

INSPECTION REPORT

CLAPTON GIRLS' TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Clapton

LEA area: Hackney

Unique reference number: 100278

Headteacher: Ms C Day

Lead inspector: Mr M Beale

Dates of inspection: 25 – 28 April 2005

Inspection number: 268369

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 16
Gender of students:	Girls
Number on roll:	870
School address:	Laura Place Lower Clapton Road London
Postcode:	E5 0RB
Telephone number:	020 8985 6641
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Jane B Franklin
Date of previous inspection:	15 March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The number on roll at this average sized school has fallen slightly since the last inspection. The girls come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are of black-African, black-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, and Indian heritages. The number of girls at an early stage of learning English as an additional language is high. The main first languages spoken are Bangladeshi, Yoruba and Turkish. There are 124 refugee and asylum seekers, who account for most of the high level of movement into and out of the school during the year. A large proportion of the girls come from disadvantaged backgrounds with many housed in temporary accommodation. The number entitled to a free school meal is well above average. There are five traveller children and 13 girls are in the care of the local authority. The proportion of girls with special educational needs has fallen over the last few years but is still well above average, although the number with a statement for their needs is well below average. The main reasons identified for higher levels of need are for girls with moderate learning or with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below average and is lowered further because of the large number of girls who join after this point, many of whom have had disrupted schooling and are still at very early stages of acquiring English language skills. The school has received several awards in recognition of its work including a Schools Achievement Award in 2003 for its improved GCSE results, Artsmark and Investors in People. The school receives funding through Excellence in Cities for its gifted and talented programme, learning mentors and the Student Support Centre.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19385	Martin Beale	Lead inspector	
9708	Sylvia Daintrey	Lay inspector	
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
17541	Fran Ashworth	Team inspector	Mathematics
4126	Clive Parsons	Team inspector	Science
8052	Ken McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
30563	Jackie Pentlow	Team inspector	Religious education
31685	Val Girling	Team inspector	Art and design
11190	Winifred Burke	Team inspector	Design and technology
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs
10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	History Citizenship
12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
27665	Alrene Lees	Team inspector	Music
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school. It serves the diverse needs of the students and the local community very well and provides very good value for money. Achievement is very good overall and standards rise considerably as the students move through the school. The headteacher has focused the work of staff successfully on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and on ensuring that all students can benefit from all that the school offers. The students respond well by working hard and demonstrating a very positive approach to their learning. This helps to generate a purposeful, harmonious and secure environment in which students develop into mature young people and their learning thrives.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- students make rapid progress in both their academic and personal development because much of the teaching inspires and motivates them and generates a desire to be successful;
- under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, teachers continually seek to improve their work and to meet the students' diverse needs;
- highly effective and influential links with other schools and colleges benefit the students' achievement considerably and support their transfer into and out of the school;
- carefully planned and targeted advice, support and guidance enable individual needs to be tackled and give students a clear picture of how they can improve their standards;
- thorough assessment of students with special educational needs focuses support and teaching very successfully on tackling their individual learning and personal needs;
- teaching time for physical education is inadequate; this coupled with staffing difficulties in the recent past and unsuitable outside areas is leading to the students not achieving as they should.

Improvement since the last inspection is very good. GCSE examination results have risen rapidly, and Year 9 test results are higher than at the last inspection. Teaching is much better, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Significant improvements have been made in information and communication technology, design and technology, geography and music all of which had major weaknesses at the last inspection. Punctuality to lessons has improved and attendance levels are higher because of the rigorous action taken to reduce absence.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
	C	C	C	A*

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

Achievement is very good overall, although the students make more rapid progress in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 where achievement is nonetheless good. Overall standards attained are below average by Year 9 and in line with the national average by Year 11. Year 9 test results rose in 2004 and represented good progress given the students' attainment on entry to the school; they were well below the national average but

above results in similar schools. Students' performance was in line with the national average in English, but well below the national average in mathematics and science. GCSE performance in 2004 represented very good progress for most students from their earlier Year 9 test results and placed the school in the top five per cent of similar schools. The achievement of students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented is very good throughout the school. The achievement of students learning English as an additional language is more variable but is good overall. Many of these students become the highest performing in the school once they have developed fluency in English.

