications for some students in the 14 to 16 age range. So far, it provides foundation certificates in skills for life and languages. External opportunities such as taster sessions in Beauty therapy at the local college have provided very good opportunities for a few girls to gain certification in this area after their course, though some failed to complete this. No separate provision is made for ICT for all students in Years 10 and 11, and the school has not yet met its stated arts college plan to do so.
39. The curriculum is enhanced by very good opportunities across a range of sporting, arts and other activities. These are a strength of the school. Take-up is generally good and regularly monitored by departments and year groups. Provision is good for out-of-hours learning for accredited activities, as well as special interests and subject support. For example, there are

opportunities to study GCSE classical civilization as well as life drawing, and these are open to adults as well as post-16 students. There is an extensive programme of visiting artists, and students are involved in *joinedupdesign*, an opportunity for partnership with professional designers, which is helping students to refurbish the canteen. The on-site City Learning Centre offers a further extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities, inviting participation from primary schools as well as parents and others.

40. The school has used well its specialist status as an arts college to enhance its curriculum and extra-curricular provision in the visual and performing arts. Through a range of projects such as *food standards*, *The Guardian newspaper* and the *poetry slam* there has been a positive impact on other subject areas. In particular, the school's special educational needs provision has benefited from an art therapist, a project with Tate Modern and the Imax cinema, and additional dedicated timetabled time from two art teachers. Arts College status helps to raise aspirations, and each year a significant number of students continue their education in the arts on leaving school.
41. The school has a very inclusive curriculum. Its provision of equal opportunities for all students is very good. The school takes care to meet the needs of minority ethnic groups. Because of the high proportion of boys, it makes a particular point of looking after the interests of girls. Arrangements for students with special educational needs are very good. Courses to help students develop their skills in literacy and numeracy are well planned and very effective, so giving these students their chance to be included in the mainstream curriculum. Special help, of good quality, is given to those at an early stage in learning English as an additional language. The interests of gifted and talented students are provided for, largely through the school's generous activity programmes. For those students whose behaviour has disqualified them from lessons, the learning support centre provides a good range of classroom activities, as well as the necessary support to return to lessons as soon as possible. The Connexions careers service provides excellent, specialist help in finding Year 11 students alternative courses and placements, if they are no longer profiting from the curriculum the school provides. However, the mixed-ability grouping of students, especially in Years 7 and 8, restricts access to the curriculum, especially in modern foreign languages and mathematics, because work is not consistently matched to the needs of the full attainment range.
42. Accommodation is satisfactory, but there are deficiencies in a number of areas that need refurbishment. Accommodation for music is poor and that for English unsatisfactory. Much of the accommodation is not readily accessible to students with physical disabilities. However, the school benefits from a very good new library and resources centre, and up-to-date ICT facilities. Accommodation for special educational needs is excellent. The assembly hall provides an excellent space for a range of school productions and performances. Resources for learning are generally satisfactory and the match of teachers and support assistants to the needs of the curriculum is good. Technical, clerical and administrative support is good and has been increased in line with the 2003 workload agreement.
43. Recent improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

The sixth form

The sixth form curriculum is good, and is further enhanced by the school's membership of the *La Swap* sixth form consortium.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a wide curriculum, offering many courses and a very rich choice of activities.
- The school and consortium actively review the quality and development of the sixth form.
- A very high proportion of Year 11 students stay on in the sixth form, and the school is seeking to provide an even wider offer of courses, so that more will stay.
- Preparation for higher or further education is very good.

- Provision for religious education in the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements.

Commentary

44. The curriculum is good in all respects except that of religious education. The school has not adequately met the requirement to provide religious education in this very large sixth form.
45. The very wide selection of level AS and A2-level courses, offered by the school and its *La Swap* consortium partners, is well matched to the needs and aspirations of many of the students. The school's review of its 14 to 19 pathways reflects its inclusive philosophy. While there is some provision for vocational courses across the consortium, the school recognizes the need considerably to expand this programme and is thinking creatively as to how to move forward.
46. A very good programme of enrichment activities including PSHE and out-of-hours opportunities extends learning and contributes very effectively to students' personal development. Provision for students to develop key skills is made through the individual subject courses, although provision for ICT skills is not systematic. Nevertheless, students' independent work demonstrates that they are competent, autonomous users of ICT.
47. A very high number of students choose to remain at the school for post-16 courses. Most courses are taught within individual schools, but students often move to another school for some of their lessons. The school is ready to innovate in response to students' needs. For example, in line with its arts college status, the school introduced additional vocational courses in the performing arts and art and design in 2003 to improve students' opportunities of progression from Year 11. There is good additional provision for gifted students, such as the accredited Level 3 critical thinking course that supplements their AS-levels in Year 12.
48. Preparation for all students for the next stage of education or work is very good. Good links with *Connexions* partners, higher education institutions and work-related activities all support the high retention rates. Almost 90 per cent of students go on to some form of higher or further education. Students with special educational needs are well supported in the sixth form with most enabled to take full advantage of the curriculum.
49. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, but the school has not met the requirement to provide adequate religious education in the sixth form.

Care, guidance and support

The school has good procedures to ensure students' welfare, health and safety. Academic advice and guidance are satisfactory, and have good potential for improvement. Overall, personal support is good, and very good for some groups of students. Arrangements to involve students in the school's work are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Personal support and guidance are good for all students
- The support given to vulnerable students is particularly sensitive and thoughtful.
- The school's well known anti-bullying campaign and the work of its community police officer are considerable strengths.

Commentary

50. Procedures to take care of students are good. As part of this, the school aims to provide a friendly and welcoming environment in which individual students feel that they are known, liked and valued as individuals. Systems for child protection, which include thorough procedures for Internet safety, are good. Students consider that they settle into the school easily because of the help they receive from teachers, older students and the peer counsellors. The work of

these trained counsellors has led to wide recognition of the school's anti-bullying campaign, which greatly helps to reduce insecurity and to build up a good sense of community in the school. The school's initiative in providing the funding and a base for its highly valued neighbourhood police officer has greatly improved students' sense of safety, and has significantly reduced local aggravation by his positive, helpful presence.

51. The quality of personal support, advice and guidance is good. The procedures to monitor student's personal progress and provide support are well established in practice. One example of this is the class sheet, which because it is reviewed during registration at the end of each day, is an effective method of routinely reminding younger students of their behaviour. Girls interviewed like the extra support provided by the girls' den, and by a separate co-ordinator for girls.
52. The school has a very inclusive approach to helping all groups of students who need support. For example, the learning support unit and the learning mentors provide very sensitive help for those groups of students whose behaviour impedes their learning. The learning development department identifies and helps a large number of students with special educational needs. Co-ordinators for students with English as an additional language and for gifted and talented students ensure that these students receive good support.
53. The academic advice and guidance that students receive is satisfactory. The very good new systems to record and monitor students' academic progress have yet to become firmly established in use. Members of staff are still receiving training on how to make the most effective use of the wide range of information now available to them to help students to do as well as they can.
54. Arrangements to involve students in the work of the school are good. This is done formally through the work of the School Council. Its discussions are reported in detail in the newsletter. Its review of how students viewed their personal safety in the school area following the attachment of the police officer to the school provides a good illustration of the Council's role. Students are also involved, to an increasing extent, in evaluating their own work and learning how to set targets for improvement.

The sixth form

Standards of care are good. Students receive very good support and guidance during their time in the sixth form. As in the main part of the school, arrangements to involve students are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students consider that they receive very good advice during their time in the sixth form.

Commentary

55. Students feel that they are well briefed by the school before entering the sixth form. They contrasted, very favourably, the information and advice they were given with that received at other institutions outside the consortium schools. Very good advice is provided for students during their time in the sixth form through the regular series of interviews with tutors and academic reviews. This advice is constructive and supportive, but students interviewed felt it was not at the expense of independent learning, and they valued it all the more for this. The quality of advice given as preparation for further study is also very good. Arrangements to involve students in the life of the school and the consortium are good. Some students help younger students at Acland Burghley, while others are more involved with ideas across the consortium.
56. Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are good overall. The school provides good information for parents about its work and about the progress that their children make. Links with the local community are very good. Links with other schools and colleges, including higher and further education institutions, are a further strength. The school makes effective use of its specialist status to strengthen its partnership.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Clear information is provided for parents about the curriculum.
- Links with the community help to provide stimulating experiences for students.
- Links with other schools and colleges are very well developed.

Commentary

57. The school has developed a good partnership with parents. It provides a good range of information about curricular studies, both on-line and in booklet form. Weekly bulletins and the web site are effective sources of current information. Information about their children's progress is also good. Although the full report is very succinct, it is issued just before consultation evenings and intended as a basis for discussion. Review sheets help parents to follow progress throughout the year. They can also come to the review interviews with their children. For their part, parents show their interest by coming to consultation evenings. The level of attendance at these is high. There is also an active parents' association (ABSA) which both raises funds and runs educational forums.
58. Links with the local community are very good. The school takes full advantage of its situation (and, increasingly, its specialist status) to secure activities through which students can learn. The work with Hampstead Theatre observed during the inspection is one such example. The City Learning Centre and sport hall provide facilities for the community, and the use of them is increasing. There is effective consultation with local residents to minimise the impact of a large school on a principally residential area, and here too the school's own police officer plays an important role.
59. Since the school acquired arts college status, links with local primary schools have increased. They now encompass shared teaching, taster lessons at Acland Burghley and visits to the schools by the peer counsellors. Links with post-16 schools and colleges are, of course, a particular strength because of the impact of the well-established *La Swap* consortium of schools. The benefits for students are substantial. Through the consortium, they have access to a very wide range of academic courses and a growing number of vocational choices. The school's very good links with other education organisations enable several students requiring off-site education to link into this type of provision successfully. This is often organised via the learning development department, and often serves the purpose of taking very disruptive students out of classes and lessons so the remaining students learn more successfully.

The sixth form

Links with parents are good, while links with the community and other colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The *La Swap* consortium of four sixth forms provides a very good practical link between these schools.
- Close links with higher and further education institutions provide very good opportunities for further studies.
- These links are excellent in the arts.

Commentary

60. Students benefit from the extensive links with the local community and from the strength of the *La Swap* consortium arrangements. The range of consortium courses is extensive and much valued by students. In general, the partnership arrangements work well, but occasionally communication links between the other schools and parents do not work as well as they should. Links with higher and further education institutions are highly effective. They help to enrich students' studies in the sixth form and make them aware of prospects for further study. As befits an arts college, links through the arts are outstanding.

61. The school has maintained the good standards noted in the previous inspection report.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good overall, and that of the headteacher and deputy headteachers is very good. Governors give very good leadership in most respects, but have not ensured that statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship are met. Good management at all levels is starting to have an effect on behaviour, attendance and assessment – all areas where new policies have recently been introduced.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteachers is very good.
- The governing body leads very effectively.
- Self-evaluation procedures are very good and are leading to improvements in teaching and learning.

