

INSPECTION REPORT

HARROW HIGH SCHOOL AND SPORTS COLLEGE

Harrow, London

LEA area: Harrow

Unique reference number: 102242

Headteacher: Ms. C. Lenihan

Lead inspector: Christine Ryan

Dates of inspection: 1 - 4 March 2004

Inspection number: 262807

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 pupils:	12 – 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	719
School address:	Gayton Road
	Harrow
	Middlesex
Postcode:	HA1 2JG
Telephone number:	020 8861 7300
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Linda Heggie
Date of previous inspection:	9 March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Harrow High School is a comprehensive community school for boys and girls aged 12-16 years (Years 8 to 11). It is smaller than most secondary schools with 719 pupils and in all year groups boys significantly outnumber girls. The school was formerly a boys' school, only becoming co-educational in 1998, and recently completed its first year as a specialist Sports College. It has gained a number of national awards for the quality of its provision, including the Artsmark Gold award (2003), Sportsmark award (2002), Investors in People (1999) and Careers Education and Guidance award (1996). Pupils are drawn from, in and around Harrow, though a significant minority travel long distances from areas such as Brent, and they reflect an extensive range of social, ethnic and cultural mix. The school is non-denominational and caters for a number of different religious groups. About one quarter of the pupils are from Asian or Asian British Indian backgrounds and white British pupils make up about another quarter. Pupils from other ethnic groups are also significantly represented and include about one in five who are refugees and a small number of Traveller children. Over half of the pupils do not have English as their first language, which is much higher than average, and sixty five of these are at an early stage of learning English. A large minority of pupils come from homes that are economically and socially disadvantaged. Over 30 per cent of pupils receive a free school meal, which is above the national average, and the numbers of pupils that join or leave the school midway through the year is high. Pupils' attainment on entry represents the full range of abilities. Mostly it is below average, but literacy and numeracy skills are very low. About a quarter of the pupils are identified as having special educational needs and twenty of these have a high level of learning difficulty. These proportions are above the average for most secondary schools.

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32297	Chris Martin	Team inspector	Geography
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an **effective and inclusive school, with a very positive ethos**. The school operates in challenging circumstances and the majority of pupils enter the school needing some form of specialist support for their learning. As a result of the high quality care pupils receive, they achieve well in Years 10 and 11. Very good leadership and management of the school provide a clear direction for staff and pupils and successfully create a happy and trusting environment for pupils to succeed. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and much of it is good, but a significant minority is unsatisfactory and holds back achievement for some younger pupils. Sports College status has a very positive effect on many areas of school life and makes an important contribution to raising standards for all. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Excellent leadership by the headteacher has skilfully involved staff, parents, pupils and governors in shaping the vision for the school and securing their commitment to its improvement. The school uses self-evaluation very effectively.
- The significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 8 and 9, mostly associated with inexperienced or temporary staff, contributes to poor behaviour in some classes and impedes pupils' progress.
- All pupils are very well cared for, guided and supported; it is an inclusive school that actively promotes good relationships and achievement for all.
- Pupils' lateness to school and to lessons reduces the effectiveness of teaching and slows progress for some pupils.
- Sports College status has been used creatively to enhance provision and raise pupils' achievement, not only in sport but across a range of subjects, and to forge strong links with the local community.
- Pupils' language and literacy skills are not well developed and this is a barrier to raising standards at all ages.
- The school works hard, and with increasing success, to improve attendance and reduce pupil exclusions.
- Provision for history is unsatisfactory.

This is the school's first inspection since opening as the co-educational Harrow High School in 1998.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	N/A	D	D	C

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

STANDARDS AND ACHIEVEMENT

A high proportion of the pupils start school in Year 8 with literacy and numeracy skills that are very low. Many do not have a good command of the English language. Despite these barriers to learning pupils' achievement is **satisfactory overall and improving**. During the last few years, results from national tests taken at the end of Year 9 have been below average, though they are rising. When compared to similar schools, results in 2003 were well above the average, and represented rapid progress for those pupils. In the current Years 8 and 9, pupils' progress is not as strong as those last year and standards remain below the national average. Results in GCSE examinations for 2003 improved at the highest grades A*-C and, although they remained below the

national average, they were in line with those of similar schools. Pupils presently in Year 11 have below average standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but they have made significant gains since Year 9 and are working at average levels in most other subjects. Their achievement is good overall. Throughout the school, the many pupils with special educational needs and those who do not speak English as their first language achieve well as a result of the good provision made for them.

The development of pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good overall. Relationships are strong and supportive, based on pupils who like their teachers and teachers who have a genuine interest in their pupils. A minority of younger pupils disrupt some lessons with their immature behaviour. Attendance is satisfactory and is improving. Punctuality, both on arrival at school and at lessons, is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching is **satisfactory** overall. The majority of teaching is good or better but there is a significant minority in Years 8 and 9 that is unsatisfactory. The school places a high priority on developing and supporting teachers so that teaching and pupils' learning improve further. Teaching and learning is particularly good in Years 10 and 11 where work is carefully matched to pupils' differing abilities and gives them the opportunity to take an active part in lessons. In a small number of lessons, mainly in Year 8 but also in Year 9, weaknesses in teaching and the management of pupils' behaviour prevent pupils from making proper progress. These lessons are most often associated with inexperienced or temporary staff. In all year groups, lateness to lessons by a significant minority disrupts learning for many pupils.

The curriculum is considerably enriched by extra-curricular activities and the care, support and guidance that pupils receive is very good. Access to support, advice and guidance is excellent. The school actively seeks pupils' views and encourages their involvement. Through the Sports College, the school has developed its contribution to the community and built productive links with parents and partners, including other schools and colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and with the contribution of other key staff ensures that leadership and management throughout the school are **very good**. Teamwork is a significant strength of the school. The governing body provides important support to the school and makes a good contribution to its development. Almost all statutory requirements are met with the exception that not all pupils receive a daily act of collective worship. The school is highly effective at identifying where improvements are needed and then putting in place the necessary finances and staff training to support them.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Very few parents returned questionnaires prior to the inspection and even fewer attended the parents' evening. The overwhelming majority of comments received were positive about the school, in particular the evident improvement to pupils' achievement because of the support they receive. Concerns were expressed about poor behaviour by a few pupils but most felt that this had also improved significantly since the Sports College was opened. Pupils' views are also positive, though a few also had concerns about the behaviour of some pupils. However, they felt very confident that unacceptable behaviour is well handled by the school. Pupils describe this as a friendly school where relationships between different ethnic and religious groups are especially good. The inspection confirmed the views of parents and pupils.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and management of pupils' behaviour in some lessons, particularly in Year 8.
- Ensure that pupils' lateness to school and lessons is properly monitored by all staff and that effective action is taken to improve the situation.
- Apply the school's language for learning policy consistently in all subjects to provide support for those pupils whose literacy and language skills need improving.
- In history, raise standards of pupils' achievement and improve the quality of leadership and management of the subject.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that a daily act of collective worship is provided for all pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. Standards are below average in all years, though in many subjects they are closer to the national average in Years 10 and 11 than in earlier years. Pupils with special educational needs and those who do not speak English as their first language achieve well and reach standards commensurate with their abilities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils progress well, relative to their starting points on entry, as they move through the school; results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests were well above those of similar schools.
- GCSE results for higher attaining pupils have improved steadily over the last three years, though lower attaining pupils have been less successful. Improvement is in line with the national trend but results overall are well below the national average.
- Pupils of all ages achieve well in science, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education (RE), physical education (PE) and design and technology (DT) and achievement is very good in art in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is unsatisfactory in history. Overall, pupils' achievement is better in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 8 and 9.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills improve from a very low base on entry but for many they remain below average for their age.
- Sports college status has a positive impact on staff and pupils and is instrumental in raising standards of achievement across the curriculum.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those who do not speak English as their first language often make good progress as a result of the support they receive.

Commentary

Years 8 and 9

1. The results summarised in the table below show that in 2003 pupils reached standards close to the national average in English, though they were below it in mathematics and science.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.3 (33.6)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	32.4 (32.4)	35.4 (34.7)
science	30.9 (31.4)	33.6 (33.3)

2. A significant factor in these results is that most pupils enter the school at age 12 with below average levels of attainment and a significant minority is well below the average. The school then has only two years, instead of the usual three, to raise standards further for the tests at age 14. Although the school's results have not yet reached the national average they have improved over recent years in line with the national trend.

3. When compared with schools whose pupils had similar attainment at age 11, the results were well above the average and so represented good and for many very good progress during Years 8 and 9. In mathematics and science boys' results were closer to the national standard than girls', though in English girls and boys did equally well. However, analysis of pupils' attainment on entry to the school shows that on average girls' attainment is lower than that of boys. This is due at least in part to the disproportionate numbers of girls who go from the local middle schools to the two girls' only schools nearby.

4. In the present Years 8 and 9, pupils' progress is not as good as in previous years, largely as a result of the poor behaviour and attitudes to learning of a minority of pupils and some weaknesses in teaching. However, achievement is satisfactory overall in all subjects except history, where poor planning and shortcomings in teaching prevents pupils from making proper progress. Pupils with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English achieve well, as the school helps them to overcome their barriers to learning through carefully structured support. Achievement of Traveller children is satisfactory, though scope exists for improving their progress through raising awareness of their specific needs across all subjects.

Years 10 and 11

5. Pupils' results in the 2003 GCSE examinations show an improvement over the previous year at the highest grades A*-C and overall are in line with those of similar schools. The rate of improvement in grades A*-C at GCSE is greater than both the national and local picture. Girls took GCSE examinations at the school for the first time in 2002. Results for both 2002 and 2003 indicate that the performance of boys and girls was similar, though girls' results were further below the national standard than boys. Pupils do particularly well in physical education (PE) where results are significantly above those found nationally. However, when all subjects are taken into account, the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C was below the national average and those gaining grades A*-G was well below the national standard.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	37 (36)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	76 (81)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	92 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	29.1 (34.7)	29.5 (34.7)

There were 180 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. For most pupils, progress accelerates as they move through the school and is at its best in Years 10 and 11 where their achievement is good. This is largely because by that stage the school's approach to teaching and learning is well established. Pupils behave better as a result and they make a greater effort to take an active part in lessons.

7. The impact of Sports College status has also been considerable in helping to raise standards, not just in sport, but across the school. Pupils freely acknowledge that the high expectations demanded in sport have influenced their approach to academic work and their motivation to succeed. For some of the more disaffected pupils the positive benefits have been very significant. Pupils also benefit from the school's renewed focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and the more stable staffing than the school had previously. Consequently, pupils' achievement is now good overall and in the core subjects of English and science, in information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology (DT), music, PE and religious education (RE); it is very good in art. In almost all other subjects, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, though in common with younger pupils, history remains a weakness at this key stage.

