

INSPECTION REPORT

ELLIOTT SCHOOL

Putney

LEA area: Wandsworth

Unique reference number: 101060

Headteacher: Mr Tony Willis

Lead inspector: Mrs Sheila Browning

Dates of inspection: 1 – 5 December 2003

Inspection number: 262889

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:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11-19
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1376
School address:	Pullman Gardens Putney London
Postcode:	SW15 3DG
Telephone number:	020 8788 3421
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Mills
Date of previous inspection:	12 October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Elliott is a large mixed comprehensive school with 1,376 students, including a sixth form of 243. There are more boys than girls in all year groups and more than half of the students are from ethnic minorities, the major groups are British black and black Caribbean. More than 11 per cent have a mother tongue other than English, which is higher than in most schools. Twenty-four of these students receive special support in lessons. The school's roll is rising; it is popular and oversubscribed. The school is in a residential area of Putney in South-West London. The area is mixed in economic terms; the number of students eligible for free school meals, at 25 per cent, is above the national average. The attainment of students entering the school covers the full range, with a large proportion of students with below average attainment. Twenty-four per cent of students have special educational needs (SEN); the largest groups are those with social, emotional and behavioural needs, moderate learning needs, hearing impairment and other learning needs and 3.9 per cent of these students have a statement of special need, which is above the national average. There is an above average degree of student mobility. Elliott is a Beacon School and is part of the local 'Excellence in Cities' initiative. The school is also a specialist language college. Since the last inspection there have been considerable staffing changes. The school has reduced in size since the last inspection, the number of students from ethnic minorities has increased by 20 per cent, the number of students with special needs has doubled, and the number of students eligible for free school meals has reduced.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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28199	Peter Lawley	Team inspector	English English (sixth form) English as an additional language
28097	Sheila Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)
1249	Joseph Edge	Team inspector	Science Special educational needs
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Chemistry (sixth form)
31034	Nigel Zanker	Team inspector	Citizenship Design and technology
12110	Roger Bailess	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	History History (sixth form)
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team inspector	Geography Economics (sixth form)
32166	Nasim Butt	Team inspector	Religious education Biology (sixth form)
8622	Heather Housden	Team inspector	Physical education
8139	Barbara Johnstone	Team inspector	Music
31693	Tim Hanafin	Team inspector	Art and design Art and design (sixth form)
33211	Graham Abel	Team inspector	Science
4361	Richard Boatman	Team inspector	European and community languages

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. It provides a sound education for all its students, and in the sixth form provision is good. It gives satisfactory value for money, and is increasingly popular and oversubscribed. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average and are in line with national expectations at the end of Years 9 and 11. Students are taught well, achieve appropriately and enjoy their school, which is open and inclusive. Leadership and management by the headteacher are satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is a specialist language school, and this aspect of its work is a key strength.
- Teaching and learning are good and leadership by key staff is good.
- Poor attendance is a major hindrance to achievement. Punctuality at the start of the day is unsatisfactory.
- GCSE/GNVQ results in 2002 were well above average.
- Achievement in English is very good. For the majority of students, standards are too low in information and communication technology.
- Although some aspects of the curriculum, and the opportunities for curriculum enrichment, are good, provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and the limited physical education opportunities for girls make the curriculum, overall, unsatisfactory: the school does not comply with the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good.
- Support, advice and guidance for students is good, provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in a racially harmonious school and good relationships. There are good links with the community and good opportunities for enrichment activities.

Despite considerable staffing changes, and staff reductions due to financial constraints, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in October 1998. Standards in English have improved. The provision the school makes for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. A short compulsory course in religious education is offered. Many of the other weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been addressed, with the exception of: a lack of non-western focus in art and design; limited fieldwork in geography; and unsatisfactory use of ICT across the curriculum.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	C	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	n/a	B	B	

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

Students' overall achievement is satisfactory. In Year 9, current standards of work are broadly average in English and science and close to average in mathematics, with girls achieving less well than boys. In Year 11, inspection evidence shows that standards in most subjects are average and that students achieve satisfactorily. However, for the majority of students in Years 9 and 11 standards are too low in ICT. The students who are taking vocational and work-related courses in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress.

In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, standards were in line with the national average and much better than in similar schools. 2002 is the latest year for which national comparisons are validated for GCSE. GCSE examination results in 2002 were in line with the national average and much better than in similar schools. However, in 2003 there was a marked decline in GCSE results, especially in the percentage of students gaining five or more grades A* to C, reflecting the lower ability of students entered. Realistic targets set for 2002 were broadly met. Results have improved broadly in line with the nationally rising trend over the last five years.

The school places great emphasis on providing for the personal development of its students, and their **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall**. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Poor attendance restricts what some students can achieve. Punctuality at the start of the day is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of the education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are committed to doing the best they can for their students. There are variations between subjects; in some there is a considerable amount of good and very good teaching, in others some of the teaching is unsatisfactory and on these occasions student behaviour often deteriorates. Generally, students acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding. Satisfactory links with parents and good links with the community help to support students' learning. Weaknesses in provision for ICT, limited physical education opportunities for girls, and the lack of a daily act of collective worship, make overall curriculum provision unsatisfactory. Accommodation, although improved, is in poor condition and creates some health and safety problems.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has identified and is addressing priorities, within very tight budgetary constraints; he exerts sound leadership. The school is managed satisfactorily, though its analysis and use of data to improve performance (for instance, attendance) is not yet secure. The governing body fulfils its role and successfully holds the school to account for the quality of education provided but has not ensured that all statutory requirements are met. Since the last inspection, the school has experienced significant barriers to achievement and moving the school forward, due to staffing reductions brought about by financial constraints.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students are satisfied with many aspects of the school's work and view it very positively. Of those returning the parental questionnaire, a sizable minority expressed concern about: the school not seeking or taking account of their views; homework; behaviour; and the range of activities on offer. Significant proportions of students returning their questionnaire had concerns about bad or oppressive behaviour, homework, fair and respectful treatment, and being able to talk with an adult about problems. None of these issues was found to be a major concern during the inspection. The school now formally seeks parental views. Behaviour overall is satisfactory, but there are certainly patches of unruliness, especially when teaching is not very interesting or stimulating, and some students take too long to settle. There is a good range of activities offered, and the setting of homework is satisfactory.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the attendance and punctuality of students in order to raise their achievement.
- Raise standards, especially in information and communication technology and for girls in physical education, by ensuring that all students receive their full entitlement under the National Curriculum.
- Improve the accommodation and information and communication technology facilities for students in the sixth form.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of worship.
- Provide religious education in the sixth form.

Some less crucial improvements needed are:

- Greater opportunities for girls in physical education.
- The analysis and use of data.
- The impact of language college status on other subjects.

SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is successful and gives students a good education. Students are taught well. As a result they learn effectively, enjoy the sixth form and achieve well. The sixth form gives good value for money. Despite considerable staffing changes, over the last few years, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, except that the requirement to provide religious education has still not been met.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are above expectations and students achieve well, as a result of the very good teaching and learning. Students achieve above average standards in English and well above average in history and economics.
- Attendance in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.
- Students receive very good academic support and guidance in relation to their on-going studies and in relation to their applications to universities.
- Links with the community are very good.
- There is a good climate for learning, particularly in the extended activities offered.
- Religious education is not offered in the sixth form.
- Students demonstrate considerable enthusiasm for their courses and mature attitudes to their studies. They actively contribute to the life of the school as a whole.
- The sixth form centre is cramped, with inadequate facilities for students to work.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision for English is very good. Standards are above average and achievement and teaching and learning are very good. Advice on what is needed in order to improve is particularly well focused. Teaching designed to extend independent thinking skills is good in Year 13, but under-developed in Year 12.
Mathematics	Provision for mathematics is good. Standards in A2-level mathematics are generally at least average. Students benefit from good teaching and from good relationships with their teachers.
Science	Provision for biology is good. Standards are average and students achieve well. Teaching is good and is linked effectively to a good assessment process. Provision for chemistry is good. Standards are similar to the national average and are rising. Teaching is good. There are not enough planned opportunities for independent study.
Humanities	Provision for history is excellent. Standards are very high and achievement is very good. Teaching is very good with excellent features. Enrichment of the curriculum is excellent.

Business	Provision for economics is excellent. Students achieve very well and secure a very high percentage of top grades. Learning is very good because of high quality teaching.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision for art and design is very good. Students achieve high standards. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. The use of ICT by students is not well developed.
<i>The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.</i>	

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school provides pastoral support and guidance for students in the sixth form with the same commitment that it gives to their younger colleagues in the main school. As a consequence, sixth-formers receive very good academic support and guidance in relation both to their on-going studies and in relation to their applications to higher education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are good. Those in key posts are well informed about the needs of students and they endeavour to provide good enrichment programmes and learning opportunities. Current financial constraints impinge on some learning opportunities. Religious education is not offered although students can study philosophy. Leadership is well focused on enabling and developing the full potential of students.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are generally very satisfied with the sixth form. They are pleased with the teaching and enjoy the sixth form. They value the help and support they receive and say they are encouraged to study and research independently. A significant minority of students would like better advice on what to study in the sixth form and what to do after leaving the sixth form. Inspectors endorse the positive comments but find the quality of advice and support given to be very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students in Years 9 and 11 reach standards in line with national averages; their achievement is satisfactory. In the sixth form, students reach above average standards and achieve well. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Achievement of students with English as an additional language and those gifted and talented is satisfactory by the end of Years 9 and 11 and good in the sixth form. Examination results indicate differences in boys' and girls' achievement. However, this gap narrows as students progress through the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE/GNVQ results, in 2002, were well above average when compared with similar schools, for 5+ A*-C grades.
- In 2002, the average points score for students entered for GCE A/AS levels was above the national average.
- At A/AS level current standards are above average in English, art and design and economics and are very high in history.
- Poor attendance means that too many students fail to achieve as well as they might.
- For the majority of students standards are too low in information and communication technology.
- A significant minority of girls underachieve in physical education leading to low standards, while a minority of boys reach the highest standards in sport.
- Achievement is good in art and design and history throughout the school and in the sixth form it is very good in English, art and design, history and economics, and good in biology.
- Higher-attaining students achieve well in the French and Spanish GCSE express groups at the end of Year 9.

Commentary

1. The results of National Curriculum tests by the end of Year 9 in 2003, when comparing the average point score in comparison with all schools nationally, were in line with national averages in English, mathematics and science. In comparison with schools taking students from similar social and economic backgrounds, results were well above average. These results show an improvement risen on the previous year's results. The proportion of students who reached the level expected for their age has improved since the last inspection. The proportion of students who reached the higher levels improved in 2003. Girls achieved better than boys in English but not in science and mathematics. Over the last five years, results have improved at a rate broadly in line with the nationally rising trend. At the end of Year 9 in the 2002 National tests, standards in English, mathematics, and science were not high enough when considering students' previous achievement. Results for 2003 show an overall improvement.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33 (32)	33 (33)
Mathematics	35 (32)	35 (35)
Science	34 (32)	34 (33)

There were 200 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. The latest year for which national comparisons are validated for GCSE results is 2002. In 2002, GCSE examination results were average for the proportion of students gaining 5+ A*-C and 5+ A*-G grades nationally. The proportion of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades was very high. However, in comparison with similar schools, results were well above average for the proportion of students gaining 5+ A*-C grades and above average for 5+ A*-G grades. The proportion of students gaining one or more A*-G grades was very high. When compared with the same students' standards by the end of Year 9, results were well above average for students gaining five or more A*-C grades, average for students gaining five or more A*-G grades and very high for students gaining one or more A*-G grades. These results represented good achievement in Years 10 and 11. The achievement differential narrowed but girls still achieved better than boys. There was little difference in the performance of students from different ethnic groups (the ethnic profile of some groups being too small for comparisons to be valid). Results have improved broadly in line with the nationally rising trend over the last five years.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	46 (47)	50 (48)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88 (91)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	34 (33)	40 (40)

There were 190 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Students' best performance at GCSE in relation to their other subjects was in combined sciences, English literature, English language, and art and design. Their relative worst performance was in mathematics, geography, and modern languages. It is important, however, to note that the number of entries was small in some of these areas. The school results for 2002 were lower than in 2001. Nevertheless, the school's predicted targets were exceeded in nine out of 18 subjects. In 2002, the school's percentages of A*-C grades were significantly above the national figure in combined sciences, English language, and in physical education. In art and design, design and technology, geography, history, and other languages the percentage of A*-C grades were below the national figure by a significant margin. Standards in the 2003 GNVQ information and communication technology course were well below the national average. In GNVQ Tourism and leisure, 14 students were successful at Foundation level. The degree of mobility among the students affects the school's results to some extent. Erratic attendance and frequent absence also impact on students' assessment and hinder their progress. The school fell short of its targets for 2003 at the end of Year 9 and exceeded its targets for five or more GCSE A*-C grades and the average point scores set.
4. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Year 11 had mock examinations during the inspection week. As a result, little of their work was readily available. However, the work sampled throughout the school indicated wide variation in the quality and presentation of work. The inconsistent spelling, particularly of average and lower-attaining students, undoubtedly impacts on achievement. Standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory and overall reading and writing standards are good. The school has information that indicates that girls are underachieving; inspectors found limited evidence to support this other than in mathematics.
5. Gifted and talented and higher-attaining students achieve appropriately, and particularly well in the French and Spanish GCSE express groups at the end of Year 9. Higher-attaining students are challenged and achieve well in English, mathematics, science, modern languages and music, but across other subjects there are inconsistencies in the level of challenge set. The achievement and progress of students with special educational needs is good. The progress of those at school action plus level and of those with a statement of special educational need

are very good, in terms of both academic progress and personal development. For example, recently a few students made enough progress to have their statements withdrawn as no longer needed. The overall achievement of students at GCSE is very strong for the school action plus and statemented students. The successes over inclusion of these students in lessons are exceptionally good. Overall, the school is very inclusive. The achievement of students with English as an additional language is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. A very small number of students are in the early stages of acquiring English. Students are usually well supported in lessons and are provided with suitable work; as a result they achieve in line with their peers.

