

INSPECTION REPORT

LISTER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Plaistow, London

LEA area: Newham

Unique reference number: 102778

Headteacher: Mr M Buck

Lead inspector: Mr R Hancock

Dates of inspection: 9 – 12 February 2004

Inspection number: 263389

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 – 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1337

School address: St Mary's Road
Plaistow
London
E13 9AE

Telephone number: 020 8471 3311
Fax number: 020 8472 1027

Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mrs Christine Price
Date of previous inspection: November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

A school working in challenging inner-city circumstances, including difficulties in the recruitment and retention of teachers, Lister Community School for students in the 11 to 16 age range has a number of other characteristics which make it particularly distinctive. It is set in one of the most deprived boroughs in England and over half of its students, 51 per cent, are eligible for a free school meal, which is well above average. English is an additional language for over three quarters of the school's population, which is very high. Nearly one third of the students, 30.4 per cent, have special educational needs, which is also high. The school has support systems and facilities for deaf students and for those students whose learning difficulties require exceptional levels of resourcing. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational need, 4.8 per cent, is above average. The school is bigger than most secondary schools and there are 1334 boys and girls on the roll. There is a high level of student mobility. Many different ethnic communities are represented in the school with a preponderance of students whose backgrounds are Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian. The attainment of students on entry is well below the national average. The school has Sports Mark Gold and Arts Mark Gold status and won a School Achievement Award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2715	R Hancock	Lead inspector	Drama
32690	J Webb	Lay inspector	
33160	N Power	Team inspector	
18886	F Ruggiero	Team inspector	Mathematics
30597	R Howells	Team inspector	Science
15372	P Walker	Team inspector	English Citizenship
31821	B McCann	Team inspector	Physical education
8552	W Hart	Team inspector	Design and technology
10060	D Guttman	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
17522	N Stiles	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
23499	H Seymour	Team inspector	Music
15576	D Nebesnuick	Team inspector	Geography History
20533	D Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design
21899	G Lawson	Team inspector	Special educational needs (SEN)
33727	N Vinall	Team inspector	
18912	C Large	Team inspector	Religious education
17932	J Bald	Team inspector	English as an additional language

The inspection contractor was:

Open Book Inspections
6 East Point
High Street
Seal
Sevenoaks
TN15 0EG

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6-8
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	9-14
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	14-20
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	20-22
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	23-40
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGE 3 AND 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	41

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Lister Community School is a good school with some of the features of a very good school.

Although standards are below average, the overall achievement of students is good. Students' attitudes to school are good in Years 7 to 9 and are very good in Years 10 and 11. Behaviour is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Very good leadership is provided by the headteacher and the school is well managed. The governing body provides good support. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The vision and drive of the headteacher give the school a strong sense of direction.
- The very good achievement of students in GCSE examinations when results are compared with similar schools.
- Standards are below average throughout the school.
- Some students for whom English is an additional language do not achieve well enough.
- Good quality teaching and learning.
- All students, but especially those with special educational needs, are very well supported and cared for.
- Strong links with parents, outside agencies, other schools and the wider community.
- Unsatisfactory provision for modern foreign languages.
- Not enough use of ICT to develop learning in all subjects.
- The school has a large financial deficit and continues to find it difficult to manage within its budget.
- Insufficient time allocated to the teaching of religious education in Year 10.
- The school does not hold a daily act of collective worship.

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected in November 1998. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and students' achievement is greater although standards are not significantly higher. The school has made great strides forward in developing its support for all members of the school community. It has also firmly established itself as an effective Performing Arts college.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

By the end of Year 9, standards are below average. Although still below average, standards are higher by the end of Year 11. **Achievement in relation to students' starting points is satisfactory by the end of Year 9 and good by the end of Year 11.** The results of National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below average. When the results are compared with those of similar schools they show that the achievement of students is at least average. The standard of current work in these subjects also shows overall improvement and, while standards are still below average, achievement is now good in English and mathematics and is satisfactory in science. Achievement in most other subjects is satisfactory although standards are mostly below average. In 2003, the proportion of students achieving five or more grades at A* - C in the

GCSE examination was well below average. In comparison with similar schools, however, results were above average and in relation to the progress made by students their performance was well above average. In the same year, the proportion of students achieving five or more grades at A*- G was average, better than in the previous two years. Achievement was well above average. When the average points score is considered, the performance of the school in 2003 was below average in comparison with all schools but was in the top five per cent of schools when the prior attainment of students is taken into account.

Over a three-year period girls' attainment has been below that of boys. The overall trend of improvement has been in line with the national trend. In 2003 results in drama and sociology were remarkably high. They were very low in relation to the national average in art and design and French. Mathematics, health and social care and Urdu results were among the stronger results and were considerably better than the English language results, science results lying in between.

Provision for the development of students' personal qualities is good. Their **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good**. Students' attitudes are positive in Years 7 to 9 and are very positive in Years 10 and 11. Behaviour is satisfactory. Often good in classrooms, it sometimes deteriorates in corridors, on stairways and in the dining hall. Attendance is satisfactory. Students do not always arrive to school or to lessons on time but punctuality is satisfactory overall.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good because in the vast majority of lessons teachers use effective ways to help students learn more about their subjects, plan lessons very well to make the best use of time, distinguish clearly between the different needs of students and use questioning well to ensure that learning is secure. The quality of teaching and learning in drama is of an especially high order. Students who are learning English as an additional language do not always receive the support they need to improve their literacy skills.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management in the school is good. The headteacher is providing very good leadership because the school has a very strong sense of direction, all teachers are pulling together, are receiving good support and their morale is high. Senior managers provide good support. Excellent use is made of grants to promote better practice in key areas of the school's work, such as the professional development of its teachers. The governing body also provides good support. The school has a very large deficit budget but has made appropriate arrangements for reducing it. The school still finds it difficult to set a budget within its allocation and which matches its aspirations.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The majority of parents like the school, are pleased that teachers expect students to give of their best but have some concerns about students' behaviour. Students mostly enjoy school and appreciate the quality of teaching but also feel that there is bad behaviour, bullying and racial harassment in the school. The inspection team consider behaviour to be satisfactory overall and discovered no evidence of bullying. They found many examples of students of different ethnic backgrounds relating well to one another and working together effectively.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards throughout the school.

- Work systematically to improve the literacy skills of students for whom English is an additional language so that they can achieve higher standards.
- Improve provision for modern foreign languages.
- Develop the use of ICT in all learning.
- Ensure that the school works within its overall budget.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Consider the need to hold a daily act of collective worship.
- Increase the allocation of time to religious education in Year 10.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are below average by the end of Year 9 but are closer to average by the end of Year 11. Achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 9 and good by the end of Year 11. Standards in English, mathematics and science are below average but are improving and achievement by the end of Year 11 is good in each of these subjects. Students with special educational needs achieve very well. The overall achievement of students who are at different stages of learning English as an additional language is satisfactory but their overall standards are not yet high enough.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average throughout the school.
- Given their starting points, students' achievement is good by the end of Year 11.
- Whilst students who are learning English make satisfactory progress, their standards are not yet high enough.
- Students with special educational needs achieve very well.

Commentary

1. When students enter the school their overall attainment is well below average. In Year 7, many students are learning English as an additional language, some being at the early stages of doing so, and have still to master basic literacy skills, especially in writing. Significant numbers of students also enter the school later than Year 7 and the work of these students often shows that they, too, have acute literacy needs. Consequently, overall standards at the end of Year 9 are still below average but there is clear evidence that students make progress and that their achievement is satisfactory. Although still below average, the school's results in National Curriculum tests have been improving in line with the national trend of improvement.
2. English results in the National Curriculum tests taken in Year 9 in 2003 were well below average. Half of these results were at Level 4 or below in comparison with the quarter at these levels in the national picture. Boys did less well than girls although the difference between these groups over a three year period is not marked. Over time, the school has not been able to raise standards significantly but results are getting better and when they are compared with those of similar schools they are at least average. When compared with those of students in other schools who achieved similar results in the Key Stage 2 tests, achievement is above average at the higher levels. This achievement is reflected in the standard of current work which shows that standards in English have improved, although they are still below average, and that the achievement of students is good.
3. Mathematics results in the National Curriculum tests taken in Year 9 in 2003 were well below average and weaker than results in English. Over half of these results were at Level 4 or below in comparison with just over a quarter at these levels in the national picture. Girls did less well than boys, as they have been over time. There is no evidence to indicate that these results have been getting significantly better. Furthermore, when results are compared with those of students who achieved similar results in the Key Stage 2, tests they are below average although in comparison with similar schools results are above average. The standard of current work shows improvement but is still below average. Given the students' starting points, achievement is good.