The students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. They have very positive attitudes to their work and are keen to do well. They work co-operatively and show considerable respect and support for each other. The students are very helpful to those new to the school, especially if they need support to learn English. Behaviour is very good, because of the consistent implementation of the school's expectations. Attendance is good and the students are punctual to school and to lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good as are teaching and learning. A considerable proportion of teaching is stimulating and motivates the students. Teachers very skilfully develop language skills through the methods they adopt. The curriculum is designed well to support the achievement of all students and is supported by a good range of well-attended enrichment activities and support for learning beyond the school day. However, time is insufficient to enable teaching physical education skills to a reasonable depth. Provision is carefully planned to meet the needs of specific groups such as those identified as gifted and talented or with special educational needs and the large number learning English as an additional language. Advice and guidance are very sharply focused on identifying individual needs and how these can best be met. The school has developed very strong links with other schools and the community; these links and other partnerships are supported by the school's specialist status and its leading role in the local Excellence in Cities zone.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good and place the school in a strong position to develop further and to tackle the challenges and opportunities it faces. The headteacher's leadership is excellent. She has high expectations of the staff and provides structured support to help them achieve the school's goals. She is supported by a highly effective senior staff team who reflect continually on how to improve the school and plan carefully to meet its priorities. Leadership skills are demonstrated at all levels, which helps to generate a high level of consistency in the approach of staff to the implementation of policies, and contributes significantly to the success of the school. Governors have developed considerable expertise and understanding of the school. They fulfil their role very well and are appropriately challenging of the headteacher and staff. Statutory responsibilities are fulfilled with the exception of having a plan to show how the curriculum and buildings are to be made accessible to all.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' views of the school are very favourable. They are particularly pleased with the quality of teaching and the leadership of the headteacher. The students are also very happy with the school and feel that they have a voice in its development. They particularly value the commitment of their teachers and the consistency of their approach. However, they are not entirely happy with queuing arrangements for lunch, a matter the school and the inspection team agrees with.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- extend provision in physical education;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- by preparing a plan to make the curriculum and the buildings accessible to all potential students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is very good overall, and students make more rapid progress in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Both Year 9 test and GCSE results are rising. The improvement at GCSE is more rapid than nationally. Targets for test and examination results were exceeded in 2004.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2004 represented very good, and in many cases excellent progress from the students' attainment on entry to the school and from their earlier performance in Year 9 tests.
- The school is very effective in supporting the achievement of all groups of students whatever their backgrounds or individual needs.
- The students' very good achievement is based on stimulating teaching, a sharp focus on developing basic skills and very high levels of motivation and commitment.
- Achievement is satisfactory in physical education, although students do not achieve as well as they could because of weaknesses in provision.

Commentary

1. National test results for Year 9 students in English, mathematics and science rose in 2004 and were higher than at the last inspection. These results represented good progress overall for the students from their attainment on entry to the school. Results in English were in line with the national average and well above results in similar schools. They were well below the national average in mathematics and science but in line with performance in similar schools.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.0 (29.9)	33.5 (33.4)
mathematics	32.1 (29.3)	35.7 (35.4)
science	29.5 (28.4)	33.2 (33.6)

There were 179 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Overall GCSE results rose sharply from 32 per cent of students attaining five or more A*-C grades in 2002 to 48 per cent in 2003; results remained at roughly the same level in 2004. Results in 2004 in mathematics and science were in line with the national average and were very high in comparison with similar schools. English GCSE results were below average but were still very high in comparison with similar schools. The best performance was in art and design where results were significantly above average, whereas results in design and technology and in sociology were significantly below average. Results in the information and communication technology short course were poor. The proportion of the highest A* and A grades was considerably below the national average, although mathematics and French produced the school's best performance at this level.