6. In the work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 9 and 11 are average overall and indicate improvement and satisfactory achievement. This is due to improved curriculum development, focused and refined assessment methods and targeting of students and, particularly to good teaching. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average in English, average in mathematics, science, modern languages, art and design, design and technology, history, physical education, and below in information and communication technology, geography and music. Standards are in line with those expected for the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average in English, and textiles, average in mathematics, science, art and design, music and physical education. Standards are below average in information and communication technology, geography, and modern languages.
7. Students undertaking vocational courses achieve well in business studies, leisure and tourism, and in ICT. Results in vocational qualifications in 2001 were above the national average at Intermediate level.

Sixth form

8. In the sixth form, A/AS-level results for students achieving A-B grades generally show improvement over the last three years. The student pass rate increased from 91.8 per cent in 2001 to 97.7 per cent in 2002. In 2003, some 19 per cent of students achieved grade A at AS level and 30 per cent achieved it at A level. The average points score for those entered for GCE A/AS/VCE examinations, at 17.4 per candidate entered in 2002, was close to the national average. Most subject areas achieved a 100 per cent pass rate. Results in other vocational qualifications, at 83 per cent, were above the national average at Intermediate level. Girls achieved better than boys. Because of new reporting guidelines, the average points score figures are being calculated differently from previous years. Consequently, straight comparisons between historical and current data are not possible. Nevertheless, the percentage of student entries gaining A-B grades improved in 2003 by 19 per cent. In 2002, the best relative subject performance at A level was in design and technology, English literature, theatre studies, art and design and history. In AS it was in art and design. The poorest relative subject performances at A level were in mathematics and sociology, and at AS level was biology and other social studies.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	98 (92)	96 (89)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	43 (44)	42 (36)
Average point score per student	17.4 (17.0)	17.5 (17.4)

There were 86 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

9. Achievement is good in the sixth form. The achievement of students with English as an additional language, those with special educational needs and gifted and talented students is good. By the end of the sixth form, standards are generally good, demonstrating good

achievement. In the sixth form, current standards are above average in English and economics, and are very high in history.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school places great emphasis on providing for the personal development of its students, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attitudes are very good in the sixth form and sound in the rest of the school. Behaviour is good in the sixth form and satisfactory elsewhere. However, attendance is poor and this restricts what students can achieve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know students well as individuals and work effectively to build their confidence and self-esteem.
- Attendance is poor and recently-improved procedures are not yet having a demonstrable impact on the statistics.
- Racial harmony between individuals and groups is good overall.
- The school does not make optimum use of the data it collects (eg on attendance and exclusions) to identify trends or to target its initiatives.

Commentary

10. There is a recent history of poor attendance and a high rate of exclusions at the school. New practices and procedures for addressing both problems were introduced at the start of the 2003/04 school year. It is too early to be confident about the impact of the changes, but the evidence is that the changed approach to exclusion is having the desired effect – reducing the number of days that students are removed from the school without eroding its learning environment.

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any Other ethnic group
Parent / student preferred not to say
Information not obtained

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
678	151	5
5	0	0
96	5	0
58	6	0
17	0	0
15	0	0
26	0	0
21	3	0
29	5	0
11	0	0
18	0	0
106	88	3
64	4	0
26	23	1
7	0	0
68	0	0
55	51	2
76	0	0

11. The same cannot be said about attendance. The procedures for following up absences and for working with the educational welfare officer are sound, but they are not having the required effect yet. The school does not analyse attendance records and the other information it possesses well enough, with a view to identifying trends and the causes of poor attendance,

student by student if necessary, in order to devise effective strategies to ensure that each individual comes to school reliably and regularly. Poor attendance means that too many students fail to achieve as well as they might. There is an impact not only on the poor attenders, but also on others in their classes, too, because the pace of lessons is affected when some students have to catch up after missing work when absent previously.

12. There is a significant incidence of late arrival at the start of the school day but, overall, most lessons start on time and punctuality in this respect is satisfactory. Nevertheless, attendance and punctuality have deteriorated since the last Ofsted inspection.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2002)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.5	School data	1.2
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

13. When engaged and challenged by good teaching, students' behaviour is good, but there are patches of unruliness when teaching is not very interesting or stimulating, and some students take too long to settle down to work at the start of a lesson. In some lessons, teachers have to spend so much effort ensuring that behaviour remains good that they are unable to promote learning as well as otherwise they might. There is some boisterous but generally good-humoured behaviour around the school, outside the classroom. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory because, in spite of the shortcomings noted here, most students co-operate with their teachers and work well with their peers. Behaviour is not as good as was reported at the time of the last Ofsted inspection. Students mature during their time at the school and most grow into responsible young adults.
14. The overwhelming majority of students returning questionnaires to inspectors state that they like being at the school. Their parents endorse this. Students participate well in the activities provided for them. They are offered a range of opportunities to take responsibility, like helping at the school's reception desk and acting as mentors for fellow students, and they undertake such tasks conscientiously and well. Staff and students have recently reviewed the 'school code' jointly, and it is the foundation on which the ethos of the place is built. The code promotes good interpersonal relationships and racial harmony and the school is successful in ensuring that all its students are treated as individuals of equal worth. There are few incidents of serious bullying, and they are recorded and handled well when they occur. Analysis of the overall data about oppressive behaviour, although logged, is not always used to indicate any identifiable trends or patterns quickly so that strategies to address them can be devised.
15. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as it was when the school was last inspected, because the promotion of personal development is at the heart of Elliott's ethos. Staff are strongly committed to it in all they do, inside and outside the classroom and through the many enrichment activities that are on offer. They push students to become independent learners. Students have good understanding and awareness of the views and beliefs of others. They learn to respect those with different opinions and give them a fair hearing. There is a wide range of racial groups and they mix freely. Students with special needs are integrated well, too.
16. Development of spiritual awareness is satisfactory. It is addressed in religious education and through some assemblies, but its planned promotion through the rest of the curriculum is spasmodic. Nevertheless, this does occur sometimes. For instance, in a Year 10 history lesson, using The Last Post and 'original' letters established a quiet, reflective mood very effectively and conveyed the horror of life in the trenches in a way that pulled no punches. Students responded sensitively and were clearly moved.

17. Students are left in no doubt about the differences between right and wrong attitudes and behaviour. The school code is well understood and it is used effectively to ensure fairness. Right behaviour is encouraged and celebrated and wrong behaviour is punished. All students are made aware that treating others with courtesy and respect is central to the functioning of the school as a society. The school is a friendly place to be. The school council provides a forum for debate and is a vehicle students can use to contribute to the development of the society they are part of. They learn to demonstrate concern for society more widely, too, for instance, by raising money for many charities, both local and international.
18. Cultural development is promoted well in various ways. The wide range of languages taught, and provision in subjects such as design and technology and music, help to ensure that students are introduced to different cultures and some of the different attitudes and beliefs involved. The considerable range of cultural heritages represented by the students themselves is treated with respect.

Sixth form

19. Students 'take off' in the sixth form and their personal development is good. They demonstrate considerable enthusiasm for their courses and mature attitudes to their studies. They contribute to the life of the school as a whole in a range of ways for instance, by providing support to younger students through paired reading and assisting teachers in some classes during free periods and through their participation in the school council.
20. Attendance in the sixth form is little better than in the rest of the school. This is less damaging because the students become more capable of independent study as they grow older, but it is nevertheless unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good but there are shortcomings in the curriculum and the quality of some accommodation.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Overall, teaching is good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. Students learn well because they are usually interested in the work and are well motivated. Assessment is at least satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and it is good in the sixth form. It is often used well to give students and teachers a clear view of strengths and weaknesses in learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge of their subjects is good.
- Lesson planning is good, identifying a clear focus for learning.
- Good teaching methods are used and teachers have a commitment to raising standards.
- ICT skills are not yet consistently developed across subjects.
- The learning support for students with individual needs is effective.
- Assessment is used well in the sixth form.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 152 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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7 (5%)	29 (19%)	70 (46%)	37 (24%)	9 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
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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.

21. The school has built an effective staff team who are clearly committed to sharing and extending good practices in teaching. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are reinforced in some subjects more successfully than others. Information and communication technology skills are not yet consistently well developed across subjects.
22. Teachers are knowledgeable and in many instances enthusiastic in their readiness to share information such as in English, science, modern languages, history and economics. Some outstanding teaching was seen in these areas. Teachers use resources creatively in their teaching to stimulate and interest students. Lesson planning is usually thorough and clear. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods successfully, such as quick mental starter activities and probing questions, and draw on students' experiences well to generate discussions and views. They usually have good expectations and challenge students well. The interaction and relationship between teachers and students are good.
23. One generic feature of the relatively few unsatisfactory lessons was related to work not matching individuals' needs. Insecure and inconsistent behaviour management of a significant minority was another feature often affecting the pace of learning, or the focus of the lesson was too vague, or expectations of what students can do and are capable of were too low. On occasion, teachers were unfamiliar with new classes and in a few instances lessons were too teacher-directed which limited student participation.
24. Teachers mark work effectively and students said they found written comments helpful. Guidance as to how to improve and targets to work towards are also given. Assessment is at least satisfactory and is continuing to develop so that information from reviewing students' work and analysing test results is increasingly informing teaching and learning. English, mathematics and science subjects have been successfully tracking the progress of students since the last inspection. This year a whole-school system has been introduced to track and assess student progress and involve students and parents in target setting. Piloted in Years 8 and 10, this has so far proved to be beneficial. Very good assessment practices are noted in the sixth form.
25. Learning support assistants, often students on a gap year, work very effectively with those who have special educational needs. The teaching and learning of those students are good. Withdrawal lessons are taught well and students learn well. Subject teachers are often adept at providing different methods and materials to help students with special educational needs to learn; this provision is very good in English. The work undertaken by teachers and assistants who give support in lessons is very good, and most teachers link this work effectively into the overall provision for their subjects. Teachers are alert to the very small number of students at an early stage of acquiring English. Their needs are identified well and staff are trained well to help them in ordinary lessons. Furthermore, additional staff provide helpful enrichment activities in additional lessons. The requirements of each student are recorded carefully and shared between staff across the subjects. As a result, lesson content and methods are adapted suitably. Students achieve in line with their peers in consequence.
26. The quality of teaching is very similar to that found at the last inspection, but more instances of very good and good teaching were seen during this inspection.

Sixth form

27. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good overall. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Teaching is rigorous, well informed, thorough and systematic so that new knowledge and skills are acquired and consolidated. Some outstanding teaching was seen in history and

economics. Students are actively involved in their learning and enjoy participating and taking charge of the direction of their own learning. On occasion, teaching is over-directed, limiting the development of students' independent and investigational skills. Assessment information and regular interviews are used exceptionally well to inform progress and future targets and these are having a real impact on raising standards and achievement.

28. Students use computers well to word process and communicate their work. The Internet is widely used for research. PowerPoint presentations are regularly used in presentations of work to the class. Students are beginning to benefit from resources, such as curriculum planning, model answers and tests, being posted on the school's intranet. There are fewer opportunities for students to use spreadsheets and database software in their studies.

The curriculum

The curriculum is unsatisfactory because it does not meet statutory requirements for providing information and communication technology (ICT) in the main school and religious education in the sixth form. In other respects, however, the curriculum is satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Satisfactory staffing, accommodation and resources support the curriculum. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Modern language courses are a strong feature of the curriculum.
- The range of vocational courses is not wide enough, either in the main school or in the sixth form.
- Extensive enrichment is provided in the arts and languages.
- There are too few opportunities for girls to participate in sports clubs and teams.
- The co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum is not developed.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good.
- A good range of academic courses is offered in the sixth form.
- Religious education is not offered in the sixth form.