4. Science results in the National Curriculum tests taken in Year 9 in 2003 were well below average, less good than results in English and mathematics. Over half of these results were at Level 4 or below in comparison with just over a quarter being at these levels in the national picture. There is no significant gap between the performance of boys and that of girls. There is no evidence to indicate that these results have been getting significantly better but when results are compared with those of similar schools they are above average. The standard of current work shows improvement although it is still below average. Given the students' starting points, their achievement is satisfactory.
5. By the end of Year 9 standards are below average in art, geography, history, physical education and ICT but are well below average in design and technology. They are closer to average in citizenship, music and religious education. Achievement is mostly satisfactory and is good in geography, history, religious education and physical education.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.0 (29.6)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	30.6 (29.5)	35.4 (34.7)
science	28.5 (29.1)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 269 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

6. In 2003, the proportion of students achieving five or more grades at A* - C in the GCSE examination was well below average. The proportion has alternated over recent years between being below average and well below average. In comparison with similar schools this result was above average and in relation to students' prior attainment it was well above average.
7. In the same year, the proportion of students achieving five or more grades at A* - G was average, better than the previous two years. In comparison with similar schools and prior attainment this performance was well above average. The proportion achieving one or more grades at A* - G was also average – not quite as good as in 2002 – and this performance has varied greatly over the recent past. In comparison with similar schools, and on the basis of prior attainment, this performance was well above average. When the average points score is considered, the performance of the school in 2003 was below average when compared with all schools but was in the top five per cent of schools when the prior attainment of students is taken into account.
8. Over a three-year period, girls' results have been weaker than those of boys. The overall trend of improvement has been in line with the national trend. In 2003, results in drama and sociology were remarkably high. They were very low in relation to the national average in art and design and French. Mathematics, health and social care and Urdu results were among the stronger results and were considerably better than the English language results, science results lying in between.
9. In the school as a whole, the achievement of students with English as an additional language is satisfactory. They make good progress in the early stages of learning English. Their later progress is satisfactory overall, but they have weaknesses in vocabulary and in structuring written work and their standards are not as high as they need to be.
10. Taking the school as a whole, students with statements of special educational needs achieve very well, supported in the majority of lessons by well-trained, experienced teachers and teaching assistants who liaise effectively with subject teachers to plan and structure their work. Students with special educational needs enter the school with very low levels of literacy, reading at levels well below those expected for their age. The support they receive through individual tuition, small

group literacy work and in-class support, carefully tailored to their specific individual learning needs, enables them to make substantial progress. Students with moderate learning difficulties achieve well in all lessons and particularly highly in practical lessons. The exceptionally well resourced provision for students with the most complex needs is effective and is enabling those students to make noteworthy progress in developing independence and social skills alongside literacy and numeracy skills. Most students with special educational needs regularly succeed in meeting their challenging targets in Years 10 and 11, which leads to accreditation or college placement.

11. Students who are deaf achieve very well because of the school's flexible and inclusive approach to their needs. Teaching for students who are deaf is highly skilled and carefully structured and enables them to learn very effectively, make rapid and significant progress, and work at similar levels to their hearing peers.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	37 (36)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (87)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	31.4 (34.7)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 258 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes are good in Years 7 to 9 and are very good in Years 10 and 11. Most students enjoy school and have a positive attitude to learning. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. It is usually good in class but there are lapses in good conduct around the school and in a small minority of lessons. Attendance is satisfactory and has continued to improve since the last inspection. Punctuality is satisfactory. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff and students work well together, relationships are good and there is racial harmony.
- Most students enjoy school; their enthusiastic and positive attitudes to learning contribute to their good achievement.
- Students are able to express their views and participate in decision-making, which promotes responsibility and self-esteem.
- Although most students behave well in class, some misbehave in a small minority of lessons and around the school.
- Students have frequent opportunities for reflection, for considering the moral aspects of human behaviour, for interacting with one another and for cultural development.

Commentary

12. The school has taken positive action to promote good attendance. Sound procedures are in place to ensure accurate reporting of attendance at the start of the school day and also at each lesson. Staff and students are kept informed of attendance figures on a regular basis and specific initiatives such as competitions with appropriate rewards have contributed to the improvement in the overall attendance rate since the last inspection. The school has much to offer its students and the majority respond positively by attending regularly. Unauthorised absences are above the

national average but the school is working hard to reduce them. Attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality is satisfactory.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.7	School data	3.5
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

13. The attitudes of students to school are good in Years 7 to 9 and are very good in Years 10 and 11. The strong network of support for all students instils confidence which manifests itself in an enthusiasm for school and for learning. Students feel trusted and consider that the school takes an interest in their views. Students who are learning English as an additional language have good attitudes in lessons and want to improve. Although they sometimes become bored when work lacks challenge, their behaviour remains satisfactory. Despite their difficulties, students with special educational needs have very good attitudes towards their learning. They develop confidence and show increasing levels of independence in after-school activities, in school performances, at outside events, in work experience and on college placements. Younger students take pride in their work, try their hardest and respond very well to their teachers. Students with social, behavioural or emotional special educational needs are well supported by the student support centre within the school and make significant progress in improving their rates of attendance, managing their own behaviour and being able to return to their regular classes and most school activities successfully
14. Good teaching helps to create a good climate for learning which students appreciate. Accordingly, behaviour in the classroom is generally good and students are quick to settle to lessons but in a few lessons some students misbehave. When behaviour is unsatisfactory, there is a good range of sanctions which are operated in a robust and appropriate manner. Outside the classroom, between lessons, and in the playground, behaviour is satisfactory but there are instances of noisy and excited behaviour from time to time in corridors and outside buildings. Behaviour in the dining room is mostly satisfactory but some students jostle and push and generally do not show care and concern for the welfare of others, although any inappropriate behaviour is quickly and effectively dealt with by vigilant staff. Boisterous behaviour by older students causes some younger students understandable concern, which is exacerbated by the difficulties encountered in providing sufficient separate play areas.
15. Whilst a majority of the students disagreed with the statement that there was no bullying or racial abuse in the school, there was no evidence of racial abuse or of bullying during the inspection. The school takes bullying and racism seriously and continues to develop appropriate strategies and initiatives to counter such behaviour. The students themselves, through the work of the school council, have worked with staff on measures to promote cultural harmony and have been working towards the school becoming a 'bullying-free zone'. Posters encouraging the reporting of any such incidents are evident and an innovative school-based email 'issues box' is being explored. The Behaviour Improvement Project has provided significant resources which, together with a supportive governors' disciplinary committee, have contributed to improvements to behaviour and a reduction in exclusions. The number of permanent exclusions and fixed period exclusions has decreased since the last inspection.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	112	6	
White – Irish	3	1	
White – any other White background	35		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	17	4	
Mixed – White and Black African	4		
Mixed – White and Asian	5	4	
Mixed – any other mixed background	30	1	
Asian or Asian British – Indian	242	5	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	266	18	
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	282	23	
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	51	5	1
Black or Black British – Caribbean	52	19	
Black or Black British – African	181	28	
Black or Black British – any other Black background	18	5	
Chinese	5	2	
Any other ethnic group	34		

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

16. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have frequent opportunities, particularly in assemblies, to reflect and think upon what is right and wrong. There are frequent opportunities for students to discuss aspects of life in multicultural Britain today. They are also encouraged to think about human rights and the principles underpinning organisations set up to uphold them. In an excellent Year 10 lesson in religious education, there was a strong emphasis on citizenship in a stimulating and moving account of Gandhi's sufferings at the hands of the British. In a lesson in Year 8 in the same subject, students were encouraged to think out for themselves the implications of the proscription of religious apparel in schools. In a drama lesson in Year 11, students were helped to enact situations in which an excess of one emotion can cause a character's downfall; they reflected on the implications of this.
17. Students are enriched by the cultural experiences of their work in the performing arts. Drama, in particular, provides them with a good understanding of how dramatic form can be used to help them understand more about human experience. They derive great satisfaction from being creative, not only in drama but also in dance and music. These art forms are also used to help students learn more about their own culture and about the cultures of others.
18. There is a strong emphasis on the social development of students. They are encouraged to play an active part in school life. They debate issues on the school council and are learning how to work together effectively for a common end. They frequently collaborate in the classroom and are used to expressing opinions and sharing ideas, especially in subjects such as dance and drama where they work together in very creative ways. They are used to the idea of evaluating their own

work and that of others and to doing so in an atmosphere of trust and responsibility. The success of the peer mentoring system and observations of students helping those with special educational needs are evidence of the opportunities for some students to accept responsibility.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Students with special educational needs are supported very well. There is a broad curriculum which meets the needs of most students.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school and in over a quarter of all lessons it is very good or excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In three out of every four lessons the quality of teaching and learning is good or better.
- Students with special educational needs, particularly those who are deaf, are very well taught.
- The full needs of students who are learning English as an additional language are not always met by teachers.
- The quality of teaching and learning in drama is excellent.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to develop students' learning.

Commentary

19. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. It was very good or excellent in over a quarter of all lessons. The quality was good or better in three out of four lessons. A strength of the teaching is the knowledge that teachers have of their subjects and the enthusiasm they show in sharing this with their students. The majority of lessons have plenty of pace and time is used well. Teachers are well prepared, highly organized and plan effectively. They are very aware of their students and the different ways in which they learn, and are intent on enabling all students to do so. They work especially well with learning support assistants to help students overcome their learning difficulties and are especially successful in enabling deaf students to take part in the same learning as all other students.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 159 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (3 %)	42 (26 %)	70 (44 %)	38 (24 %)	4 (3 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)

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

20. There were excellent lessons in art, English, drama, and religious education in which teachers had the highest expectations of students, made skilful use of questioning to help them grapple with difficult concepts or issues and used time to very good effect. Occasionally, lessons are ineffective because teachers do not expect enough of their students.
21. Overall, the teaching of students for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory. These students receive good teaching in induction classes, but in other classes support is more inconsistent. There is very skilled teaching for students learning to use British Sign Language. Across subjects, teaching makes good provision for speaking and listening, and ensures that lessons are accessible to all students. It does not, however, tackle students' problems with

vocabulary and with composing written work systematically enough, and this holds back standards in written tests and examinations. This weakness prevents a significant number of students achieving at higher levels.