Commentary

62. Governors know their school very well, are aware of its weaknesses as well as its strengths, and work very effectively with the headteacher on strategic development for school improvement. They are a highly skilled and committed group with a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities that face the school. Governors' committees are well constituted and cover a good range of business effectively. Governors have a thorough knowledge of their statutory responsibilities, and with the exception of provision for religious education in Year 11 and the sixth form, and collective worship, are assiduous in the discharge of them. About RE in Year 11, the school considered that it reasonably conformed with requirements by providing rather more time for a short GCSE course in Year 10. Some religious education is provided in the sixth form, but it is insufficient. However, both school and governors are aware that there is no act of daily worship.
63. The headteacher and the two deputy headteachers lead very well. All joined the school at the same time four terms ago. Since then, the new headteacher has adopted a measured and thoughtful approach to leadership. He has defined with his deputies a very clear vision of the way forward, emphasising the need for a stronger whole-school ethos, and for effective management systems to enable students to achieve well, "through a constant focus within the school on the highest standards of teaching". In his excellent briefing paper for staff, produced one year ago, he outlines the processes and the underlying principles that have subsequently shaped the school's development. The headteacher has very good skills of analysis and self-evaluation, seen to advantage in his preparation for this inspection, and with his senior colleagues has improved the systems for the evaluation of departmental performance. Management meetings between senior staff and heads of department and years are frequent and constructive, while the monitoring of teaching is well managed and evaluated. Such procedures are starting to improve teaching further, and have already informed senior management of the need for further improvement in teaching and learning in Years 7-9.
64. Since the headteacher and deputies joined the school, much has been achieved. Systems of consultation are effective and there are high levels of transparency and participation in decision making. Important whole-school policies, particularly for assessment, teaching and learning, and behaviour, have been developed and are in the early stages of implementation across the school. Signs of progress in these areas are encouraging, with the emergence of a new cohesion and shared purpose at this large and traditionally disparate school.
65. Management of the school's many systems and areas of work is good. Overall, heads of department and years manage their areas well. Management of assessment and inclusion by deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers is very good. A very good policy for assessment has been developed and is starting to have a marked effect on the way teachers assess students' work and challenge them to produce their best. The central analysis of data

is a strength of the school, and the benefits of this are now starting to extend to all departments. The impact of the Key Stage 3 Strategy is already becoming apparent, as teachers refine and seek to improve the depth and consistency of their teaching. A detailed and relevant school development plan has been produced, and the performance management framework is used to support staff and enable staff to play their part in raising students' standards of attainment.

The following table gives a summary of the quality of leadership and management in subjects fully inspected in Years 7-11:

subject	leadership and management
English	good
Modern foreign languages	good
Mathematics	good
Science	very good
ICT	good
Geography	good
History	good
Religious education	satisfactory
Design and technology	very good
Art	very good
Music	very poor
Physical education	good
Citizenship	satisfactory

66. The very good leadership and improving effectiveness of management is reflected also in the more stable staffing of the school. Staffing retention rates are relatively good, and the school has attracted some well-qualified and able new teachers in the past year. Induction procedures for new staff are well defined, effective and thoroughly implemented.

The sixth form

Leadership and management are good overall. Leadership given by the director of sixth form is very good. The school's shared responsibility for the leadership and management of the *La Swap* consortium is very good also.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The director of sixth form leads very well. He has a very clear grasp of policy and standards, both in the school and in the *La Swap* consortium.
- Leadership and management by the heads of department and years are good.
- An adequate religious education course which meets statutory requirements has not been provided.
- The management of attendance and punctuality is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

67. The director of sixth form leads this large and complex part of the school very well. He is very well informed about the progress of the students, and makes able analyses of attainment, progress and targets. Leadership structures for *La Swap* are also very good. The consortium operates on the basis of revolving leadership, with one school taking the lead of all committees

– headteachers, heads of sixth, heads of departments – at any one time. Very good provision is also made for joint leadership at governor and strategic planning levels. The consortium has been operating successfully for twenty years, and is still developing well.

68. Management of the sixth form is more variable, and is good overall. Heads of department and years manage their areas very well, but management of the vital matters of attendance and punctuality is unsatisfactory. Registrations are not frequent enough, though tutors get to know about absences. The consortium has clear intentions, now in its development plan, to improve attendance to a satisfactory level. All too often, classes are reduced by absence, and punctuality is a problem also. This vital part of daily management is not being successfully run. Management of assessment, reporting and students' welfare is good.

69. The leadership and management of the sixth form was not reported in the last inspection.

The following table gives a summary of leadership and management in each subject inspected:

subject	leadership and management
English	good
French	satisfactory
Mathematics	good
Biology	good
Chemistry	good
ICT	good
Geography	very good
Psychology	very good
Sociology	very good
Design and technology	very good
Art and design	excellent
Art and design (vocational)	very good
Drama and theatre studies	good
Performing arts	good
Media studies	very good
Business education	excellent

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5720780	Balance from previous year	- 22951
Total expenditure	5619354	Balance carried forward to the next	78475
Expenditure per student	4579		

70. Sound procedures and systems for financial management are in place at Governing Body level and throughout the school. In the audit report of 2002, there were no issues in the highest category of priority for the school to address, and the medium and low category issues have been addressed in full since then. The new bursar, who had only been in post for three weeks

when this inspection took place, worked alongside his predecessor for several weeks prior to taking up the post in order to receive a thorough grounding in the school's systems.

71. Targeted funds, for example the Arts College grant, Excellence in Cities funds and the funding for Gifted and Talented students, are used for the intended purpose under the watchful eye of the Governing Body. The school applies the principles of best value appropriately and provides satisfactory value for money.

Leadership and management of work-related learning, throughout the school

72. The senior management team recognise the need to extend opportunities for work-related learning in the school, and have already done much to enhance provision in a range of ways, often in liaison with the Connexions services. An audit of work-related learning opportunities across departments has been started and subjects are increasingly aware of the needs to make reference to this areas in their planning of courses. Learning mentors too make a significant contribution to work-related learning provision.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Courses in English, English literature, French and Spanish were fully inspected. A certificate of achievement course in Spanish was also sampled. In this course, a group of very low attainers were very well taught, showed great interest and made rapid progress. English

Provision in English is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership generates productive commitment from teachers.
- Good marking and use of assessment give students appropriate targets.
- Lack of challenge in early years causes the most able to achieve below potential.
- Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11.
- Students experience a rich provision of extra-curricular activities.

Commentary

73. Test results show that attainment in Years 7 to 9 has been improving steadily since 1999, reaching standards above the national average in 2002, but dipping below in 2003. Until now results have been in line with those in similar schools. In 2003, results were not as good as in mathematics and science.
74. In GCSE English language, both boys and girls have been achieving results better than those nationally. In literature, the results were below the national average. In English language, girls performed better than boys in 2003 but the difference is less marked than nationally. In literature, boys outperformed girls.
75. Standards observed in class confirmed these results. Students were working at around the nationally expected levels. However, students in Years 7 to 9 produce little extended writing, which limits their progress. In Years 10 and 11 students write at greater length with growing maturity, covering a good range of genres. The poetry seen, displayed on all walls, is fresh and plentiful.
76. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are aware of what levels students have attained and set targets accordingly. Students generally behave well, and appreciate the support given by teachers. But it takes time for them to achieve as well as they might. Growing maturity results in greater progress.
77. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. All teachers know the subject well. They are guided by detailed and appropriate schemes of work, and apply the literacy strategy conscientiously. They prepare diligently, and mark work with extreme thoroughness. As a result, students are well guided in how to improve. Teachers organise an ambitious programme of extra-curricular activities which contributes to wider learning. However, students' progress is held back by their having few opportunities for speaking. Lack of rooms and lack of space within rooms restricts what teachers can easily do.
78. Some lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9, do not provide enough challenge for the most able and are ill adapted to the needs of weaker students. That said, learning support assistants are effective: when they are available those with special education needs make good progress. The presentation of finished work - and students' pride in what they have achieved - would be improved by greater use of information technology. Only in Year 7 do students have reading lessons and consequently borrow many books from the library.

79. Leadership and management are both good, displaying a well thought-through vision of what is now needed, backed by high levels of administrative competence. The head of department has been in post barely a year, so the impact of fresh energy and new policies is only now being felt. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, but thanks to strong team commitment, excellent use of assessment data, and a comprehensive programme of in-service training, everything is in place for rapid development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

80. Standards are satisfactory, but there is a need to involve all staff in the literacy policy, and see that literacy is kept firmly in mind in all that students do. Key words are displayed in classrooms, and in some subjects such as science and history they are referred to and explained. In art and ICT the quality of writing is improved by opportunities to do research. Subject teachers vary in the extent to which they use such devices as writing frames, or comment on and correct errors in spelling or syntax. In several subjects, students are not often asked to write at length, thus limiting their progress in explanation, hypothesising and deduction. This is most noticeable in the early years, but improves later.
81. Opportunities for speaking in class are limited. Many questions are closed so students do not explore a range of possible answers or argue with each other. Poor listening skills were observed in mathematics and science. Good practice was observed in drama, particularly in the sixth form. Likewise a sixth form tutor produced very lively questions and discussion.
82. The library is an asset to the school, and well used for study, particularly by sixth formers. But it is seldom booked by subject teachers from departments other than English. Students in Year 7 have borrowed over two and a half thousand books in the last six months, but only about a tenth of this number in other years. Standards of reading have been higher than those for writing, but a concerted reading policy would improve overall literacy and support progress in all subjects.

Modern foreign languages (French and Spanish)

Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good overall.
- Behaviour of students in lessons is generally good, because of firm classroom management.
- The setting of students by ability is, unhelpfully, delayed until Year 9.
- Writing and speaking skills are improving in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

In French

83. GCSE results were just above average in 2003. This was a decline from above-average results in previous years, because of the introduction of a new examination syllabus. Even so, the 2003 results represent good achievement overall, because the same students were assessed as below average when in Year 9.
84. Standards seen in Year 9 during the inspection are average overall, and the achievement of students is satisfactory. In Years 7 and 8, standards are below average, because mixed ability teaching holds back those who are higher attaining in particular. Teachers have effectively revised the Year 7 and 8 schemes of work to take account of the national strategy. This has particularly helped average and lower attaining students in Years 7 and 8. In Year 9, teachers have to overcrowd the syllabus, to cover the required programme adequately. Standards in the current Year 11 are broadly average, and improving. Achievement is satisfactory.

Teachers are now more used to the demands of the new examination syllabus, particularly of the written coursework. In addition, teachers now concentrate more fully on the development of speaking. Students with special educational needs make good progress in Years 10 and 11, as in Year 9, because of the smaller classes created for them, where they receive excellent support from the language assistants.

85. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and is sometimes very good. Lessons are carefully planned, with clear statement of objectives and generally firm student management. Teachers work well with National Curriculum levels to assess students' work and tell them how well they are doing. However, they do not always give students enough opportunities for intensive language and pronunciation practice. A minority use too much English for familiar classroom instructions. Marking of exercise books is satisfactory, but teachers do not require students to redraft or write out corrections.

In Spanish

86. The 2003 GCSE results were average in Spanish. As in French, this was a decline from above-average results in previous years, but achievement was good overall. Standards are below average in Years 7 and 8, because of the slow start caused by mixed ability teaching. The revision of the Year 7 and 8 schemes of work has particularly helped average and lower attaining students. In Year 9, there is too little time to cover the required programme adequately. Standards by Year 9 are average overall. Achievement is satisfactory, helped particularly in Spanish by the good teaching of the higher attaining students, while those who are gifted in Spanish are particularly encouraged to excel. Standards seen in Year 11 are average and improving, while students' achievement is satisfactory. Speaking skills are improving. As in French, students with special educational needs make good progress.
87. Teaching and learning are good overall. In some lessons, teaching is excellent. The main features of effective teaching are the careful planning of lessons, clear statement of objectives and firm student management. Teachers assess students' work well and inform them accurately about their progress. They also reward students immediately in lessons for good contributions in all skills, which encourages them to concentrate further. Marking of exercise books is satisfactory, sometimes good.