Commentary

29. The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 has some strengths and some weaknesses. There is a good range of modern languages and all students study French and either Spanish or German. Higher-attaining students have the opportunity to start GCSE in Year 8 and many successfully complete the course in Year 9. Swimming is not provided in Year 7 but is in Years 8 to 9. In Years 7 to 9 students have only a limited range of activities in art. Year 7 students have a well-planned ICT course taught by specialist teachers but there are no discrete ICT lessons in Years 8 and 9 and computer skills are taught in various subjects. Co-ordination of this ICT work is not robust enough and many students are not taught the full National Curriculum. Provision for personal, social and health education, sex education and drugs misuse is satisfactory. There is good provision for students with special educational needs.
30. In Years 10 and 11, all students take English, mathematics, science, religious education, physical education, personal, social and health education and at least one language. There is no planned ICT course for the students who do not take an examination course in ICT. Students choose from a wide range of GCSE options. These include further languages – Russian and Japanese. These subjects provide students who take a language GCSE early with valuable additional language experience. However, these students tend to lose touch with French and Spanish and, while the school has put in place a PSHE 'continuation' course to foster these languages in Years 10 and 11, many do not consider them for further study in the sixth form. A few vocational examination courses are offered but financial difficulties have so far limited their expansion. The school also offers limited alternatives for students who find

coursework or GCSE burdens too much. Unfortunately, the college link courses benefiting such students are being withdrawn because of staffing difficulties outside the school. The school is undertaking a curriculum review this year and intends to improve motivation through including more vocational courses and further enhancing the 14 to 19 curriculum, including collaboration with other providers.

31. The provision for students with special educational needs is well planned to meet their specific needs. All students have full access to the curriculum and are included fully and effectively in the life and work of the school. In addition they have well-targeted support in lessons from teaching assistants and are occasionally withdrawn for specialist support. Every care is taken to minimise any disruption to learning in subjects. Each student's needs are well known to teachers, who plan suitable work for them. The effective and experienced special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) keeps each student's programme under careful review. Good practice is seen in modern foreign languages, history and art, and very good in English; it is never less than satisfactory for the other subjects.
32. Good opportunities are provided in most curriculum areas to ensure good enrichment and extension of the curriculum for gifted and talented students. The school has developed very good provision for gifted and talented students and provides a very good range of extension and enrichments in and beyond lessons. The quality of provision for higher-attaining students is inconsistent across different subjects. The school is aware of the need to co-ordinate and monitor this. Good opportunities are provided in most curriculum areas to ensure good enrichment and extension of the curriculum for those with English as an additional language.
33. A good range of activities is provided outside lessons. Many subjects run lunchtime clubs as well as study support sessions targeted at different groups. There are many good opportunities for students to enjoy activities in the arts through music and drama. The level of provision for instrumental tuition in music is a strength. Students' interest in modern foreign languages is fostered through a range of clubs and extensive language trips and student exchanges. Students benefit from good links with Fulham and Chelsea football clubs, through coaching at school and at the clubs' training grounds. However, the opportunities for girls' participation in extra-curricular sport are unsatisfactory. With the exception of activities specifically arranged for students identified as gifted or talented, and Year 11 GCSE support classes, the school does not monitor the level of student involvement in extra-curricular activities.
34. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory. The school is now well staffed for the needs of the curriculum, with both teachers and support staff. Textbooks and equipment are sufficient and suitable. The school has fewer computers than is typical; it is likely to achieve the government target of 1:5 until September 2004. This in part has occurred because of the proposed building programme being delayed. The school has now decided to go ahead with the planned ICT investment. Resources in the modern languages and religious education departments are particularly imaginative and help to support the good teaching. Elliott is a listed building and improvements are constrained by regulations. Teachers work hard to make their classrooms attractive through a range of visual displays but these cannot hide the poor condition of the fabric and upkeep of the building. Toilet facilities, in particular, are in poor condition. Movement of groups of students on the spiral staircases and the open site access are both safety concerns.

Sixth form

35. The sixth form curriculum offers a wide range of academic A-level courses that are well matched to the current students' aspirations and needs. Although vocational courses are provided in several subjects, the range is very restricted. All students have opportunities for work experience, and a few work abroad. Courses are not provided for students with limited GCSE results but the school provides good advice on suitable programmes offered locally. The general studies programme is very well received by students. The school offers philosophy, but religious education is not offered and this was a key issue in the last inspection.

The curriculum is enriched greatly by a programme of lectures involving both external speakers and members of the school staff. There are sufficient opportunities for sporting activities. Careers advice and guidance, for those going on both to higher education or to work, is very good and is well supported by external agencies. High numbers of students go on to higher education courses. The library provides well for the sixth form but the sixth form centre is cramped and facilities for students to work on their own or with computers are inadequate.

Care, guidance and support

The school is strongly committed to ensuring the well-being of its students but some of its systems are not strong enough to ensure that this commitment is securely implemented in practice. Overall, care, guidance and support are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are given good guidance about their academic progress and future targets, and well informed guidance on further study and career opportunities.
- Several health and safety features in the school require attention.
- Induction of new students in Years 7 and 12 is good.
- Analysis of data relating to student welfare in order to spot trends and patterns is underdeveloped.

Commentary

36. The school's pastoral system is a strong one, as it was at the time of the last inspection, energetically and pro-actively line managed. The system of form tutors, heads of year and managers of key stage works well and minimises the opportunities for any individual students to slip through the net of care. A deputy headteacher is the designated member of staff for child protection, and the school works appropriately with other agencies. New members of staff are briefed on child protection procedures. Although staff have a good overview of students' welfare, a regular and systematic analysis of trends and patterns is not in place.
37. A range of health and safety issues were noted during the inspection, which the school accepts need to be addressed. Two points were acted upon promptly before the end of the inspection.
38. When students first arrive at the school, they are well briefed and they quickly become accustomed to its inclusive ethos and settle well. The system whereby students move through the school with the same form tutor and head of year means that they become very well known by specific members of staff, with whom they can and frequently do form trusting relationships. Students receive good advice and guidance from their teachers about their academic progress. In general, students are given a clear idea of where they stand and of what they need to do to improve. There are effective systems for setting academic targets.
39. Provision for students with special educational needs is based on good procedures for assessment, review and identification. The procedures are very thorough, and are used well. Students' progress is reviewed regularly. Targets set in individual education plans are clear. Parents and students are involved suitably in their use, and guidance is given to students at the termly reviews. The targets set provide good advice to teachers about how to help students to improve. Liaison with the pastoral systems is well secured and is good.
40. Students receive very good advice and guidance about the routes open to them when they reach the age of 16, from both school staff and Connexions advisers. Relevant information is readily available about careers and about further study or employment.
41. Students are consulted about issues of concern to them in various ways, either directly (for example, through form tutors) or through representatives on the school council. Although their

views are certainly listened to, the school does not have a clear, well-structured mechanism for this. It is not clear to members of the school council that if they want to make a proposal to the school (for example, about the school uniform code) certain steps are required to validate the suggestions, and that the school's management will respond to any properly presented ideas within a certain time and in a certain way. Overall, the way in which the school acts on students' views is satisfactory.

Sixth form

42. The school provides pastoral support and guidance for students in the sixth form with the same commitment that it gives to their younger colleagues in the main school. Students are well inducted and are well advised and supported in their choice of courses. As a consequence, sixth-formers receive very good academic support and guidance both in relation to their on-going studies and in relation to their applications to universities.
43. Well-informed, structured and established advice is given on vocational and academic routes. Flexibility is also offered by the option of a third year in the sixth form. All students receive vocational guidance as part of their social and personal development provided by specialist careers staff. This is well considered advice. A weakness is the limited range of vocational courses, largely dictated by financial constraints, but alleviated by informed guidance on appropriate courses offered elsewhere. There is a special programme of advice on higher education. This year the highest ever number of students went on to higher education. Students are given very good pastoral support.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school welcomes parents and carers and is fully committed to working with them to the benefit of students. The resulting partnership is satisfactory. The school has good links with its community and, through its language college work especially, it contributes well to educational links with other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are able to visit the school at any time, and every effort is made to see them to respond to any concerns.
- As a language college, the school works well with many other schools (primary and secondary) and provides in-service training to individuals from other organisations and local authorities.

Commentary

44. Parents are satisfied with many aspects of the school's work and view it very positively. Of those returning the parental questionnaire, a sizable minority expressed concern about: the school not seeking or taking account of their views; homework; behaviour; and the range of activities on offer. None of these issues was found to be a major concern during the inspection. The school now formally seeks parental views. Behaviour overall is satisfactory, but there are certainly patches of unruliness, especially when teaching is not very interesting or stimulating, and some students take too long to settle. There is a good range of activities offered, and the setting of homework is satisfactory.
45. The school strives to work effectively with parents in order to promote good learning for their children. It achieves a good measure of success in many areas, as it did at the time of the last inspection, and constantly searches for ways to improve the partnership. For instance, it has recently piloted a system with two year-groups where parents visit the school to discuss and agree specific academic targets for their children. Whilst it is too soon to assess how effective this initiative has been in raising achievement, immediate feedback from parents has been positive, and a high proportion of them participated. In some other areas, such as working

together to ensure regular attendance, the partnership is not yet reliably effective. Parental and other complaints from members of the community are dealt with appropriately on an individual basis, but they are not always formally logged in a way that enables the school to analyse trends or patterns as part of a process of continual improvement.

46. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept well informed about the progress made by their child, for example by regular reviews of progress and target setting for future provision. The school has very good links, used well, with external agencies that provide the support for certain students with additional special educational needs. Parents of students with statements of special educational need are suitably involved in annual reviews, including provision of satisfactory reports from the school and relevant external agencies. The full range of external agencies are consulted and used thoroughly, including health, social services, and local education authority and special educational needs support agencies.
47. Newsletters and other communications to parents are issued with appropriate frequency. The content is appropriate. The Parent Teacher Association is strong.
48. There are sound links with feeder primary schools and with the further education colleges to which some students transfer after Year 11. The school makes a major contribution to teacher training through its links with higher education institutes and works with national agencies to disseminate good practice. There are good collaborative links with other schools, especially in relation to language teaching. For example, the school provides master classes for primary students in Catalan, Russian and Arabic and a 'European Day of Languages' with participation of five secondary schools. The school offers parenting classes to members of the local community, and its facilities are available for community use in various ways. The school works with its local community by offering evening classes in French and Spanish and working with Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) to develop resources for the teaching of citizenship and language training for staff and volunteers. There are some excellent links established through information and communication technology, such as video conferencing with Oxford.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leadership by the headteacher is satisfactory. He is keenly establishing educational priorities for the school and is well supported by the leadership team and key staff. The overall management of the school is satisfactory. The governors concern themselves with the major issues affecting the school and fulfil their role appropriately, with the exception of meeting legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship and some aspects of the curriculum. This means that governance, overall, is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New and effective teams have been created and as a result leadership of the curriculum and teaching is good.
- Training, support and professional development for staff is bringing about improvement in many aspects of the school's work.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.
- The financial constraints within which the school works have, undoubtedly, curtailed some planned educational developments.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship, ICT across the school, or religious education in the sixth form.

Commentary

49. After a long period of stability the school recently experienced significant changes within its leadership and governance teams. The headteacher was appointed 15 months ago. This year coincided with the termination of office of the majority of the long-serving governors including

the chair. The school has also experienced severe financial constraints. The school is fully staffed. Despite the significant changes, Elliott is a harmonious community with good relationships and these are highly valued by parents.

50. Governors have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are highly articulate and well informed, and concern themselves with the major issues affecting the school, generally from the informative reports provided by the headteacher. The governors play a full part in planning the strategic direction of the school's developments and in managing its affairs. Development planning and financial planning are increasingly part of the same process and the headteacher and governors have had to make some tough decisions given its severe financial constraints. The school is in the process of recovering from a serious budget shortfall accumulated over the past three years. This stemmed from a change from grant maintained to foundation status and other major budgetary reductions. The bursar, headteacher, and leadership group very carefully monitor expenditure and the governors scrutinise statements. Systems of financial control are stringent. The school has benefited from specific grants and funding. The four principles of best value, challenge, compare, consult and compete, are carefully observed. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,895,441	Balance from previous year	99,308
Total expenditure	6,003,351	Balance carried forward to the next	-8,612
Expenditure per student	4,370		

51. Leadership by the headteacher is satisfactory. He is establishing a clear identity and educational priorities for the school and communicates these well to governors and staff. Restructuring of the leadership group and a reduction in staffing levels was agreed and implemented fully in the summer term as a direct result of reduced finances. This has resulted in successful team building and a sharper focus by the leadership group. Key personnel with complementary skills, experience and expertise ably support the headteacher. At the time of the inspection one deputy headteacher had been seconded to another school, but her colleagues demonstrated the capacity to share the workload and responsibilities effectively. The headteacher, leadership group and governors are very aware of the challenges that lie ahead, not least a proposed rebuilding of the school, which is in a poor state. The leadership of the curriculum and teaching by other key staff is good and cohesive. Heads of year and of departments, some of whom are new in post, are proactive in leading developments within their areas of responsibility and are forging cohesive teams.
52. Management is sound overall. There is a well-targeted programme of staff development; staff are well supported and enabled. Self-review is embedded and progress towards meeting development targets is reviewed, and there is a continuous process of monitoring and evaluating outcomes. Revised targets are drawn up in a consultative process and there are also plans to widen the range of those involved in this. Priorities for staff development feed directly into the identified priorities for whole-school development. The main focus has rightly been on: improving standards; the quality of provision; the use and impact of assessment; non-teaching staff development; and improving attendance, punctuality and behaviour.
53. Provision for students with special educational need is exceptionally well led. The thoroughness of the management of the learning support department ensures that provision is effective, especially for statemented students and those supported at school action plus level. Not enough is yet done to ensure that the already satisfactory management of special educational needs issues within departments is made more effective. The links between the co-ordinator and the governors are very strong.