22. Learning support teachers and teaching assistants work collaboratively with subject teachers to match activities and demands to students' levels of need. This very effective support, together with very good relationships, allow the appropriate level of challenge and support for all students, particularly those with the most complex needs. Teachers and instructors of the deaf are highly skilled in British Sign Language (BSL) and very knowledgeable about deaf culture and so even students with the highest levels of need are able to work alongside their peers with appropriate support. All deaf students have educational communicators with them in lessons and there is a high level of signing amongst other staff, so that these students make rapid and significant progress. They leave school with a range of GCSE examination results that are comparable with hearing students in their age range.
23. Special needs teachers and well trained support assistants have expert knowledge of their students' needs and work with other staff to adapt materials and teaching styles to match the wide range of learning needs of students. Resources and teaching for those with the most complex needs are sensitively and skilfully matched to individual needs so that students are encouraged to extend their concentration, develop positive self-esteem and recognise the progress they are making in learning. Teachers in the student support centre work perceptively and sensitively on skilful intervention programmes with students with significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Students respond well and many are returned to class with effective support and useful ways of managing their behaviour and relationships.
24. The school has been stressing the importance of teaching and learning in its developmental work and this is now bearing fruit. In particular, there has been a strong focus on how to promote quality in learning. This, too, is having a good outcome. Teachers have benefited from the work they have done on the importance of healthy and positive relationships between teachers and students if the right conditions are to prevail for learning to take root. In many lessons, students have already learned how to work at ease with others, to share findings, to solve problems, to pursue individual lines of enquiry and to evaluate their own work and that of others in a mature manner. Some teachers, especially in subjects such as science, are making good use of ICT to develop learning but the lack of ICT is a weakness in teaching in subjects such as English and mathematics, as well as in the teaching and learning of students with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection.
25. Teachers make effective use of assessment to find out what students have learned and what they still need to know and understand. Practice is especially good in special educational needs because teachers clearly identify strengths and weaknesses in order to build up students' self-esteem and confidence whilst helping them overcome difficulties, especially in areas such as literacy. Students who are gifted and talented have been identified and some appropriate activities have been devised for them. The school also works effectively to identify the different stages of language development for students for whom English is an additional language. A good feature is that teachers are provided with this information collated so that they are left in no doubt as to the range of ability and need in their classes.
26. Very effective assessment, based on a wide range of standardised, specialist and diagnostic tests together with the use of data and evaluations provided by subject departments, is central to students' progress and achievement. For exceptionally resourced students, teachers use continuous assessment linked clearly to the National Curriculum P Levels (national measures in each subject for what students know and can do if they are working below Level 1 of the National

Curriculum). Students have clear and measurable targets and know how well they are meeting them.

27. In subjects as a whole, the use of assessment is good. Highly developed in drama, the use of assessment is also good in science, particularly in relation to the long term. Students have target grades to aim at and these help to motivate them. Assessment in the short term is less well developed and is an area for improvement. In mathematics, regular and detailed marking provides good feedback to students and helps them to improve, especially in Years 10 and 11. A good feature of assessment practice in geography is the use of self-evaluation sheets which students are expected to complete at the end of each module. In history, careful and regular assessment helps students to know the levels they have reached. Assessment is also well developed in physical education, especially in Years 10 and 11, where students' work is helpfully marked on the basis of examination criteria. The modern language department has not yet reached the stage of using the results of tests to inform or to set targets for students, either in the short term or to target GCSE examination grades, but test results are used to give an indication of students' progress at the end of Year 9 when reporting to parents. Assessment procedures for students learning English as an additional language are very good in the early stages, but are not used to provide sufficient guidance to more advanced learners of English. The best assessment practice is more firmly embedded than it was at the time of the last inspection.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good at both key stages because it has the breadth to serve the diverse needs of a wide range of students. It is especially effective in catering for students with special educational needs, particularly those who are deaf.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good provision for students with special educational needs.
- There is good emphasis on vocational education in Years 10 and 11.
- Extra-curricular activities provide good levels of enrichment.
- Very effective use is made of the wider community to enrich work in the performing arts.
- The quality of support for students for whom English is an additional language is inconsistent.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT in the curriculum at large.
- Insufficient time is allocated to religious education in Year 10.

Commentary

28. The curriculum is good throughout the school. Very good links with primary schools ensure a smooth transition when students enter the school and thorough preparatory work by teachers means that the requirements of students with special educational needs are anticipated so that they can be accommodated in the curriculum. Furthermore, excellent links with a major college provider of education from 16 to 19 years also mean that students have clear pathways through to further education. This is an excellent feature because the school has worked effectively to help ensure that the education of its students has coherence and progression, not only from ages 11 to 16 but throughout their schooling and subsequent study.
29. Students have good opportunities to study the National Curriculum for appropriate amounts of time. Schemes of work help to ensure that the work in each year builds on the work of the previous one, which gives coherence to the whole curriculum. There are very good opportunities for the study of arts subjects. The PSHE programme provides effectively for students' personal development. Citizenship is developing well and provides good opportunities for students to find out about decision making and taking on responsibility. The school's thinking in relation to the

vocational curriculum of the future is well developed and its existing courses in Years 10 and 11 are already providing valuable learning experiences for students in such subjects as health and social care, where students' achievement is raising self-esteem. Work-related courses are also proving effective in improving students' motivation. Current provision, however, is not sufficiently varied or extensive to cope with the full range of needs that the school has identified.

30. The school provides a very wide range of extra-curricular activities. Many of these are of a sporting nature and are very popular with students, providing them with many different activities and levels of challenge. Dance and music clubs are similarly popular. Students also have many opportunities outside the normal working school day to enjoy and develop their expertise in the performing arts, acquiring further skills through specialist classes and in rehearsing presentations for different audiences. There are opportunities for students to develop their ICT skills at workshops held after school. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
31. The curriculum opportunities for students with special educational needs are very good. Teachers have a wide repertoire of skills for modifying existing courses or developing specific provision within and beyond the school to provide an imaginative, coherent and balanced curriculum. The learning support department has formed successful teaching partnerships to develop the curriculum, which is very well organised to ensure that those with additional needs have highly effective opportunities to access the mainstream curriculum. For example, students with autism and those with severe and complex learning difficulties are supported by multi-sensory programmes and specific teaching methods. Adults in school are now skilled in their use of signs and symbols and students have been taught to use the picture exchange communication system (PECS) to enable them to gain access to the regular curriculum. A pre-reading and intensive literacy scheme enables students to have individual support to develop reading skills and a three-week ICT booster scheme helps weaker readers. Students with severe learning difficulties can choose a coursework support option which enables them to follow highly-structured literacy and numeracy focused work in a small group. Very effective small group multi-sensory work in art is enabling students to develop their skills effectively. The department for students who are deaf, runs BSL classes for both hearing and deaf students with successful examination pass rates. The 85 per cent pass rate is above the national average published by the examination body for this specialised area of the school's work.
32. Although many students have a good grounding in the application of ICT this is not the case for all students as insufficient use is made of ICT in the curriculum at large. Opportunities for its use are frequently missed, especially in subjects such as English and mathematics; this is a weakness especially in the learning experiences of those students who do not study ICT as a specialist subject.
33. Not enough time is allocated to the teaching of religious education in Year 10, which means that the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus cannot be met. The school does not comply with the statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship although assemblies are held on a regular basis. Because of their effective treatment of important human themes they make a definite contribution to the personal development of students. The ASDAN course helps to prevent the alienation of some of the school's more disaffected students. The curriculum makes satisfactory provision for students with English as an additional language. Induction classes for new students are well organised and effective, but partnerships between English as an additional language specialists and other departments are not focused clearly enough on issues arising from learning English as an additional language.
34. Accommodation for students' multiple and complex special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Parts of the school are inaccessible to students in wheelchairs, many classrooms are cramped and teaching spaces for group and individual work are limited. Despite the best efforts of the school to overcome these difficulties, the nature of the accommodation restricts teaching and

learning methods and this limits the achievement of some students. The school has prepared a strategy for ensuring that students with special educational needs have appropriate access to all the building's facilities.

35. Accommodation for the performing arts is excellent. Music is especially well resourced. In the school generally, accommodation and resources are effective. The school has experienced acute staffing difficulties in the past and still does not find it easy to make appointments in some subjects but overall the school now has a significant degree of stability in staffing.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. The school provides very good support, advice and guidance based on thorough monitoring procedures. The school involves the students well in its development through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong team working at all levels ensures appropriate and wide-ranging support for students.
- Induction arrangements and the school's work on inclusion are very good, benefiting all students especially, though not exclusively, those with special educational needs.
- Deaf students benefit from very good care and guidance.
- Target setting, with timely reviews and high expectations, has a significant beneficial impact upon students' achievement.

Commentary

36. Students feel safe in the school. Health and safety and child protection are treated seriously, through a range of extensive and thorough policies although the review procedures for the policies are not all of the same quality. The school provides a safe environment. Because tutors and directors of study know their students well, they are able to offer very good pastoral support. Each year group has a designated learning mentor to whom students can be referred by a number of different procedures. The different strategies and extensive internal and external support agencies available to the learning mentors result in very good support for students in need. Timely reviews by the tutors and directors of study with the learning mentors track the progress of each referred student to good effect. New students settle in quickly because of a thorough induction process which is especially good at identifying the needs of those with English as an additional language. Careers advice is a unit of personal, health and social education in all years in the school and students have regular and easy access to Connexions and external businesses for guidance and experience. Provision is very good.
37. Students are encouraged to take some responsibility in setting their academic targets. Progress is tracked using software systems and regular meetings between tutors, co-tutors and directors of study, ensuring that those working below or above predicted levels are identified. Those who are neither struggling nor high achievers but are working well can be highlighted for appropriate praise, thus contributing to the students' view that their work is helpfully assessed. Provision for support, advice and guidance is very good.
38. The support for students with special educational needs is very effective because relationships between students and staff are very good and learning takes place in a confident atmosphere. Students are aware of their targets and contribute to the discussion of what they need to learn next or to improve. The school complies fully with the Code of Practice and works very well with the local education authority and outside agencies, which enhances students' learning very

effectively. The monitoring and recording for students with a statement of special educational need are good and annual reviews effectively meet requirements.