8. At all ages, good provision is made for pupils with particular learning difficulties and those who are at various stages of learning English. Most of the pupils identified as requiring learning support have problems with literacy and a significant number also have social, emotional and/or behavioural needs. The school caters well for the full range of learning difficulties and they achieve well, and sometimes very well, as a result. The school has also begun to identify and provide programmes of extension for pupils who are gifted and talented. Though at a relatively early stage of development, the indications are that pupils appreciate the support on offer and benefit from it. In lessons, there is no significant difference in the achievement of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. However, the school has recently conducted its own analysis of pupils' attainment which shows that white British boys, black boys, and pupils who receive free school meals often do

not achieve as well as other groups. It is too early to see the effects of the additional support the school provides for these pupils but their progress is being carefully monitored by heads of year.

9. The attainment of most pupils entering the school is below average and many come with significant weaknesses in literacy, especially writing, and in numeracy. Improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills forms a significant part of the school's strategy for raising standards overall and most departments incorporate literacy and numeracy improvement into their planning. However, practice is not yet consistent across the school and at all ages pupils' literacy and numeracy standards remain below average. The national strategy for raising standards in Years 7 to 9 has been incorporated into whole-school and departmental planning. The impact of this initiative is beginning to be seen in lessons, though it has not been in place long enough to judge its impact on pupils' achievement overall. Recently the school made substantial investment to improve provision for ICT and its use is now successfully incorporated into work in most subjects. It is used to particularly good effect in PE, mathematics and science and, though not all subjects do as well, pupils of all ages now achieve at least a satisfactory standard.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good overall. They are particularly good in art and physical education lessons. Attendance is satisfactory and is improving. Punctuality, both on arrival at school and at lessons, is unsatisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A strong sense of community is evident around the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good; pupils from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds mix freely and together with staff create a community for all.
- Monitoring of attendance and the follow up action to improve attendance are very good.
- The majority of pupils behave well and they have good attitudes to learning.
- Significant numbers of pupils arrive late to school and do not arrive promptly at lessons; this disrupts teaching and learning.
- Extra-curricular activities enrich learning and personal development.
- The number of fixed term exclusions last year was high, reflecting some poor behaviour by a minority of pupils. Measures to reduce pupil exclusions are taking effect and the numbers of exclusions are falling.

Commentary

10. Pupils arrive in Year 8, from over twenty middle schools, and with a range of ideas about acceptable ways to behave. A number of older pupils also join after having experienced problems at other schools. The school works hard to achieve consistent approaches and sets high expectations for all its pupils. The success of its approach can be seen in the fact that as pupils settle into the school their behaviour and attitudes improve. The very positive ethos created underpins pupils' motivation to learn and most make good progress as a result. However, a small number of immature pupils, particularly in Year 8, disrupt learning by disturbing others and refusing to follow teachers' instructions. The current Year 8 have found it more difficult to adapt than is usual and, when high expectations of behaviour are not set firmly by staff, a significant minority of these pupils misbehave. The senior management is aware of this issue and has taken action to remedy it by giving additional support to Year 8 teachers and close attention to individual pupils.

11. The many different races, ethnic and faith groups mix well and there is a high level of harmony and tolerance. Staff are very quick to identify and sort out the few instances of bad behaviour that occur around the school and there is a positive and friendly atmosphere in all communal areas. In discussions with inspectors and in response to the questionnaire, pupils were very complimentary about how the school deals with bullying and other forms of poor behaviour. They feel that bullying is relatively rare and are confident that it would always be swiftly dealt with.

Relationships are strong and supportive, based upon pupils who like their teachers and teachers who have a genuine interest in their pupils.

12. Pupils of all ages are given numerous opportunities to contribute to the school's decision making and to develop into mature and responsible individuals. Some represent their class on the student or sports councils for example, whilst others act as mentors for younger pupils or lead PE sessions in neighbouring middle schools. By its constant focus on achievement and building self-esteem, the school successfully encourages pupils to raise their own expectations and work hard. Physical education lessons in particular generate enthusiasm and excellent attitudes from pupils and they are very proud of the school's specialist status. One especially successful initiative has been the use of a sports coach mentor who works with particular groups or individuals in Years 8 and 10 who are at risk of underachieving. He accompanies them to lessons in a wide range of subjects and, by reminding them of their successes in sport, encourages them to adopt similar approaches to the rest of their work. This has led to significant improvements for some pupils in their work and behaviour.

13. Provision for spiritual development is good. In religious education, pupils of all religions and beliefs are helped to understand religious faith better, and their own background is affirmed through the lessons, for instance Muslim pupils were seen demonstrating in front of the class the way they pray. Respect is shown for religious artefacts and books. However, there is not a great deal of evidence that other curriculum subjects provide for spiritual reflection. Very good opportunities exist out of lessons for spiritual development; a dozen or so pupils attend the Christian Union, not all of them Christians, and are welcomed to the activities arranged by the local youth workers. At present, most pupils have collective worship on only three days per week rather than each day as required. The school recognises this deficiency and has begun to remedy it through planned changes to tutor time.

14. Provision for moral education is good and teachers provide good role models for pupils. The personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme has a strong moral emphasis and enhances the sex education provided in RE. Moral issues feature in drama lessons, such as the work done by Year 9 on the ethics of designer labelling. A clear framework for behaviour, devised by pupils, is displayed in several languages around the school.

15. Social education is well provided for in a variety of ways. In many lessons, there is group work where pupils of different races, gender and ability are encouraged to work together. The Sports College provides very good opportunities for pupils to interact, as do other enrichment activities, such as the school productions.

16. Provision for cultural development is good. The school's own cultural history is celebrated through the excellent displays put together by a voluntary archivist. Photographs and other memorabilia show its long tradition. A particularly moving display identifying past pupils lost in the First World War provokes much comment and interest from today's pupils. The diversity of the community, which includes pupils from literally dozens of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, is also genuinely celebrated. Particular cultural emphases, going beyond the traditional British heritage, are commonly found, for example, African dance lessons, an international fashion show and a visit by modern languages pupils to Arsenal Football Club, where they enjoyed a dialogue with the French manager and players.

Attendance

17. Attendance is satisfactory. The governors recognise that attendance rates could be improved further and have set targets for improvement. The school has adopted a variety of measures, including the installation of an electronic registration system, and is doing all that it reasonably can to improve attendance. Absence from school triggers a first day contact to parents and senior staff and tutors closely monitor patterns of absence. A significant minority of pupils already have established patterns of non-attendance when they join the school in Year 8. The school has also identified a small number of pupils who have long periods of absence. The local

education authority (LEA) supports the school in its efforts to reduce absence and has extended the time for the education welfare officer to work directly with targeted pupils whose attendance record is poor. The measures have started to have an impact and during the autumn term of 2003 attendance was 90.3 per cent overall, with Years 8 and 10 at 92 and 91 per cent respectively. This is within the range of most comprehensive schools.

18. Direct comparison with national data, as shown in the table below, is an unreliable indicator for judging attendance at Harrow High, where pupils do not join the school until Year 8. Most secondary schools, on which the tables are based, take pupils from Year 7 where generally attendance is high.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.9	School data	1.1
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.

19. Punctuality in all year groups is unsatisfactory. There is a daily rate of more than seven per cent of pupils arriving late for school and not registering with their tutors. Similarly, significant groups of pupils are late for lessons. For many pupils, difficulties with public transport contribute to morning lateness but there is also a lack of enthusiasm by some to arrive promptly. Late arrival to lessons then disrupts teaching and interferes with learning for others in the class. Improving punctuality is an identified priority for the school and senior managers are active in pursuing the causes but most staff are not rigorous enough in challenging pupils who arrive late.

Exclusions

20. Most pupils behave well around the school and senior managers and other staff actively enforce the code of conduct. The combined effect of the high standards set and pupils' response to them creates a happy and calm atmosphere that is generally free of tension. However, any pupils causing significant problems for others are excluded, usually for a fixed period.

Ethnic background of pupils

a) Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	133	11	0
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	25	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	17	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	8	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	27	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	171	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	64	8	1
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	89	8	2
Black or Black British – Caribbean	65	14	2
Black or Black British – African	72	6	0

Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	16	8	1
No ethnic group recorded	8	0	0

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

21. In the last year, the number of pupils excluded was relatively high and the school sought measures to reduce the rate of exclusions. A 'rapid response' group has been formed with the LEA and other agencies to bring together support for those pupils at greatest risk of exclusion and the Student Support Centre (SSC) provides a means for these pupils to remain in school but separate from the majority for most lessons. These combined efforts are proving successful in reducing the numbers of exclusions. The SSC has been especially effective and so far has enabled almost three-quarters of referred pupils to complete their education at school. Its success is based on the detailed attention given to the needs of each individual, clear and high expectations of work and behaviour and a carefully constructed programme of reintegration into the main school. Pupils and staff all speak highly of the work of the centre and the pupils attending were seen to be making great efforts to improve. They learned to listen to the opinions of others, to work together as a team and to take responsibility for their actions. In comparison with the national picture, fixed term exclusions of white and of black British boys were significantly higher than those of Asian pupils, the largest ethnic group in the school. The school's analysis of pupils' attainment shows that these two groups are the lowest attaining overall and indicates the link, for some individuals, between their poor behaviour and attitudes to learning and their achievement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall; the majority is good or better but there is a significant minority in Years 8 and 9 that is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is sound and the care, support and guidance that pupils receive is very good. The school actively seeks pupils' views and encourages their involvement. Through the Sports College, the school has developed its contribution to the community and built productive links with parents and partners, including other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, though better for older pupils than the youngest. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are mostly good and sometimes very good. Teaching and learning are more variable across Years 8 and 9 and, though satisfactory or better on most occasions, they are unsatisfactory in about one in six lessons. This has an adverse impact on pupils' achievement at this key stage. The assessment of pupils' work is sound in most subjects but in many, assessment information is not used effectively to make clear to pupils what aspects of their work they need to improve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The best teaching reflects effective planning and use of resources.
- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 enables most pupils to achieve well.
- A significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 8 and 9 adversely affects pupils' learning and the standards they achieve.
- Good specialist knowledge is used by staff to enliven lessons, sustain pupils' interest, and match the demands of work to pupils' capabilities.
- Instances of pupils' disruptive behaviour and poor punctuality are not always dealt with adequately.
- Teachers are committed to the school's policy for improving teaching and learning.