54. Elliott is a Beacon school and is part of the local 'Excellence in Cities' initiative. The school is also a specialist Language College. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Since then the school has reduced in size, the number of students from ethnic minorities has increased by 20 per cent, the number of students with special needs has doubled, and the number of students eligible for free school meals has reduced. Standards in English have improved; by the end of Year 9 they are good and better than those reported in recent tests. By the end of Year 11, standards are overall good and again exceed the latest results. The provision the school makes for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. It is addressed in religious education and through some assemblies, but its planned promotion through the rest of the curriculum is spasmodic. Many of the less important weaknesses have been addressed, with the exception of: in art and design, a lack of non-western focus; in geography, fieldwork remains limited; and significantly, information and communication technology access across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

55. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The heads of sixth form have clear roles and responsibilities. Those in key posts work well together to ensure that the sixth form runs efficiently and effectively. There is a shared commitment to challenge students and support them in achieving their full potential. The management and use of assessment and the regular consultation with students about their progress is a particular strength within the sixth form. The sixth form centre is cramped with inadequate facilities for students to work on their own. The sixth form provides good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching, featuring high expectations and good planning so that students achieve very well.
- Very good leadership and management, which have improved the way in which teaching is adjusted to help students tackle identified weaknesses.
- Improved standards of writing resulting from better focussed teaching which stretches the gifted and talented well.
- Spelling problems, which persist because teaching is not forceful enough in Years 7 to 9.
- Lack of advice to students in Years 7 to 9 on how well they are doing and what they should do in order to improve.

Commentary

56. Results in national tests in 2003 taken at the end of Year 9 have improved since the last inspection, and from the previous year. Achievement mirrors that in similar schools. Standards were similar to mathematics and science, falling in 2002 before returning to their previous level. The proportion of students reaching expected levels matched the national picture. Girls did better than boys, following national trends, but were further behind the national profile for their gender than boys.
57. GCSE results for both English and English literature matched the national range overall, and the proportion gaining higher grades (A* to C) was above average. Girls did better than boys, but boys' performance reaching higher grades outclassed the national trend for their gender. Results fell slightly in 2003 in both subjects, but were close to the national picture.
58. By Year 9, standards are good and better than those reported in recent tests. Standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory. Reading is good; students read avidly for pleasure and enjoyment in response to well planned teaching and are appropriately rewarded for their efforts. Writing standards are good because teachers enable students to explore a wide range of styles and types, and prepare them thoroughly for tasks which extend their thinking. Average and lower-attaining students suffer from inconsistent spelling. Here, teachers have adopted potentially productive methods, but they have yet to be applied forcefully over an extended period so that they can take full effect. Students with special educational needs make good progress as a consequence of teachers' clear explanations and well-set tasks which engage them in class. They also benefit greatly from the support and guidance of additional staff in classrooms.
59. In Years 10 to 11, overall standards are good and again exceed the latest results. This arises from teaching which is thorough, well informed and makes particularly good use of examination criteria to make students clear about what is expected of them and how they can best communicate what they know. Students grasp well the influence of historical and social context on authors as diverse as Charles Dickens and Alan Bennett because teachers highlight themes and ideas which go beyond surface detail. This approach bestows particular

advantages on the gifted and talented students who go on to consider ideas in depth. Elsewhere, teaching builds the understanding of lower-attaining students well. At the same time, this group continues to suffer from inconsistent spelling and repetitive sentence structure inherited from their earlier years.

60. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers plan well and adapt approaches from national initiatives appropriately to engage students' interest and enthusiasm. Lessons are lively and varied and teachers keep demands high by making frequent checks on how well students are doing in class. Standards of writing have improved because of better focused teaching. Written work is marked conscientiously but students need more specific advice in Years 7 to 9 on how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve further. Teacher expectations are high and this is manifested in Years 10 to 11 where demanding written assignments and good resources challenge students' understanding. The quality of advice on how to improve is better than in Years 7 to 9, because it is well focused and helpful, leading to higher standards.
61. Students achieve well in their first three years and very well beyond. This is because teachers measure and record their progress to check that potential is realised, and give useful support and prompting in cases where there is any doubt.
62. The subject is very well led and managed by a recently appointed head of department. She has taken vigorous action to ensure that teachers share ideas and materials, and learn from mutual observation and advice. It follows that students' progress is monitored carefully and teaching content and method are improved to help them overcome identified weaknesses. The development of policies to clarify what teachers expect of students and what they expect of themselves has had a beneficial effect on achievement, especially by the end of Year 11, and underpins the improvement made since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

63. Standards of literacy across the school match national trends. In English, history and religious education, students discuss ideas confidently and teachers help them to clarify their ideas and understanding. Reading for pleasure and information is promoted very well by an attractively laid out and well-run library. Here, the librarian operates a productive partnership with English teachers to encourage use of the facility. In geography, history and English, students benefit from good teaching and materials to help them structure their ideas and communicate well in writing to others. Mathematics, religious education, music and geography teachers ensure that students know, understand and use specialist vocabulary well. In lessons observed in science, however, opportunities are sometimes missed to extend understanding by discussing ideas and experiences at length to make sure that students fully understand and are capable of expressing themselves in extended pieces of writing. Approximately half of all students spell inaccurately. Methods to check and improve their skills are applied patchily from subject to subject. A working group of teachers has done much to devise and share good methods of teaching literacy, based upon an astute analysis of needs across the subjects. This work has improved standards in several areas, but opportunities are missed to apply its lessons consistently.

Modern foreign languages

Provision for modern foreign languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching from a strong team.
- Excellent lessons in citizenship and geography taught in a foreign language.
- Effective planning that supports lower attainers well.
- A good range of carefully prepared resources.
- Strong and firmly committed leadership.
- The over-use of English and limited oral work in some lessons.
- The poor motivation of some students in Year 10.

Commentary

64. The school provides its students with a wide choice of languages. These include French, German and Spanish, with Russian or Japanese for some students in Years 10 and 11. Overall results in 2002 for most language groups at GCSE were broadly consistent with national averages. Results in Spanish were good, with students reaching standards higher than in their other school subjects. In French, boys gained significantly more A* to C grades than is usually the case. In 2003, GCSE results in French were again close to the 2002 national averages but they were well below in Spanish and German. This reflects difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff and the fact that students of above-average ability take Russian or Japanese as alternatives to these languages. Standards of work seen in Russian and Japanese show good achievement in a short space of time. In some Year 10 lessons, where citizenship is taught in French or Spanish, students make excellent progress. This is a result of highly innovative and skilled teaching using excellent resources such as the day's early morning TV news, video clips and photographs from contemporary sources. Overall standards in all languages across the school, however, are a little below average, particularly for students of middle ability.
65. In Years 7 to 9, most students benefit from knowledgeable teachers who plan well, work hard to maintain a good pace, and provide a range of activities that usually involve students of all levels of ability. Extra help and support, provided for students with special educational needs, enable them to progress well. Higher-attaining students take their GCSE in French and Spanish at the end of Year 9 rather than Year 11. Students in these express groups achieve very well and the pass rates are well above average. Other students make their best progress in reading and listening. The emphasis on using worksheets, however, does not sufficiently challenge them to write at greater length. It also reduces their opportunities to speak the language in short dialogues and there is under-achievement in this skill.
66. There is excellent teaching in lessons in Year 7 where geography is taught in French. Very effective planning, careful presentation and a range of practice of new language enable students of all levels of ability to achieve well. They rapidly understand the difference between human and physical geography and make very good progress in writing short, accurate descriptions of the regions of France. The overall quality of teaching is good. Homework is carefully marked and used well to reinforce learning. Clear objectives are set and lessons are planned in good detail. Students' attitudes are usually positive but in a majority of lessons they are passive rather than enthusiastic learners. Less experienced staff have some difficulties in managing their students' behaviour and this leads to some unsatisfactory lessons and the use of too much English. In Year 10, some students are poorly motivated and make slow progress, particularly in listening and speaking.
67. The head of department leads and manages the languages team very well. The manager of the languages college gives very effective support. There is clear vision, firm direction and a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's complex language provision. The positive features identified at the last inspection have been maintained in spite of fluctuations in examination results during that period. Outstanding practice has been developed in teaching

other curriculum areas through a foreign language and there is the capacity for further improvement.

European and community languages

The school has been a specialist school since 1997 and the quality of the work seen and documented is a key strength of the school.

Overall the quality of provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good range of languages available in the school, including Russian and Japanese.
- Excellent work with primary schools.
- Very good teaching of citizenship through the medium of French and Spanish.
- Low uptake and a limited range of language courses for the sixth-form.
- Limited impact upon other subject areas with the exception of music, geography and citizenship.
- Strong and enthusiastic leadership.
- Excellent teaching of geography through the medium of French.
- Vocational courses with languages content in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

68. There is a very good range of languages offered to students. All students study two languages in Years 7 to 9 and there are express groups for French and Spanish. Students benefit from a choice of a very good range of languages. Students in the express groups take the GCSE exam at the end of Year 9 and their results are good. In Year 10, the range of languages offered for higher-attaining students is further enhanced by Japanese and Russian. Both are very well taught and students make very good progress. In addition, these students are taught citizenship through the medium of French or Spanish. In these lessons they deal confidently with subjects such as racism and benefit from high quality innovatory teaching. A vocational course is also available for those for whom GCSE is not an appropriate goal.
69. In the sixth form the range of courses is limited to AS and A2, in which students achieve well in comparison with national results. The numbers studying French, German and Spanish are still low, despite good results at A2. Students indicated their wish to take more vocational courses in the sixth form. Such courses could be of value to students but are not yet offered by the languages department.
70. The community work of the specialist school is a particular strength. The school works very well with its partner primary schools by providing extra master classes for gifted and talented students from primary schools. The progress these students make is very impressive and their enthusiasm and enjoyment of language learning is very clear, particularly when trying to say Spanish tongue twisters or talking about themselves in Catalan. They also made a very good start to learning Russian. The quality of teaching of both languages is very good. The work with the two partner secondary schools is less developed but, through successful events such as the professional training day for secondary teachers and modern languages departments and European Day of Languages, there is evidence of good progress.
71. There is very imaginative and creative teaching of geography in Year 9 through French; the school is part of a national pilot project and the only one to work with primary schools.
72. The school works with its local community by offering evening classes in French and Spanish and working with Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) to develop resources for the teaching of

citizenship and providing language training for staff and volunteers. The school makes a major contribution to teacher training through its links with higher education institutes and works with national agencies to disseminate good practice. There are very good links with other European countries such as France, Germany, Spain, Romania and Finland, including internal projects. By working with a school in Burkina Faso, the curriculum is enhanced through global and multi-racial links. There are some excellent links established through information and communication technology, such as video conferencing with Finland.

73. The specialist status of the school is now well established. The languages department works successfully with some curriculum areas but the impact on the core subjects and other subjects is more limited. There is an impressive range of extra-curricular activities and trips organised for all age groups in the school. These motivate students and help them to understand the purpose of learning a foreign language.
74. The quality of the leadership of the school's special status is very good; the manager is very creative, enthusiastic and committed to the success of the school.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of Year 9, girls achieve less well than boys.
- Standards at the end of Year 11 are now improving so that they are close to national expectations.
- Teachers are committed to helping their students to do well and relationships are good.
- Marking and informal assessment, although satisfactory, lack consistency across the department.
- The day-to-day management of the department is smooth. The shared leadership promotes good teamwork.
- A major strength of the department is teachers' very good command of mathematics.

Commentary

72. Students' attainment in mathematics when they enter the school is below average, and generally below that in English and science. Results in the national tests for Year 9 have been consistently below, or well below average, over several years, and in 2002 students' rate of progress was below average for schools with a similar starting point. In 2003, results improved to levels similar to the 2002 national average. However, girls achieve less well than boys by the end of Year 9, partly as a result of their lower attainment on entry. The overall gap between boys' and girls' attainment is much wider in mathematics than in science and English but for students who are gifted mathematically there is no significant difference.
73. Standards in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were close to the national average. The 2003 results were lower than the national figures both for the higher grades, A* to C, and for the proportion of the students gaining A* to G grades. Mathematics was a net contributor to the whole-school five A+ to C grades. Boys achieved more than girls in 2002 but the gap narrowed in 2003, partly reflecting the narrower gap within that cohort at the end of Year 9. Departmental analysis of the results indicates that students in the average range made slower progress than their peers over their GCSE course. Students with special educational needs or who are at the early stages of learning English generally make satisfactory progress.
74. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Year 9 are close to the national average. Achievement in lessons is generally in line with expectations, and the work in the students' books reflects steady progress across most areas of mathematics, particularly numeracy.

Numerical skills develop satisfactorily across the early years so that higher-attaining students extend such processes into good manipulative algebra skills. Work on shape and space is sound, with higher-attaining groups of students achieving well, as in their work on enlargements in a Year 9 lesson. However, in lower and middle groups, graphicacy skills are underdeveloped and diagrams as well as written work are often poorly presented. Students' written work at this stage of the year reveals very little emphasis on tasks using and applying mathematics or encouraging data-handling skills. Some students who are able mathematically have difficulty in interpreting questions expressed in words because of their weak language skills.