39. All staff are involved in the teaching of students with special educational needs and contribute well to the preparation and review of individual education plans. Targets are specific and progress is measurable. Support for students with special educational needs is provided, in the main, within the classroom, ensuring that it is inclusive and gives equality of access for all students. As a result, most students with special educational needs attain very well for their abilities, in school and in national tests and examinations. Very effective support and guidance is given to students with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties through the student support centre, which enables them to remain in school and follow their chosen courses.
40. The strong links with the special educational needs careers adviser and work experience agencies ensure that students receive appropriate advice and work experience of a high quality. This results in very positive and successful experiences, particularly for students who are deaf and those with complex needs.
41. The year forums provide useful information for the representatives on the school council, strengthening the voice of the individual student. The council has demonstrated effective decision making and planning to help shape the direction of the school, with enthusiastic representation from all year groups. The headteacher and the governing body are appropriately responsive to the views expressed by the council. The involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is very good.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is very good. Links with other schools and colleges are extensive and effective. Links with the wider community provide very good support for the students' learning and welfare.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The relationship with local primary schools is exceptionally strong and very well managed with staff at all levels ensuring that all students, including those with special educational needs, feel at home when they transfer.
- The school has grasped the opportunities to encompass the local community in its learning.
- Particularly strong links exist with the local sixth form college but there are also partnerships with other local further education colleges.
- Parents appreciate the relationships between staff and students and actively support the work of the school by attending information days and evenings in very high numbers.

Commentary

42. The school's close relationships with parents were endorsed by the positive comments expressed in the parents' questionnaire and at the parents' meeting prior to the inspection. Although a minority expressed concerns about the quality of information on students' progress and slow response to queries, there is good provision for parents to meet with tutors, directors of study and the head teacher in addition to the numerous regular meetings fixed by the school. The very good links with parents are enhanced by the quality of the written communications, especially the excellent brochure, clear annual report and informative newsletters. Parents have agreed to receive these communications in English but, nevertheless, crucial information, particularly for refugee families, is communicated in a number of other relevant languages, strengthening further

the inclusive ethos of the school. Large numbers of parents support the school's information days and events.

43. Parents of students with special educational needs support the work of the school well. They are fully informed about their children's progress and have good opportunities to discuss targets, reviews of statements and individual education plans with teachers and visiting specialists.
44. Relationships with the local education authority and outside agencies are very good. Two speech and language therapists (one for deaf students) contribute to students' targets and provide on-going training to both deaf support and learning support staff. Strong links with the community ensure very good opportunities for students with special educational needs to join in cultural, sporting and work-related opportunities. For example, students who are deaf take an active role in drama productions and in promotional videos for disability awareness.
45. All students have extensive opportunities to enrich their learning at other educational establishments that work with the school and who also welcome the school's students off site. These opportunities also serve to inform students of the range of options open to them after Year 11. Links with other schools and colleges enable students to transfer with the minimum degree of disruption. Links are especially effective with the local sixth form college. Transfer arrangements are given high priority by the governing body who have given the extended management group the status of a governors' sub-committee. The work of the community learning manager in this area is regularly reviewed by senior staff and the extended schools co-ordinator of the local education authority. Not only do the students benefit from additional learning opportunities, they are also able to access clubs outside of school, enhancing their social and cultural development.
46. Opportunities for the community to use the school's facilities are very good and well supported. Students return to school with their families to take part in a wide-ranging programme of activities, which include fitness and health, sports, drama and ICT. Local businesses are supportive of the school, assisting with work placement and mentoring the students, further broadening their knowledge of career opportunities and life after school generally.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher is providing very good leadership because the school has a very strong sense of direction, all teachers are pulling together and receiving good support, and their morale is high. Senior managers and the governing body also provide good support. The school has a very large deficit budget and has made appropriate arrangements for reducing it, but the school still finds it difficult to set a budget to match its aspirations.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership which enables the school to share a common vision.
- Students with special educational needs benefit from very good leadership and management.
- The school finds it difficult to fulfil its aspirations within its allocated budget.
- Directors of study, heads of faculty and heads of department provide good leadership and management.
- Very good use is made of outside agencies to support the work of the school.
- The management of provision for students for whom English is an additional language is not fully effective.

Commentary

47. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. It inspires others and enables a consistent set of principles to lie at the heart of all that the school undertakes. His vision of an education which fully serves the needs of all groups of students permeates the school. A mark of its success is the degree to which the school is consistent in demonstrating this. The vision is expressed by personal example through the quality of teaching and learning and through effective presentations in assembly. The headteacher's very visible presence around the school is a further expression of his commitment to ensuring that the vision is realised in the day-to-day operations of the school. Robust review procedures, the collation and use of performance data and target setting are all established as part of the school's well-developed approach to self-evaluation.
48. Teamwork is at the heart of much of the school's successful work. The team of senior leaders, work effectively to help the school meet its aims. Teachers are given important roles and responsibilities and are encouraged to work effectively together for the general good of all students. Directors of study have roles and responsibilities which effectively link up different but related aspects of students' performance so that they have an overview of their progress. Especially good use is made of the Leadership Incentive Grant to help all those in key roles to learn more about the process of leadership. Teachers' professional development needs are carefully identified and effectively provided for. The school provides good support for teachers who are newly qualified and for trainee teachers. The school has had considerable success in recruiting and maintaining staff to provide good quality education for its students but this has been at a high cost in an area where recruitment is difficult. Staff development is a priority as part of the school's *Investors in People* status.
49. A strong management team, within the faculty for social inclusion, leads the development of learning support, deaf education, exceptionally resourced student provision and the student support centre. This very effective management is a major factor in ensuring the very good progress of the majority of these students. Leaders of each of the areas have a clear, shared vision of future development. Communication systems are very effective and these areas have substantial support from the senior management team and governors. All staff understand and are kept up to date with new developments in the area of special educational needs by regular training sessions and the planning and partnership work with departments. The school has a good team of experienced and skilled teaching assistants and their work effectively supports students with special educational needs well. The school uses money from the school budget effectively to supplement the annual funding for special educational needs and, although this is an expensive area, it provides good value for money in the outcomes produced. There has been good improvement in the area of special educational needs since the last inspection.
50. Overall, the management of provision for students for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory. Good progress has been made since the last inspection when provision was found to be grossly inadequate and management was unsatisfactory. Specialist teaching is managed well, but students' needs, particularly in writing and vocabulary, have not been specifically addressed in recent staff training. This is holding back the impact of provision on standards in written tests and examinations. The school intends to tackle this issue over the next school year.
51. The governing body provides good support for the school. It shares the headteacher's vision and helps it to be expressed through all major developments. It is effectively organised on the basis of sub-committees which meet regularly and fulfil most of their responsibilities well. The governing body has been especially effective in helping the school in its drive to improve behaviour. Governors undertake training to keep themselves in touch with new developments in governance. They have been very involved in the school's review of the curriculum, demonstrate a broad knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, ask searching questions about the school's

performance and are diligent in following up any subjects which they believe are under-achieving. They support the school strongly in its liaison work with other schools and colleges. They are closely involved when the school makes senior appointments.

52. The governing body has not been able to prevent the school from accumulating a very large budget deficit. Already running with a deficit budget for two years, in 2001 the governing body anticipated higher levels of grant than materialized and had to cope with a sudden escalation of unexpected costs to ensure that the school was able to operate following a staffing crisis of considerable proportions. The outcome was a very large financial deficit. The school now has satisfactory procedures for financial management and it has taken appropriate professional guidance to eliminate the deficit over a period of time. However, the governing body is still unable to set a budget within its existing resources and continues to run with a licensed deficit. There are no failures to comply with statutory requirements, other than the fact that the school does not hold a daily act of collective worship and does not allocate quite enough time for the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus to be met in Year 10.
53. The principles of inclusion which the school embraces are effectively implemented in its day-to-day practice. In particular, students with special educational needs are very well served. Much learning takes place in the superb facilities provided for the performing arts or other accommodation which has benefited from upgrading and refurbishment. Equipment is of good quality. There are no major shortages of resources. The expenditure on students is comparable with that spent on students in similar schools. Although standards are below average, achievement is good by the time that students leave the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Taking all the factors into account, and fully recognizing that the school has a very large deficit which it has still to reduce, the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,522,826	Balance from previous year	-61,462
Total expenditure	5,079,079	Balance carried forward to the next	-617,715
Expenditure per pupil	4,042.90		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECT AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average but are beginning to rise.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Assessment procedures are very effective.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- There is strong emphasis in the schemes of work on areas identified for development.
- Procedures to identify students' progress are inconsistent.

Commentary

54. In 2003, the attainment of students at the end of Year 9 in the National Curriculum tests was well below the national average. Although there has been a small improvement over the past five years in the average points scored by students, this has not been sufficient to raise standards closer to the national picture. The attainment of boys is generally lower than that of girls and in 2003 the difference was greater than the national difference. Evidence indicates that standards are now rising in response to good provision and good teaching, although the attainment of students in Year 9 remains below the national average.
55. Students join the school at the start of Year 7 with standards which are well below average and the prior attainment of the significant proportion who join during Years 7 to 9 is also well below average. Students achieve well to reach higher standards although they are still below the national average. Students with special educational needs also achieve well. Although the more general support given to students who are at the earlier stages of the acquisition of English as an additional language is good, it does not systematically address the full range of language needs of this group of students. Consequently, their progress is not as good as it needs to be.
56. The attainment of students at the end of Year 11 in their GCSE examinations in 2003 was well below the national average and there has been no upward trend over previous years. Evidence indicates that standards in the current Year 11 are closer to, although still below, the national average. These students started Year 10 with attainment which was well below the national average and their achievement is good. A considerable number of students join the school during the GCSE examination course and on arrival their attainment is generally well below average.
57. Throughout Years 7 to 11, students make good progress in the planning and structuring of their extended writing in order to meet examination and test requirements. They improve the quality of what they write by including more description and better detail. They also make good progress in making textual references and quotations in order to illustrate their ideas and opinions. Students make good progress in the use of discussion as a way of extending their understanding through listening to the ideas of others. The confident and enthusiastic use which students make of discussion is a strength. Nearly all students are hampered by having a very limited general vocabulary, although they make good progress in the use of vocabulary specific to the subject.