In both subjects

88. Leadership and management are good overall. The new departmental head has vigorously established clear priorities for development and delegates responsibilities effectively among the strongly committed team. The programme of visits abroad is good, as are contributions to the school's Arts College status. The amount of curricular time for languages is favourable to raising standards, but it is not until Year 9 that students are grouped by ability and this limits their progress, especially those who are higher attaining. Shortages of textbooks and some classroom equipment have been made good in Spanish, but not yet in French.
89. Improvement since the last inspection is limited, but there is real potential for development.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 9 are below those achieved nationally.
- Standards at the end of Year 11 are in line with nationally expected levels, but not all groups of students achieve equally well.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, but teachers miss opportunities in lessons to assess students' progress towards their targets.

- The leadership and management of the department are good and promote very good teamwork.

Commentary

90. Standards in mathematics are in line with nationally expected levels by the end of Year 11, reflecting the broadly average attainment when students enter the school. GCSE results in 2003 were close to the national average, with both boys and girls achieving successfully in mathematics. More girls than boys, however, gained the highest (A* and A) grades, but a higher proportion of boys than girls achieved at least a C grade. Results in the national tests for Year 9 have been below the national average for several years, particularly for girls. In 2003, the students' achievement by the end of Year 9 was well below the average for schools whose students had similar results at the end of Year 6.
91. Inspection evidence indicates that overall standards in Year 9 are higher than those reflected in the 2003 test results and are now close to the national average, with achievement in lessons generally in line with expected levels. However, in some mixed attainment groups in Years 7 and 8, students are working below expected levels. These students' books reflect erratic progress across the range of mathematics and sometimes unstable behaviour patterns. Weak numerical skills and reliance on half-remembered rules from earlier years limit progress, as in a Year 9 class working on equivalent fractions. Work on shape and space and data handling is sound but drawing skills are underdeveloped, with often poor presentation. Although many students achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 11, students in middle and above-average groups do not always achieve high enough grades. There are weaknesses in the algebraic skills of able students. Those in middle groups often fail to give reasons for solutions. Students with special educational needs and others who find mathematics challenging generally make good progress.
92. The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall. Working relationships are good and all teachers are committed to helping students achieve their best. However, despite teachers' conscientious planning to suit to the different levels of ability, some lessons are ineffective because learning activities do not match the students' conceptual and behavioural needs. Students' learning is sometimes disrupted because of poor behaviour, poor listening skills and too little variety in lessons. Teachers miss opportunities in lessons to assess students' understanding of the work in progress, and while marking is often good, there are inconsistencies in departmental practice, so that students regularly fail to respond to prompts on how to improve work.
93. The quality of departmental leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for the development of mathematics and a committed team approach. Plans are well advanced to move on from an individualised learning scheme and to incorporate the strengths of the *Framework for mathematics*. Although many of the issues from the last inspection remain, recent departmental progress has been satisfactory, particularly in providing greater guidance for teachers through a new scheme of work and in the improved tracking of the students' overall progress.

Mathematics across the curriculum

94. Provision for mathematics across the curriculum is unsatisfactory; it is still at the very early stages of development. At whole-school level, staff training has taken place and departments have begun to integrate numeracy within schemes of work. However, there is no comprehensive school numeracy policy giving clear guidance to all teachers on methods of calculation and data handling.
95. Students have too few opportunities to use mathematical skills across other curricular areas. In Years 7 to 9, in science, for example, there are not enough examples of students successfully expressing numerical relationships graphically. In geography, younger students lack accuracy in plotting graphs and in analysing data. In design and technology, skills of

shape and space are strong, but measuring and numeracy are often inaccurate. However, older students use mathematical skills more effectively, for example, in geography in course work, and in science in balancing chemical equations. Recent staff development activities have not yet been translated into good opportunities to enhance and use students' mathematical skills across many subject areas.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising as a result of good teaching and very good leadership.
- Students achieve well because learning objectives are clear and lessons well paced.
- Higher attaining students are not well enough stretched in some lessons.
- Students are keen to learn; they enjoy science lessons because relationships are good.
- Time is lost at the start of some lessons because students are slow to settle.
- The quality of teachers' marking is too inconsistent.

Commentary

96. Results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were below average in 2003, having dipped from the previous year. In comparison with schools with similar levels of attainment, results were well below average. When students enter the school, standards are average. Students currently in Year 9 achieve well, but standards are still average. This is because they have not yet made up ground lost in previous years as a result of staffing difficulties. Students have good practical skills, but in Years 7 to 9 have too few opportunities to develop wider scientific enquiry skills. Lack of appropriate equipment restricts their appreciation of the importance of ICT in science.
97. Students continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and standards in Year 11 are above average, matching GCSE results in 2003.
98. Teaching and learning are good. Over half the lessons seen were good and about a third were very good. Teachers usually share learning objectives with students and capture their interest. Because relationships are good, students are keen to participate in question and answer, often learning from each other. Teachers are beginning to help students improve their learning by setting them meaningful short-term targets. In less good lessons, teachers' careful planning is not always fully implemented, particularly in Year 8 where work is too easy for some students, while others leave too much unfinished. Most teachers make their expectation of good behaviour and high work-rate clear at the outset and students respond positively to this, but time is wasted in some lessons when students are slow to settle. The quality of teachers' marking is too inconsistent. About half the teachers write comments that help students to improve their work, but others write only superficial comments.
99. As a result of very good leadership and management by the recently appointed head of department, standards are rising, particularly in Years 7 and 9. Teachers work well together as a team, for example in using assessment information more effectively to identify and support under-achieving students. However, much more remains to be done in reducing inconsistencies. Vision for the future includes making science more interesting and exciting for students. Already, an impressive number attends extra-curricular activities ranging from young investigators club in Year 7 to booster classes in Year 9 and additional support sessions in Year 11.
100. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Although National Curriculum test and GCSE results remain similar, standards in lessons are higher. Teaching has improved and is now good at both stages. Inconsistencies remain, particularly in Year 8. Although teachers

have done their best to improve its appearance, laboratory accommodation remains unsatisfactory, contributing little to enhance students' views of the role of science in modern society. The school is aware of a number of health and safety issues.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Lesson, resource preparation and the assessment of students' work are thorough.
- ICT across the curriculum is not assessed, so that students' attainment and achievement are not recorded, and students are not aware of the progress they are making.
- Targets for developing ICT capability are not set when using ICT in other subjects.

Commentary

101. Standards reported at the end of Year 9 in 2003, based on teacher assessments, were well below average. Students were then receiving their entitlement only through the use of ICT in subjects. Students now follow a separate course, based on the Key Stage 3 strategy, and evidence from lessons and scrutiny of work shows that students' attainment is now higher. Year 9 students' achievement is satisfactory and their attainment is close to average, despite having had a separate course only in Years 7 and 9. The current Year 8 students have achieved well and their attainment is already close to the levels expected for Year 9.
102. Results in the GNVQ vocational examination in Year 11 were below the national average in 2003. This was largely due to a reduction in time for the subject. Many students did not complete their course or coursework. Time for the GNVQ course is now appropriate and students following this course are working at the level expected nationally and are achieving well.
103. Students who have not chosen to follow the GNVQ course in Years 10-11 receive their entitlement of ICT through use in subjects across the curriculum. Use of ICT in English, mathematics and science guarantees that the required ICT is provided for all students at this stage. However, although this complies with National Curriculum requirements, the course is not assessed and students' attainment in ICT is not recorded or reported. There was therefore little evidence of progress in the development of their capability through their use of ICT in these subjects.
104. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen, and was good in most. Evidence from scrutiny of work confirms students are learning well and making good progress in their separate ICT lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge; they explain the requirements of the examination well to students following the GNVQ course. Assessment of students' work is thorough and is related to National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9. With the introduction of the Key Stage 3 strategy, teaching methods are effective and have improved. Resources available are well used.
105. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has a good vision of how to improve the subject and raise its profile. This is shared with other members of the department. Development plans are detailed, but priorities need to be established. Non-specialist teachers are well supported and resources created for lessons are shared within the department. Improvements have been made in how the subject is provided in the curriculum. Some data held in electronic format was not readily available due to network problems.
106. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The subject now meets requirements throughout the school and the proportion of good teaching has increased. Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 has improved.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

107. ICT is used in most subjects across the curriculum. The school relies on this cross-curricular provision within mathematics, English and science to meet the requirements for National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11, as all students follow courses in these subjects. Within the English curriculum, there are timetabled lessons in ICT rooms. Mathematics makes contributions to data handling and introduces students to the use of programmable calculators.
108. Although requirements are met for the content and delivery of the National Curriculum, the work produced is not assessed to ICT criteria. It does not show students' attainment or achievement and does not provide for the setting of targets for learning or provide students with criteria by which they can measure their success in developing capability.
109. ICT is used well to support learning in many subjects, for example Spanish, business studies and media studies. Access to ICT equipment can be difficult. The ratio of computers to students is currently 1:6, below the target of 1:5 and some of the computers, for example those in the computer room in the art curriculum area, are unreliable.

HUMANITIES

Courses in geography, history and religious education were inspected in full. The GCSE course in sociology was sampled. In this, GCSE results in 2003 were just above the national average. The Year 11 lesson seen was well taught and students achieved well.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory, but not as high as they could be.
- Good teaching helps students to learn well in Year 10 and 11.
- Good leadership and management are resulting in improved standards.
- Students, especially girls, achieve well due to good attitudes to learning.
- A coherent ICT and fieldwork programme in Years 7 to 9 would further enrich learning.

Commentary

110. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003, while below the national average, were close to the school average and an improvement on previous years. Girls do better than boys and the difference is greater than that nationally. Most students perform satisfactorily, achieving the levels expected of them.
111. At the end of Year 9, standards are below average. Achievement over Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, because students enter the school with little experience of geography. There is variable and limited progress in Year 7, where the subject is taught in blocks within a humanities course. Progress is more evident in Year 9, where there is greater pace and students have acquired a better basis of geographical skills. Most use and interpret maps satisfactorily, but more practice is needed in the accurate plotting and analysis of statistical data. Knowledge of place is good. Gifted and talented students need to be stretched more. Lower attaining students often progress well, as tasks are simplified appropriately for their needs. There is no significant difference in progress between students of different ethnic groups. By the end of Year 11, standards are average. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. This is due to consistently good teaching, precisely focused on GCSE examination needs, and the positive attitude of most students. The best independent projects for GCSE are of high quality.

112. Teaching and learning are good overall, but better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive. Classroom management and control are very good and relationships warm. The best teaching is enthusiastic, stimulating and has high expectations. A teaching strength is the way in which teachers engage students in learning, but more group work and enquiry projects are needed in Year 7 to 9. Learning benefits significantly from the consistently good attitudes and behaviour of students in lessons. Learning would be further improved if lesson aims were more precisely focused on what students will know, understand and be able to do, and if they were tested thoroughly for how effectively they had learned at the end of the lesson.
113. The subject is well led and managed. Staff work together very well. Curricular planning and assessment are good but need to focus more on students' learning. A more coherent programme of ICT and better access to computer facilities are needed. The fieldwork undertaken greatly stimulates students' interest in the subject, but statutory requirements for this are not met in Years 7 to 9. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, but standards need improving further in Years 7 to 9.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good assessment is improving teaching and learning.
- Students make good progress in Years 10 and 11.
- The department is well led and managed.