75. Although many students, particularly the most able mathematicians, make the expected progress from Year 9 to the end of Year 11, some students in the average range fail to obtain expected grades. They mainly experience difficulties in giving reasoned explanations for answers, and in questions involving proof. Students' data-handling skills, particularly interpretative skills, do not support GCSE coursework sufficiently. However, the introduction of GCSE statistics in Year 10, for able students in the first instance, has begun to address these issues. In a Year 10 statistics lesson, students shared successfully a very good model of a project. Generally, the work in lessons for Year 10 provides appropriate challenge for students. Year 11 were occupied with mock examinations. As a result, little of their work was readily available. However, a sample of their completed mock examination papers shows that, for students in lower-attaining groups, areas of mathematics in everyday use were more clearly understood. For example, students were secure in reading a timetable or in interpreting how long a driver stopped for a break. They showed genuine confusion, however, in the use of some mathematical terminology and in interpreting statistical and other diagrams. Students in the average attainment range showed good facility in ordering numbers and in simple manipulative algebra. Higher-order numerical skills, however, such as decimal multiplication and averages from frequency tables, proved challenging. For students in the upper attainment range, work at grade A or A* involving proof, vectors and indices was not well understood. Nevertheless, these students showed good pattern spotting skills and were readily able to find algebraic generalisations.
76. The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall. Relationships are very good and all teachers are committed to helping students achieve of their best. Although the best lessons are well structured, not all students benefit from carefully prepared lessons that have clear and precise learning outcomes. As a result some students learn less well than they should. In such lessons, students lose interest in their work and fail to concentrate well on tasks. Most teachers manage challenging behaviour well but in some classes, such behaviour leads to insufficient opportunities for students to give extended oral responses to explain their thinking. Not all teachers, particularly with younger year groups, differentiate work sufficiently to match students' needs, including those students who have individual education plans. A major strength of the department is teachers' very good command of mathematics.
77. The use of day-to-day assessment in mathematics is satisfactory but there are some deficiencies. All teachers set homework frequently and regularly. Students often receive helpful and immediate oral feedback on their work in lessons and there are examples of good quality diagnostic marking that enables students to improve their work. Some teachers fail to check individual students' progress at intervals in lessons, and miss opportunities for correcting errors and misconceptions at an early stage.
78. The sound leadership of the department is shared between two experienced teachers, and this has successfully encouraged good teamwork across the department. The day-to-day management of the department is smooth. Currently, the heads of department are very well supported by members of the mathematics team, particularly in the re-writing of curriculum planning and in the implementation of a data system to track students' progress. There is an interesting programme of curriculum enrichment. Nevertheless, until recently the department had not made a fast enough adjustment to the latest GCSE examination requirements, particularly for the data-handling project. While the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the

department are satisfactory, not enough is done to develop a wider range of teaching and learning approaches so that students experience consistently good teaching.

79. Since the last inspection, the progress made by the mathematics department is satisfactory. Standards are now improving in Years 7 to 9. Teaching has remained satisfactory although there is less that is good. The use of information and communication technology resources is more carefully orchestrated across the department. However, the link between whole-school unsatisfactory attendance and students' attainment in mathematics has not been fully analysed.

Mathematics across the curriculum

80. There is satisfactory provision within mathematics to develop students' numeracy skills alongside other aspects of the subject. However, students have too few opportunities to use these skills effectively across other subject areas. Students' mathematical competence supports work adequately in English, art and music. In a Year 9 art lesson, students transformed shapes accurately on a grid to make two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional shapes appropriately. In geography, the department handbook gives clear guidance to teachers on data handling skills. Year 10 students use their knowledge of graphical representation of data well in their work on population. In Year 7, however, students' response to interpreting data tables is less consistently good. In design and technology, students do not readily apply their numeracy skills in design work or to measuring accurately. In younger year groups, students' numeracy skills do not adequately support their work in science. Many students following GCSE science courses apply their knowledge of graphs well in recording experimental work. Some, however, fail to understand the importance of labelling graphs accurately.
81. The school's numeracy policy is still in draft form and not all departments have fully integrated numeracy into schemes of work. There is insufficient written guidance to teachers on the use of consistent methods across the curriculum. Some staff training has taken place and further work is planned. However, there is little monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the students' numeracy skills in other subject areas. This cross-curricular aspect is under-developed.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good progress and final attainment in national tests by last year's Year 9.
- Improved progress and attainment by current Years 10 and 11.
- Diverse groups achieve equally well.
- Lack of consistency of students' progress and attainment year on year.
- More could be asked of high-attaining students.

Commentary

82. The standards attained in science have swung up and down in recent years. By the end of Year 9 in 2002 results were below average, compared both to schools nationally and to schools with a similar intake. In 2003 the results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were much better, and are in line with 2002 national averages. The progress of these students, since intake, has been much better than that of the previous Year 9 cohort. GCSE examination results in 2002 were above national averages for both the GCSE courses. These students made good progress over the two years of their single and double science GCSE courses. GCSE results for 2003 are significantly below those of 2002, for both courses. The progress made by these students was below expectations.

83. Current standards are more consistent. Students in the current Years 7, 8 and 9 are attaining in line with the levels reached last year, in 2003. These students are making good overall progress. The progress made by the current Year 11 is better than it was for last year's cohort. They have made satisfactory progress from the starting point at the end of their Year 9 in 2002. At times more could be asked of high-attaining students of all ages. A strength in the provision is that diverse groups achieve equally well, specifically boys and girls, students with learning difficulties, those with English as an additional language, and different ethnic groups.
84. The quality of both teaching and learning is satisfactory; it is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory with Years 10 to 11. The level of work demanded from students in Years 10 and 11 varies more than the level asked of Years 7, 8 and 9. For Years 10 and 11 some teachers set demanding work whilst others settle for useful but less challenging work. Students of all ages respond well to high expectations, in both work rate and behaviour. When the work is easier significant numbers of students drift into off-task activity. In the rare instances of unsatisfactory teaching, some students become lazy and disorderly, especially boys. Teaching to Years 7, 8 and 9 is better and includes some excellent practice. Students are led to concentrate well and work hard. Overall strengths in teaching are that expert teachers make points clearly and ensure variety and interest in lessons. Students are given plenty of feedback in lessons about how to improve. Generally there is too little use of resources such as texts and aids to presentation. More detailed planning is required for all years so that high-attaining students are regularly set different, harder tasks.
85. The leadership and management of science provision are good. The quality of teaching is monitored and sensible steps are taken to tackle inconsistencies. Teachers and managers have accurate data about students' progress. They use this data very well, for example, giving precise guidance to students about how to improve. Students lack ready access to information and communication technology but this is because of under-investment at whole-school level. Overall the quality of provision for science is as it was at the time of the last inspection. A key strength is that good steps are now being taken to reverse the recent fall in GCSE examination results whilst maintaining the recent recovery in results attained in tests at the end of Year 9.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- For the majority of students standards are too low.
- Some students are not taught aspects of the National Curriculum.
- Teaching in specialist ICT lessons is good.
- Students taking specialist courses in Year 10 achieve well.
- There has been a lack of urgency in addressing problems in ICT.
- Co-ordination of teaching ICT skills across the curriculum is not developed.

Commentary

86. Standards in 2003 GNVQ were well below the national average for 2002 and students achieved below what was expected. Staffing difficulties impacted on students' under-performance.
87. Among current students, standards overall are below average. However, in Year 7 standards are average because students have discrete ICT lessons taught by specialist teachers. Standards of students in Year 10, who have opted for a new specialist ICT course, are average too.

88. Students in Year 10 ICT examination classes have a satisfactory grasp of writing and embedding macros in Word documents. Higher-attaining students have a good understanding of HTML code in web pages. They can write a simple relational database and generate appropriate reports. Given that students entered the course with below average ICT skills, their achievement is good and this is due to the good teaching they receive. The poor attendance of some students is hindering their achievement.
89. Year 7 students can use simple animation to enhance their PowerPoint presentations and they select appropriate clip art. Only the higher-attaining students give enough consideration to the needs of their target audience when they plan their work. Students have a good understanding of logos and can use a computer to draw a simple logo well. Students are making satisfactory progress.
90. Standards reached by all other students are below average because they are usually taught ICT by non-specialist teachers. Additionally, they learn their computer skills through a wide variety of subjects and this approach is not well co-ordinated. As a result some students are not taught all aspects of ICT while others do not cover work to a sufficient depth. Students' word processing skills, web research and their knowledge of using computers in control are average. Their appreciation of databases, spreadsheets and graphics is often well below average. Students make too little progress overall and their achievement is unsatisfactory.
91. Teaching and learning in discrete ICT lessons are good. They are very good in Year 10 examination classes. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to focus on the essential concepts. They are enthusiastic about their subject and this inspires students' interest. Teachers make good use of the digital projector to demonstrate techniques, accelerating students' learning of computer skills. Students are encouraged to experiment and think for themselves and this is developing their confidence and independence well. Students' learning is limited by restricted resources; many Year 7 students have to share a computer during practical work. Students' attitudes and behaviour are generally good but in a minority of Year 7 lessons the behaviour of a few students takes too much of the teacher's time and hampers the learning of the rest of the class.
92. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because planning has not been robust enough to ensure that the National Curriculum is taught. The management by the new subject leader is good and he is already having a positive impact on standards in ICT lessons. He is contributing effectively to the school's plans to expand ICT. Recently introduced assessment procedures are beginning to have a positive impact on tracking the progress of students.
93. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. While teaching and students' attitudes remain good, the low standards highlighted in the last report have not improved.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

94. This is well established and many subjects such as French, geography, design and technology and mathematics are making a positive contribution to students' ICT learning. Research using the web and word processing are widely practised and students are making increasing use of PowerPoint presentations to communicate their ideas. Spreadsheets are used in some geography lessons and students use computers to control small machines in design and technology. Most departments have clear plans for teaching ICT but these are not always implemented because access to computers is difficult or because teachers are not confident in their own ICT skills. Teachers are making good use of the growing number of digital projectors and interactive white boards in classrooms to engage students, particularly at the start of lessons.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography, history and religious education, which were inspected and reported on in full.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement overall are not high enough.
- Students' good attitudes and behaviour lead to effective learning.
- Very good lesson planning and delivery ensure that most students' learning is systematically reinforced.
- The new assessment process provides better information for monitoring students' progress and for improving achievement.
- There is one very limited fieldwork opportunity in Years 7 to 9 and this does not provide a secure basis for geographical enquiry or investigation.
- Some learning activities are not always closely enough matched to every student's needs and this leads to a lack of challenge for some.

Commentary

95. The Year 9 teacher assessments in 2003 indicate that students were working well below the national expectation. Current students are working below the national expectation. Standards are improving because since September the improved assessment process has begun to have a positive impact upon both teaching and learning. Present standards in Year 9 indicate satisfactory achievement. The GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average. Geography is a very popular subject and there are no significant differences between boys' and girls' performance. The 2003 results were similar to those in the previous year. This is the third year that standards have declined, although in relation to their starting points students achieved satisfactorily. No Year 11 classes or work were seen, so judgments are based on standards in the current Year 10. Standards are below the national average, but recent changes to the GCSE syllabus, to the coursework element and to the assessment processes are beginning to have a positive impact. Currently the achievement of students in Year 10 is satisfactory.
96. By Year 9, students acquire good geographical skills, including the effective analysis of maps, diagrams and photographs, good understanding of different graphs and the effective interpretation of data. There is a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills, both of which contribute well to the students' understanding of the subject. Currently, in Year 7, there is a very limited fieldwork experience, on the school campus, that provides a basic introduction to survey techniques. By Year 10, students can effectively identify unsustainable resource use and can contrast usage in more and less economically developed countries. A few students lack oral confidence although their notes are well written. Their written understanding of the theories of Malthus and Boserup is good.
97. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years, with some very good features in Years 7 to 9. Most lessons are characterised by the teachers' very good planning and their organised delivery, with insistence on very high standards of behaviour. These methods provide a secure basis for good learning and students work with considerable focus especially on their written tasks. The most successful lessons have good opportunities for paired and group work and teachers use a wide variety of strategies, including effective questioning, good analysis of data and opportunities for student discussion. The new assessment process provides better information for monitoring student progress and for improving student achievement. In a few lessons the work does not match closely enough the individual needs of the student, especially

the higher-attaining students. These lessons are teacher-led with limited opportunities for direct student involvement. Overall students have good attitudes towards the subject.

98. Both leadership and management are good. The new head of department has introduced several changes, including coursework support classes, clearer National Curriculum targets and student self-assessments. The development plan has the key objective of raising standards in Years 10 and 11. Teamwork is good and the department is organised efficiently. Now there is a greater range of information and communication technology themes, but good access to computer rooms is an issue. Resources are satisfactory, with many worksheets but with a more limited range of investigation and enquiry materials. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory as there is good teaching and the curriculum and assessment processes are improved. However, standards and achievement overall are not high enough and the fieldwork experience in the lower school is not good enough.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good.
- Attainment is rising.
- Assessment is used consistently well to track progress.
- Good support is given for the development of literacy skills.
- Attainment in Year 11 remains below the national average.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to keep records of their own progress.