58. The quality of teaching is good overall with some significant strengths. Teachers make very good use of regular, rigorous assessment to identify the needs of individual students and plan lessons well to meet these needs, including the needs of boys. They make good use of pair and group activities as well as a wide range of activities which involve students' active participation. Teachers make good use of questioning to explore and assess students' understanding and they respond well to the challenge by putting thought into their answers. Students respond well to the variety in lessons by maintaining their enthusiasm and concentration. The pace of most lessons is fast and students rise well to the challenge by working hard. Marking is generally helpful and informative, although there is some inconsistency between teachers in the amount of advice they give. This represents maintenance of the good teaching standards noted in the last inspection report.
59. The quality of leadership and management is very good. Much thought has gone into analysing the causes of the low standards of recent years and the results of this can clearly be seen in the updated schemes of work which place particular emphasis on areas of identified weakness. For example, the strong emphasis which is now placed on the planning and structuring of written work is having a clear effect on students' progress in these key skills. The schemes of work identify opportunities for the use of ICT and in Year 9 considerable efforts are made to ensure that these opportunities are as wide as possible. Very good use is made of assessment information to track students' progress and identify underachievement and there are good procedures to give extra support to students who need this. There are very good procedures to involve students in understanding their own progress and what they need to do to improve, although these are not used consistently by all teachers. There has been good progress since the last inspection in the areas of curriculum development and the use of assessment information to raise standards. Improvement overall has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. In general, standards of literacy in the full range of subjects are below average, although in some subjects literacy skills are satisfactory and in others – for example geography – they are improving. Students' speaking and listening are better than their writing, in response to the good opportunities they are given for this in most subjects. Most students read accurately, although some read slowly because they frequently need to work out words with which they are not familiar. Most students find recording their knowledge and understanding in written form very challenging and most require support, sometimes by using aids to support writing known as 'writing frames', to help them with planning and the organization of their ideas. There is an effective literacy intervention programme targeted at students in Years 7 and 8 whose standards are below national expectations.
61. The teaching of literacy skills is good in nearly all subjects, although only limited opportunities for written recording are given in citizenship. Many subjects plan good opportunities for the development of literacy; this represents improvement since the last inspection. In mathematics, this aspect of students' work is planned in the schemes of work, and writing full sentences is used to develop students' mathematical understanding. In science, students are given good support for their writing but are also encouraged to do some writing independently. In nearly all subjects, the teaching of vocabulary specific to the subject is good and, in many cases, students' specialised vocabulary is better than their general vocabulary.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are not high enough.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory because of earlier weaknesses which have not yet been fully addressed.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the foreign language but it is not used sufficiently.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to support students' learning.
- Numbers of students taking foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 are very small.
- Useful initiatives have taken place since the last inspection with the aim of improving standards.

Commentary

62. All students, in Years 7, 8 and 9 study either French, Spanish or Urdu. They can continue their study of one language as an option in Years 10 and 11. However, currently, fewer than one in five students studies modern languages in Years 10 and 11 but it is possible for students to study two languages.
63. Teachers' assessments of students' work at the end of Year 9 shows that the overall level of attainment, which has been low for several years, has started to rise. Reported levels in 2003 are significantly higher than in 2002, although they remain well below national averages. However, the levels represent satisfactory achievement for these students, the vast majority of whom enter the school at various stages with little or no prior knowledge of the foreign language. The standard of current work confirms this picture. Gifted and talented students do not yet make satisfactory progress, whereas the progress of students for whom English is an additional language is in line with that for all students and students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress when they receive additional adult support in the classroom.
64. At the end of Year 11, standards in French and Spanish are well below national averages. In 2003, approximately 1 in 10 students entered for the GCSE examination in French or Spanish achieved an A* - C grade. Students' attainment was lower in French than in any other foundation subject. In both French and Spanish, boys attained lower standards than girls, reflecting the national picture. The standard of current work indicates that attainment is improving, especially in the small classes in Years 10 and 11. However, students lack confidence in speaking the foreign language and find it difficult to write accurately enough to convey information unambiguously. These standards are not high enough. In Urdu, standards are below national averages but the examination results in 2003 represent good improvement on previous years and students' achievement is satisfactory. They are generally confident speakers.
65. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In individual lessons, the quality ranges from unsatisfactory to good. Very good features include detailed planning, teachers' knowledge of the language and very good relationships between teachers and students. However, in some lessons, insufficient use of the foreign language and lack of challenge for the more able students are clear weaknesses. Further weaknesses include inaccuracies in marking and the poor management of students who misbehave in class. Teachers are not making enough use of ICT to develop learning.
66. Leadership and management have improved and are now satisfactory. A new head of department has been appointed since the last inspection. Detailed schemes of work have been devised and a regular assessment scheme has been put in place. The promotion of community languages, particularly Urdu, and the development of visits abroad are beginning to have a positive effect on the department. The new head of department is working towards the creation of a cohesive

department and is a good role model for teaching. However, some operational targets to improve standards have not been met by their deadline and work with a Beacon school has not yet started.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in GCSE examinations is very good.
- Teamwork and collaborative planning are raising the achievement of students.
- The approaches to supporting literacy, deaf students and inclusion are effective.
- Insufficient use of ICT restricts students' learning.
- The co-ordination of the use of mathematics in other subjects is unsystematic.
- The quality of teaching is improving but is not yet very good.

Commentary

67. In 2003, the results in National Curriculum tests taken by students in Year 9 were well below average. In comparison with students' results in similar schools they were also well below average although they were better in terms of the higher grades. Results have improved steadily over time in line with national trends. In 2003, girls and boys performed similarly. Overall, taking into account the high mobility of students at the school, the results represent good achievement.
68. The GCSE examination results for 2003 at the higher grades were just below average. They were well above average compared with the results of similar schools. They were better than in most subjects, including English and science, and have improved steadily, a little above the national trend of improvement. Girls continued to do a little better than boys. Deaf students, and students for whom English is an additional language, also performed well. Overall, the results represent very good achievement. The GCSE examination results for students who enter for the mathematics examination early have fluctuated over the last three years, falling significantly in 2003 to below average. Boys did slightly better than girls.
69. When students enter the school their standards are well below average. The standard of current work in Year 9, in number, algebra, shape, space and measurement shows that standards improve although they are still below average. Most students can perform accurate calculations without using calculators and mentally solve simple problems. Achievement overall is good, and is best in Year 9 where teaching is more suited to the grouping of students. All ability and ethnic groups achieve well, with the exception of the higher-attaining students in Years 7 and 8, who do not achieve well until Year 9 where teaching is more effective. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of work seen is below average, except in numeracy, where it is average. Standards in statistics are above average. Students with special educational needs, including those who are deaf, also achieve well. Overall, achievement is good throughout the school.
70. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11, is good, and is best in Years 9 to 11. The elimination of unsatisfactory teaching since the last inspection has been a very good improvement, and more than six out of ten lessons were good or better. The main features of good teaching include very good planning and lesson organization and the use of teaching methods that incorporate the National Numeracy Strategy well. Teachers' high expectations and students' positive attitudes promote good learning; interactive presentations often focus on understanding which also effectively promotes the good use of spoken English, of particular benefit to those students who are learning English as an additional language. There is almost always good use of additional support for students with special educational needs, particularly for

deaf students; the approach to inclusion also incorporates different learning styles; regular, and mostly very detailed, marking provides useful feedback, and setting minimum targets encourages students in Years 9 to 11 to achieve more. There are also some weaknesses that restrict the achievement of students: some teaching is not well matched to the needs of students – particularly the higher attainers in Years 7 and 8, and for a very small number with severe reading difficulties. There is incomplete coverage of ICT requirements within the National Curriculum because of insufficient access to computers; and some methods used to respond to bad behaviour distract classes from learning.

71. The good leadership and management are focused on improvement and are effectively supported by senior leadership and the local education authority. Good induction and support of new staff, sharing of good practice, collaborative planning, and delegation of responsibilities lead to good team spirit and a common purpose. Initiatives and curriculum innovation are effective and help to raise the achievement of students. They include induction programmes for future Year 7 students, accelerated courses from Year 9 onwards, extending the range of effective teaching methods and learning styles, and lesson observations by teachers' peers which supplement the good performance management arrangements. The faculty's development plan and self-evaluation provide for extensive monitoring and evaluation and are useful management tools. However, monitoring the use and assessment of information technology, the progress of some faculty targets, and consistency in some marking are not rigorous enough. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and has focused on raising achievement and improving the faculty's provision for inclusion.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Overall, standards are average. In mathematics, teachers have improved students' skills in calculations, use of graphs and the basic use of algebra and formulae. Three years ago, the school focused on improving students mathematical skills in other subjects and this initiative was clearly beneficial as a number of good examples of using mathematics effectively in other subjects were seen. In Year 7, students use fractions and number groupings when working with time values in music; in geography lessons in Year 9, where practice is best developed, students analyse and graphically represent tourism data; younger students also use scale, measurement and draw graphs well in design and technology and in science. Students in Years 10 and 11 use skills in space and shape when working in two and three dimensions with pattern templates in textiles, and with perspective in art; they accurately interpret national police data to help them understand trends in crime when learning about responsible citizenship in PSHE lessons, and extensively use statistical methods to analyse population studies. However, the students' effectiveness in applying their mathematical skills is restricted by insufficient guidance and co-ordination across the school.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and much is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good and are focusing on raising standards.
- Data analysis and long-term planning are good.
- The use of assessment is not consistently good.
- Some teachers do not cater for the full range of abilities.