Commentary

114. By Year 9, students are reaching standards in line with the national average. They understand how to interpret conflicting source evidence, and their critical writing has developed, so that they can produce structured answers to complex issues, as groups did when considering the Holocaust in the light of human behaviour, both at the time, and over periods of time. Their progress is satisfactory at this stage.
115. In Years 10 and 11, good progress is made. The 2003 GCSE results were above average, with a high proportion of A* and A grades. Students are well prepared by their teachers. Year 11 students use sources very well, for example in their study of Vietnam. Standards and progress in Years 10 and 11 are good. History is a very popular choice and a very high take-up for GCSE is maintained in the sixth form.
116. Progress made by students with special educational needs, language difficulties, and those who are gifted and talented, is good. Where learning support was provided, it was well targeted and effective. Lesson activities are well structured, so that students can successfully work to their ability. This is a result of the very effective use made by the teachers of assessment. Progress is reviewed regularly, and matched securely to National Curriculum or examination standards. Teachers know where individual students stand and plan their teaching accordingly, helped by the very good schemes of work devised by the department. The students are not always aware of how well they are doing, but usually know what they need to do to improve.
117. Teaching was good or better in more than half the lessons seen, with most of the better teaching in Years 10 and 11, where it was often very challenging. In almost all lessons, a good pace was maintained, and high standards of behaviour were evident. Teaching was routinely reinforced by the effective use of questions and answers, so that students were productive and engaged in their work. When students worked together, they did so effectively. Students use

ICT in their work, and literacy skills are encouraged. Through their history, they show an ability to make sound moral judgements on a range of issues.

118. The department is well led and managed. Good teamwork, organisation, and documentation enable the department to run smoothly. Regular and systematic observation of teaching and monitoring of students' progress ensures that good practice is shared and developed. Good standards have been maintained since the last inspection; improvement is satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress in Year 9.
- The mainly non-specialist teachers work with great commitment.
- Statutory requirements are not met in Year 11 and the sixth form.
- The assessment of students' work is not improving teaching or learning.

Commentary

119. In Year 7, religious education is taught as part of the humanities course. Students are not always sufficiently challenged by the work, and have limited opportunities to write reflectively about the religious knowledge they are acquiring. Artefacts are used occasionally, for instance when considering the power of Shiva through a range of symbols. By Year 9, when students have begun a GCSE short course in religious education, they can reflect and write at length about issues of life and death. A Year 9 class was challenged strongly and wrote answers which showed clear understanding of the moral dilemma posed by euthanasia, and could relate it to Christian and Buddhist beliefs. Progress is good by the end of Year 9, when students have been following this course for a year. In Year 10, most students go on to take the GCSE examination a year early. Although results in 2003 were below the average for 15 year olds, achievement was satisfactory for students of their age. Girls' achievement was better than boys'. The minority of students not taking GCSE follows a Certificate of Achievement course, in which attainment and achievement are satisfactory.
120. Teaching is shared between seven teachers, and is satisfactory overall. Although all except one are non-specialists, regular in-service training is provided so that the teachers have sufficient command of the subject. New schemes of work are being developed collaboratively and these are having an impact on teaching, producing lessons which are better structured, and providing better support for students with special educational needs. The attitude of the students is generally good, particularly in Years 9 and 10. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress is having a limited impact, and students are not always aware of their level of performance or the progress they are making, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
121. Overall, leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department has been in post for six months. He has identified clear priorities, which are already having an impact. Although it is difficult within the school's calendar of meetings, he is meeting regularly with his department who, as a team, are helping him to make changes quickly.
122. Despite a lack of continuity of staff, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The department is now better resourced and is developing improved schemes of work to match the Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Some religious education teaching is now provided in the sixth form. However, the time allocated is insufficient, which, together with the lack of religious education teaching in Year 11, means that the subject does not comply with statutory requirements.

TECHNOLOGY

Courses in design and technology were fully inspected. These include GCSE courses in graphics (technology), resistant materials, textiles and electronics.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, by knowledgeable, committed and experienced staff.
- In Years 7 to 9 a good range of activities and projects covers a wide variety of materials and motivates students to do well.
- In Years 10 and 11, a good range of subjects allows students to design and make work of real quality and achieve above average results.
- Computer-aided manufacture has not been introduced as required. National Curriculum requirements are not met in this respect, and this is a weakness.
- Very good use of assessment, based on examination board criteria for coursework in Years 10 and 11, is helping to improve standards.
- Attitudes to learning improve among older students, helping them to learn well.
- Leadership and management by the head of department are very good.

Commentary

123. GCSE examination results in the different subject areas vary from year to year, reflecting the attainment and choices of the individual groups. Overall, students' results are significantly above national averages, and better than those achieved in most of their other subjects. Boys' results are particularly good. In lessons, both boys and girls attain similarly, and high standards are maintained. Students' achievement is good.
124. At the end of Year 9, attainment is above the national average at Level 5 and above, but not enough students are working at the very highest levels. Students join the school with lower than expected standards, and make good progress to reach these standards. There are clear links between the work seen in the department and the schools' arts focus. Gifted and talented students are starting to be supported through initiatives like the girls' jewellery club. Overall, low attaining students and students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, through enthusiastic teaching, good support and tasks matched to their ability. Gifted students are able to extend their learning by producing more complex tasks. Students with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress because of the support and regular feedback they receive. Though teachers provide materials from a wide range of cultures, they do not encourage students enough to bring their own cultural heritage to their design work.
125. Results are above average because teaching is effective. Teachers use effective materials, have real expertise and a genuine commitment to their students. During the inspection, teaching was good, and often very good, leading to good learning. Students have satisfactory attitudes to learning in the earlier years, and improve as the well-prepared lessons and teachers' high expectations have an effect. These improve students' attitudes, so that GCSE students learn more independently, work hard, achieve well and produce interesting work of good quality. Students are supported by very helpful assessment which uses the National Curriculum level descriptors and the examination marking criteria very well, so helping to raise standards significantly. Older students show maturity, listening well and working quickly to make the best progress they can.

126. Leadership of this proficient team is very good and day to day matters are very well managed. Team work of high quality among teachers and technicians makes a strong contribution to the department's success. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement. The department is very spread out, with the textiles areas a long way away. This limits communication. Resources need to be improved further. Computer-aided manufacture has not been introduced as required, so that National Curriculum requirements are not met in this respect, and this is a weakness. There are shortages of resources like smart materials, and there are too few light cutting machines. Very stimulating displays celebrate students' success. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Courses in art and music were fully inspected, and in vocational art and design, dance, drama and media studies they were sampled.

In the new applied vocational GCSE course in art and design, standards are below the expected level because all those currently studying this course are very low attaining students. Attitudes to learning are often poor, but teaching is good and students therefore make good progress.

Dance is taught in all years. GCSE results were below the national average in 2003, but teaching was good and very good work and progress were seen at both stages. The subject makes a major contribution to the cultural life of the school.

Drama is taught to students in all years. Results at GCSE in 2003 were close to the national average. In the three lessons seen, teaching and learning were satisfactory, though two lessons were marked by unsatisfactory behaviour from boys. The subject is involved in many of the Arts College initiatives, and in community projects and links. With dance, it takes the lead in school productions and shows. Both subjects do much for students' social and cultural development.

The GCSE course in media studies was also sampled. GCSE media studies results in 2003 were very high. Two lessons were seen, one satisfactory and one very good. Year 11 students are on course for another set of very good results this year.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 11 and likely to be well above for the current Year 10.
- Teaching and learning across the department are very good, particularly for GCSE, so students achieve very well.
- Students make very good use of highly individualistic sketchbooks and work-journals.
- Marking and assessment are very good for GCSE; similar rigour is now needed in Years 7-9.
- Although well managed, the unsatisfactory behaviour of some boys in Years 7-9 prevents many students learning as well as they might.
- ICT is not used well enough as a creative tool, particularly by younger students.

Commentary

127. GCSE results at grades A*-C have usually been very high, but fell to the national average in 2003. This was due to more rigorous and accurate assessment of some of the examination criteria than had previously been the case.

128. Standards in art on entry to the school are below average. Students make good progress in Years 7-9, despite the unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority, mostly boys, in some classes. Standards are average by the end of Year 9. Students of all abilities make good progress in a

stimulating range of media. They also make better progress than expected in their understanding of artists' work. Students develop good overall competence, but do not use ICT well enough.

129. Art attracts a large number of students into Years 10-11. GCSE standards in the current Year 11 are above average and Year 10 students show very high potential indeed. Students' attitudes and behaviour mature significantly by Year 10, so the atmosphere in GCSE classes is highly purposeful, uninterrupted by the need for teachers to waste time in controlling behaviour. Progress is therefore very good across Years 10-11, with many students achieving well above expectations. The extensive, exciting range of media used enables students of all abilities to develop unusually individual responses to given projects. Their sketchbooks and work journals are often excellent. Visual explorations and investigations are extremely well annotated, with students presenting and describing their learning experiences very imaginatively.
130. Teaching and learning are very good overall, but better in GCSE classes because students' attitudes to learning are very positive. Younger students, particularly boys, find it very difficult to listen effectively, so teachers plan lessons carefully to avoid any disruption. This is successful because these methods involve short, crisp introductions and demonstrations, leaving plenty of time for students to be active, which is how they learn best. Individual students of all abilities develop skills, knowledge and understanding very effectively, at their own pace. Rigorous assessment of all aspects of students' standards, which was weaker in previous years, is now very good, particularly for GCSE. Written feedback reinforces oral discussion in lessons, and provides a very secure basis for learning and improvement. Students learn to integrate their research about artists very creatively into their sketchbooks, and then to transfer this into imaginative final pieces. This is a key strength of the department.
131. Leadership and management are very good. Issues related to the assessment of standards have been fully resolved for the examination courses, and a similar focus is needed in Years 7-9. Curriculum development has been very good. The department makes a very strong contribution to the school's arts college status. The previous report was very positive and, despite the temporary decline in GCSE grades, the department has improved satisfactorily since then.

Music

Provision in music is **poor**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Though GCSE results in 2003 were good, underachievement in class is widespread.
- Many classes are poorly taught, so that students learn little or nothing.
- Standards in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 are low.
- The leadership and management of the department is very poor.

Commentary

132. Students enter Year 7 with variable levels of musical experience and knowledge. Through Years 7-10, the school has little impact on their standards of attainment, which are below average overall. Around nine per cent of students take instrumental or voice lessons, a relatively low number, though many of these participate in musical ensembles at the school. GCSE results have been above average for the past three years. Of the 24 students entered for GCSE music in 2003, 15 obtained passes at A* and A grade and all the other students obtained a pass at grade C or above. Numbers of students opting for the GCSE course have declined in the past three years, however, and are presently at a low level. The Year 10 class this year has only eight students.