3. There are some differences in the performance of different ethnic groups. Students of Indian and Bangladeshi backgrounds attain higher standards than the school average, while the GCSE performance of students of black-Caribbean and Turkish heritages is below the school average. The school has identified the last two groups for targeted support, which is already beginning to show benefits to their achievement.
4. Several factors affect the overall performance of different groups of students. Average performance at GCSE is higher for those who enter the school at the start of Year 7 than for later arrivals. A considerable number of students not only join the school as late as Year 11 but also do so with developing English language skills and disrupted schooling experiences. Students identified with special educational needs are also much less likely to achieve five A*-C grades than those who are not. The school provides a wide range of activities to support the achievement of all of these students. In the majority of cases, they make more rapid progress than might be expected given their levels of prior attainment.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	47 (48)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88 (90)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (93)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	273.0	282.8

There were 173 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. The very good achievement of the students is the result of several factors. Teaching is very good throughout the school. This stimulates and motivates the students to work hard and be determined to succeed. Their very positive approach to learning is exemplified not just in lessons but also by their commitment to attending out of hours activities, particularly where these have a subject focus. A further significant factor in supporting the students' achievement is the high quality of support and guidance that is targeted at the identified needs of each individual. This ensures that challenging but attainable targets are set and that the best possible provision is planned to meet these targets. In spite of the very good teaching in Years 7 to 9, overall achievement is not as rapid as in Years 10 and 11. This is because many early learners of English as an additional language need time to develop their skills and understanding of concepts and ideas. The foundations laid here pay dividends later, as seen in the very good achievement of students in Years 10 and 11.
6. Achievement is at least good in all subjects bar one. The exception is physical education where achievement is satisfactory. This is because insufficient time is allocated to teach skills in depth, there have been staffing problems in recent years and outside facilities are inadequate. Achievement is very good in English, citizenship and modern foreign languages throughout the school and in mathematics, science, history and religious education in Years 10 and 11. Consequently, students make rapid progress during their time at the school from the well below average overall attainment on entry, to below average standards overall by Year 9. The exceptions to below average standards by Year 9 are in English, art and design, citizenship, modern foreign languages and music where standards are in line with the national average. The current Year 11 is not as strong as in 2004, although overall standards are still in

line with the national average and the school is well placed to meet its GCSE targets. Standards are broadly average by Year 11 in all subjects except for art and design and modern foreign languages where they are above average, and in English, information and communication technology and physical education where they are below average.

7. Students with special educational needs achieve very well because the majority of teachers have a very good understanding of their needs and how to provide for them in lessons. All met or exceeded their GCSE target grades in 2004 and many made such good progress that they were removed from the special needs list. Many students who are just beginning to learn English arrive after Year 7 and in the middle of the school year. The achievement of students who are functionally fluent is very good. Most of the students beginning to learn English also make very good progress but a small group learn more slowly. These students are often in Years 9 to 11 and may have had a limited education previously. The school is aware that the current support for these is insufficient. The achievement of students identified as gifted and talented is also very good. This is because teachers plan to challenge them in lessons and additional programmes and activities are very successfully targeted at extending and enriching their learning. The support for traveller children is effective although their variable attendance holds back their progress significantly.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Students' personal development – including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development – is very good. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The students' strong commitment to learning contributes to their very good achievement.
- Students work together and support each other very well and there is a high degree of racial harmony.
- Behaviour, attendance and punctuality have improved considerably since the last inspection because of the very successful implementation a range of carefully-planned strategies.
- Students' personal development is promoted very effectively in many aspects of school life.

Commentary

8. Attitudes to learning are much better than at the last inspection when they were satisfactory. Students in all years and of all abilities are now keen to do as well as they can. They very much appreciate the help their teachers give them which will enable them to fulfil their ambitions to go on to further education and employment. In lessons, they settle quickly to tasks and concentrate hard throughout the 60 minutes. A striking feature is their enthusiasm for learning outside lessons. Large numbers of students use the learning resource centre before and after school and at break-times. The subject clubs held after school are very popular, especially for Year 11 students on the brink of their GCSE examinations, but also among younger students. For example, over 70 students from Years 7 and 8 chose to stay behind on one day during

the inspection to take an hour-long UK Maths Challenge paper under examination conditions.