- The school makes good use of assessment data to create a profile of achievement for each pupil but many subject departments do not always use the information effectively to help pupils improve.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 119 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	16 (13%)	47 (39%)	45 (38%)	9 (8)	1 (1)	0

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

22. The above table indicates a sizeable proportion of good and very good teaching, but also a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. The unsatisfactory teaching was only found in Years 8 and 9 and the majority was related to teachers who were new to the school. Good teaching is the norm in just over half of all subjects. In PE and art, teaching is very good. In the core subjects, teaching is good in science and in English for Years 10 and 11. It is satisfactory in mathematics and in English for Years 8 and 9.

23. In the best lessons, for example in Year 8 PE, high standards of acceptable behaviour were set from the start and in Year 11 English the high quality of discussion challenged all pupils to do their best. Pupils responded to these high expectations and made rapid progress as a result. In music, geography, science and art, work was carefully planned to match pupils' differing needs and activities were varied to sustain their interest. In Year 10 Spanish, effective use of ICT motivated pupils and the pace of learning increased. In these lessons, pupils took an active part in learning and were encouraged to think for themselves. Confident subject knowledge enables most teachers to give clear explanations and adapt their teaching when pupils give unexpected responses or misunderstand. In a small but significant number of lessons, mainly in Year 8 but also in Year 9, weaknesses in teaching and the management of pupils' behaviour prevented pupils from making progress. This unsatisfactory teaching, leading to inadequate learning, is not found across the school but in a few individual subjects, such as history and French and is most often associated with inexperienced or temporary staff. It arises principally through a failure to gain pupils' attention at the start and establish good behaviour. Teaching is then based on setting similar work for all pupils regardless of ability and provides too few opportunities for them to work independently. In these lessons, teaching fails to capture pupils' interest, their attention wanders and behaviour deteriorates further.

24. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught by specialists and as a result they learn effectively. In Year 8, pupils were given clear steps to help them understand the meaning of a poem and probing questions encouraged progress. An art therapy group made good progress in their speaking and listening skills through focused discussion. The teaching assistant gave timely praise and support which reinforced good behaviour. Occasionally, teaching and learning is satisfactory but not better because work does not provide enough challenge for pupils and discipline is not fully maintained. Provision in subject departments is usually good. Teaching assistants are well informed about pupils' needs and they plan well with mainstream teachers, as in design and technology, for example, where the clarity of specific objectives and well-targeted support enabled pupils to work independently. In PE, pupils with physical disabilities were active participants in fitness, badminton and trampolining lessons. Three pupils with autism were given the support they needed to change in the main changing room where previously they changed separately from other pupils.

25. The senior leadership team and staff show a high level of commitment to raising standards through improvements to teaching and learning. Numerous initiatives are in place to support this, including the expertise of Advanced Skills Teachers in school. All departments incorporate the school's language for learning policy into their planning and it clearly has a beneficial influence on

teaching in most subjects. Good use of the national strategy for improving standards in Years 7 to 9 is also apparent in the way in which lessons are structured. The monitoring of teaching within departments is an integral part of the school's self-review process and is practised widely. Staff development, training and advice are readily available from within the school and in conjunction with the local authority and other agencies. High staff turnover has meant that there are always some staff requiring further training and support and this explains why teaching in a small but significant number of lessons is unsatisfactory. However, the very good management and the range of initiatives limit the impact of this on the overall quality of teaching and ensure that much of the teaching is good.

Assessment

26. The quality of assessing pupils' work and the use made of assessment data is satisfactory. The school collects a wide range of data on pupils' attainment. Good quality systems are used to record and analyse pupils' attainment in the statutory tests taken at the end of Years 6 and 9 and in GCSE examinations. The data is supplemented by information from school examinations and provides a clear profile of each pupil's achievement across the curriculum. This thoroughness enables the school to quickly identify any pupils who are underachieving and so provide additional help and support through their year group tutors and other staff. Pupils are effectively assessed for any learning difficulties on entry to the school and individual education plans drawn up where necessary. Not all the plans contain easily identifiable targets, which sometimes make it difficult to accurately judge pupils' progress.

27. Within subjects, notably science and art, the content of individual modules or other components of assessment is closely matched to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. This gives pupils a very clear idea of their progress relative to others of similar age and sets targets for improvement. However, most subjects do not share this information with pupils often enough for it to have an impact on the standards they achieve, and marking of their written work fails to provide sufficient information about their particular strengths and weaknesses. In contrast, when pupils are given detailed feedback, as in science coursework, they correct their misconceptions and improve their grades as a result.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It is well-structured to meet the needs of pupils, except that Year 9 has insufficient ICT and Years 10 and 11 have too few vocational options. Sports College status has had a significant impact across the curriculum, especially in the high quality provision for PE, sport and extra-curricular activities. Previously, a lack of qualified staff in some subjects slowed pupils' progress but staffing difficulties have now been mostly resolved.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent provision is made for sport and many opportunities for enrichment occur beyond the school day.
- Good procedures for reviewing and developing the curriculum ensure that it meets most pupils' needs.
- Pupils in Year 9 do not have sufficient ICT and the range of vocational courses is too narrow.
- Past difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified staff have disrupted pupils' learning in some subjects.

Commentary

28. The curriculum has an appropriate emphasis on English, mathematics and science in order to raise standards and is in line with the school's specialist sports status. Increased resources and staff training for improving the provision of ICT have been successful in raising standards in this area. The school provides very well for sport and the arts. Good use is made of external links to support provision and ensure resources are targeted to meet the needs of all pupils. The school

provides well for students who require additional support for English language or other special needs. They have access to the whole curriculum and it is flexibly adapted where necessary. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are offered GCSE courses where possible and alternatives if required.

29. The school's commitment to raising standards is based on valuing individuals and encouraging potential. Staff share these aspirations and the school has built effective teams, taking every opportunity to be part of funded initiatives. Many successful curriculum developments have resulted, for example, peer mentoring, an induction course for pupils with English as an additional language, fast-track provision for gifted and talented pupils in maths, science, music and foreign languages, Saturday school focussed on raising achievement at GCSE and enrichment days to develop key skills. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is carefully tailored through individual education plans to enable them to have full opportunities in line with their peers. Procedures for developing the curriculum are good and include consultation with pupils to ensure that their motivation and learning are supported. The national strategy for raising the achievement of 11 to 14 year-olds has been adopted by some departments, though its use is not yet routine in all subjects. The school recognises that it does not offer enough vocational courses for Years 10 and 11 and plans to introduce additional courses next year. However, it does provide a flexible curriculum for some pupils which includes college links and work experience.

30. The impact of specialist sports status is significant in many areas of school life and makes a strong contribution to the development of pupils' self-esteem and confidence as well as their academic achievement. Older girls benefit from a joint initiative with the YWCA for single sex fitness sessions, created in response to their lower achievement in mixed classes. High quality extra-curricular sport is offered throughout the week and there are numerous links to sport in the local community. This provision contributes substantially to pupils' success in PE at GCSE. A very good range and variety of other extra-curricular opportunities, including weekend activities, enrich pupils' experiences. The programme is carefully planned to support teaching and learning in lessons as well as to create broader options such as participation in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Visits by a range of experts from outside the school are well supported by all pupils and the staff respond to pupils' interests with, for example, various theatre and dance visits.

31. Accommodation is good and provides a stimulating learning environment; it has benefited greatly from Sports College funding. Pupils make extensive use of facilities outside lesson time and they provide the community with a valuable learning resource. Even greater community use is planned for next year. A good supply of learning resources aids pupils' learning, though the music department does not have enough classroom instruments. Pupils' work is prominently displayed around the school and celebrates the high quality that some achieve.

32. Recruitment of qualified staff has been a difficulty in recent years and parents expressed concerns over the high staff turnover, which has in the past slowed pupils' learning in the classes affected. However, the school has worked hard to attract and retain teachers and now has most posts filled with permanent staff. In almost all departments, teachers' expertise is well matched to the demands of the curriculum and additional training is given when needed. The school has an ongoing commitment to training staff at all levels in the various aspects of special educational needs. The level of support staffing is generous and used well to assist the school's ongoing drive to improve teaching and learning.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils receive very good care, guidance and support. Staff have very good relationships with pupils and a comprehensive understanding of their achievements and development. The school, parents and other agencies work together effectively to meet the extensive range of complex needs that the school serves. Management and staff are aware of the links between pupils' achievements and their behaviour and attendance. Pupils are encouraged to take an active part in the school's development and their views are sought and acted upon.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Access to support, advice and guidance is excellent.
- Relationships with adults are very good.
- Induction arrangements for those new to the school are very good.
- The school provides a healthy and safe environment; the school is seeking the Healthy Schools Award.

Commentary

33. The school's focus on individual support means that all pupils are well cared for. During the inspection and in response to the questionnaire the vast majority of pupils spoke highly of the care and support they receive. The school has a wide range of systems to reward and acknowledge individuals and classes. Staff know the pupils well individually and the pupils' survey shows that they feel confident that there is an adult they could approach if they had a problem.

34. The directors of study, who meet regularly with form tutors, have a strong focus on individuals and see their role as enabling all pupils to access learning. Very good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic performance include both a subject-based and a whole-school focus. Pupils' achievement and progress is tracked at whole-school level, in each department and by form tutors. Assessments are recorded centrally so that staff can benchmark progress and set targets. School data is thoroughly analysed to identify trends in performance and to make sure that any underachievement is picked up quickly so that action can be taken. Pupils' progress and achievement clearly benefit from this integrated approach. The study centre gives very direct support to those pupils who are struggling within normal classes and helps them to adjust. The referral system for pupils who are having problems with work or behaviour encourages improvement by its emphasis on recording positive as well as any negative comments. The sports mentoring system is having a marked effect in improving the attitudes and work of targeted pupils. The school has extensive links with a number of outside agencies to inform and support their care of pupils. These links have been particularly effective in helping to improve attendance and therefore pupils' achievement. The special needs co-ordinator meets regularly with year co-ordinators to review pupil progress and good use is made of the LEA physical and sensory support services. Regular links with social, health and voluntary organisations are maintained and good links with the local middle schools ensure a smooth transition for pupils.

35. Overall responsibility for Traveller children is taken by the co-ordinator for English as a second language. A local education authority worker mentors the pupils one day per week and liaises with their parents. The co-ordinator is well trained in dealing with pupils' needs, though provision in departments varies. Some departments, for example art, make good provision. In art, pupils are encouraged to do their homework at school since they have difficulty in doing it at home and, in an effort to reduce the frequent absences, their attendance is rewarded. However, staff in other departments are not always sufficiently aware of the particular needs of this group and though pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall it could be further improved.

36. Pupils who do not have English as their first language are looked after well. Very good induction procedures support small groups of newly arrived pupils and are particularly effective for the refugee pupils who are new to the English education system. Pupils are gradually integrated into lessons and they receive bilingual support across a range of subjects from bilingual teaching assistants. Child protection procedures are good because staff understand the appropriate action they should follow and do so. Information about vulnerable pupils is used well to monitor and support their progress through school. Pupils new to the country who may have left difficult situations behind are very thoughtfully supported. Where possible the school ensures these pupils have some guidance in their home language.