Commentary

99. Attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2003, based on assessments carried out by teachers, was in line with the national average for students attaining at the expected level and also at the higher levels. This represents considerable improvement over 2002 when attainment was well below average. The attainment of students currently in Year 9 is likely to be in line with the national average by the end of the year.
100. Students enter the school with attainment in English that is in line with the national average and with very varied experience of history. Evidence suggests that their attainment in history at this stage is below what is seen nationally and so for students to reach the national average by the end of Year 9 represents good achievement. They make good progress at the start of Year 7 in moving on quickly from standards that are too low for students of this age. During Years 7 to 9 students make good progress in the development of the full range of key historical skills, in the use of historical detail and in the understanding and interpretation at a simple level of historical source material.
101. There has been a considerable improvement over the past four years in attainment in GCSE examinations from a previously very low level. In 2002, results, although showing improvement, were well below average. In 2003, there was a further considerable improvement but the percentage of students attaining grades A* to C, although much closer to the national average, remained below it. The percentage of students gaining grades A* and A was slightly higher than was seen nationally in 2002.
102. Although there was only a limited amount of evidence available during the inspection on which to judge current attainment in Year 11, it indicates that students are on course to attain close to the national average. Students in Year 11 started their course in 2002 with prior attainment in history that was well below the national average and they are achieving well. The achievement of students in Year 10 is also good. They make particularly good progress in the way in which

they record and organise their work using notes and diagrams, and in the planning and structuring of their written answers, using historical detail to justify their ideas. They also make good progress in the interpretation of more demanding historical sources.

103. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers plan a good range of activities to meet the needs of students across the attainment range and particularly good support is given to students with problems with literacy. Generally teachers have clear objectives for the learning that is to take place and these are explained to students, who know what to expect and what is expected of them. Teachers give clear explanations, backed by very good subject knowledge, and this increases students' confidence in their ability to succeed with tasks. Teachers make good use of questioning and students rise to this challenge by thinking hard and showing keenness to participate. Marking is regular but inconsistent in the amount of advice it offers. Teachers sometimes make insufficient use of the national strategy for students in Years 7 to 9 and spend a little too much time on lengthy introductions to lessons, leaving insufficient time for the interesting activities planned.
104. The leadership and management of the fairly recently appointed head of department are good. There is a clear commitment to raising attainment and to offering support to students identified as being likely to underachieve or who show strong potential. A priority has been the production of the very good curriculum planning for Years 10 and 11, although curriculum planning for Years 7 to 9, in place for some years, is inadequate and has been identified as a priority for development. The good policy and procedures for assessment are carried out consistently and teachers are thus able to compile good records for the tracking of students' progress. Although students are involved in the assessment of their own work, this does not happen frequently enough for them to be totally aware of how well they are doing and they do not keep records of their own progress. Students are offered planned opportunities to develop their information and communication technology skills through their study of history, although these are limited by the restricted access to information and communication technology facilities.
105. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Although standards at GCSE have risen over the past four years, before this there was a marked drop in attainment and so overall they are not much closer to the national average than at the time of the last inspection. The previously good quality of teaching has been maintained.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching results in good achievement in the GCSE short course at the end of Year 11.
- Effective methods of teaching literacy are used well in enhancing students' understanding of religious issues.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the students.
- Methods of assessment and collection of data are not rigorous enough to monitor the achievement of students over time.
- Access to information and communication technology facilities is limited.

Commentary

106. All students in Years 10 and 11 follow the GCSE short course, and a small cohort of ten students in Year 11 undertook the full course last year. Results for both the GCSE short course and full course were close to the national average in terms of passes at grades A* to C in 2002. In 2003, GCSE results were above national expectations. This is evidence of good achievement in religious education by the end of Year 11.

107. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the end of Year 9 are slightly below the expectations of the Wandsworth Agreed Syllabus. This represents satisfactory achievement, given students' levels of attainment on entry to the school. The positive attitude of students to the study of religion is a significant factor in their progress. Most students are acquiring a good body of knowledge about the world faiths that are represented in the school. Students recognise the range of religious and secular beliefs concerning the creation of the world. In Year 7 for example, they have had some opportunity to consider personal responses to questions about the meaning of life and the existence of God. In the unit on persecution and prejudice, Year 8 students are invited to reflect on powerful moral questions in the context of Jewish experiences of the Holocaust: *'If God exists and He is good and all powerful, how could He have allowed such terrible suffering?'*. However, insufficient opportunities are provided to detail their responses in writing. Standards by the end of Year 11 are broadly in line with the national average, which represents satisfactory achievement.
108. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The very good subject knowledge of specialist teachers enables students to understand and link concepts more easily. Good background knowledge stimulates students' interest, promoting a good Year 10 discussion on assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia. Teaching is less effective in Year 9 where persistent low level disruption stirred up by a handful of students, mainly boys, creates barriers to effective learning. In most lessons, however, teachers manage behaviour well so that all can concentrate. Thorough question and answer sessions test and confirm previous learning. By the use of display cards showing key concepts and words, teachers stress the importance of the correct use of subject language, thereby helping the development of literacy skills. Writing frames for developing an argument support the work of students with weaker literacy skills in Years 10 and 11. Higher-attaining students in Years 10 and 11 demonstrate that they can write fluently, supporting their judgements with reason. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, responding well to the support of teachers and learning support staff.
109. Leadership and management of the department are good. The opportunity for all students to achieve a qualification in religious education, designed to meet their needs, is a strength of the department. The head of department has built an effective team, which makes a very good contribution to the moral and spiritual development of the students. Assessment and monitoring in Years 10 and 11 are generally good, but practice across the department in Years 7 to 9 is less consistent. There is no central departmental record of assessment to enable the monitoring of students' progress across the years. Day-to-day marking is generally regular and encouraging, but it often contains insufficient information regarding how work may be improved. Moreover, there is evidence that students do not correct errors or catch up any work that they have missed. Good progress has been made on redrafting Years 10 and 11 curriculum planning, and the department handbook is in the process of being updated. The use of information and communication technology is being developed and students use it occasionally for research and presentation. At present the range of activities is limited, however, due to difficulties of access to the networked suite.
110. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards are still average at the end of Year 11 but teaching is good and focuses on students' learning. Assessment has been developed but is still not yet used to monitor progress. There is now an established head of department who has a clear sense of direction. He leads an effective team that is poised for a phase of further improvement.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of department, supported by staff, has a very clear vision of what is achievable and what has yet to be achieved.
- The remodelling of the Years 7 to 9 curriculum planning has provided a good framework to raise standards and achievement.
- Newly qualified and less experienced staff are receiving very good guidance and support.
- The presentation of folder work, especially by students of average ability and below, does not sufficiently convey their design intentions.
- Staff expertise is not yet sufficiently developed in the initiatives that are changing the nature of design and technology education.

Commentary

111. Standards and achievement are currently satisfactory overall. They are satisfactory by the end of Year 9 and good by the end of Year 11. GCSE examinations results, A* to C grades, for 2003 are slightly below national figures for resistant materials, in-line for food, and well above for textiles. However, A* to G grades are in-line with national figures, with girls' performance significantly better than boys'. At the end of Year 9, there is no significant gender difference in achievement. However, girls show better attention to detail in the presentation of their design work in folders, but less so in the quality of their made outcomes. GCSE project work shows accuracy and students of all abilities take a pride in the quality of their work. In Years 7 to 9, outcomes are satisfactory but there is an inconsistency across the ability range. This is because students show care and attention in their making, but many, especially those of average and below average ability, lack the basic skills to work accurately. Students are aware of their weaknesses but are not sure how to improve their work. Folder work is often incomplete. It does not sufficiently show how students develop their designs from initial ideas to final outcome. Poor attendance by many students affects the completion of work. The planned strategy to produce project booklets should address this and raise standards in designing and making across the entire ability range. Students work safely and they show respect for property and each other. They enjoy the subject and meet challenges and teacher expectations. The 'designer of the month' display of work by students who have worked well, which is aimed at all students, is a good strategy for celebrating success.
112. Curriculum planning for Years 7 to 9 provides good projects for control technology, including electronics, resistant materials and graphics. There are good links to other cultures, for example, the Mexican hat project, and to the environment, for example, the moisture sensor project. At GCSE students may choose from graphics, resistant materials or textiles, which are staffed by specialist teachers who have a good understanding of examination requirements. There is no food technology because of difficulty in recruiting a teacher. The projects provide satisfactory opportunities for students to use CAD/CAM. These opportunities have not yet been extended to make greater use of modern manufacturing techniques, smart materials and developments in electronics and communications technology.
113. Teaching and learning are good. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is never less than satisfactory and it is often good. In Year 10, teaching is at least good and often very good. Year 11 teaching was not observed during the inspection because of mock examinations. Teachers set clear objectives, of which students are made aware at the start of lessons. Students are given good guidance on what is required, with realistic deadlines for completing tasks. There is sufficient work in the lessons to keep students focused, maintain good behaviour and to create an ordered working environment. Students respond well to their teachers and actively seek advice on how to improve their work. Students with special educational needs are given good support through the use of learning support assistants. Teaching can be improved by considering differentiated starting points in projects to raise the quality of made outcomes produced by average and below average students, and also by making National Curriculum attainment levels

more explicit to students for each project. Students of all abilities are not aware of what is required to achieve the levels indicated by the assessment of their work, in order to reach higher levels. Staff expertise in the initiatives that are changing the nature of design and technology education needs to be developed.

114. Leadership is very good and management is good. The high turnover of staff in the department has affected standards, which have fluctuated since the last inspection. The recent appointment of the new acting head of department has quickly resulted in secure systems being put into place, for example, the new curriculum planning for Years 7 to 9, and good team building. This shows that there is a determination to raise standards. There is a very clear vision of what needs to be done to achieve this. That the full effectiveness of the new systems has yet to be evaluated is acknowledged and understood by all staff in the department. Assessment data are being collected as students complete their projects, and this is transferred to staff as students move to their next projects. However, the data are not sufficiently used to identify how individual students can improve their work. The three newly qualified teachers in the department are supported very well and they receive good guidance from experienced staff, who act as very good role models. They have quickly become integrated into the department, are valued, and are encouraged to take an active part in raising standards.
115. Health and safety are addressed in all areas, with clear risk assessments to meet statutory requirements. Specialist rooms are well equipped, and tools are maintained in good condition. There is very good technician support, which helps the effectiveness of the teaching staff.
116. Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection. It has varied in the intervening period of time as a consequence of staff turnover and the impact on standards. The new staff appointments and the determination to raise standards have resulted in a stable department, which is now well placed to make good improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and leads to students' good achievement.
- The very good management of the subject has succeeded in raising standards.
- Teachers plan their lessons well.
- Students do not gain a sufficient understanding of the art of other cultures.
- Students have little opportunity to use information and communication technology (ICT) in the subject.

Commentary

117. In work seen, standards match national expectations by Year 9. This represents good achievement for students, including those with special educational needs, in relation to when they started at the school. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 for 2002 were below average for boys and girls, but in the assessments for 2003 they matched the national average. By Year 9, most students have well-established skills. There is strength in drawing from observation, in composition and in painting. They have gained some understanding of specific art movements because their work is focused mainly on the development of western art. However, students' use of information and communication technology remains poor. This is chiefly because there is restricted access to appropriate equipment.

118. Results at GCSE in 2002 were significantly below the national average. However, they were very much improved in 2003 when the proportion of A* to C grades matched the 2002 national average and a high proportion gained the top two grades. By Year 11, students make extended studies from broad common starting points. They explore personal ideas and important issues, making links to the work of artists. Work is well-presented and annotated, reflecting the generally positive attitudes and commitment of students. Substantial progress is made over the course and achievement is good. The standard of work seen during inspection was above average. However, it was not possible to observe Year 11 lessons and the work sample was restricted.
119. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good; some very good and some unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Particularly good features of the teaching are the secure subject knowledge of teachers and thorough planning of work. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, the challenging and disruptive behaviour of some students was not well managed so that the progress of the whole group suffered.
120. The quality of subject leadership and management is very good and improvements have been sustained since the previous inspection. Performance data is carefully reviewed and effective action taken. The work of this large department and the quality of its teaching are regularly monitored and developed through regular lesson observation, feedback and meetings. However, the curriculum content lacks breadth and balance. The model of the linear development of western art does not address sufficiently the art and practices of other cultures. One of the rooms is inadequate and restricts the range of possible work. The National Curriculum requirement that students should be able to use information and communication technology in art and design is not met. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make very effective use of information and communication technology in delivering the curriculum.
- There is good provision for instrumental lessons.
- Very occasionally, a few students in Year 9 are poorly behaved.