133. Underachievement is the direct consequences of teaching, which is seldom better than satisfactory and often unsatisfactory or poor. Features of poor teaching include weak lesson planning with tasks that are unsuited to mixed ability groups, low expectations and challenge, a readiness to accept work of poor quality, and ineffective classroom management. There is insufficient structure, guidance and control for composition and practical music-making, and control of behaviour is often ineffective. Written work is poorly marked, or not marked at all, and elementary mistakes are not corrected. There was no evidence, for example, that a teacher had looked at the files of two Year 11 students observed during the inspection.
134. Because of this poor teaching, the behaviour of some students is unacceptably poor. In Year 7 and Year 8 lessons observed, students shouted out rudely, disrupting the lesson. In one such lesson, four girls sat closely and apprehensively together, trying to make a dull task that had been set for them into a more interesting one by extending it. Most of the other students were very disruptive. Bright students in a Year 10 GCSE class had learned little. They had acquired only very little musical knowledge and understanding throughout their time at the school.
135. During the inspection, some better, more promising teaching was observed. A newly qualified teacher was able to control disruptive behaviour and worked hard to maintain the momentum of lessons, displaying strong qualities that could readily be developed into effective, challenging teaching.
136. This department has deteriorated since the last inspection. Acceptance of poor teaching, low standards and an apparent lack of awareness of the serious issues facing the department indicate that there is very poor leadership and management. The department has a run-down feel to it, with broken equipment, poor displays and an absence of musical experiences of quality. New and inexperienced teachers are not receiving the departmental support and guidance to which they are entitled, and which they most certainly need. The fact that some students are doing well in spite of all this illustrates the potential and the need for a really fine music department at this school. There is an urgent need for radical improvement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good overall achievement of students is a result of consistently good teaching.
- Opportunities for students to benefit from self-assessment are unsatisfactory.
- Students benefit from support and guidance from specialist teachers.
- Inconsistencies exist in the use of clear learning objectives that guide students' learning.
- Not enough time is provided for the common course in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

137. Students' achievement seen during the inspection is good, including those with special educational needs and from different ethnic backgrounds. Students enter the school with attainment below the average. Though it was not possible to observe Year 9 lessons, evidence from discussions with students, assessment data and other lesson observations confirms that standards are in line with nationally expected levels by the end of Year 9, and also by the end of the common course in Years 10-11. 2003 GCSE results were well below average, because students had problems with theory work, and because of a lack of well-focused self-evaluation, but in work seen there is evidence of improvement.
138. Students acquire and develop their games skills well. In Year 7, students pass the rugby ball consistently and accurately. By Year 11, boys have progressed well and demonstrate good skill levels when they pass and set up the ball in volleyball lessons. Girls show satisfactory basic skills when serving in badminton and can maintain simple rallies. Less secure is

students' ability to improve their performance through self-evaluation. Students know how to warm up before an activity and can identify different exercises for different sports. In theory work, some students have difficulties in recalling knowledge such as the bones and muscle groups of the body. Literacy problems for the less competent learners result in extended writing that is often disjointed.

139. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons with a range of activities that stimulate students. Teachers are subject specialists and consequently the students benefit from good coaching. However, students do not get enough opportunity to perform and evaluate their own and others' work. Most respond well to good teaching and benefit from the good relationships in lessons, but a minority of GCSE students show reluctance to complete homework. The best learning seen took place when students knew clearly what they were expected to learn, and achievement was thoroughly reviewed at the end of lessons.
140. Leadership and management are good. Good teamwork and helpful documentation contribute to the smooth running of the subject. Teachers' planning would benefit from greater clarity in expected levels of work, and from more detailed provision for aspects such as citizenship and the use of computers in lessons. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Teaching and assessment have improved and GCSE is now established. Curriculum time is, however, below the nationally recommended level in Years 10 and 11, and this hinders teachers from covering the subject in sufficient depth. The assessing of students' performance needs greater development. This, and the development of National Curriculum levels which students can understand, would further enable students to evaluate their own progress in other areas of the subject.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Courses in business studies, leisure and tourism and skills for working life were sampled.

141. In GCSE business studies, results in 2003 were below average. Teaching was good and standards were in line with levels expected nationally. Students made good progress, particularly in applying marketing strategies for a new business and in their use of ICT. In the Year 11 lesson seen in the foundation level vocational course in leisure and tourism, standards were average for this course. Good teaching helped students achieve well. The learning development department provides a useful college-linked foundation level course, skills for working life, for Year 10 students who can benefit from it. In the lesson seen, teaching was very good and students learned well. They had made good progress over the course so far.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school provides citizenship and personal, health and social education (PHSE). No lessons were available to be seen during the inspection. The PSHE curriculum covers the required aspects, but time is insufficient to do so as thoroughly as the school wishes, at present.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has checked the curriculum to see where aspects of citizenship are taught and to help plan a more comprehensive coverage.
- The amount of time available for citizenship lessons and activities is limited at present.
- Interesting, innovative initiatives help to promote effective citizenship in collaboration with outside agencies.
- Many teachers are highly committed to providing extra curricular citizenship activities.

- Assessment and reporting procedures are developing well in some areas, but are not yet working fully for all students.

Commentary

142. As a result of limited evidence during the inspection, it is not possible to evaluate students' achievement fully. However, evidence seen indicates that standards are average. Many aspects are covered during half days when the school timetable is suspended; none of these coincided with the inspection. The developing provision is well planned and co-ordinated by an experienced member of staff who has other responsibilities relating to community links. These links are now used well in all years to develop skills of enquiry and communication. As far as possible, citizenship provision is seen as an activity rather than a purely classroom-based course. Students take part in a wide range of well organised, informative and often challenging activities. These are well facilitated by a committed teaching staff and many are led by professionals from outside agencies. There are good links with the National Health Service for students in Years 10 and 11, where some students are trained to take-on counselling roles for their peers.
143. The participation aspect of citizenship is developed significantly through the medium of successful year councils and the school council, to which forms elect representatives. The school council has regular meetings with the head teacher as well as relevant outside agencies. This provides motivation for council members and the understanding among students of democratic structures. Citizenship provision has an effective international aspect, as in a twinning arrangement with a school in Ghana. Regular information from this school makes students aware of problems facing communities in the developing world. They also hear of the good results of their fund-raising activities. The multi-cultural nature of the school and its surroundings is used to good effect to promote understanding during "International Week". There is also an "Equal Opportunities" week. Other practical activities relate to the local area, including maintenance of Hampstead Heath and the operation of the local recycling centre.
144. Currently, citizenship provision is more developed in Years 7-9 than in Years 10-11, but the school is well aware of this and is actively exploring additional opportunities. A system of assessment has been developed, including an element of self-assessment. Reporting to parents on progress in citizenship is at an advanced stage of development and will soon be in place for all years.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 14 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in **2003**, which is the latest year for which national comparisons are available. Results in these tables are those officially recorded for students registered at this school, who may be taught in any of the four *La Swap* consortium schools. Results commented on in subject reports are those achieved by classes taught in this school.

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
Art and Design	7	100.0	80.1	71.4	23.7	51.4	29.9
Biology	7	71.4	65.2	28.6	11.1	25.7	20.6
Chemistry	6	66.7	72.7	33.3	13.9	28.3	24.1
Classical Studies	1	100.0	87.4	0.0	34.3	40.0	35.2
Communication Studies	11	72.7	86.4	27.3	23.8	30.0	32.0
Dance	2	100.0	86.9	50.0	35.0	40.0	34.5
Drama	1	100.0	86.5	100.0	19.6	50.0	30.6
Economics	4	75.0	73.6	0.0	20.1	17.5	26.4
English literature	10	90.0	85.9	10.0	19.1	33.0	30.2
Design and Technology	2	50.0	74.9	0.0	15.1	10.0	24.3
General Studies	16	100.0	73.9	56.3	17.8	46.9	26.6
Geography	6	83.3	74.3	0.0	19.8	25.0	28.3
History	7	28.6	80.7	14.3	19.5	12.9	30.5
Information Technology	5	60.0	67.0	0.0	10.9	18.0	22.3
Mathematics	5	80.0	61.9	40.0	17.1	38.0	20.7
Music	3	100.0	86.5	66.7	21.4	46.7	32.3
Other Languages	1	100.0	82.6	100.0	42.9	60.0	38.7
Other Social Studies	9	77.8	69.7	11.1	16.7	22.2	25.2
Physics	7	68.6	68.6	0.0	14.4	18.6	22.7
Sociology	3	71.8	71.8	0.0	18.4	33.3	25.4
Spanish	6	78.5	78.5	0.0	17.7	13.3	27.3
Sports/PE Studies	1	73.2	73.2	0.0	11.4	0.0	23.1

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
Art and Design	53	94.3	98.6	75.5	50.2	100.4	87.5
Biology	13	100.0	96.4	30.8	39.2	73.8	78.6
Chemistry	18	100.0	97.6	50.0	49.0	83.3	84.9
Classical Studies	2	100.0	99.5	0.0	55.9	80.0	90.9
Communication Studies	23	100.0	99.4	34.8	37.8	86.1	82.1
Dance	3	100.0	98.5	66.7	44.9	93.3	83.9
Drama	15	100.0	99.5	53.3	40.1	94.7	83.6
Economics	7	100.0	98.9	28.6	52.0	85.7	88.3
English Literature	44	100.0	99.5	52.3	46.5	88.2	86.5
French	6	100.0	87.6	16.7	51.5	76.7	87.6
Design and Technology	8	100.0	97.8	25.0	35.0	72.5	77.9
Geography	15	93.3	98.7	33.3	44.5	73.3	84.0
History	21	100.0	99.0	57.1	44.6	91.4	84.6
Information Technology	4	100.0	95.6	25.0	24.6	65.0	69.5
Mathematics	18	83.3	96.7	38.9	55.6	70.0	88.8
Music	12	100.0	98.8	16.7	38.9	63.3	81.1
Other Languages	1	100.0	96.6	0.0	64.5	80.0	93.8
Other Social Studies	31	100.0	97.4	58.1	42.7	94.2	81.8
Performing arts	5	100	94.3	0.0	50.4	40.0	77.8
Physics	14	100.0	96.7	28.6	44.6	68.6	81.7
Sociology	12	100.0	98.2	66.7	44.3	93.3	83.6
Spanish	6	100.0	98.3	50.0	50.2	100.0	86.9
Business	9	100.0	88.6	0.0	20.6	62.2	60.1

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
GNVQ Intermediate Business	9	77.8	49.5	33.3	22.6	0.0	2.3

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

AS and A2 level courses were inspected in English literature and French, and sampled in Spanish. In the Spanish lesson seen, teaching and learning were very good. Students greatly enjoyed the lesson and achieved very well.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in A2-level examinations are above the national average.
- The care and support given by teachers results in good achievement.
- Some students need more guidance in the writing of essays.
- Retention rates are high because students enjoy the course and succeed.
- Students do not sufficiently challenge each other and share ideas.
- Visits to theatres give students a deeper understanding of literature.

Commentary

145. In the sixth form, a large entry of students for the A2-level examination performed significantly better than the national average, with half the candidates achieving grades A and B. Of those taking the AS-level exam, half obtained grades A to C. Students wishing to improve their GCSE results are successful in doing so.
146. Standards observed in lessons, and in scrutiny of essays, confirm these results. Students are researching widely, reading outside the syllabus, and use their critical faculties effectively. They cope well with such problems as the importance of magic in *The Tempest*, with critiques of modern society in *The Handmaid's Tale*, and the ways in which Blake attacks hypocrisy in early nineteenth century England. They follow up influences and parallels well. In several lessons students were observed making clear and well-researched presentations or answering questions in a "hot-seating" exercise. However, on these occasions the rest of the class asked questions or offered suggestions in a perfunctory way, suggesting a lack of engagement. There was little buzz of spontaneous argument, and accordingly less opportunity to learn from each other.
147. Achievement over the two-year course is good. Students are welcomed on to the course with relatively low prior attainment (provided they show commitment), so rates of progress over the two-year course are commendable. Many said their work had improved significantly, and this was confirmed by comparing essays written at the start of the course with those from later.
148. Teaching is good. Teachers are familiar with the literature being studied, and the requirements of the examination. They communicate enthusiasm, and inspire their students to work hard. Students enjoy the course and value the help they receive from teachers. It is this which most clearly provides the basis for effective learning. Above all, the quality of marking is unusually high, with a wealth of helpful comments and encouragement. Nonetheless, some essays in both Years 12 and 13 suffer from minor errors of syntax, poor spelling and use of colloquial language. There were occasions when quotations were used inappropriately, when the essay gave more space to re-telling the "story" of the material rather than analysis, and the whole structure of the essay appeared immature. More modelling of essays by teachers would raise achievement.
149. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Results are now above the national average, and retention rates are unusually high. All this signifies good leadership and management, adapting well to new syllabuses and marking schemes. The department arranges many extra-curricular activities such as the recent Year 13 visit to *Journey's End*,

and the forthcoming visit to the Somme battlefields. In such ways, teachers create an effective forum for learning.