37. The school's induction programme helps pupils to settle in when they first join in Year 8. Year 10 pupils are trained to act as peer mentors for Year 8 pupils. This offers the younger pupils very positive support and gives the older pupils useful expertise and experience. Pupils particularly

enjoy the outdoors activities day, which encourages teamwork and enables pupils to get to know each other better. The success of this was noted by one pupil, who joined the school knowing nobody, but made friends quickly on that day. There is also a well used drop in centre, called 'Talk to us' where pupils can go to get individual advice and help.

38. Careers guidance is very good and is threaded into the pupils' experience during different times in their school career. Part of the work is carried out the school's PHSCE programme and departments, such as English, also work very effectively delivering some of the work. A Connexions representative works regularly in school giving Year 11 pupils very useful advice and to make the service more accessible there is an open office session at lunchtimes. By accessing the school data base of pupils' progress, the representative is able to tailor advice to match the strengths of individuals. The high profile work experience programme is serviced through an effective consortium arrangement and the learning support department ensures the pupils it cares for are well placed in companies. Where possible, pupils in the early stages of learning English are matched to work placements in companies where their home language is spoken. A comprehensive interviewing programme allows pupils to have good interview experience. Gifted and talented pupils are given a more challenging experience by going through a panel interview. The process is so successful that two pupils were asked to take part in a real selection process for new Connexions staff.

39. Pupils are active partners in the school community and are given opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. Pupils have an active school council whose views and recommendations have led to beneficial changes, for example, healthy option meals at lunchtimes. Pupils drew up the school's code of conduct and were involved in formulating the race relations policy. The respect and trust implied in these opportunities are repaid by the good relationships and behaviour around school. The Junior Sports Leader Award scheme, where pupils are trained to lead sports activities, has raised their levels of confidence and self-esteem.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has worked innovatively to develop a highly effective partnership with parents. They are well informed and their views are sought and valued. The links with the wider community, especially through the Sports College, are very good. The support programmes for parents and the community are good; they are well planned to benefit pupils and adults. Links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works hard and effectively to involve all parents in their child's learning; it is keen to seek parents' views and follows up concerns very well.
- Reports to parents are informative, clear and useful for moving children forward.
- Many parents are very supportive of the school's aims and intentions.
- Very good use is made of community contacts to broaden pupils' experiences; businesses and local organisations support the work of the school very effectively.
- The Sports College has a significant impact in the local community, particularly in the middle schools.
- A very effective partnership with the independent Harrow School benefits pupils and the wider community.
- Partnership with local schools and the college are well established and pupils' involvement with them contributes to their personal development.

Commentary

40. The school places a strong emphasis on involving all parents in their child's education and recognises the importance of a strong partnership with the home. Parents' views are actively sought following progress review days and any concerns are followed up. The school readily responds to issues raised, for example, changes to the Year 9 timetable next year to accommodate

specific ICT lessons. A few parents responding to the questionnaire felt that they were not well informed but the reports to parents are very informative; they give a clear picture of how well each child is doing as well as useful targets for improvement. The twice yearly opportunities to discuss pupils' progress are appreciated. The school follows up those parents not attending to ensure that they are involved in their child's learning. In addition, many teachers contact parents to discuss concerns and to celebrate good achievement. Parents appreciate the efforts made and feel able to approach the school should they need to. The weekly bulletin is very useful; it is both informative and celebratory.

41. The school works particularly hard at ensuring that all groups of parents are involved in the school. The recent international evening was very well attended. Curriculum workshops for Somali parents and other groups provide advice on how they can support their child in learning. Traveller and refugee families' needs are recognised and targeted support is provided. The home-school link worker provides additional support to individual pupils and their families and works closely with them.

42. Links with the wider community are well developed, especially through the Sports College. Many community groups make use of the sports hall out of school hours and pupils are very involved in local sports events. Many subjects use the resources of the community to enhance pupils' learning. Trips to the Tate Gallery for example have added considerably to pupils' art work, visitors into school, such as authors and poets, also add an extra dimension to the curriculum. One particularly innovative activity was the pupils' visit to Arsenal Football Club, which was arranged by the French department. Pupils work in class showed that they had benefited in many ways from the trip.

43. Sports College status has enabled the school to develop extensive links with other groups in the community. Local middle schools report that the work done with them in providing professional development for their teachers has been very beneficial and improved teachers' skills. Links with these schools are very good. Year 10 girls visit the middle schools, supporting and leading PE lessons as part of their Junior Sports Leader Award. This brings benefits to both the younger and older pupils, who spoke about the increased confidence and self-esteem they gained as a result. The school recognises that more opportunities for community links exist and have identified particular needs amongst girls and families who are not English speakers. A number of activities have been introduced as a result. The YWCA works with the college to provide opportunities for girls to discuss health concerns and runs an exercise session for them in the fitness suite. These initiatives are aimed at raising girls' self-esteem and confidence; particularly important as they are in a minority in the school. Harrow College uses the school's facilities for its Family Learning Group, aimed at helping parents to improve their English language skills so that they are not a barrier to parents' involvement in their child's learning. Parents attending the group spoke with obvious enjoyment and appreciation of the lessons. The school also works closely with the athletics link officer to promote pupils' participation in a variety of sports clubs within the community.

44. Good links with a range of local businesses provide pupils with a well-organised work experience programme. Employees of a local bank regularly come into the school to mentor pupils. In discussion, a bank representative made clear that the support offered is tailored to the child and is focussed on raising achievement.

45. Links with other schools and colleges are mutually beneficial; they are clearly managed to promote pupils' learning and to provide a supportive transition for those joining Harrow High or leaving to go to college. However, curriculum links with Harrow College are few at present, though there is some support for the vocational courses. A very effective partnership with the independent Harrow School is established; pupils from Harrow High use the playing fields of Harrow School and the two schools have developed a joint bid for the creation of an athletics track to benefit both schools and the wider community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good throughout the school and governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The commitment, energy and vision of the headteacher to inspire pupils and all staff to aim high and to do their best.
- Team working is a significant strength that enables the school to respond effectively to changing needs.
- The school uses self-evaluation very successfully to monitor and improve performance at all levels.
- Performance management and induction procedures for new teachers and in-service training for all staff are very well organised and effective.
- Very clear links are established between the school development plan and departmental and year group action plans.
- Some variation exists in the quality of departmental management; it is good in most subjects, very good in English, science, art and PE, but ineffective in history.
- Financial planning is robust and effective.
- The governing body has a clear perception of the school's strengths and weaknesses but has yet to develop fully its role as a critical friend of the school.

Commentary

46. The overall quality of leadership is very good throughout the school. In a relatively short time the school has undergone highly significant changes in almost all aspects of its life because of the commitment of the headteacher, governors and other key staff. Although there are still important areas to develop, including improvements to pupils' attainment, the headteacher has demonstrated excellent leadership. There is a very clear vision of what Harrow High School seeks to achieve and the skill, energy and determination to make it happen. The headteacher maintains a high profile around the school and is very approachable to pupils, parents and staff. One of the school's significant strengths is the effectiveness of the strong teams that have been created to lead and manage important aspects. Decision making is quick and efficient, whilst also fully consultative. Team working is central to the school's ethos and many opportunities are available for staff, at all levels, to gain management and leadership experience. The senior leadership team is flexibly managed so that responsibilities can be modified to reflect changes in the school's priorities. Leadership and management of the Sports College are very good. The imaginative and energetic approach used has ensured that all pupils and the community benefit. The director has worked vigorously to enable all pupils to gain from the facilities, ideas and approaches to teaching and learning that the Sports College has to offer. A great deal has been achieved in recent years and the school is well aware of what else has to be improved.

47. The major vehicle for change and improvement is the implementation of the self-evaluation programme. Through this the headteacher, senior managers and governors rigorously examine all aspects of the school; they identify areas of concern and then take steps to improve them. The high quality school improvement plan is based firmly on the results of self-evaluation and departmental improvement plans are similarly formed. Recent self-evaluation made clear which aspects of pupils' attainment should be improved first, the need for greater community involvement, and that raising pupils' aspirations was essential to success. Very significant progress in all these areas has been achieved and forms the basis for the school's future developments. Other major issues that have been successfully tackled are: raising staff morale and improving the recruitment and retention of teachers; changing the perception of the school by parents; establishing a productive and positive climate for learning; promoting inclusion in all aspects of school life.

48. Governance is good overall and the governing body serves the school well. Governors are committed to the school's continued development and there is a well-organised focus-group structure that ensures that these developments are closely monitored. Governors are confident

about fulfilling their role and all governors with key responsibilities are able to give time to visit the school regularly. Governors are kept well informed of improvements and areas for development and have played a full part in formulating the school improvement plan. They are, however, less confident in their role as a critical friend and do not always provide sufficient challenge, for example in making certain that the school's practice for collective worship meets statutory requirements. Good provision is made for collective worship on three days a week but class-based collective worship on the remaining days often does not take place and so fails to meet statutory requirements. Although this lapse does not have a significant impact on pupils' achievement it is a missed opportunity for their personal development.

49. Very good management is found at all levels in the school. Financial management of the school is robust and systems work well so that decisions about school priorities are based on secure financial information; 'best value' principles are firmly applied. A planned surplus for next year is earmarked for building repair and improvement. The school is very effective and creative in procuring additional funding for improvement initiatives, for example, securing monies from the Children's Fund for two home-school liaison workers. An increase in the special educational needs budget for next year will enable the SSC to be permanently staffed. The budget for pupils with English as an additional language is spent and used very effectively on staffing.

50. The directors of study and heads of departments are mostly efficient and effective, though some inconsistencies remain. Management is especially strong in science, art, English as an additional language (EAL), ICT, physical education, and religious education and good in other subjects, but it is unsatisfactory in history. Provision for special educational needs and pupils with EAL are both effectively managed and work in these areas forms a regular part of senior leadership team meetings. The effective use of performance data is a feature of most departments but not all. The directors of study efficiently monitor the progress of pupils and co-ordinate the variety of support available to them. They are an integral part of the very good communications within the school.

51. Performance management is very good; records are thorough and policies for managing complaints from parents or pupils, and weaknesses in teaching are clear. The development of teaching and learning is a central focus of provision that enriches and broadens the repertoire of teachers' skills and effectiveness. A comprehensive programme of in-service training for all staff successfully dovetails the needs of the school with those of individuals. The commitment to the continuing professional development of staff is evident and a well-devised programme is linked to performance management and to departmental and whole-school improvement. Newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school receive an exceptionally well-organised and taught induction programme which is very successful in helping staff to settle into the school. The school has applied for accreditation as a Training School and with its successful record of support and mentoring for overseas trained teachers, initial teacher training and the graduate training programme, it is well placed to carry out this function. In the last year alone, for example, three graduate teachers in the science department successfully completed their training.