Commentary

73. When students enter the school in Year 7, their overall standards are well below average. In 2003, National Curriculum test results taken in Year 9 show that standards remained well below average. However, when compared with similar schools, the percentage of students achieving higher levels was better although still below average. Bearing in mind the high number of students who start the school with very low levels of competence in the subject and that many students are not fluent in English, or join the school late, the overall achievement by the end of Year 9 is at least satisfactory. GCSE examination results in 2003 were well below average but achievement by the end of Year 11 is good given the low standards on entry.
74. Students in Years 7 and 8 are taught in mixed-ability classes and, while their progress is generally good, the highest-attaining students in some classes are not making enough progress. In Years 9, 10 and 11, there are some groups of higher-attaining students and their rate of progress is above average but the higher-attaining students in the mixed-ability classes are not making as much progress.
75. In Years 7 to 9, students gain confidence and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills across the broad range of National Curriculum topics. Work in students' books shows that they do much practical work, present their work in a variety of interesting ways and acquire scientific methods of recording. Students work sensibly, confidently and safely. They are encouraged to collaborate and frequently work sensibly in pairs or groups. Computers are used well.
76. All students in Years 10 and 11 follow GCSE examination courses. There are two groups of students studying at the higher level. The remaining students are either following the foundation level course or a new 'applied' science course. In Year 10, students have made a good start on their courses. The work of students in Year 11 shows that they are well prepared for the GCSE examination this year. The applied science groups have already sat the examination and are preparing their course work. In all classes, the students participate well in their lessons. Their work shows a good balance of theory and practical work and a variety of recording methods.
77. The teaching and learning of science in Years 7 to 11 is good overall and much is very good. This is an improvement on the last inspection. The teachers plan well, set clear learning objectives and include a variety of learning tasks. Students who experience the greatest difficulties are supported well by specialist teachers and assistants and they make good progress. Relationships between students and teachers are strong and encourage students to work hard, co-operate and behave well in lessons. Where teaching is very good, it matches the level of understanding of individual students so that all are appropriately challenged. In some lessons, teachers give too little consideration to the range of students' abilities, their prior learning or to their level of personal development, so that the work does not challenge the higher-attaining students or meet the particular needs of some lower-attaining students. Not all teachers record the extent of students' achievement of the learning objectives and as a result these teachers do not become aware of students who need either more attention or further challenge.
78. The leadership of the department is very good. The head of department, after a period of serious staffing difficulties, has established a strong supportive team of good, conscientious teachers. The analysis of long-term assessment data is used as the basis for the department's improvement plan which focuses on the raising of standards. The department is well managed. Staff development and monitoring processes have contributed to the improved quality of teaching. Schemes of work have been revised, but are not yet used, for the recording of lesson-by-lesson assessments so that teachers may track students' short-term progress and adjust their planning to meet the needs of all students.

79. Laboratories are efficiently organised by well qualified technicians. Wall displays of students' work celebrate their efforts. ICT is used well but other cross-curricular work is not planned and opportunities to address these elements of learning are missed. There are some after-school revision lessons but there are few other enrichment opportunities such as field trips, museum visits or competitions. The department recently improved staffing. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is very good and helps students achieve very well.
- More stable, qualified staffing and better equipment are leading to significant improvements.
- Students have very good attitudes and are committed to their work.
- There are too few planned lessons to cover the full National Curriculum programmes of study.

Commentary

80. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is below average overall. Teachers' assessments in 2003 accurately showed students' National Curriculum levels as well below average. Students have weekly ICT lessons in Years 7 and 8 but lessons are only fortnightly in Year 9, and there are few planned lessons in other subjects. Skills in measurement and control are undeveloped, although lessons are planned. Students currently in Years 7 and 8 show an improving trend and their standards are nearer average. Their achievement is satisfactory overall. In Years 10 and 11, standards are below average. About a third of students take the new applied GCSE vocational examination course. In 2003, results in the Part 1 GNVQ examination were above average, with two-thirds of students gaining grade C and above. Girls and boys achieved very well from below average levels at the end of Year 9, although the achievement of students who do not take the GCSE examination is unsatisfactory. Standards in the whole school are improving and there are good plans to begin weekly ICT lessons for all in Year 9.
81. In lessons and work seen, students show satisfactory basic ICT skills, but in their other subjects do not practise the full range of ICT skills they will need in the future. They use the computer network competently, carry out a fair amount of internet research, and use presentation software well. In Year 7, students' skills when designing attractive leaflets were above average. In Years 8 and 9, a few students, including some identified as gifted and talented, do not move on fast enough in large classes. Students of all ethnic groups work very well together and make satisfactory progress overall, including those with special educational needs. Students taking the applied GCSE examination course make very good progress in their coursework tasks, creating effective databases which show above-average understanding of how to use search and sort techniques.
82. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and very good in GCSE examination lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic, encouraging and supportive, and most are subject specialists. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language learn equally well without additional support. Teachers use the new national scheme of work flexibly. Lessons are very well planned, and give opportunities for all to succeed. Teachers mark work regularly and help students improve through demonstrating new routines, such as creating web pages. In Years 7 to 9, students are not always fully aware of progress because not all work is

assessed against national levels. In GCSE examination classes marking is very constructive, and students are set frequent targets to help improve the quality of written evaluation to higher levels than would be expected given their previous levels of literacy.

83. ICT is very well led and managed. Since the last inspection, when ICT was weak, the school has improved specialist staffing and the number of computers has risen significantly to reach the national average. This has led to higher standards and achievement. However, there are still too few lessons in Year 9 and for those students who do not take GCSE examinations in ICT. Technical support is very good. Staff plan and manage courses very well, and monitor ICT in other subjects. Overall improvement has been satisfactory but subjects need to plan ICT use more systematically and participate in assessing students' achievement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

84. Most students are competent users of ICT but do not have enough opportunities to use it to develop their learning in all subjects. During the inspection, some good practice was seen in music, physical education, PSHE, leisure and tourism and science – where teachers project animated pictures of rotating motors, and log changes in temperature well. Increasingly, students use home computers and excellent, well-attended club facilities in school to do homework and GCSE examination coursework. They use the internet safely for research. Teachers use their lap-tops and projection equipment increasingly well, and several are making good use of new interactive whiteboards. Staff are beginning to manage data on students' progress electronically, with good administrative use, although further support and training are required, particularly in subjects undergoing recent staff changes. Although there are currently not enough planned lessons involving ICT in mathematics, modern foreign languages and history as well as some other subjects to meet the full National Curriculum requirements, most subjects are addressing this issue, and provision is steadily improving.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving in Years 7 to 9 but recent changes are not yet making an impact on Years 10 and 11.
- Learning is good because of good teaching.
- The assessment strategy gives students a good understanding of how to improve.
- A very wide range of different learning styles help to develop students' understanding.
- Suitably challenging materials are not always available for higher-attaining students.
- Comprehensive fieldwork opportunities develop students' investigative and enquiry skills.
- Relationships are good and support effective collaborative work.

Commentary

85. Standards on entry are well below average. Standards improve although they are still below average by the end of Year 9. In Year 11 they remain well below average. Achievement is good by Year 9 and satisfactory by Year 11. Standards are improving because of the recent developments in practical and investigative learning in Years 7 to 9 but these developments have yet to take full effect in Years 10 and 11 because the main focus for innovation is in the earlier years. The recent emphasis on student self-review has also had a positive impact. The 2003

GCSE examination results were well below average, although this indicates satisfactory achievement. Numbers studying geography have declined, one of the reasons being that some students now study leisure and tourism.

86. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout Years 7 to 11. Lessons are characterised by the very wide range of different learning styles, particularly in Years 7 to 9, that encourage students to learn well. Most can sort a range of geographical information and draw relevant conclusions but some have weak organisational skills which prevent them from learning effectively. Where the students have comprehensive and well structured worksheets, they make good progress. However, some material is insufficiently challenging for the gifted and talented students and they are not achieving enough. Lessons effectively begin with short starters that stress key phrases and make good links to prior learning. Relationships are good and support effective paired collaborative work. Students in Year 9 worked with enthusiasm to identify the causes and consequences of flooding in Bangladesh and, in Year 11, students developed their understanding of global warming through good use of questioning and teacher exposition. The department has collaborated with other departments to develop effective literacy and numeracy strategies to support learning and these are beginning to have a positive impact on learning. The carefully structured and focused approach to learning enables all students and, in particular, those students who are learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, to make good progress.
87. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision focused on further improvement and this is reflected in the very comprehensive revised scheme of work, with new learning strategies linked to an expanding range of resources and well supported by a comprehensive and rigorous assessment strategy. All units include the learning objectives and a student self-review sheet with clear targets for improvement. Students have clear strategies for improving their understanding and their progress. An extensive programme of fieldwork effectively supports the development of investigative and enquiry skills and complements the work in lessons. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Leadership and management, achievement in Years 7 to 9 and teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 have all been strengthened.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- An effective and enthusiastic team of teachers support good learning.
- The assessment strategy ensures that students receive good guidance about their progress.
- High expectations encourage students to develop good attitudes.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to use ICT.
- A broad curriculum serves the needs of all students.

Commentary

88. Standards on entry are well below average but improve and are below average by Year 9 and also by Year 11. Achievement is therefore good in Years 7 to 11 for all groups of students, including gifted and talented students, students learning English as a second language and students with special educational needs. The department ensures, through careful planning and an emphasis upon identifying individual needs, that all students make good progress. GCSE examination results in 2003 were below the national average but this represents good achievement. History secured a wide range of grades, including A* and A grades, with boys outperforming girls.