Language across the curriculum

150. Across the curriculum, skills in literacy are well developed. Students receive good training in the writing of well structured prose, for example in history, business studies, media studies and psychology, where standards of written work are high. Fluency in speaking is a strength of the sixth form. Teachers and students discuss issues with ease and conviction, fostered by mutual respect and the good relationships between them. In this respect, the wide contacts which *La Swap* offers makes an admirable preparation for university. Students read widely and make good use of the library.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Student absenteeism is high and limits progress.
- Current students are interested in the work they do and have good attitudes.
- Teachers do not require students to log their independent reading and listening work.
- Teachers do not have a systematic approach to increasing students' vocabulary.
- There are no organised study trips to France to improve students' speaking skills.

Commentary

151. In 2003 and 2000 there were no candidates for A2-level French from students in this school, though teachers from Acland Burghley taught courses, which included students from this school, at another school in the consortium. In 2001, consortium results were below average and well below average in 2002. Numbers were relatively small and cannot reliably be compared with national averages. In 2002, students performed broadly in line with predictions based on their GCSE results.
152. In Year 13 lessons seen, standards were average overall. Fewer than a quarter of the group were Acland Burghley students. A high rate of absence has affected, and continues to affect, attainment. Most students listened carefully and showed keen interest and understanding in the topic of homelessness in France. Speaking skills varied greatly between students. The most talented were able to express their opinions fluently and shared their ideas freely in pair work and with the teacher. Less confident students, who were in the majority, used a fairly limited range of vocabulary and expression. The teacher reported that the absent students had lower standards of speaking and understanding than those present. Written work showed a similarly wide range of attainment, both in extended essays and in grammar work. Students have good opportunities for independent work on the Internet, but they do not keep a log of their extra reading and listening.
153. In Year 12, standards are average overall and most students achieve satisfactorily. A third of the students come from Acland Burghley School. The current students have made satisfactory progress since their GCSE examinations. However, the retention rate has been low and a quarter of the group has already left the course. Again, absence is above the rate expected. Students' skills vary widely in all aspects of language learning, but they showed interest in the material on French advertising.
154. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The quality of students' learning is sound as a result. Teachers use French throughout lessons, but do not always ensure that the weaker students understand and note new vocabulary systematically. Lessons are planned well with a range of interesting and linked activities. However, teachers sometimes move too fast between activities, without giving all students the expressions and vocabulary they need to tackle new work. The amount of essay writing is low. Teachers do not require students to redraft marked

work, or log their independent reading and listening. Progress through the grammar course is thorough and well monitored. Students show interest and participate well in pair work.

155. The teacher of French in the sixth form is temporarily absent. Cover arrangements are good. Students have opportunities for specialist language days at a local language college, but there are no organised study trips abroad. Teachers need to monitor more closely to reduce students' absences and dropout rates. Only A-level results were reported in the last report, so it is not possible, in view of small numbers and the different groups of students which comprise the classes, to make a judgment on progress since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

The inspection covered the A2-level and AS-level examination courses offered by the school: pure mathematics, mechanics, and statistics modules as well as provision for students re-sitting GCSE mathematics.

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in A2-level mathematics courses are improving, but not all students achieve as well as they should.
- There has been a high drop-out rate from AS-level course because some students begin from a too low base.
- Teaching is satisfactory and good working relationships support students' learning.
- Students generally enjoy their mathematics, but too few extend their mathematical experience by wider reading.

Commentary

156. The 2003 A2-level mathematics results were below national average levels, with just over one third of the students gaining the higher A and B grades. These results are lower than those of 2002 where two thirds of the students successfully achieved these grades. There has been a high take-up of AS-level courses but the drop-out rate has also been high, partly because too many students begin the course with an inadequate background in mathematics. Nevertheless, in 2003, those students who remained on the AS course reached above average standards.
157. The standards of work seen in lessons indicate good progress in Year 13 and satisfactory progress in Year 12. However, these successful students report their difficulties in the transition from GCSE mathematics to AS-level work without the aid of a bridging course. In discussion, both AS and A2 groups noted the challenges in building on Year 11 work that was only partially understood, particularly higher order algebraic skills. Students honestly admit to limited independent study skills at the start of courses and to casual attitudes to attendance, relying on teachers to provide missed work. There is no distinct pattern to differences in attainment in the three areas of mathematics studied. However, some students find pure mathematics modules particularly challenging in the initial course stages.
158. Post-16 students re-sitting GCSE mathematics benefit from a generous time allocation. However, students join the course with very varied mathematical experience. The 2003 results indicate at least half of the students making gains of one grade or more over the course. Others mostly achieve similar grades to those gained in Year 11.
159. Teaching is satisfactory. All teachers have a very good command of mathematics and understand clearly the requirements of the examination specifications. The best lessons give careful thought to the development of the students' thinking skills as, for example, in a mechanics lesson where teaching carefully anticipated the likely challenges to the students. However, teaching often pays too much attention to the content to be covered rather than to the students' learning, so that students spend too much time in lessons as passive listeners.

Students report significant individual help and support from their teachers, and working relationships are very good.

160. The mathematics department's provision for post-16 mathematics is well managed. The department makes good use of the school's review and target-setting arrangements to track students' progress. However, more could be done to identify underachievement earlier in the AS modules. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory, but there is further to go in remedying the underachievement of some students, and in enriching the mathematical experiences available to them. Numbers of students studying mathematics are much increased.

Mathematics across the curriculum

161. Across the curriculum, post-16 provision for the key skill of application of number rests within specific curriculum areas, and is satisfactory. Subject teachers explain mathematical ideas as the need arises. Most students have sufficient skills to support work in A2 and AS-level courses. In vocational courses, students' numerical skills are well used and enhanced.

SCIENCE

AS and A2-level courses were inspected in biology and chemistry. Physics is taught in another school of the *La Swap* consortium. Psychology was inspected and is reported in the section on humanities.

Biology and chemistry

Provision in biology and chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects promotes students' interest.
- Teachers are approachable and support students' learning very well.
- The pace of learning is slowed when teachers repeat work unnecessarily.
- Teachers engage students' interest by reference to practical applications.
- Poor attendance by a minority of students in Year 12 restricts their progress.

Commentary

In biology

162. There were no entries in A2-level in 2003. At AS-level, results were below average, with students performing less well than expected because of staffing difficulties. Results at both levels have varied over recent years. Students enter the sixth form with average but wide-ranging GCSE grades. The great majority works to full capacity. Work seen during the inspection was at least at the expected level. Students were achieving well, particularly in Year 13.
163. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it effectively to challenge students. Students carried out fieldwork in Devon and were challenged to carry out original research; one produced a very good investigation into factors that affect mayfly populations in streams. Teachers' enthusiasm rubs off on students; several in Year 13 are seeking to enter higher education in related subjects such as medicine. They particularly appreciate teachers' efforts to help them, for example, through a visiting professor whom one described as 'the knowledge'.

In chemistry

164. Chemistry results at A2-level in 2003 were in line with the national average and students did about as well as expected. Results in previous years have fluctuated widely, but were well above average in 2001. At AS-level, results in 2003 were below average, and students did less well than expected, largely due to staff changes. Attainment is average on entry to the sixth form, but covers a range of ability. Students work well, at least at the expected level. They achieve well, particularly in Year 13. However, progress of higher attaining students is sometimes restricted because work is revised with the whole group.
165. Teaching and learning are good, supported by teachers' very good subject knowledge. Teachers are enthusiastic for their subject, and this encourages students to think of continuing their study into higher education. Teachers engage students' interest by referring to practical applications wherever possible, for example when relating the importance of bond strength to the breakdown of insecticides in the soil. Students' written work is not always well enough organised to form a useful record for future revision. Although it is planned for the future, current students have few opportunities to see the impact of the subject outside the school environment.

In both subjects

166. Biology and chemistry are well led and managed. Teachers co-operate well in sharing work load and ensuring that students benefit fully from their complementary expertise. Standards are rising as a result of teachers intervening when progress is less than expected, ensuring that students are fully aware of the commitment needed at A level. Heads of department have clear vision for future development of the subjects, including improved links with outside institutions in order to help students appreciate more fully the work of professional biologists and chemists. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall. Some teaching seen was excellent.
- GCE courses are well planned.
- Resources for use in GCE courses are very good.
- Recent examination provision has been affected by staffing difficulties, but the department is now well staffed and provision is improving.
- The recording and presentation of some examination performance data in the department lacks clarity.

Commentary

167. Recent AS-level results have been below average. A2-level results in 2002 were close to the national average for the higher A, B grades, which represented good achievement for some students. However, the number of unclassified candidates was above average. There was no A-level examination in 2003 because of earlier staffing difficulties. Standards seen during the inspection in lessons and in students' portfolios were satisfactory overall, although there is a wide range of ability in both the AS and A2-level courses. There have been significant staff changes in the ICT department recently and standards are improving.
168. Because teaching was always at least good, and sometimes excellent, the achievement of many students was ahead of expected levels. This was seen, for example, in their understanding of the use of business information systems on the A2-level course, and in their ability to use macros and pseudo-code in AS-level coursework. Some impressive learning resources, produced within the department, ensured that all students were well informed and challenged appropriately. Because marking and assessment are carried out diligently,

students understand what they need to do to improve further. Coursework is annotated with detailed diagnostic comments and challenging targets are being set. Students with special educational needs are well supported. In a small minority of lessons, straying from lesson plans resulted in a less sharp focus on the learning objectives and less time for an effective review of learning at the end. Excellent use is made of the interactive projection facilities available in sixth form teaching rooms, so enabling the positive attitudes and enthusiasm of students to be exploited to the full.

169. Leadership and management are good. Roles are allocated appropriately and staff strengths put to best use. Teachers work effectively as a team, sharing resources and expertise. Recent business experience is used very effectively to help students understand the relevance of their studies to the world of business and community information systems. The computer network helps students learn well. Though it has some inherent deficiencies, it benefits from good technical support. There was no reference to sixth form ICT in the last inspection report but the curriculum has developed significantly in recent years to meet the increased demand within the local consortium arrangements.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

170. Across the curriculum, students make good use of ICT. Many are skilled in word-processing and make very good use of the computers in the library, for example for essay work and consulting the resources of the web. Though not all subjects make use of ICT in their regular teaching, there are many which exploit its potential very well.

HUMANITIES

AS and A2-level courses were inspected in geography, psychology and sociology, and were sampled in history and critical thinking (AS-level). Standards in history were well above average in the A2-level examinations in 2003, though well below in AS-level. In the lesson seen, teaching was very good. Students were learning well and making good progress. Standards in critical thinking (AS) are good. Students are very well motivated and make very good progress as a result of very good teaching.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching on the AS and A2-level courses results in good learning.
- Students are well motivated and achieve well in Years 12 and 13.
- Students obtain great benefit from fieldwork, but more is needed.
- Students need to prepare themselves better for lessons and make a greater personal contribution, in order to learn better.