Commentary

121. GCSE results for 2002 were well below the national average. There was a good improvement in the 2003 results, with more students gaining higher grades.
122. For current students, standards by the end of Year 9 are below average. Students enter school with variable musical experiences, but their achievement is satisfactory. By Year 9, some students show good rhythmic and vocal skills. They compose short pieces using given note patterns and play their ideas well to each other. They evaluate what they do and make suggestions for improvement. A few students, however, have limited keyboard skills and find difficulty in accurately locating the notes. Although students understand some musical terms, they do not always make reference to these when answering questions. Most students show satisfactory attitudes and work well together. A few students, however, take time to settle down at the beginning of lessons and do not always respond quickly to teachers' instructions. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve as well as other students. More musically-able students make good progress, both in lessons and in extra-curricular provision.

123. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average and students achieve well. Many students show confidence as performers, both as soloists and as ensemble members. They understand basic chord structures and how different musical techniques might be used in a composition. They use information and communication technology well to devise and refine their ideas. They answer written questions about short musical extracts and show some skill at identifying the key features. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress. More musically-able students make very good progress in all aspects of the course.
124. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers make skilled use of information and communication technology resources to aid students' learning. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, the teacher gave a Power Point presentation and used other resources to demonstrate the way a composer had portrayed a scene of destruction. This gave students a clearer understanding of how they might use sound effects when creating music for a short film score. Although teachers generally manage students well, there is occasional time wasting whilst they deal with poor student behaviour by Year 9 students. There is satisfactory provision for developing students' literacy and mathematical skills and for students to use music technology.
125. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There have been staffing problems since the last inspection. The head of department has been in post for two years and has already improved the overall provision. Assessment procedures are in place and are satisfactory. Instrumental lessons are available for students in all years. Students have taken part in concerts both in and out of school. They perform in the local schools' Christmas concert and in the summer festival. The African drumming group achieved success at the National Youth Music Festival and the steel band played at the opening of a shopping centre. At present there is a 'Sing Africa' project, which involves Year 7 students and Year 6 students from nearby primary schools.
126. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Although standards by Year 9 have remained the same, there has been a slight decline in standards by Year 11. Previously some unsatisfactory teaching was observed. None was evident during this inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant minority of girls underachieve, resulting in standards that are lower than expected.
- Competitive sport for girls is unsatisfactory, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Students obtain above-average GCSE examination results.
- A minority of boys reach the highest standards in sport.
- Assessment procedures are not informing teaching and learning sufficiently well.

Commentary

127. Provision is unsatisfactory because of school staffing and organisational difficulties. At the time of the inspection, a physical education teacher was deployed to cover a vacancy elsewhere in the school and a supply teacher took over the teacher's timetable for about half a term. Since boys outnumber girls by two to one, physical education is taught in predominantly mixed groups.
128. Standards overall are average. Standards reached by boys in core lessons are average across all areas of the National Curriculum and this represents satisfactory achievement. A significant minority of girls underachieve and their standards are too low. Boys are strong on

competitive sport, where they have notable success, especially in football. A significant minority of boys are selected to play for local clubs and other prestigious teams. Girls rarely fulfil their potential in games as there are no school teams in Years 10 and 11, although a few participate in individual competitive sports. GCSE examination results were above the national average in GCSE in 2002 and follow a similar pattern in 2003. Progress since the last report has been good on the issues raised – curriculum and lesson planning, greater challenge and knowledge of health-related fitness – but unsatisfactory overall because of the decline in standards reached by girls.

129. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. Teachers know their subject well and this contributes significantly to standards reached at GCSE. Planning work to meet the needs of all students strengthens teaching, enabling lower ability students and those with special educational needs to make steady gains. In games, such as football, the needs of girls are seldom fully met in mixed groups because they are unable to compete on an equal basis with boys in the context of a game. Consequently, they tend to become disheartened and withdraw. Good discipline ensures that students learn in a safe environment, develop good basic skills and, in most lessons, learn new work. The attitudes, work and behaviour of classes taught by cover teachers have declined and a large group of girls in Year 9 have become disaffected.
130. Leadership is satisfactory with potential for further development. The departmental head has correctly identified priorities for development. Management of the department is good. Good quality schemes of work and assessment procedures are in place, which have considerable potential for driving up standards. Although a wide variety of activities are taught, continuity of learning is depressed by deficiencies of whole-school subject allocation. There are imaginative plans for the use of information communication technology but very little evidence of its use in practice. On-site facilities for games are unsatisfactory since the school has no fields, but good use is made of off-site facilities.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education and citizenship are delivered as part of a combined course in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 to 11 Citizenship is taught as part of a GCSE modular short course.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching staff show positive commitment to the development of PSHE and citizenship.
- Good opportunities exist for students to show initiative and take responsibility for their personal development.
- A well-considered start has been made to implementing citizenship through the GCSE modular short course in Years 10 and 11, which includes imaginative modules and makes use of staff expertise.
- Students are not helped to take responsibility for their own learning.
- There is too little emphasis on teaching speaking and listening skills to help students present their work and share their ideas.

Commentary

131. Standards are satisfactory by the ends of Years 9 and 11. Students understand what is required in lessons and they are positive about the subject's role in their personal development. They do not clearly recognise the value of the subject in developing initiative. In Years 10 to 11 students especially enjoy the global citizenship module, at GCSE, and the work on stereotypes, in Years 7 to 9. Overall, students take insufficient responsibility for their own learning and their achievements are based solely on teacher-directed activity. In lessons, they quickly complete

the tasks set, but there is sometimes insufficient work to occupy them for the whole lesson. Students are encouraged to discuss and share their ideas using presentation techniques, which includes the use of ICT resources, such as PowerPoint. Students of above average ability do this well and are producing work of a high standard. However, students of average and below average ability are not achieving as well as they could. This is because they need clearer guidance with their presentation and listening skills.

132. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is never less than satisfactory and in some lessons it is good. Year 11 teaching was not observed during the inspection because of mock examinations. Teachers plan their lessons with clear learning outcomes and they teach the material with interest and enthusiasm. Activities are teacher-led with few opportunities for students to take the initiative. In lessons where there are high expectations and good challenge, students make good gains in knowledge and understanding. However, this is not always the case: when students do not have enough work their behaviour and attitudes deteriorate as the lesson proceeds. Teachers do not place enough emphasis on developing independent learning skills to raise the overall standard of students' work.
133. Leadership and management are good. A good range of opportunities exists for all students, such as the school council and overseas links. Priority has been given to developing curriculum planning for citizenship within the existing scheme for PSHE, for years 7 to 9, and as a separate subject at GCSE as a modular short course. This is a good foundation for developing opportunities for students' personal development. However, currently there are gaps, for example in communication and presentation skills, which are not yet filled through curriculum mapping with other subjects. In planning the curriculum, a well considered start has been made to implementing citizenship through the GCSE modular short course in Years 10 and 11, including imaginative modules. Planning involves most staff, who recognise the importance of developing students' ability to lead independent lives and to become responsible citizens. Staff leading the subject understand the need for this as a priority when they evaluate the effectiveness of the existing provision.
134. Since the last inspection a sound start has been made on the provision of education in citizenship. The school is providing good opportunities for students to become informed citizens.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	9	100	90.0	55.6	42.7	47.8	39.0
Biology	6	50.0	81.6	16.7	33.2	16.7	33.2
Chemistry	6	83.3	84.8	0	36.9	23.3	35.2
Drama	5	80.0	94.6	20.0	37.6	30.0	39.1
English Literature	9	77.8	94.4	0	37.9	23.3	38.9
Geography	6	100	88.3	16.7	36.4	26.7	36.3

Mathematics	10	50.0	74.2	10.0	34.3	17.0	31.3
Other Social Studies	13	46.2	83.2	15.4	32.5	13.8	33.6
Sociology	7	42.9	83.7	14.3	33.6	14.3	33.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	17	100	96.1	47.1	48.7	89.4	85.1
Biology	10	100	91.6	20.0	36.3	70.0	74.1
Chemistry	10	90.0	94.0	30.0	45.9	70.0	81.1
Drama	20	100	98.1	65.0	41.5	97.0	82.9
Economics	20	100	96.2	40.0	45.8	80.0	83.1
English literature	29	100	98.5	48.3	43.7	91.7	84.3
French	12	100	96.2	50.0	46.1	86.7	83.0
Design and technology	18	100	95.3	83.3	35.5	107.8	76.5
Geography	18	100	97.1	11.1	40.5	74.4	80.9
History	13	100	97.1	53.8	41.0	89.2	81.2
Mathematics	19	89.5	93.3	26.3	52.2	67.4	84.7
Other social studies	5	100	94.3	80.0	38.9	108.0	77.7
Physics	9	100	92.8	11.1	42.8	73.3	78.6
Sociology	9	100	95.4	11.1	39.6	64.4	79.1

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
<i>Business</i>	8	47.1	87.1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Information Technology VQ</i>	8	23.5	84.3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning based on authoritative subject knowledge, used well to consolidate and extend students' understanding.
- Very good achievement, founded on high teacher expectations and students' mutual challenge and support.
- Above average standards, well maintained over several years.
- Very well focussed advice to students on their strengths, weaknesses, and how to improve.
- Teaching to extend students' independent thinking skills is good in Year 13 but less so in Year 12.

Commentary

135. Standards are good in examinations and in work seen during the inspection. Over several years, A-level results have exceeded the national average overall. The proportion of students gaining higher grades (A and B) is good in comparison with national trends.
136. In Year 12, students acquire a good grasp of key events and characters in demanding plays such as 'Hamlet'. They annotate texts well, using skills acquired earlier to locate key ideas, and they identify specific techniques and quotations that reveal and extend insights into character and theme. The teachers' well-focussed questioning, based on a through command of specialist knowledge, enables students to take account of a challenging range of possible interpretations. In Year 13, students deploy their own perceptions and adapt insights well from other critical authorities to enhance their understanding of what they study. They seize on new ideas and challenges confidently, testing out and extending each other's suggestions in stimulating discussions. Academically authoritative probing and prompting by the teacher extend the scope and ambition of their deliberations.
137. Teaching and learning are very good. Written assignments are marked conscientiously and students benefit from very good advice on how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve. Opportunities to promote independent thinking and communication are much better developed in Year 13 than in Year 12, where opportunities are missed.
138. Students achieve very well. They apply a high level of concentration and commitment and their serious approach to academic study is an eager response to demanding expectations by the teacher. They appreciate difficult ideas quickly and rapidly develop an assured control and presentation of written assignments. By Year 13, achievement is further underpinned by lessons where students develop the ability to extend their own and each other's intellectual development through mutual challenge and support.
139. The subject is very well led and managed, which enables varied teaching approaches and ideas to be applied across the age range. There is good monitoring of how well students are doing, and consistently effective methods are used to give them advice on their work. This underpins good attainment over several years.

MATHEMATICS

The inspection covered the A2-level and AS-level examination courses offered by the school: pure mathematics, mechanics, and statistics modules. Provision for students re-sitting GCSE mathematics was sampled, standards of work seen in the mechanics class confirm good progress with very good teaching observed. Students' manipulative algebra skills and sound recall of earlier learning supported their progress well. In a Year 12 further mathematics class studying statistics, students made clear connections with previous learning.

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is on occasion very good and seeks to develop students' mathematical understanding. Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- Students in Year 12 achieve least well in some aspects of pure mathematics especially when they begin the course from a low base.
- A significant proportion of students do not achieve their target grades, particularly in AS-level examinations.
- The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

Commentary

140. Standards are average overall. The results for 2003 show that just under half of mathematics candidates obtained the higher A and B grades in the A2-level examinations, and the overall pass rate closely matched 2002 national figures. These results are an improvement on the 2002 results, which were lower than the national figures for the higher A and B grades. Students' AS-level results for 2003 are similar to the national pass rate for 2002 but with a lower proportion of higher A and B grades. AS-level students achieve well in the first pure mathematics and mechanics modules, but less well in the second pure module of the course.
141. Approximately half of the students achieved the target grades set by the school in the 2003 AS-level examination series. There was a high drop-out rate, almost 50 per cent, at the end of Year 12 from the current Year 13, mostly with good reason. Some of these students begin their AS-level mathematics courses from too low a GCSE base. A small number of able students study further mathematics and reach above-average standards in all aspects of their mathematics course.
142. Most students re-taking GCSE mathematics improved their Year 11 grades by at least one level last year. The majority of those who began the course with grade D successfully achieved a higher GCSE grade. In the lesson sampled, students were keen to participate orally in the work on percentages, and were quick to apply numerical skills to practical problems. The coursework marks of many of these students, however, are too low to support a higher GCSE grade.
143. The standards of work seen in lessons and in students' records in the current Years 12 and 13 confirm good progress for those following AS-level and A2-level courses. In each of the lessons sampled, students showed interest in their work, with some asking penetrating and perceptive questions of their teachers. Such interactions occasionally indicated surprising gaps in some able students' understanding of earlier factual information, such as the permitted range of probabilities, when applied in more complex situations.
144. The teaching seen was at least satisfactory and on occasion very good. All teachers have a very good command of mathematics and understand clearly the requirements of the examination specifications. The best lessons give careful thought to the development of the students' thinking skills, as for example, in a mechanics lesson on Newton's Laws of Motion. Students report significant help and support from their teachers but indicate their difficulties with some pure mathematics. Relationships are good and this allows able students to explore independent ideas about information provided as well as to develop good problem-solving skills.
145. The leadership of the subject is good, and the management is supported very well by an energetic and enterprising team of teachers. However, not enough has been done to bridge the gap between GCSE mathematics and AS-level courses so that all students can make sufficient progress. Too few girls take up the study of mathematics.
146. In the last inspection report, little prominence was given to post-16 mathematics. However, in spite of fluctuating standards following the introduction of AS-level courses, the department has generally maintained standards for those students completing A2-level courses. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

SCIENCE

The focus was on biology and chemistry.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well by the end of Year 13 because of the good teaching.
- The quality of leadership is good and provides a clear vision for the subject.
- Some students lack confidence in class discussion.
- Higher-attaining students in Year 12 are not sufficiently challenged to think analytically.