52. The evident drive for improvement creates a climate which encourages teachers to raise their own expectations and contribute to the development of others. Those supporting newly qualified teachers and teachers in training enhance their own management skills while providing good support and professional advice to beginners. The generally high level of leadership and management greatly supports the school in translating its aspirations into practice.

Aids and barriers to raising achievement

The school has identified many barriers that have made it difficult to raise pupils' achievement in the past. Difficulties that remain are:

- The low attainment on entry of most of its pupils.
- Weaknesses in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- The high proportion of pupils who do not have English as their first language.

- Poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils, including those excluded from other schools.
- Difficulty in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified teachers, which adversely affects the quality of teaching and learning.

53. The school has established many well-planned strategies to overcome these barriers to raising standards. Examples of successful initiatives include: the sports coach mentor programme for Year 8, the student support centre for those at greatest risk of exclusion, and the various programmes for providing enrichment outside of the school day. Pupils' needs are thoroughly assessed on entry to the school so that they can be given individually targeted support. Achieving Sports College status has been instrumental in raising pupils' self-esteem and expectations of success. Following an innovative recruitment plan, the school has been successful in filling the majority of vacancies to a point where practically all departments are fully staffed. Regular staff training and career development have proved successful in retaining teachers and raising the quality of teaching overall. A major focus for teaching has been training to raise the literacy levels of pupils. The school is in a good position to sustain further improvements in the future.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,127,984
Total expenditure	2,960,833
Expenditure per pupil	4,149

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	261,375
Balance carried forward to the next	428,526

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of English in Years 10 and 11 is consistently good and as a result, pupils achieve well by the end of Year 11.
- Leadership and management of the English department are very good.
- The arrangements for the induction of newly arrived pupils, who are at the early stages of learning English, are very good. This contributes very well to these pupils' learning.
- In Years 8 and 9, work is not always matched well to the needs of some individual learners.
- Disruptive behaviour by a minority of pupils in Years 8 and 9 is not managed effectively enough.

Commentary

54. Pupils' results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are in line with those of similar schools, though they are below the national average. Standards are also below average in the present Years 8 and 9. However, considering pupils' low levels of attainment on entry to the school their achievement is satisfactory. In Year 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in both English language and literature, though they remain below average for their age. Staffing difficulties in recent years have affected pupils' attainment and the department is working determinedly to improve standards. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades improved slightly in 2003. Staffing is now more stable and pupils receive consistent support in their course work, especially through the English club for Year 11. Pupils of Indian backgrounds and black Caribbean girls achieve higher than black Caribbean boys, though the difference is not great. In general, boys' and girls' performance is similar.

55. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 8 and 9 and in most lessons pupils learn effectively. Teachers have good subject knowledge but the needs of individual pupils are not always met effectively. In a small number of lessons, particularly in Year 8, disruptive behaviour by a significant minority of pupils has an adverse effect on pupils' learning. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11 and contribute well to the achievement of the pupils in these year groups. Pupils respond to challenging expectations, good pace and the effective use of resources. This combination was particularly evident in a Year 11 poetry session where pupils demonstrated very good analytical skills and presented their views confidently and eloquently. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported very well in developing their understanding, for example, in the critical appreciation of poems in Year 11. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and staff guide their pupils well in producing good quality work. As a result, pupils have very good attitudes to learning.

56. The leadership and management of the English department are very good. The new head of department has a very clear understanding of strengths and areas for development and has ensured that the department works effectively as a team. Staff are committed to the welfare of pupils and their academic improvement. The department is successfully implementing the Key Stage 3 Strategy to improve standards and a thorough assessment system enables teachers to set challenging targets for pupils.

57. The department of English as an additional language (EAL) works very closely with the English department. Close collaboration in planning and joint teaching contribute well to the

provision for pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. Pupils new to English, for example refugee children, are gradually integrated into lessons and are well supported by bilingual teaching assistants.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. A large minority of pupils enter the school with low standards of literacy and as a result of the effective support they receive they make satisfactory progress in developing their literacy skills. Professional development of teachers from all subjects has enabled the school to make a concerted approach to literacy development. Most departments have a strategy for extending subject specific vocabulary to support pupils' learning. In science, for example, pupils' achievement is improved by the strategies for developing language and study skills. In a PSHCE lesson, pupils were given an extensive opportunity to improve reading whilst learning about fair trade. Most other departments focus mainly on developing vocabularies but opportunities for improving pupils' speaking and writing skills are more limited and should be improved.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The school offers French and Spanish to pupils in Years 8 and 9. Pupils start to study Spanish as beginners in Year 8. They come to the school with a range of experiences in French from their middle schools. Those pupils who opt for a modern foreign language course in Years 10 and 11 choose one of these two languages to study.

FRENCH

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- Some classes are not effectively organised and so behaviour deteriorates and learning is unsatisfactory.
- Staff are supportive of each other and work well as a team.
- Difficulties in securing qualified, permanent staff has hampered pupils' achievement in some classes.
- Pupils are not always informed fully about their progress.

Commentary

59. In 2003, standards at the end of Year 9 were just below the national average, confirming an improving trend. Boys performed better than girls, which is contrary to the national picture. Considering pupils' low attainment on entry their achievement is satisfactory overall. In the current Year 9, pupils understand short dialogues, they can read short texts and write simple sentences with support. However, they cannot produce extended writing or use a variety of tenses and their pronunciation is approximate. Pupils lack confidence in speaking; boys are less accurate than girls but are more willing to try. Standards remain below the average.

60. Results at GCSE in 2003 were below the national average, with girls performing slightly better than boys. However, achievement is satisfactory and standards are improving, with the present Year 11 broadly in line with the national average. The improvement has been supported by better staffing over the last two years and increased motivation from pupils who now choose to study French. Pupils can read longer texts, and better understand dialogues. They are beginning to write complex sentences and extended paragraphs. No significant differences in achievement are evident between ethnic groups. In all years, pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language achieve in line with their capabilities. Pupils are actively encouraged to take examinations in their mother tongue and the success rate is high.

61. Teaching and learning are largely satisfactory and occasionally good. In the most effective lessons, objectives are shared with pupils and language learning is supported with visuals. A good variety of tasks and activities includes opportunities for pupils to learn independently. In these lessons pupils respond well and learning is good. In a small number of lessons, particularly in Years 8 and 9, work is not always sufficiently organised and controlled, behaviour then deteriorates and learning is less effective.

SPANISH

Provision in Spanish is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of staff are native speakers and give pupils good models of language to imitate.
- Information and communication technology is increasingly used to support learning effectively.
- Standards have been well below average but are improving slightly.
- Pupils do not always know what levels they are working at or how to improve their work.

Commentary

62. In 2003, standards in Year 9 were well below average, with virtually no difference between the performance of boys and girls. Results have improved slightly in the past two years, largely due to greater stability in staffing, but standards remain below average. Pupils can read short texts and understand simple dialogues, write short sentences and give short responses to what they see or hear. They cannot produce extended pieces of writing or refer to any time frame other than the present. However, pupils do not start to study Spanish until Year 8 and so in the time available their achievement is satisfactory.

63. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, pupils' results were well below average, with boys performing better than girls. However, in common with French, results are improving because of better staffing and standards of work seen during the inspection were broadly in line with those found nationally. Pupils can understand longer texts and dialogues, they can take part in prepared conversations and produce extended pieces of writing using some complex sentences. Given the late start to the study of the subject, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language achieve as well as expected given their prior attainment. There are no significant differences in achievement between the various ethnic groups.

64. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some that is good. In Year 10, for example, clear objectives were shared with pupils at the start of the lesson and then reviewed at the end so that learning was reinforced. Language is well supported by visual examples and effective use is made of information and communication technology. These approaches engage pupils' interest and involvement, and their learning is more secure as a result. Sometimes teachers do not question pupils sufficiently to test their understanding and when marking they do not often link their comments to assessment demands. Consequently, pupils do not always know what levels they are working at and what specific aspects of their work they should improve.

Leadership and Management of Modern Foreign Languages

65. Leadership and management are good and a mutually supportive team has been created out of a difficult set of circumstances. Assessment procedures are secure, with good tracking of pupils' performance and moderation of their work. Extensive support is given to less experienced members of staff and there is much informal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. The enthusiasm and expertise of staff at all levels are quickly recognised and developed, for example, a new colleague is leading the integration of information and communication technology into the department's work. The impact of the Sports College is evident in the work of the department. Pupils have visited Arsenal FC to help improve their French, and all pupils studying a language in

Years 10 and 11 produce a piece of written coursework about health, diet and personal fitness. The head of department, an advanced skills teacher, keeps the department focussed on improving teaching and learning. This expertise has been extended to other departments and beyond the school to partner middle schools.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment data is well used to direct planning and strategies for raising standards.
- Teachers work well as a team and are committed to improving standards and pupils' achievement.
- Teaching is not always matched to pupils' needs
- The national strategy for mathematics is not fully applied in all Year 8 and 9 classes.

Commentary

66. At the end of Year 9 the standards were below the national average in 2003, but were above the average performance of similar schools, with some pupils reaching high levels. The GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national average, a sharp fall from the results of 2002, though the numbers attaining the highest grade A* was above the national average. Boys performed better than girls in the tests and examinations. However, considering pupils starting points on entry to the school, their achievement is satisfactory at both key stages.

67. The standard of work seen in Years 8 and 9 was below national expectations though there are examples of high level work, particularly in Year 9, where the work overall is much closer to national expectations. Pupils are mostly competent with place values, fractions, percentages, and negative numbers. They understand multiples, can calculate simple probabilities and find patterns in sequences. Algebra develops more quickly in Year 9, in solving simultaneous equations and in deriving expressions to describe number patterns. Work on Pythagoras' Theorem, for example, was above average. Pupils work competently on shapes, space and angles, symmetry and areas and volumes, but these skills are not sufficiently developed by the end of the key stage.

68. In the current Years 10 and 11, standards of pupils work vary but are below average overall. A few pupils, who took GCSE a year early in Year 10, are now studying GCSE statistics where they are reaching above average levels. In contrast, a significant minority of pupils are working at levels well below average. Pupils repeat and consolidate work from the previous key stage and as a consequence their competence and confidence improves. However, development of the scope and application of mathematics is limited, particularly for pupils in the lower sets, and insufficient emphasis is placed on using and applying mathematics in practical and everyday situations. In all years, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Girls' performance is below that of boys' in national tests at age 14, though this difference narrows by the end of Year 11. In class, boys tend to dominate discussion but otherwise there is no obvious difference in performance.