Commentary

171. Recent A2-level examination results have been below the national and school average. The AS-level results were average in 2003, an improvement on those of the previous year when there were significant staffing problems. Most students on both courses in 2003 performed to expected levels or above. Female students generally perform better than males. The retention rate on the courses is well above average.
172. Standards of work seen on the AS-level course is average and on the A level course above average. These improving standards are the result of more stable staffing and better progression and continuity of learning. Good achievement is evident over Years 12 and 13. Students in Year 12 show sound knowledge and understanding of introductory topics covered in both physical and human geography. Work on both courses is covered thoroughly and in

great detail. However, course units would benefit from a summary review at the end of each unit so that students do not lose sight of the overall focus of the topic. Critical analysis is developed over time, although evaluations are often rather limited by narrow application, particularly in Year 12. When writing assignments, few students undertake independent research to add to text and notes provided in class. Written work is generally of a sound standard. Coursework, based on fieldwork, is of high quality and shows much better understanding of concepts, but more is needed.

173. Overall, teaching is good and often very good. Teachers show good subject knowledge when presenting topics and when monitoring students' learning. Lessons are very well planned and well organised with the purpose of developing students' learning through enquiry. Learning gains much from very skilful use of questioning, as it extends students' knowledge and understanding of topics taught. Generally, lessons have good pace and productivity, and teachers' expectations are high. Students are given good opportunities to contribute to discussion and develop ideas, but many students do not respond well enough. They rely too much on their teachers. Learning in Year 12 would benefit from students spending more time preparing themselves for discussion and written work in lessons.
174. The courses are very competently managed. The subject is well co-ordinated and staff work well together. Courses are very well planned and fully meet syllabus requirements. Most work is well marked. Comments made on how work can be further improved are helpful but need to be consistently applied.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained at A2-level are well above average and represent very good achievement.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. A good range of strategies is used. Preparation of students for examinations is exemplary.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- Relationships within lessons are very good. Students receive very good support.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

175. Psychology is a popular subject. Attainment at A2-level is well above average. In 2003, all passed, with nearly two-thirds attaining grades A or B. This represents very good achievement, from standards reached at GCSE. Students' performance on coursework is particularly strong. In contrast, attainment at AS-level, in 2003, was below average. Nearly a quarter of the 57 students were ungraded and only a sixth achieved grades A or B. This unsatisfactory achievement is explained in part by staff absence for the crucial first half term of the course. Many have since successfully retaken modules and achieved well in the first half of Year 13.
176. Evidence from lessons and work seen indicates a wide variation in standards which are generally in line with those nationally at A2 and AS-levels. This represents good achievement, overall. Whilst the quality of much written work is very good, students' responses in lessons vary greatly. Many, particularly in Year 13, display a very good grasp of different psychological approaches. The quality of written work is supported by the exemplary emphasis placed upon students practising examination essays and using assessment criteria to mark their own work.
177. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with some very good features. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well to develop students' understanding. Whilst some teaching observed lacked pace, there is evidence of a good mix of teaching styles, with a good emphasis on developing students' capacity to work both collaboratively and independently. In

all lessons, there is good whole-class discussion, with some searching questioning by teachers. In the best lessons, students undertake a range of activities, and work well in groups to produce presentations of good quality. Regular homework encourages students to carry out research, with appropriate use of ICT. Excellent use is made of assessment. Thorough data is collated on students' performance and detailed marking of regular practice essays gives students a clear indication on how to improve. Relationships within lessons are very good. Students are very positive about the support they receive, which helps them do well. They also appreciate the opportunity given to debate issues and express their views.

178. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Examination performance is very thoroughly analysed. Good support is given to other staff. Collaboration with the dance department, supporting an improvisation on aspects of Freudian theory, is an example of excellent innovation. Students are provided with a wealth of resources, but accommodation is unsatisfactory. The main teaching room is subject to constant interruption and the other room used is cramped.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A2-level examination standards are well above average.
- Very good teaching helps students acquire good sociological insight.
- Students develop very good attitudes to work; progress is closely monitored.
- Students do not use ICT enough, as it is not easily available in lessons.

Commentary

179. Sociology is a very popular option, reflected in large classes in Years 12 and 13. In 2003, A2-level results were well above average, with top A and B grades twice the national average and all passing. Students, both female and male, achieved well from their GCSE points scores, maintaining the high trend from previous years.
180. Current students in Years 12 and 13 are working above nationally expected levels and achieve well in lessons and project work. Year 12 students show above-average knowledge of sociological concepts, and work co-operatively to develop skills of analysis and enquiry. Students apply concepts well in interesting coursework projects on the relationship between family size and achievement. Their good sociological insight is developed from personal experience at home and in school, and they show above-average evaluation skill. Year 13 students develop above average literacy skills, for example in summarising positivistic theory. As computers are not available in lessons, students do not use ICT enough to improve drafts, plan presentations and analyse data. Students display very good attitudes, aided by teachers' high expectations, which enable most to fulfil their potential. Most students remain on courses they started this year, a significant improvement from the previous year due to more stable staffing.
181. Teaching and learning are very good. Students develop very good critical evaluation skills through teachers' very well structured lesson planning and use of topical materials, which students discuss in pairs, feeding back opinions and drafting written definitions. Assessment is good, and includes frequent short tests and timed essays, which are marked promptly. Detailed comments help students improve examination technique. Most students use the excellent worksheets and internet effectively for research. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge enables students to discuss moral, social and cultural issues well, and summarise conclusions confidently. Students of all levels of attainment are fully stretched by lesson activities.

182. Although a new teaching team has only recently been formed, the subject is very well led and managed. Teachers are well qualified and very well organised. Teachers update schemes of work regularly and monitor individual students' progress very well. The subject was not previously inspected.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design technology

Provision in Design and Technology is **Satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' design work is of high quality.
- Teaching is good. Teachers are very knowledgeable and committed and cover design-based aspects very well.
- Very good assessment systems support students well.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Irregular attendance by too many students restricts the continuity of their learning and its development.

Commentary

183. In addition to AS and A2-level examinations in product design (graphics), this year an AS-level course in product design (textiles) is provided.
184. At AS-level, results have been inconclusive, as only a few students 'cashed in' their marks to gain a grade whilst others continued the course to A2 level. At A2-level last year, the eight students who took the examination all passed, with two candidates gaining higher (AB) grades. These results were in line with national averages overall, but boys tended to do less well than predicted and their performance in other subjects. Overall, students achieved satisfactorily.
185. During the inspection all students were focusing on coursework. In graphic products at both AS and A2-levels, portfolios are of good quality, indicating good teaching and learning. However, some portfolio areas are missing, and some students are behind schedule. Irregular attendance is affecting the progress of many students. All students are achieving in line with their capability, but pressure of time, caused by earlier absence, has reduced potential achievement because too little time has been spent on the theoretical parts of the course. In the textiles course, the first part of the projects are very well done, but too much time and attention has been paid to the research areas of the portfolios, leaving too little time, particularly with irregular attendance, to complete the practical tasks to their potential high standards. Again, the theoretical aspects of the course have suffered. In addition, all students have chosen to work on fashion projects and other potential textile products are not represented.
186. Students respond well to their teachers and relationships are first class. Assessment is very good. Teachers evaluate students' work with them, and students transfer the issues raised into improved design solutions. There are clear links between the work seen in the department and the schools' arts focus.
187. Teaching is good, with effective materials, real expertise and a genuine commitment from teachers which ensure that students have access to real expertise in every area. This gives them confidence in their work, and they readily accept advice and criticism.
188. Leadership of the team of very proficient and committed teachers and day to day management are very good. There is very good vision by the head of department. Each teacher is given clear responsibility for their work and has a commitment to high quality, both of their own work and of outcomes for students.

189. Accommodation in terms of workshop space with appropriate machines and equipment is satisfactory. The separation of textiles from the main area for technology is a weakness. Computer resources have improved and are sufficient to meet the specification requirements for learning about computer-aided design. Computer-aided manufacture is not resourced well enough and is not taught or experienced sufficiently by students.
190. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

A range of subjects was inspected in this arts college, at AS, A2 and advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) levels. Subjects inspected fully were the AS and A2-level courses in art and design, drama and theatre studies, and media studies, and the vocational AVCE courses in art and design and performing arts. Lessons were sampled in AS and A2-level dance. The A2-level music lesson seen was poor.

In dance, although only four students took the examination in 2003, three achieved A-B grades and in the same year the school's first dance students went on to take degrees in dance and performing arts. Teaching is good and students learn well. Dance is responsible for a third of the teaching in the two performing arts courses and the head of dance is in charge of both.

Art and design

Provision in art and design at AS and A2-levels is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in both years, but particularly in Year 13, are exceptionally high.
- Excellent teaching and learning enable students to take creative risk with all aspects of their work, so they produce highly innovative, individual explorations and final pieces.
- Excellent teamwork among staff provides students with access to an exceptional range of professional expertise.
- Students are committed, enthusiastic and articulate about their work and are excellent partners in learning.
- Excellent formal and informal assessment and feedback systems ensure that students know exactly what to do to improve work.
- No sixth form studio exists; students have to use empty classrooms outside timetabled lessons, so access to their work is hindered.

Commentary

191. A2-level results have been exceptionally high in recent years. Large numbers of students enter AS and A2-level courses. Very few drop the subject once they begin. Students usually attain much better grades than predicted and achievement is often excellent.
192. Standards in current GCE groups in both years show similarly very high standards. Students develop highly individual characteristics in all their work from a very early stage in Year 12. Their research is innovative and extensive, often covering an immense range of artists' work, frequently very unusual ones. Students present their investigations and explorations highly creatively in lively visual formats in their work journals and sketchbooks. Discussion with individuals reveals the excellent and unusual depth of their understanding. Students' own very highly positive, mature attitudes make extremely strong contributions to their own learning and achievements. Much of their work is of the highest quality and students of all abilities often achieve excellence in all aspects of their work.
193. Teaching and learning are excellent. The whole team of teachers is involved in sixth form work and students benefit enormously from this integrated approach to their studies. A rich range of teacher expertise is available, so students readily and confidently seek advice from all staff interchangeably. They also use a wide variety of often unusual media very creatively in their

learning, Each individual's work is therefore very highly personal and they develop distinctiveness and flair in two and three-dimensional work of all types. A key feature of the excellent teaching in the department is teachers' willingness to challenge students to work in innovative, original media, styles and techniques. Teachers have the confidence to ensure the quality of whatever outcomes students produce. By very good questioning, teachers ensure rigorous exploration, whilst insisting that students take the responsibility for themselves. This ensures excellent independence, leading to the freedom to develop work of much individuality and quality. Many students progress to higher education courses of high quality in various arts disciplines.

194. Leadership and management are excellent. The exceptional standards described in the previous report have been maintained. Improvement since then has been very good. Assessment has improved and now forms a highly effective mechanism for dialogue between students and staff and for tracking students' achievement. Short and longer term targets are used very well to stretch students towards higher objectives. Students understand the examination assessment objectives fully and targets are very well focused on these. With such very large numbers on sixth form courses, the lack of a dedicated sixth form art studio prevents students from having ready access to work in progress. Many use empty art rooms in free periods, but a sixth form studio would greatly help.

Art and design (vocational)

Provision for art and design (vocational) is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have made a very good start on this new course and standards are already above average.
- Attainment was relatively weak on entry to the course, so students' achievement is very good.
- Students are very enthusiastic and committed to learning; they have become very good vocational learners, many with high aspirations for access to higher education and careers in art.
- The department is succeeding well in acquiring arts-based work experience placements for students.
- Systems and procedures are new and need to become fully embedded.