89. By Year 9, students develop a good range of historical skills, including the understanding of chronology and the significance of primary and secondary sources. The interpretation of photographic evidence is particularly strong. By Year 11, students can make good judgments about the reliability and usefulness of sources in twentieth century South Africa and they have a good knowledge of events in Northern Ireland. There is a wide and varied range of written work that provides good opportunities for developing analytical and evaluative skills. The work is carefully and effectively marked with clear targets for improvement. There is good consistency across the whole department. Good listening skills are encouraged and developed well, which is of particular benefit to the significant number of students who are still learning English.
90. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11, with some very good features. Teachers show that they have very good knowledge and planning skills, and enthusiasm that is readily shared with students. Teachers have high expectations of students and, as a result, students have positive attitudes towards history and they work very well together. All groups of learners, are well supported both by teachers and learning support assistants and, as a result of the individual care they receive, they make good progress. Much of the learning is highly participative with a wide range of learning resources and this approach engages the students' interest. Pace and challenge are good and there is good support for particular individual needs, in particular students with English as an additional language, both from teachers and the specialist teaching assistants. The teamwork is impressive. There is good literacy support for learning to develop good oral skills, to strengthen understanding through a good use of key terms and to provide a varied range of writing opportunities. The strategy is clear and structured and adopted rigorously by the whole team. The assessment strategy is good with students having a National Curriculum levelled assessment at the end of each unit. Units have clear targets for improvement.
91. Good leadership and management provide clear vision and direction in the department. The teachers share their knowledge and experiences and develop new and improved ideas for supporting learning. The curriculum is broad and reflects very well the wide diversity of students in the department. However, there are limited opportunities to develop skills using ICT. Fieldwork visits provide a good basis for developing students' research and investigative skills. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of good teaching.
 - Students have positive attitudes and work hard.
 - The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.
 - The curriculum in Year 10 does not fully meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus.
 - Marking does not yet enable students to know how well they are doing in comparison to national standards.
92. In 2003, GCSE examination results were in line with national averages as nearly 60 per cent of the year group achieved a grade A* - C. The standard of current work is close to this level. In Year 10, overall standards are lower because time allocations and content coverage are well below those recommended in the Agreed Syllabus; this is a weakness. In Year 9, although overall standards are below national averages, they are improving rapidly. Students have a sound

knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices. They work hard and listen well in class.

93. Achievement is best in Years 7 to 9 and Year 11. Students are beginning to build on their knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices in order to give their own opinions and understand how religion affects everyday life. They can confidently express their own personal feelings about people who have influenced them. The achievement of students of all abilities, including those who are deaf or for whom English is an additional language, is at least satisfactory and often good. In Year 10, the lack of time and continuity in curriculum provision restricts achievement over time and students' written work and their oral responses in lessons confirm that they are unable to draw on earlier learning to apply religious teachings to moral and social issues.
94. The quality of teaching and learning is good and in some lessons is excellent. Teachers have good relationships with students and manage classes well. They have very good subject knowledge which enables them to question and challenge students effectively. Lessons are well planned and make use of appropriate activities to develop learning. Students' work is marked regularly and teachers are beginning to set assessment tasks that enable them to measure standards according to the level descriptors in the Agreed Syllabus. Teachers make good use of praise when students do well. Students are provided with worksheets which, in most cases, are adapted to their individual needs. The department recognises that more remains to be done in order for students to understand how they might improve in the subject. At present there is insufficient opportunity for students to use ICT in their work. Students do not have enough contact with local faith communities.
95. Leadership and management are good. The current acting head of department and her colleague have worked hard in a short space of time to improve the quality of planning in the subject, and new schemes of work are impressive. Non-specialist colleagues in the humanities faculty are well supported. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good overall. Apart from in Year 10, students have more time allocated to studying the subject.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning and marking are insufficiently precise.
- Some learning tasks are not carefully thought through to help students reach national standards.
- Too little work is done in ICT for designing and making and understanding modern machinery and production methods.
- Students learning English as an additional language do not get enough guidance.
- The team of specialists is both enthusiastic and receptive to new ideas.
- Equipment, resources and display are good and examination guidance is improving.

Commentary

96. Standards of attainment in the subject are well below average. In 2003, the results of tests taken at the end of Year 9 and GCSE examination results were both well below average. Standards have failed to keep up with national trends. Nevertheless, improvement since September 2003 has been good. Standards of sketching and the drawing of graphs and charts are good but

students do not use their own plans enough. They ask teachers rather than use their own skills. Course-work, even though often very well presented, does not include reasons why things were done differently or why one source of information was better than another.

97. Overall, students achieve well from Year 7 to Year 9. Students with special educational needs make very good progress because they receive good support. Higher-attaining students achieve well. The gifted and talented progress especially well through the individual guidance they receive, often in after-school sessions. Girls progress better than boys because they communicate better. Student whose skills in English are weaker leave work unfinished, write too little and make too many errors. They do not receive enough support. In some lessons, teachers make effective use of group discussion and a range of appropriate activities to strengthen language use but in about a half of lessons seen such approaches were not used. It was significant that in those lessons where teachers paid good attention to students' language needs, standards of design and technology rose noticeably. Marking is undertaken but does not require work to be corrected, despite the many errors in spelling and punctuation. There are also too few opportunities for students to write at length. Too little use is made of ICT but teachers are receptive to new ideas.
98. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. The skills are taught well, students concentrate hard and the outcome is good work in books and in the design and making of good models and garments. Students enjoy acquiring new skills, such as how to buff metal or how to print quality decorations on fabric. However, because teachers' written comments on the quality of students' work are not clear enough, too many students avoid doing corrections in books or undertaking further work on the development of their skills of language. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory with some good features. Teachers are beginning to make more use of effective guidance to help students in their examinations. In the best lessons, teachers are firm, cheerful and fair, but leave students in no doubt that further improvement is required. They, in response, did more for themselves and gained self-esteem in the process. In other lessons the pace was slower because teachers talked for too long and left too little time for students to discuss and develop their own ideas. Behaviour and attitudes in the majority of lessons are very good and only a few students avoid working if they can.
99. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because resources are more plentiful and much of the accommodation has been upgraded. Standards are beginning to rise and achievement for some students is good. It is already very good in textiles and product analysis. Leadership and management are good. The school intends to make a further appointment to the teaching staff to strengthen provision further.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average.
- Good teaching promotes effective learning.
- Teachers have high expectations which help students achieve well.
- Students have very positive attitudes and behaviour is good.
- Too little use is made of ICT to develop learning.

Commentary

100. Standards on entry are well below average. Although no measurable gains had been made by the end of Year 9 in 2003 as standards were still well below average, in what the school acknowledges was a very difficult year group, achievement was satisfactory. In previous years results had been significantly better although they were still below average. Standards of current work show that achievement has been satisfactory over time, largely as a result of methodical teaching which helps students learn how to observe and record a range of subjects and objects in pencil and other materials, to mix and apply colour and to model effectively in clay. Their work is influenced by a variety of famous artists and a range of cultural styles but this is not strongly evident in their finished pieces. Teachers set homework on a regular basis and this is helping to develop the independent learning skills of students. The development and refinement of both drawing and painting skills do not receive sufficient emphasis in Years 7 to 9. Students are involved in evaluating their own work but not all are aware of their National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9.
101. Overall, students in Year 11 are working at levels that are below the national average. Results at the higher grades in the GCSE examination fell significantly last year following recent years when they were much closer to the national average. This was largely due to a change in examination requirements which necessitated a far greater emphasis on critical studies, which many students found difficult. Nonetheless, in terms of students achieving grades A*-G, the school was in line with national averages.
102. The department has done much to improve standards. For students who entered the school with standards well below average, attainment in classes represents good achievement over time. Some students have developed good drawing and painting techniques, as well as skill and sensitivity in using a range of other media such as charcoal, chalk, oil pastel and print making. Work in the new specialist photography course is impressive and results in good levels of achievement. Preparatory studies generally show increasing attention to the use of written English, research and experimentation. Students' work is generally finished well. There is evidence of the inspiration provided by other cultures. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, often good or very good and, occasionally, outstanding. It is at its most successful in lessons which have a prompt start, where frequent questioning tests knowledge and understanding, and where task and pace are challenging. However, this was not always the case, as the end-of-lesson reviews are sometimes not managed effectively or consistently. The department ensures that students of different backgrounds and with a wide range of needs are able to enjoy what the subject has to offer. In particular, the skills of the teachers ensure that if students are learning English as an additional language it does not become a barrier preventing them from achieving well.
103. Very good opportunities for enrichment are available through the school's involvement with a number of effective initiatives. Those aimed at serving the needs of gifted and talented students show promise but are not yet consistently developed. However, assessment is consistently and effectively used in Years 10 and 11 to inform students of their progress as well as ways to improve, and for individual target setting. The analysis of data is not sufficiently detailed to allow for the most effective monitoring of standards for different groups who may need more support or increased challenge. Students with special educational needs are very well supported. Teachers modify materials so that different groups of students can learn effectively. Learning support assistants make a very good contribution to learning and students achieve well as a result. Attitudes and relationships are good overall and are very good in Years 10 and 11. Art makes a good contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development but little is planned to address their spiritual awareness, despite the richness of opportunities available.

104. The subject is well led and managed because planning is very thorough, records are well maintained and the outcomes of teaching and learning are monitored. Assessment procedures have been refined and are now more effective. Schemes of work are in place for all year groups. Weaker features are that policies do not yet reflect whole-school policies in detail and that there is little opportunity for the development of work using ICT. A strong team spirit and good work ethic have been established. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Strategies are not in place to drive up standards and to ensure consistency of good practice in teaching, learning and assessment procedures across the department.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the department is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good in some lessons.
- Accommodation is very good and there are excellent resources for music technology.
- Good relationships foster positive attitudes to the subject.
- Too few students learn to play instruments.
- Too few students are involved in extra-curricular activities.

Commentary

105. Teacher assessments indicate that students achieve standards at the end of Year 9 which are close to the national average. Work seen during the inspection confirmed this. These standards represent satisfactory achievement given the relatively low attainment of students on entry to the school. Although the most recent GCSE examination results are well below average, the number of students choosing to study the subject has increased. More boys than girls take the subject and overall they achieve better.