69. Teaching is satisfactory overall and has a number of good features. Assessment tests are well used to monitor pupils' progress and medium and long-term targets are set. Marking and direct feedback to pupils is often not so effective. Most pupils are co-operative in class and their willingness and motivation, encouraged by the positive ethos of the subject, enhances their learning. In some lessons, use of computers promotes high achievement because it is well managed and matched to pupils' competence. In a significant minority of lessons pupils' learning is hampered by the high level of noise. Frequent lateness by some pupils also disrupts learning and slows progress.

70. Teachers demonstrate their good knowledge of the subject in their confident handling of pupils' questions. Explanations are clear and pupils at all levels are suitably challenged. Broad planning based on the schemes of work is good. In most lessons, learning objectives are shared with the class, which establishes a goal for the pupils and a basis for review at the end of the lesson. Occasionally, lessons are not as effective as they could be. In these lessons, work is not timed appropriately so the objectives are not reached. Prolonged periods of completing worksheets or exercises reduce pupils' attentiveness and slow the pace of learning. Failure to match tasks to suit each student's needs means that some pupils are not sufficiently challenged whilst others struggle.

71. The department is soundly managed and good leadership in some areas, for example, monitoring of teaching, has led to improvement. Staffing difficulties in recent years have made it difficult to establish a common approach to teaching and learning but a stable team has now been established. A clear commitment to raising standards is evident and the department has adopted the national strategy for Key Stage 3 mathematics. However, inconsistent implementation undermines its effectiveness.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Standards are below average overall. Though the school has adopted the national strategy, skills in numeracy are not regularly practised. Some departments have incorporated mathematics into their schemes of work. In ICT pupils use spreadsheets and data logging, in PE pupils measure fitness levels, and in modern languages they handle data, produce graphs and carry out currency conversions. In other subjects, opportunities for developing pupils' numeracy skills are missed.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers and the good relationships they develop with their pupils have a positive impact on the standards achieved.
- Very effective leadership and management have established a strong team of teaching and technical staff.
- Good quality teaching ensures that pupils of all abilities learn effectively in most lessons. However, the relative inexperience of some staff means that consistency in the quality of teaching across all groups has not been fully established.
- The provision the department makes for pupils with language difficulties ensures that they can take full part in science lessons.
- The department has good systems to record and track pupils' attainment but these are not sufficiently shared with pupils to help them improve.

Commentary

73. The standards that pupils achieve in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are below average and have been so for the last three years. However, their results compare well with those of pupils in similar schools and for many represent good progress from their earlier attainment as measured in the tests at the end of Year 6. Analysis of the 2003 GCSE results show a small proportion of pupils for whom achievement is good or even very good. Several pupils whose attainment at middle school was average, for example, gained the higher grades A or B at GCSE. For the majority of pupils, though standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are still below national averages, their results represent at least satisfactory achievement when their low attainment on entry is taken into account. Often achievement is good or even very good for pupils whose first language is not English.

74. Overall the quality of teaching and pupils' learning is good. Teachers have good command of their subject and understand the diverse needs of the pupils. Effective planning assists pupils' good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding in science. A large majority of pupils in the school have weak language and numeracy skills and teachers pay particular attention to developing these skills. They ensure that those pupils with identified language difficulties are well supported so that they can achieve in line with their peers. The significant minority of pupils who have challenging behaviour are generally well managed and are not allowed to disrupt the learning of others. However, the teaching staff have all been appointed in the last two years and, apart from the head of department, are still inexperienced. Consequently, consistency in the quality of teaching across all year groups is not yet fully secure. Occasionally, when teaching fails to manage pupils effectively, pupils' learning suffers. Marking is conscientious, but there are too few evaluative comments on pupils' work to help them know which National Curriculum level or GCSE grade they are working at, or what they need to do to improve. However, there are effective systems to track pupils' attainment as they move through the school. In GCSE coursework, for example, pupils are encouraged to re-draft work in the light of comments made by their teacher in order to improve their marks.

75. The head of department was appointed in September 2002 and since then has successfully brought together teachers, teaching assistants and technical staff to form a very effective team. A very clear vision for departmental improvement is shared by all and very effective management ensures that the department runs smoothly. Many pupils commented that this was a significant reason for them enjoying their work in science. The science curriculum fully reflects the recommended national strategies and staff are now working to extend provision for higher attaining pupils. The new vocational science qualification is being considered as a way of raising achievement and attainment for all pupils. The changes that have taken place in the last twelve months have been far reaching. Many good features have recently been introduced and the impact of these on the standards which pupils attain is just beginning to be realised.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communications technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising.
- Co-ordination and monitoring of ICT across the curriculum are good.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning.
- More focus is needed on supporting pupils to gain an understanding of how they can improve.
- Year 9 do not have timetabled lessons in ICT but it is planned to remedy this next year.

Commentary

76. This is an improving department, though not yet fully effective in all aspects. Standards are rising in both key stages as a result of the recent investment in provision. Most pupils begin in Year 8 with a low level of skills, but these are raised to national standards by the end of Year 9 and at least maintained until pupils leave at the end of Year 11. Good achievement is made by pupils of all abilities and their coursework shows a secure understanding of ICT applications.

77. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, though variable. Relationships with pupils are very good and in the best lessons teaching provides pupils with well-timed challenges matched to their capabilities and they make good progress as a result. Some pupils make good use of the school's Internet and other curriculum materials to aid their learning. In a minority of lessons the resources chosen do not always match pupils' needs and the work given does not provide enough challenge for those who are more skilled. Pupils generally work well together though a minority have a casual attitude and are often late to lessons. Teaching provides good support for individual pupils and their work is accurately assessed against examination criteria. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own progress but are not always given enough information about their strengths and

weaknesses in the subject to do this effectively. Teachers are committed to helping pupils to improve their skills and provide much additional support and access to ICT outside of lesson times.

78. A mixture of academic and vocational courses has recently been introduced. Skills in ICT are also developed effectively through strong links with other curriculum areas. The school has adopted the National Strategy for ICT in Years 8 and 9 but is at an early stage in its implementation and continuity in pupils' learning is not yet secure. The current Year 9 does not have timetabled lessons in ICT and provision for them is unsatisfactory. The school is aware of this deficiency and has planned rational changes to the timetable for next year to ensure that all pupils receive their full entitlement.

79. Leadership and management of the subject are good with a shared vision between staff and the senior leadership team. The department has completed a very thorough evaluation of its provision and has identified the areas for development. The subject improvement plan contains suitable targets specific to raising standards. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall but some rooms are cramped, with poor ventilation. The school has already made significant investment in ICT and further improvements are planned so that ICT provides even greater support to the school's drive for improvement.

ICT across the curriculum

80. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to use ICT in mathematics, PE and science. In most other subjects it is used soundly but scope for improvement remains. Staff are increasingly gaining confidence in using ICT in their teaching and the co-ordination and monitoring of ICT use are good. Improvements to provision are detailed in a systematic development plan and are designed to ensure full coverage across the range of ICT skills.

HUMANITIES

Geography, history and religious education were the main focus of the inspection, but work in sociology was also sampled.

81. **Sociology** is offered as an option in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are good with a variety of learning resources used effectively to engage pupils' interests. Pupils enjoy the subject and demonstrate sensitivity to controversial issues. Standards are in line with national expectations. In the one lesson seen during inspection, Year 11 pupils learned well in response to the good teaching, which challenged them to think about issues of population management.

GEOGRAPHY

Provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The impact of the department's strong leadership is undermined by a shortage of suitably qualified staff.
- Use of a wide range of geographical learning resources.
- Assessment is effectively used to track pupil progress.
- Effective use of ICT for geographical research.
- More able pupils do not always achieve high enough standards.
- Pupils' geographical skills, especially map work and numeracy, are not sufficiently developed.

Commentary

82. Standards are below average at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. However, there has been an upward trend over the past four years. In the 2002 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades, A*/A, was significantly above the national average, though the

results overall fell. Standards in lessons and in pupils' work vary from average and below in Year 8 to above average in Year 10, which shows that pupils make good progress as they move through the school. In Years 8 and 9 pupils' achievement is satisfactory and in Years 10 and 11 it is good. Occasionally, opportunities for more able pupils to achieve at higher levels are provided but often all pupils complete the same work regardless of ability.

83. Teaching overall is satisfactory but it is stronger with the older examination classes than those lower down the school where teachers are less experienced. Very effective teaching was seen in Year 11 for example, when teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject enabled them to personalise issues of fair trade and so motivated pupils to learn. In a few lessons, teaching was less effective where teacher input dominated with little opportunity for pupils to use their initiative or work independently. Too much stress on content rather than developing specific geographical concepts or practical skills slowed pupils' progress. Marking is up to date and there is informative feedback with clear directions to help pupils improve their work. Separate assessment portfolios are used to help pupils track their academic progress.

84. Learning is satisfactory for most pupils and occasionally, where teacher expectations are high, more able pupils learn well. Pupils show good geographical understanding in lessons, and appreciate a wide range of physical and human geography interactions such as, in Year 10, the effects of hurricanes. In discussions, most pupils are confident in oral work and contribute well showing considerable geographical knowledge. A pupil in Year 8, for example, gave a very clear description of major features of Barcelona. Older pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good with pupils keen to learn and respond well to the demands made on them. Pupils listen attentively and concentrate for extended periods of time. Most pupils enjoy the subject and value its contribution to their knowledge of the world and the environment. However, younger pupils find sustained concentration a challenge.

85. The head of department is a strong leader with a clear vision for the department, though the impact of the very good management is weakened by the high level of staff turnover and the inexperience of some staff. Priorities for developing the subject are fully recognised but dealing with staffing problems leaves little time for realising planned improvements and results in an overdependence on this key member of staff for implementing change.

History

Provision in history is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory at both key stages.
- Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. A permanent head of department has just been appointed but is not yet in place.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9, though they are better in Years 10 and 11.
- Development of literacy and historical skills is not systematically planned.
- Assessment data on each pupil is not used effectively to guide teaching and learning and marking of pupils' work is inconsistent.
- Accommodation for the department is good.

Commentary

86. By the end of Year 9, standards in history are below national standards and pupils' progress is slower than it should be. In the majority of lessons teachers' expectations are too low. Pupils' written work is disorganised because it is completed on loose sheets of paper or resource sheets, as well as exercise books. Work begun in lessons is often unfinished and pupils are unclear about what they are expected to do. They are provided with tasks that are not planned for their individual needs. Overall achievement is unsatisfactory.

87. In the 2003 GCSE examinations results were well below national standards and for many pupils history was their lowest GCSE grade. Pupils produce good coursework but their marks in the two examined papers were significantly lower. This indicates that pupils' knowledge of the content of the course is insecure. Pupils generally gained lower grades than those predicted by their teacher. Achievement over time is unsatisfactory.