Commentary

195. The AVCE course has only been running in Year 12 since September 2003, so there are no past results. Students are all taking 12 units, the equivalent of two A2-level subjects, over two years.
196. Currently, 14 are students on the course. Standards on intake were relatively low, with several students of Year 13 age who had been unsuccessful on AS- level courses last year. Standards are already above average, at this early stage in the course. Students are well suited to this vocational method of learning and have already made very good progress. Students of all abilities are already achieving much better standards than might be expected, given their entry levels. This progress is particularly evident in sketchbooks and journals of work for the completed units. Their levels of skill and understanding are significantly better than when they began the course. They also understand a range of artists' and crafts-peoples' work very well. Now that they have settled to this new way of working, students are starting to make extremely rapid progress and are on track to achieve standards which are well above average by the end of Year 13.
197. Most students are very highly enthusiastic and committed to their studies, often doing considerable amounts of additional work outside lesson times. The lack of a sixth form studio impedes this somewhat, but students visit galleries independently and undertake very good

research into artists who are often working in unusual fields. The innovative ways in which they incorporate findings into their journals are often excellent. Final pieces are very individually reflective, and realised in an exciting range of media. Students speak eloquently of their appreciation of this style of learning, which provides very good opportunities to reflect and experiment.

198. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Only when absence interrupts learning is it less so. Teachers work very closely together about students' work. As with the GCE courses, these students benefit from the extensive range of professional expertise amongst their teachers, with whom they interact on a very adult basis. Very effective integration of the vocational aspects of work into their programmes of study means that all students learn to relate what they are doing to practical work in the visual arts. Teachers also emphasise the requirement to link all work to the fine art aspects of the course. A lesson seen, for example, showed students creating tempera paints from natural ingredients such as eggs, linseed oil and coloured spices, to emulate techniques used in Renaissance paintings. Active learning from such practical experimentation stimulates students' interests, so their recording of these learning processes is imaginative and very individualistic.
199. The introduction and management of the course at school and department level has been very good, giving added breadth to the scope of art provision. The successful implementation of the start of the course has also been very well managed by one of the art staff, who has taken on responsibility for vocational courses. Assessment is very good, but the department needs to develop clarity about national data on standards and value added measures on AVCE courses. A very good aspect of this new provision is the planned work experience at the end of Year 12. Many interesting work placements are already secured for these students.

Drama and theatre studies

Provision for drama and theatre studies is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved since the last inspection
- Results over the past three years have matched or exceeded the national averages
- Teaching is consistently good; students respond to teachers' expertise and enthusiasm
- Students are keen and committed and most complete the full A-level course
- The unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality rates of some students hinder work in the groups

Commentary

200. Standards are above average and students achieve well in drama, building on the experience and skills they have acquired in the successful GCSE course and their earlier drama work. Numbers taking the A2-level examination have increased steadily from five in 2000 to 16 in 2003, and in each year the numbers attaining higher grades have matched or exceeded the national figure. Work observed during the inspection indicates that these good standards are being maintained and that the popularity of the course is still growing. Some very promising practical work was under way in both year groups, and written work, though variable in quality, showed developing qualities of critical analysis and reflection.
201. The quality of teaching is consistently good, and students appreciate teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm. Teachers have high expectations of them and they respond to this with obvious readiness to experiment and learn. Students understand the course requirements. They work hard in class and outside lessons in preparation and rehearsal. They are confident in their approach to improvisation and text. In Year 13, students took part in a discussion on the Stanislavsky method and then used their knowledge in individual character improvisations before working in groups on their examination scene. Performance and speech skills varied,

but all students were able to evaluate and improve their work, helped by the teacher's well-judged and carefully timed comments. These students attained high standards in their AS-level examinations at the end of the first year of their course.

202. There was equally good teaching and learning in the Year 12 lessons, where students were preparing for their Easter examination performance. Reviewing their work, they were sharply self-critical, eager to improve on what had dissatisfied them and to learn from their teacher's precise and constructive comments. Very effective collaboration was evident in their work on the Brecht scenes.
203. An outstanding feature of AS and A2-level drama is the pleasure with which students and teachers work together and the time they are prepared to give to their work outside lessons. Unfortunately, students' time-keeping in lessons is not up to this standard. In both classes, late arrivals interrupted the flow of the lessons and created problems for the teachers and for other students.
204. Accommodation and resources are generally good, though there is a shortage of usable texts in Year 13. In both studios, display is appropriate but it does not yet reflect the range and interest of the A-level course.
205. The school has yet to appoint a new head of drama, following the resignation of the previous post-holder in the autumn term. Meanwhile, the work of the department is being well managed by its acting head. Teachers who are not full-time in the department contribute greatly to the success of the A-level work.

Performing arts (vocational)

Provision in performing arts is **good**. The subject combines elements of dance, drama and music.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- AVCE results in 2002 were satisfactory but were disappointing in 2003.
- Standards of work and student response in both courses promise better outcomes this year.
- Some good and very good lessons were seen in dance and drama.
- Teaching and learning in music need to be improved.
- Performing arts is well led and managed by the subject co-ordinator.

Commentary

206. The establishment of this vocational course, in addition to the existing GCE courses in dance and drama, is providing an exciting opportunity for students with a keen interest in performance. The courses involve close teamwork by the drama, dance and music departments. Currently, drama and dance are making very good contributions but the music strand is less strong and there is some inconsistency in the quality of provision.
207. Standards in the lessons and written work seen are in line with average levels, and indicate that in both intermediate and advanced examinations, students could attain average levels or better. Several students on the intermediate course are planning to go on to take the advanced course and others to go on to employment in related areas such as music technology. Most students on the advanced course intend to go on to degree studies.
208. Students achieved well in the lessons seen. In their practical activities, students were confident and creative as they tackled a range of dance and drama tasks in a unit of work designed to develop skills in all three areas. In an intermediate drama class, their work in role was inventive and well sustained and they were articulate when evaluating the quality of their performances. Their commitment to the work was impressive and their teacher used it skilfully, sustaining momentum and taking them forward to refine and improve their drama. In

the advanced course, teaching and learning of an equally good standard were seen in a dance lesson. The teacher's instructions were crisp and clear as she took the students through a street jazz scene which involved both dancing and acting skills. She had high expectations of them, used the dance vocabulary very effectively and they responded by working hard and seriously, with obvious enjoyment.

209. This fruitful interaction between teacher and class, and among the students themselves, was a feature of all the work observed in dance and drama. The quality of teaching overall is good, though the contrast between lessons which were satisfactory and those which were very good was usually a matter of pace and energy levels, and occasionally of opportunities seized or missed.
210. In one music lesson observed, there was too much talk from the teacher and too little participation by the class. Another music lesson was more satisfactory at a simple musical level and contained good discussion about performance detail. In this lesson, like others in dance and drama, the late arrival of almost half the students delayed the start of the lesson. Despite the students' enjoyment, their attendance and punctuality rates are not satisfactory.
211. Accommodation for performing arts is good, and for dance particularly good. The subject is well led and managed, and some very good planning for evaluation and development is under way.
212. Students and teachers in the performing arts are contributing much to the cultural life of the school and to a lively and creative community.

Media studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning lead to standards that are well above average.
- Students integrate theory and practice well and this results in very good achievement.
- Very good leadership and management provide very challenging and rigorous courses.
- Excellent relationships result in students working with exceptionally high commitment.
- More links with and visits to local media institutions would further enrich learning.

Commentary

213. The AS level and A2-level courses were inspected. The AS-level results in 2003 were above the national average and an improvement on the previous year. Students achieved well compared with their previous levels of attainment. Recent A2-level results have been consistently high. In 2003 they were well above the national and school average, with female students doing especially well. Most students exceeded the levels of achievement expected of them. Retention rates are very high on both courses.
214. Standards are well above average in Years 12 and 13 and achievement is very good. By the end of Year 13, higher attaining students demonstrate a very good understanding of the relationship between media theory and practice. These students undertake detailed research and display a very good grasp of critical theory. Average attaining students recognize the importance of planning and research and have a clear understanding of genre in their work. Lower attainers find difficulty in linking production with theory and the organization of their work is weaker. The best A2-level independent studies are of exceptionally high quality. They are innovative, polished and reflect the taste of target audiences very well. The Year 12 course develops well key concepts such as values, convention, moving image language and celebrity. The quality of evaluation varies but develops over time. However, few students place their evaluations in a wider context or read enough around the subject. An induction study skill course is needed in Year 12.

215. Overall, teaching is very good and there were some excellent lessons observed. Lessons are very well planned and presentation is structured and focused so that students understand what they are doing. Lessons develop students' self-knowledge impressively through discussion, group work and independent learning. Relationships are excellent, relaxed but professional, and lead to very high student commitment. Expectations are high and teaching challenging, always explaining the need to subject ideas to scrutiny. Best lessons are dynamic, stimulating and enthusiastically presented. Students enjoy their course greatly and speak very highly of the support they receive. However, student absenteeism and punctuality are unsatisfactory. More links with local media would enrich students' experience of media production and institutions.
216. Leadership is very good and courses are very effectively managed. Curricular planning is very thorough and imaginative and sets the scene for the consistently high quality of teaching. Accommodation and resources in the specialist media laboratory are excellent. However, with increased popularity and more teaching groups too much teaching occurs in unsuitable accommodation. More technical support is needed to support learning.

BUSINESS

The business (vocational) course was fully inspected and AS and A2-level courses in economics and law were sampled.

In economics, A2-level results were in line with the national average in 2003 and standards seen in lessons were good. Students make good progress as a result of good teaching, and lessons are very well planned to cover course requirements. In law, good teaching leads to lively, effective learning. A2-level results are around the national average. In the AS-level lesson seen, students learnt well. This subject makes a significant contribution to the development of the citizenship curriculum.

Business (vocational)

Provision in business is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and students' achievement is excellent.
- Teaching is very good and often excellent, with very good assessment.
- Students develop excellent attitudes.
- Students use ICT very effectively in business tasks.
- Students do not have work placements, as they are not timetabled.

Commentary

217. Business lessons are run in Years 10 and 11 (GCSE), Year 12 (GNVQ intermediate, and AVCE single award) and Year 13 (AVCE double award). In 2003, both AVCE and GNVQ results were well above average for students passing and gaining top grades. Results show improvement from 2002. Students' achievement was very good when results are compared to students' GCSE results.
218. Current students in both Years 12 (single AVCE and GNVQ) and 13 (double AVCE) are working at well above nationally expected levels and achievement is excellent – recent AVCE module results were the top in the UK. Students develop very good communication, number and ICT key skills. They research very effectively on the Internet and, sometimes, their own part-time jobs in local businesses. They show excellent attitudes to work, individually and in groups, where students of different ethnic minority groups collaborate very effectively when

presenting ideas for new e-businesses. One AVCE male student's power point slides were outstanding, and reflected an excellent grasp of local financial and marketing opportunities.

219. Teaching and learning are very good, and often excellent. Very well structured lessons keep students interested and very well motivated. Students gain a thorough understanding of business terms through teachers' frequent topical examples. Teachers are enthusiastic and very knowledgeable, having good experience in business. They frequently arrange visits to businesses or speakers. Teachers mark students' course work very thoroughly giving relevant targets to help students improve.
220. Leadership and management by an experienced teacher are excellent. He has sustained a highly effective department over several years, and following previous staffing difficulties, now has two inexperienced but very enthusiastic colleagues. This cohesive team monitor students' progress against predicted grades very well, and information is held on an outstanding internal web site. Relevant plans for improvement include more visits and speakers, although there are no planned work placements to enrich the coursework of GNVQ or AVCE students, due to the structure of the sixth form timetable. The subject was not reported on at 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	3	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	4
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	5	5
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well students learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets students needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	3	4
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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