Commentary

147. Results in the 2003 AS and A-level examinations were in line with the 2002 national average and have remained broadly at this level over the past few years. Students come into Year 12 with standards that are broadly average. By the end of Year 13 they achieve results that are at least average and sometimes above. This represents good achievement. The department has detailed information on each individual student, which clearly demonstrates that the majority of students reach their target grades and in some cases exceed them.
148. Current standards of work are broadly in line with expectations for the courses. Students in Year 12 showed a good understanding of the role of DNA and messenger RNA in protein synthesis. They performed preliminary coursework-related practical activities involving pectinase and rennet in a mature manner, taking great care. However, some were unable to relate this successfully to wider aspects of enzyme activity. Year 13 students are achieving standards of work close to or above their expected grades. These students engaged well with genetics-related examination questions; the teacher dissected their responses and improved their understanding of genetic crosses involving alleles, which determine blood type.
149. Teaching is good overall, and is linked effectively to a good assessment process. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic and demonstrate very good subject knowledge. In-house support material for students on a dedicated website helps to prepare them well for examinations. Lessons are well planned but, in some cases, not so well resourced. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, the use of visual resources on the structure of DNA showing base pair interactions would have enhanced learning gains in the case of some students. Most lessons observed incorporated several activities that enabled students to work independently or as a group. Students answered the questions asked of them but were less confident to enter into detailed discussions. Higher attainers in Year 12 in particular are not engaged sufficiently in higher order analytical thinking. Assignments and homework for Year 13 students are marked in detail, with many constructive comments that help the students to improve. Relationships between the teachers and students, as well as among the students themselves, are very good. This gives rise to a very pleasant working atmosphere. Teachers are supportive of all the students and ensure that they all understand the work covered by asking well structured, specific questions throughout lessons. The students appreciate the support and guidance given by the teachers and the fact that the teachers are prepared to help them outside lessons.
150. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has created an effective team comprised of professionals keen to make a difference. He has put in a great deal of effort to co-ordinate and review all aspects of the subject. The department is aware of the need to maintain the assessment of students' progress, especially the lower-attaining ones, so that suitable support can be given to students who start to fall below their potential grade. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and there is now a good capacity for further success in the future.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising.
- Teaching is good.
- Students' attitudes are very positive.
- There are not enough planned opportunities for independent study.

Commentary

151. Results in the 2002 GCE A-level examination were below the national average and students generally achieved less well than expected. However, girls gained average results and their achievement was as predicted. In 2003 the results improved and were similar to the 2002 national average; in relation to their GCSE results students achieved their expected grades. These better results are due to improved teaching, students' very positive attitudes and comprehensive examination preparation. Standards in 2003 AS-level were similar to the national average for 2002 and students' progress was as expected.
152. For current students, standards are above average in Year 12, the result of the good teaching they receive. All students have a good understanding of advanced work and they relish the challenge it presents. They can manipulate formulae well but make frequent mistakes with units in their calculations. Students are making real gains over GCSE work and their achievement is good. Standards in Year 13 are below average and reflect the ability of the students. Their achievement since their AS grades is satisfactory. Students take frequent tests and the feedback they get from their teachers on their marks gives them a very clear understanding of how they can improve. However, their test answers show that, while their recall of facts and ideas is good, they find it more difficult to apply their knowledge and understanding to solve chemical problems. Students take great pride in their folders, which are well sequenced for easy revision. They really enjoy chemistry and appreciate the constructive help they receive from their teachers. Unsatisfactory attendance is hampering the progress of a minority of students.
153. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to focus the learning on the essential concepts. They are enthusiastic about their subject and this inspires students' interest. Well structured, lively debates are a feature of lessons and challenge students' thinking. Although there are some opportunities for independent research and group work, students' learning is often too reliant on the teacher.
154. Leadership and management are good. The firm commitment to raising standards is shared with the teaching team. Assessment is very well managed and test results and other data are carefully analysed and the outcomes used well when planning. Although chemistry was not featured in the last inspection, progress since then has been good.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on history but one Year 13 lesson was sampled in geography. Teaching and learning were good, with satisfactory achievement. The students had a good attitude to their studies. Some gave effective group presentations of how there are different rates of human response to various natural hazards in more and less economically developed countries. The teacher led the whole-class discussion well making useful references to the previous fieldwork experience in Year 12.

History

Provision in history is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is very high.
- Achievement is very good.
- Teaching is very good with excellent features.
- There is excellent provision for enrichment of the curriculum.
- Students show excellent attitudes.

Commentary

155. The A-level results in 2003 were very high, with the percentage of grades A and B and grades A to D being well above the 2002 national average. No student attained lower than a grade D and the average points scored by students was very high. The results at AS level were also very high. In 2002, A-level results, despite being above average, represented a slight decline in the consistently very high standards which had been reached over many years. The attainment of current students is very high in lessons, in discussion and in their written work.
156. There is a very flexible policy for entry on to the AS/A-level course and there is a wide range of prior attainment among students, including both those who have no recent experience of history and also those whose attainment at GCSE does not form a secure basis for further study. Students who start the course with lower previous attainment make very good progress to attain grades that in 2003 went no lower than a D. Those with higher previous attainment respond to the considerably increased challenge of A level by making very good progress to attain a high grade.
157. The teaching seen both in lessons and through a range of other evidence is consistently very good with some excellent features. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which gives great confidence to students. They make very good use of planned student participation in a wide variety of lesson activities in order to enhance progress. The level of challenge is consistently high and students respond very well by working hard and putting thought into their work. Excellent, extensive use is made of questioning and discussion to probe understanding and to identify areas of uncertainty. Teachers make excellent provision for students to enhance their understanding through the consideration of the ideas of numerous eminent historians and this is a particularly strong feature of students' achievement as they progress through the course. The quality of marking is very good since it offers students clear advice on how well they are progressing and what they should do to improve further.
158. The leadership and management are very good. The flexible policy of entry to the course ensures that as many students as possible have access to the considerable benefits it confers. Very good use is made of the individual strengths of the teaching team to ensure that students are offered a high quality programme. There is very good provision of a wide range of additional reading material both from the school library and from extracts and articles provided through the initiative of teachers. There is an excellent programme of extra-curricular enrichment of the basic A-level syllabus with a strong and well-founded expectation that all A-level students will participate. There are no schemes of work for A level; the school recognises this and has plans to address it.
159. Students speak warmly and appreciatively of their experience of studying history and clearly feel that this is a very 'special' experience. They are particularly aware of the high quality of teaching and of the way in which teachers transmit their enthusiasm and love for the subject. They are fully involved in the extra-curricular programme, play a leading role in its organisation and go to considerable lengths to ensure that they are able to participate. An unusually high number go on to study history or related subjects at a higher level.

160. The standards and quality of provision reported after the last inspection have been well maintained.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The inspection focus was on art and design. One lesson was sampled in drama. Teaching and learning were good. The focus was about stylised movements and how Berkoff' used these. Students successfully improvised and built a sequence of movements, which they then modified after commenting about each other's work. The teachers' detailed preparation and good expectation enabled students to achieve well, working together and evaluating their work constructively.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve high standards.
- Teaching and learning are consistently very good.
- Very good guidance and support is given to students.
- Students have very positive views of the course and the teaching.
- The timetabling of three different teachers to a group is unproductive.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) by students is not well enough developed.

Commentary

161. Results in GCE A-level examinations have been consistently well above average since the last inspection, except in 2002 when they were above average and AS results were well above. The most recent results for both AS and A level are high and likely to be well above average when national comparisons for 2003 become available. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average. Year 12 students have produced significant bodies of work in their first term. Starting with a broad theme, they have produced thoughtful examinations of artists' approaches and developed a wide range of very personal responses. Achievement is very good for both male and female students, with very significant progress from GCSE standards. Year 13 students demonstrate technical proficiency; their studies are rigorous and carried out in depth. Students' commitment to their studies is very high, demonstrated by their substantial folders of work. In both years, students' use of information and communication technology is not well enough developed.

162. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students work with increasing independence on their own long-term projects. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and use discussion and questioning very well so that students clarify their intentions for their work. Regular and ongoing assessment on an individual basis provides students with very good support and guidance so that they know how to improve. However, timetabling three different teachers for the same group does not support students' progress and is not viewed positively by most of the students.

163. The leadership and the management of the subject are very good. The subject leader provides effective leadership for the team of three teachers who contribute to the courses. They have a very good understanding of the requirements of the courses and students are very well prepared for the examinations. Results are monitored and reviewed and effective action is taken to raise and maintain standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because very high standards have been maintained and the quality of teaching and learning is now consistently very good. There is good enrichment of courses through gallery visits and

additional life drawing classes at a local college. Students have very positive views about the courses, the quality of the teaching and the support they receive. The courses attract large numbers and almost all students complete their courses.

BUSINESS

Economics

Provision in economics is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good learning because of the very good teaching.
- The students are very enthusiastic about economics, which is a very popular and successful subject.
- Students achieve very well and secure a high percentage of the top grades.
- In 2003 the largest percentage of students, from all the subjects, continued to study economics at university.
- Relationships are excellent and students are actively encouraged to rigorously question and debate in class.

Commentary

164. Students take up economics without any previous knowledge and within a few months they are reaching above national standards in the subject. In 2002, the A2 results were at the national expectation, with 40 per cent securing A or B passes. Moreover, students achieved, on average, half a grade higher than expected. In 2003, 79 per cent secured A or B passes among the highest achievement in the school. In 2002, 40 percent of the AS students secured the highest grades with a similar result in 2003. Again students achieved much better than their earlier standards would suggest. The achievement of the current students is very good and reflects the previous results. Retention in each course is very good and a very high number continue with their studies at university. The numbers studying economics have grown considerably in recent years and are now reaching capacity within the existing resources.
165. Students learn very well because the teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. The lessons have considerable pace and challenge and foster excellent student interaction. Teachers' expectations are exceptionally high and students develop both their confidence and their performance very strongly as a result of emphasis upon paired and group work and personal research. Progress is very good and the students acquire a very good understanding of the reasons for economic growth and the concepts of circular flow and disequilibrium. In one outstanding lesson in Year 12, students gave very effective and thoughtful group presentations of their ideas in various economic scenarios. The other members of the class probed and challenged the findings most effectively. Relationships in the class were excellent and the lesson buzzed with academic debate under the expert tuition of the teacher. There was a tangible feeling of excitement in the quality and intensity of the learning taking place in this lesson. The students' concentration when the teacher was introducing a new concept was very impressive. Students, in discussion, were very enthusiastic about their learning experience and compared the subject with others most favourably. A very strong commitment was clear from their comments and explains the high take-up rate for the subject. The quality of the coursework is very good, with considerable evidence of extensive individual research into a very wide range of topics selected.
166. The department is led most effectively and the head of department provides an excellent role model to the students, particularly in the quest for high standards. The quality of the marking is very good and gives a very good indication to students of how to improve. As a result of this

support students make very rapid progress in their understanding. The day-to-day management is good, although attention to improving the quality of the accommodation would provide a better learning environment. There is currently a lack of good book material available to the Year 12 students. Progress since the last inspection has been very good because student achievement is higher as a result of the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, now excellent at times. This is an outstanding department with many excellent features.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

This area was sampled, two personal social and health education lessons were observed, extra-curricular activities, form registrations, meetings with key personnel and students and a council and a sixth form society meeting formed the evidence or judgements.

167. During one personal, social and health education lesson, students considered how much or why we trust others and the consequences of this for society. This was a good lesson, in which the teacher adapted a 'Spectator' article to set up an activity test. Students were fascinated by this 'game' and by the results. Good links were made between trust and declared religious beliefs and issues relating to democracy. During another lesson, when students were preparing for an assembly, they used a video to plan how to put forward their viewpoint convincingly. The sixth form has an active sixth form society. The theme during the inspection was asylum seekers; a meeting was arranged with a guest speaker and it was very well attended. A brief feedback during a registration time on the previous meeting about Islam also prompted some interesting discussion points. A sixth form council meeting was observed. It was well chaired and organised. Sixth formers were focused on organising an end of term party, the proceeds to be used to refurbish and decorate their common room. They have already decorated the social area and taken charge of its cleanliness. In discussion, sixth formers are enthused about the curriculum enrichment offered. They stated that teaching was good with many teachers being enthusiastic.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	4
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Students' achievement	3	4
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		4
Attendance	5	6
Attitudes	3	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	4
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well students learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	2	4
How well the curriculum meets students needs	5	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	4
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher		4
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	4

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