106. All students have access to the music curriculum. They mostly behave and respond well and enjoy their lessons. Schemes of work offer students a rich experience of world music, but that from the British Isles and the western classical tradition is under-represented. Students on examination courses benefit from the excellent facilities for music technology. They acquire skill in the use of software packages which assist both their work in composition and the development of historical and stylistic understanding. Students' listening skills and their ability to read and use conventional notation are not as well developed as they need to be and constitute a barrier to learning.

107. The standard of teaching is good overall. Positive relationships are a striking feature of the best lessons and contribute to the motivation and achievement of students. Lessons are well planned and delivered with a good sense of pace. Occasionally, group work tends to be unfocused and unproductive when students are engaged in experimental creative work. Although considerable effort is made to build up students' understanding of specialist vocabulary, the development of core skills, whether in performance or the handling of notation, requires more careful progression and regular reinforcement in order to equip students for later work.

108. The department is very well led and managed. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection – notably the excellent accommodation and resources for music technology which have resulted from the school gaining performing arts status. Very good displays provide a colourful and stimulating environment for students.

109. There is a good range of free instrumental tuition available, but participation is below average, particularly in wind and strings. Opportunities for musical enrichment outside the classroom exist but few students are involved. Standards and tradition in these activities have yet to be established. Overall, this is a successful department imbued with a sense of vision and good capacity for further improvement.

Drama

Provision in drama is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are of high quality.
- Standards of work are above average.
- The quality of leadership and management is excellent.
- Links with the wider community are highly developed.
- Relationships between students and teachers are excellent.

Commentary

110. Standards are above average throughout the school. In 2003, GCSE examination results were above the national average and were far above results in other subjects. Boys and girls achieve equally well. There are no significant disparities in the achievement of students from different ethnic backgrounds. The many students for whom English is an additional language also achieve well. They are helped to do so by two particularly strong features of the teachers' work: clear, deliberate enunciation of spoken English and the attention paid to students' written work where errors of basic literacy are clearly identified and clear guidance is provided to help students improve their standard English. Students with special educational needs, and in particular those who are deaf, are helped by effective support to achieve as well as other students.

111. Throughout the school, standards of movement are especially high. Students have a strong grasp of how movement can convey meaning. They have the physical skills to depict ideas and to show contrasts in mood. They use bodily rhythms fluently, benefiting from their work in the dance curriculum. At best, their speech has vitality and honesty. They understand when discussing the drama process that it is appropriate to use standard English and are beginning to master this. They know how to build up a dramatic scene from preparatory discussion through to accomplished presentation. They have the skills to work effectively with one another and the capability to evaluate their own work and that of other students. They understand the function of an audience and what they have to do with drama to make an impact on it.

112. The quality of teaching and learning in drama lessons is excellent. Its hallmark is the driving pace which students appreciate as it stimulates them to high endeavour. No matter what the age group, not a minute is lost as teachers rapidly remind students of earlier learning before introducing effective activities which draw on students' knowledge, skills and understanding. Students' learning is the strong and appropriate focus of teaching and students are required to solve problems, to work with others, to share practice and to evaluate one another's work. A distinctive feature is the support given to students who are deaf and whose enjoyment of participation is reflected in their expressions as they share equally with others in creating drama. Clear, regular and helpful assessment processes enable teachers to know that students make good progress.

113. Leadership and management are of excellent quality. The drama curriculum has coherence as skills, knowledge and understanding are systematically worked on from Year 7 through to the

GCSE examination course in Year 11, building a strong platform for students' subsequent work after the age of 16. By drawing on other arts specialisms such as dance, media, photography and music, as well as a range of cross-curricular themes such as literacy and citizenship, the curriculum is given great breadth and conviction. It is further enhanced by the work the department undertakes with the wider community outside school. Because of its current levels of achievement and because, throughout its work, this subject is effectively reflecting all the main aims of the school, its improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are not yet high enough but they are improving significantly.
- Very good leadership and management provide a strong ethos for teaching and learning.
- The quality of teaching is good and students learn well as a result.
- The combined provision in physical education and dance for activities outside normal lessons is excellent.
- There is no permanent base for teaching the theoretical parts of the GCSE examination courses.

Commentary

114. Teacher assessment shows that in 2003 standards in Year 9 were well below average, particularly for girls. The percentages of students in Year 11 who gained A* to C grades in the GCSE examinations in physical education and dance were also well below average. Although the current standards in Year 9 are below average, they are improving significantly for girls as well as boys. Standards in core physical education in Year 11 are average overall. Individual students reach well above average standards in athletics, cricket, cross-country, dance, football and trampolining. In the GCSE examination classes in both physical education and dance, overall standards of practical work are average, with some students attaining standards that are above average. However, for many students English is an additional language and they experience difficulties with written work which prevent them from obtaining higher grades.
115. Standards on entry are well below average. Most students are making good progress, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Good achievement is sustained in Years 10 and 11. GCSE examination students in both physical education and dance are achieving well. Students with physical disabilities make good progress in lessons as a result of the very good support that they receive. The increased amount of curriculum time is beginning to have a positive impact on students' achievement.
116. The quality of teaching is good in almost all lessons. Teaching in GCSE examination classes in Year 11, in both physical education and dance, is very good. Strong features of most lessons include good relationships, helpful on-going assessment and very good behaviour management. Consistent reinforcement of learning objectives ensures that students remain focused and committed. As a result, students respond very well and in most lessons learning is good.
117. Very good leadership and management show a strong commitment to raising standards. Teachers work together very well. Planning for future initiatives is impressive and the capacity for further improvement is clearly evident. The combined programme of activities in physical education and dance outside normal lessons is excellent. It includes a wide range of clubs, coaching by visiting specialists, a variety of team games and frequent inter-form competitions.

118. Very good improvement since the last inspection has seen the introduction of GCSE examination courses in both physical education and dance and the provision of a purpose-built dance studio. However, there is no permanent base for teaching the theoretical elements of the two examination courses. Such a facility would help teachers in their quest to improve written work and would support the development of literacy. Curriculum changes have contributed to a high level of student participation throughout the school. The Junior Sports Leaders Award has been introduced in Year 10. The use of ICT is increasing. A designated learning support assistant works very closely with departmental staff. Improved links with primary schools in both physical education and dance are beginning to raise an awareness of standards and improve the transition between Years 6 and 7. In 2003, the faculty gained the Sportmark Gold award.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

119. Current provision for vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 is limited in scope but the school has well developed plans for it to be expanded. Although smaller in number than the school would like, applied GCSE examination courses in ICT, leisure and tourism, health and social care, as well as science, offer a relevant education for a significant number of students. The success enjoyed on these courses is improving students' skills and raising their self-esteem. Work-related courses are also proving very effective in improving students' motivation. A number of imaginative initiatives in the performing arts have provided students with valuable insights into the work of professional artists.

120. The school has also been enterprising in expanding its range of GCSE examination courses to include such subjects as sociology, media, dance and photography to cater for a wider range of interests. It has also introduced accredited non-GCSE examination courses such as ASDAN [Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network] and CLAIT [computer literacy and information technology], both to good effect, as well as a number of accredited college links courses, such as CAD/CAM [computer aided design and computer aided manufacture]. A good example of the school's inclusive approach to the curriculum is the support option in the science curriculum for students learning English as an additional language.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

121. PSHE is taught throughout the school. Its programme of study comprises key elements relating to the personal development of young people, including effective careers guidance. The programme is mostly well taught. The course has provided a useful platform for the effective development of citizenship.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good opportunities for students to develop a sense of responsible participation.
- Students have a clear understanding of the concept of being well-informed and responsible citizens.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Students are given only limited opportunities to develop their literacy skills.
- Assessment of attainment and progress is not sufficiently developed.

Commentary

122. Standards at the ends of Year 9 and Year 11 are generally in line with national expectations. Students, including those with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. They have good understanding of the importance to their everyday lives of the issues covered in citizenship lessons and, in particular, a clear understanding of what it means to be a 'good citizen'. They are very aware that participation in society is the way in which they, as individuals, can have a positive effect. They have satisfactory recall and understanding of the topics they have covered; for example, in Year 8, students understand that many of our legal rights are age-related, although they have some difficulty in remembering at what age they are able to exercise these rights.
123. Although students in Year 11 show great interest in youth crime in their locality, they find it difficult to interpret statistics in order to work out which crimes are most common among young people, but all know that auto-crime is common and are able to discuss its far-reaching effects. Higher-attaining students in Year 10 are able to compare the democratic institutions of this country with the dictatorship of Nazi Germany. They use the internet to carry out research into a range of lesser-known charities to find out which groups they support.
124. Students make good progress through the use of discussion to learn by exchanging ideas with others and through their own participation in a wide range of activities. Their progress in communicating and recording their knowledge and understanding in written form is only satisfactory, partly because they have less opportunity to do this.
125. It was possible to see only a small number of lessons during the inspection but the overall standard of teaching in the lessons was good. In one lesson it was excellent. Teachers plan their lessons to include a good range of learning activities which stimulate and maintain students' commitment and concentration. Teachers work well with visiting speakers to provide a range of relevant and interesting information and students respond well by showing interest. Although teachers give students good opportunities to discuss and make their own oral contributions they give only limited opportunity to explore and record understanding in a variety of written forms.
126. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The planning of the introduction of the subject was carried out well. A thorough audit of where citizenship topics were already being taught in other subjects was carried out efficiently and schemes of work were then produced to rectify weaker areas. There is a clear overview of what is being taught in each subject area and a review of this is currently being undertaken. There is a policy for the assessment of students' attainment and progress in citizenship, but this is very brief and lacks detailed guidance to teachers. There is a very good range of opportunities for students to make a personal, practical contribution to the society of their school. A large number of students are engaged in supporting other students through a number of peer mentoring and other schemes or in participating in the democratic process through the school or form councils, as well as by taking part in a variety of charitable endeavours.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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