88. Pupil behaviour varies in lessons. In lessons where rules for the conduct of learning are well established, pupils behave well and co-operate with their teachers. In other lessons pupils call out; they do not listen to their teacher or show respect for the ideas of other pupils. In the most successful lessons, there are good relationships between the teacher and pupils and praise is given to recognise good contributions to discussions.

89. In the majority of lessons for Years 8 and 9 teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Schemes of work provide inadequate support to guide lesson planning for inexperienced teachers and so lessons lack a clear structure. Teachers are uncertain about what pupils should learn in individual lessons and so use inappropriate tasks which make too great or too few demands on pupils. In a lesson on the Battle of the Somme, for example, the resources chosen were very difficult for pupils to use. There were a large number of readings, some of which contained language not understood by the pupils. A more effective lesson on Elizabeth I engaged pupils by considering her age in different portraits. Pupils were able to judge whether the painting was stylised or realistic. They recognised that the purpose of the paintings was to reflect her power. Lessons are often not well timed to provide challenge in learning and pupils are given too much time to complete tasks. As a result they lose motivation, start to misbehave and fail to finish work set. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning improves in response to the demands of GCSE and are satisfactory overall. By the end of Year 11 pupils are beginning to analyse sources effectively. A group of Year 10 pupils used a range of books to consider the success of the Munich Putsch. Most were able to identify factors contributing to an argument for and against its success.

90. Pupils' progress is monitored by regular assessments. Teachers have a wealth of information about the individual needs of all pupils provided by the school but do not use it effectively to plan lessons and to provide work at the right level. Usually, all pupils in a class undertake the same work irrespective of their reading skills and understanding of English. Teaching is occasionally aimed at helping pupils to improve their writing skills and their use of English but these opportunities tend to be unplanned and unsystematic. There is little coherent use of ICT to support and enrich learning. Pupils' work is marked regularly but written comments by teachers are rare. There is little guidance for pupils on how to improve the quality of their work. Standards are not always clearly stated and pupils are left uncertain about the progress they are making. Support staff are used effectively in lessons to improve pupil behaviour and help targeted pupils to understand their work.

91. Curriculum planning is underdeveloped and there is no systematic approach to the teaching of citizenship or the development of literacy within history. The department does not have an agreed approach to correcting spelling and grammar or how pupils' progress between assessments is to be recorded. The teaching rooms are good and equipped with a reasonable range of resources for pupils to use.

92. Leadership and management of history are unsatisfactory. The department has been without a permanent head of department for some time. A new head of department has just been appointed but is not yet in post. A sound development plan for the department has been prepared and appropriate priorities identified, although little has been done yet towards achieving them.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average, apart from in the full GCSE course.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership is very good; the subject is well managed.

Commentary

93. Results were above average in the full GCSE course in 2003, with more than two thirds of pupils achieving a grade C or above. The large majority of Year 11 pupils took the short course and their results were below average overall, as were those of Year 10 pupils who took the short course. In the current Year 11, of those taking the full GCSE course, standards are at least average and good results seem likely again. These pupils are achieving well, as are those in Year 10, who have started the GCSE short course.

94. In Years 8 and 9 pupils' achievement is satisfactory, though the standard of their written work remains below average over the two years. Too many produce skimpy work, although when homework requires more of them they can produce extended written pieces, often using computers. They are able to express thoughtful ideas of their own or to explain the position of their faith community. One of the reasons why achievement in Years 8 and 9 is not better is that a significant number of pupils do not apply themselves enough to work. A minority reduce the effectiveness of lessons by inattentiveness and off-task chatter. The response of pupils in Years 10 and 11, however, is better, and more is achieved as a result.

95. There is good teaching and learning in all year groups. The department is staffed by a knowledgeable head of religious education and an overseas trained teacher. Lessons are well planned and resources are very well used. Pupils use ICT for homework and they are directed to relevant websites but ICT is not used extensively in lessons. Very good use is made of visitors to the school. During the inspection, a youth worker employed by local churches took lessons on sex and marriage with Year 9, presenting Christian teachings very effectively and sensitively, and gaining a positive response from the pupils. Pupils of different religions can be an invaluable resource, such as the Year 8 boy and girl who volunteered to demonstrate the words and actions used in Muslim prayers. Lessons are appropriate for those of all faiths and none. Some of the pupils who took the full GCSE course in 2003 chose to do the syllabus on Islam. In many of the written activities, pupils are encouraged to express their own viewpoint. Tasks are often differentiated according to ability, but more should be done to support pupils from different language backgrounds and those with special needs.

96. The management of religious education is good; the subject is very well led. The head of department has a very clear vision for the subject and is determined to make it relevant to the lives of the pupils. The contribution to their spiritual and moral development is, in many ways, more significant than the examination results achieved. The use of external agencies, such as the local youth worker, contributes strongly to this. Until recently there were problems securing permanent experienced staff and a succession of unqualified teachers taught religious education. However, all staff have been well supported and monitored, with opportunities to see the experienced head of department modelling good practice. The wealth of data on pupils' attainment is used effectively to set targets based on the locally agreed syllabus. However, one 50 minute lesson per week is hardly enough to do justice to the subject. This affects standards because the short time in lessons means that not enough quality writing takes place.

97. The department makes a good contribution to extra-curricular activities, including charity fund-raising. The lively Christian Union surprisingly attracts pupils of several different faiths. Good

support comes from the local Christian youth organisation, which also arranges events for pupils outside school hours.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Computers are not used enough, particularly for computer aided design and manufacture.
- Teacher assessments in Years 8 and 9 are not sufficiently rigorous and analysis of assessment outcomes for both key stages needs improvement.
- No vocational courses are available for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

98. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments show that pupils' overall standards are below the national average. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, results were below the national average. A lack of experienced technology teachers has contributed to the low standards achieved in the past.

99. Scrutiny of pupils' work and lesson observation indicates that in the current Year 9, standards are above the national average and pupils are making good progress. Teaching provides planned opportunities for pupils to reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum. Pupils produce articles of good quality; they express their ideas well and communicate their designs clearly. However, they do not make sufficient use of computer aided design and manufacture for project work.

100. By the end of Year 11 pupils' standards are above average. They make good progress and their achievement is good. Pupils are capable of high quality work, for example, in practical project work and the detailed and very well presented project folders for textiles. Where pupils use ICT, their quality of coursework improves but there is not enough use of computers particularly computer aided design and manufacture. Teaching specifically focuses pupils on the requirements of the GCSE examination and as a result they understand what they need to do and are helped to reach higher grades.

101. Teaching and learning are good. In lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engages pupils and relationships are good. Higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged. Teaching demonstrates the very good subject knowledge and ensures that key learning points are systematically reinforced. A good range of activities ensures that all pupils are actively involved in their learning. New knowledge is introduced as it is needed so that pupils can immediately apply it to develop their understanding. Lesson objectives are effectively shared with pupils so the focus of the lesson is clear. The department places an emphasis on speaking and listening and writing skills. Numeracy is developed through calculations when measuring, length, weight and time. Teachers work well with pupils who have special educational needs and they make good progress as a result. Sports college themes influence project planning and include healthy eating, making a sports bag and designing trophies. Teachers' high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour ensure that a good learning environment is established.

102. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers provide encouraging and motivating comments. In Year 11 the good quality marking provides a commentary that shows pupils how to improve. Assessment of pupils' attainment is good and results are used effectively in planning and teaching to raise standards. The department is not making sufficient use of value added information to analyse pupil progress.

103. The head of department provides good leadership and manages design and technology very well. The technicians make a good contribution to the work of the department and support

teachers very well. Priorities identified for further improvement include a more rigorous approach to assessment, better analysis of outcomes, and extending the curriculum on offer, which at present does not include any vocational course for Years 10 and 11.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were the main focus of the inspection, but work in dance, drama and media studies was also sampled.

104. **Dance** is part of the curriculum for all year groups and has been introduced as a GCSE course for Years 10 and 11. Standards in the two lessons seen during the inspection were at the national average and pupils' achievement was good. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils new to dance showed good creativity in developing a sequence based on a sports theme. Good management of pupils' behaviour and skilled teaching ensured that all pupils were actively engaged in the lesson. The subject is well led and managed by the Sports College, which also provides additional tuition by a dance professional after school. Last summer over two hundred and fifty pupils, of all ages and from a range of schools and colleges, took part in a dance residency organised by the Sports College.

105. Provision in **drama** is good. Pupils begin drama in Year 8 and continue to GCSE in Years 10 and 11. Standards in GCSE drama are below average overall, though the proportions gaining grades A and B are close to those found nationally. In the two lessons seen during the inspection teaching and pupils' learning were of good quality. In a Year 11 lesson, the creative approach used enabled pupils of all abilities, and some with limited English, to work together on improvisation; all achieved good presentations and developed their social skills.

106. The school now provides **media studies** as a GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. Early problems with staffing have been resolved and the department has a committed and enthusiastic staff. Media studies has become a popular option with pupils. In the two lessons seen during the inspection pupils responded confidently to the teaching. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils worked successfully in groups to create their own storyline based on the science fiction genre. Good teaching and classroom management ensured that all pupils contributed and achieved good outcomes as a result.

Art and design

Provision in art is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently very good and helps the pupils make good progress.
- The teachers make sure every individual gets the most they can out of art.
- Pupils are encouraged to use the richness of the cultural backgrounds of one another in their work.
- Relationships are excellent and contribute towards the very good behaviour in art.

Commentary

107. GCSE results are slightly below national averages but have been slowly rising year on year. Pupils arrive in school with a very wide range of art skills. Considerable numbers of pupils state they have had very little or no experience of art in Year 7. Standards on entry in Year 8 are low. However, the consistently good teaching helps pupils make good steady progress so by the time they reach the end of Year 9 they achieve well. This progress continues strongly through the GCSE course and pupils' examination results represent very good achievement. Pupils produce a wide range of lively and attractive work in a good variety of media. Some pupils achieve particularly well, for example, a Year 11 student newly arrived from abroad speaking no English achieved a pass in art at GCSE.

108. Teaching is very good. A very important characteristic of the teaching is that its quality is so consistent. Whichever teacher the pupils have for art they know the same high expectations will apply and that they will have a rewarding experience. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are able to demonstrate techniques and ideas clearly. When teachers work with pupils individually they do this very well. The quality of the questions they ask to help pupils think and understand better are very perceptive. The advice they give is well chosen; they show pupils what they might do but never do it for them. This develops pupils' skills and working methods well so that they learn to use a range of media very competently. Relationships between pupils and teachers are extremely good and contribute to the motivation and interest of pupils in the subject. This means that the work pupils produce is completed to a good standard, with care and skill.

109. Another good feature of the department is the care taken to ensure all pupils are able to achieve including those who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Teachers do this by choosing tasks well and through good support. Teachers manage pupils well; they deal quietly and firmly with challenging pupils keeping them focused and interested. The well-ordered and interesting environment in all of the art rooms teaches pupils very good work habits so they work conscientiously and persistently.

110. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a focus on raising pupil achievement and constantly seeking improvement and developing the subject. Assessment and marking are effective and help pupils know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. The department is developing the expertise of a trainee graduate teacher extremely well and is ensuring the continued progress and success of the art teaching team. Visits and artists in residence add enormously to pupils' experience of art often increasing the cultural range of work pupils see.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress.
- The teacher in charge has good subject knowledge and effective lesson planning follows the school's teaching and learning strategy.
- Progress in Years 8 and 9 is hindered by shortage of time for music.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from specialist ICT teaching.
- Provision of ICT is insufficient in Years 8 and 9 and limited resources hinder development of ensemble work.

Commentary

111. Pupils enter the school in Year 8 with very limited knowledge and poor skills. By the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment, although improved, is still below average. The procedure for assessment is superficial and as a result the 2003 assessments were too generous. GCSE results last year were below the national average. However, in the current Year 11, those pupils opting for GCSE music have made good progress and standards are satisfactory. One outstanding composition by a Year 11 student was performed during the inspection and recorded examples demonstrated good use of ICT. Standards of work seen in peripatetic instrumental lessons were satisfactory. Pupils' work is assessed reliably against the examination criteria.

112. Teaching and learning are good in Year 10 and 11 but more uneven in Years 8 and 9 where they are satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, relationships between teacher and pupils are excellent, which promotes trust and confidence in the classroom. Pupils with special needs achieve as well as their peers and more able pupils are appropriately stretched. The lively pace of some lessons leads to all pupils gaining new knowledge and showing an understanding of their learning. Homework is used well to reinforce learning. Key words and displays in the classroom aid

learning and contribute to the literacy of the pupils. In one lesson, pupils were inspired by the teacher's demonstration of a piece of music and applauded her performance. They were encouraged to improve their own performances as a result. In a minority of lessons, especially in Years 8 and 9, teaching does not effectively manage pupils' behaviour and learning suffers as a consequence.

113. The music department is led soundly by the head of the arts faculty. Management by the music teacher in charge is good and visiting staff are organised productively. The very limited resources are well cared for and there are plans to increase these as funding permits. Accommodation is good. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 do not have access to ICT for music and ensemble work is limited by a lack of classroom instruments. Instrumental and vocal tuition are provided by visiting staff and by the music teacher. There are two rock school bands and the school has taken part in borough events such as the Guitar Festival. It is planned to form a choir.

114. The school has had difficulties in recruiting staff and the teacher now in post is working effectively to improve standards. Priorities are now to improve the level of resourcing for music, to ensure that Years 8 and 9 complete the programmes of study and to improve the provision for ICT.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strength and weaknesses

- The department capitalises on all the benefits of the school being a Sports College.
- The teaching has good strategies to engage pupils actively in their own learning.
- Every opportunity is taken to raise pupils' self-esteem.
- The Junior Sports Leader Award provides successful links with the community.
- The level of girls' participation in activities is underdeveloped in Years 10 and 11.

115. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C was well above the national average. Pupils' results in PE were much better than in their other subjects. Building on this success the department has a strategy to enter larger numbers in future and give all pupils an extra GCSE without having to opt against other subjects. By the end of Year 9 overall standards are in line with national expectations. Boys and girls of all ethnic groups and pupils with special educational needs show good achievement. Pupils know the key skills and features of a range of sports activities. They are developing the skill of analysing their own performance and that of others. By the end of Year 11 standards overall are at the levels expected nationally and pupils show good achievement. The department makes provision for talented pupils to reach even higher standards. Some girls in Year 11 show attitudes that depress their standards. Girls in the lower years of the school have more positive attitudes that clearly benefit from the ethos of a Sports College. At all ages some pupils reach high standards through their participation in the extensive range of clubs and teams that are available.

116. Teaching at all stages is very good. Lessons are well planned with a variety of activities to sustain pupils' interest. In games, separate girls' groups are created so that they can compete and succeed at their own level. A strength of the department is its focus on teaching styles which give pupils a greater role in their own learning. Pupils regularly lead small groups within a class on warm-up activities and skills practices. They are asked to assess their own performance and that of others. In dance lessons, where they offer other pupils suggestions for improvement, they increase awareness of their own performance. In some activities they have personal programmes and the responsibility for recording their own performance. Observation and discussions with pupils confirm the positive impact of this approach. This is most marked in the attitudes of some groups who were very challenging when they started at the school. Teachers' encouragement and relationships with the pupils enhance their successful approach and help newly appointed teachers establish themselves. The extensive use of information technology matches the interests of many pupils.

117. Leadership of the department is very good. The head of department has a clear vision for including all pupils and for raising standards. This reflects both the school's Sports College status and the national strategy for increased participation. The department takes every opportunity to celebrate pupils' successes. This is leading to improved attitudes and pupil self-esteem. The action taken on some of the barriers to the inclusion of girls is improving their level of participation. The Junior Sports Leader Award is an exemplary community link, which is giving the pupils confidence. The PE programme is enriched by the staff's extensive commitment to extra-curricular activities and by the use of outside specialists. The department's response to the stimulus of Sports College status is making a major contribution to the school's achievement of its aims.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

Provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well compared with the knowledge and skills with which they start Year 10.
- Standards are below average in Year 11 but are higher in Year 10 because pupils now study a different GCSE course which is better suited to their needs.
- Teaching is good overall. The good range of teaching methods and relationships with pupils promote learning well.
- The subject is led and managed effectively.

Commentary

118. Overall, standards in business education are below average by the end of Year 11. However, pupils achieve well given their prior attainment, knowledge, and skills, at the start of Year 10. The 2003 examination results show that a high proportion of pupils achieved a good pass in the GNVQ Intermediate course.

119. This year, the department is teaching different courses and the evidence from lessons shows a somewhat improved picture. In Year 11 standards in the GCSE business studies course are below average but pupils' achievements are broadly satisfactory. Standards are higher in Year 10, where pupils are following the Applied GCSE business studies course, and are close to average. Here, pupils make good progress and are achieving well. This is particularly noticeable in relation to their ability to apply what they have learnt and develop their understanding of how businesses work. This is due to the good teaching but also because the new GCSE course is matched well to pupils' needs.

120. Teaching is good overall and this promotes pupils' learning well. One of the strengths in teaching is the way teachers motivate and engage pupils. Their good relationships with pupils and a knowledgeable command of the subject all help to keep pupils focused on their work and interested. An important strength is the way teachers use a range of teaching methods that promote different ways of learning. For example, teachers often provide opportunities for pupils to work in groups, thus helping to develop their skills of tackling tasks together. Here the tasks are often interesting and challenge pupils to think and share ideas. But what makes teaching successful is that different techniques are used so that as well as working in groups, pupils work independently and as a whole class. The structured use of these different methods is the key: pupils have different ways to learn and this promotes their learning well.

121. There are some relative weaknesses in teaching. Questions are not always used to check pupils' understanding of a particular topic or extend their learning by asking more difficult questions of some but not others. For example, teachers tend to ask only some pupils in the class to respond: this means that in some classes a few pupils dominate discussions while others are passive.

122. Leadership and management are good overall. There is a clear vision for the subject and an appropriate focus on raising pupils' achievement. Good decisions have been made about the curriculum and new programmes of work have been developed to support the new GCSE course. The opportunity for pupils to visit businesses provides good experiences of the real world.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject knowledge and commitment of the teacher in charge is outstanding.
- Planning and schemes of work are very good.
- The links made with outside agencies are excellent.
- Pupils' involvement in various aspects of the running of the school is very good.
- The language level of some texts is difficult for some pupils.
- Pupils who have difficulty in maintaining extended discussion need more help.

Commentary

123. Standards of work are in line with expectations in most lessons. In some lessons the behaviour of a minority of pupils hindered discussion and progress. Planning and preparation for the citizenship curriculum is very good and is instrumental in raising standards. Pupils' knowledge and understanding, skills of enquiry, communication and participation, as well as responsible action, were all evident during the inspection. Pupils make steady progress throughout the school. They start in Year 8 with an underdeveloped attitude to their own learning and are strongly encouraged to show a greater interest in school life and to take an active part in the running of the school. There is a very active school council and sports council and plans are in place to form an arts council. Enrichment days focus on developing key skills. Achievement in all years is satisfactory and pupils' skills in discussion are systematically developed. In a Year 8 lesson on "Fair Trade", one boy commented, "We get food from countries which have no food", while another student queried why manufacturers could not share their profits with farmers.

124. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in most lessons and good in some. Clear objectives are given at the start of lessons and the three strands of the Programmes of Study are interrelated to aid pupils' learning. However, not all staff have the confidence and expertise necessary to cover all aspects of the programme successfully or to judge the appropriate level of work for all pupils. In Years 8 and 9, some pupils had difficulty in reading the material needed for the activities set. Very strong links have been made with community groups, the members of whom make a considerable commitment to the programme. Year 10 pupils had a member of the Army speaking to them on Human Rights and the Kosovo Conflict. Pupils' interest was held throughout the presentation and they were totally involved in the topic.

125. Outstanding commitment and extensive subject knowledge of the teacher in charge has ensured that the citizenship programme is recognised as making an important contribution to pupils' personal development. The programme is well led and managed through key stage co-ordinators and form tutors. Planning and organisation are thorough and effective, though scope remains for achieving greater consistency in the quality of teaching. Strong links with outside agencies provide additional support for pupils and include a confidential drop-in service provided by Harrow Family Planning and the services of a relationships counsellor. Pupils evaluate their own progress in addition to effective teacher assessment. Mentoring is provided for Year 10 pupils by employees of First National Bank. An excellent reward system motivates pupils and they take an active part in decision making, for example, in drawing up the race relations policy and in senior staff appointments. The strong programme of work experience caters thoughtfully for pupils for whom English is not their first language.

Personal, Social and Health Education

126. Personal, social and health education is combined with the citizenship programme and is taught by the form tutors. No specific lessons were seen during the inspection but documents were scrutinised and discussions held with pupils and staff.

127. Planning of the PSHCE curriculum is very good and the opportunities it provides for pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. The broad curriculum is greatly enhanced by the Sports College ethos, which contributes significantly to pupils' understanding of a healthy lifestyle and to their team building skills. Pupils spoke freely about the very good relationships in class which supports them in discussing sensitive issues. The involvement of external agencies in teaching the programme is a very useful extension to the school's provision and aids pupils' achievement.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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