9. The strengths in students' relationships with others have been maintained since the last inspection and improved further. Students of all backgrounds and ethnic groups mix together very well within a highly supportive atmosphere. In lessons, students work very productively in pairs and small groups. They are very willing to help new arrivals settle into the school, including those who speak little English. The school deals very effectively with the rare racist incident. Bullying is not a significant problem. The school makes very good use of an external trainer to give younger students the skills to cope with any breakdowns in relationships with their peers. Students in Years 7 and 8 are confident that they can turn to a learning mentor or a trained student mediator if they need help.
10. The school has applied the national strategy for improving behaviour in a very clearly thought-out and consistent way. As a result of this and other strategies, students know how they are expected to behave and the consequences of both good and bad behaviour. Students behaved very well throughout the inspection, both in lessons and as they moved around the school. This is a very significant improvement since the last inspection when behaviour overall was unsatisfactory. The rate of exclusions has fallen, as has the number of incidents when senior members of staff have to be called upon to withdraw students from classes. The school is not complacent, however, and is very aware that problems do arise among particular groups of students. For example, there is some disruptive behaviour in Year 8, a cohort which has experienced a high number of students joining and leaving the school. Some ethnic groups are over-represented in the data for behaviour incidents and exclusions. The school's approach quite rightly is to focus on each student as an individual and to put in place a strategy to meet her needs. This can involve, for example, the student support centre, learning mentors, special group work, external agencies or motivational speakers.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	66	2	1
White – Irish	6	5	0
White – any other White background	95	2	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	22	10	0
Mixed – White and Black African	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	6	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	90	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	46	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	96	1	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	10	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	124	21	1

Black or Black British – African	206	5	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	10	0
Chinese	15	0	0
Any other ethnic group	71	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

11. Attendance has improved significantly over the last three years so that it is now in line with the national average. The attendance of most students is good which has a positive impact on their learning and achievement. The rate of unauthorised absence is above average because some parents do not always provide reasons for their children's absence or they take them away for holidays longer than ten days. There are also a few students, particularly in Years 10 and 11, whose attendance has been poor for a very long time. The school has put in place several very effective arrangements for monitoring and raising attendance levels. For example, assistant heads of year telephone parents on their daughter's first day of absence if an explanation has not been received. A teaching assistant administers a very motivating system which tracks and celebrates the success of tutor groups in meeting attendance targets. The school works very closely with external agencies such as the home-school support worker and the traveller education service. As a result, attendance levels in the first two terms of the current school year have risen further. There is very little lateness at the start of the school day. Punctuality to lessons has much improved since the last inspection when it was a key issue: most students now arrive promptly.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.9	School data	2.1
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

12. Students make very good progress in becoming, by Year 11, mature young women who are ready to take their place in society. Their social development is encouraged particularly effectively, with most teachers planning very well for students to work collaboratively and to take responsibility for their learning. Citizenship makes a strong contribution to students' personal development by giving them opportunities to learn about and get involved in local and international issues such as the environment and World Aids Day. Students respond very well when considering the spiritual, social and moral dimensions of their studies, such as the books they read in English or the topics they encounter in geography. Students' cultures and bilingualism are highly valued in subjects such as religious education and modern foreign languages. Students love performing music in a wide range of styles. Displays are used very well throughout the school to promote reflection on learning and pride in achievement. Assemblies give students good opportunities to perform or make a presentation in front of others and to consider powerful messages such as those inspired by World Poverty Day. Year representatives take their responsibilities seriously and prefects in Years 10 and 11 highly appreciate the opportunity to develop valuable skills and to represent the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good overall. Teaching is very effective and is successful at promoting very good learning amongst all students. Individual student needs are rigorously assessed, progress is carefully tracked and well targeted advice and guidance provided to support both their academic and their personal development. Students also have their voice and views sought and listened to regarding school developments. The design of the curriculum supports achievement well and is enhanced by a wide range of additional activities. Very strong and productive links have been established with parents, the community and other educational institutions all of which extend the students' learning. The care, welfare and safety of the students are of paramount concern to the school.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has many very highly skilled practitioners who focus their teaching sharply on the learning needs of all students.
- The consistent approach to managing the students' behaviour is generating strong relationships and leading to a calm and purposeful atmosphere in lessons.
- Teachers provide considerable opportunities for the development of language skills and for students to learn through this focus on literacy.
- Rigorous assessment and the careful tracking of students' progress enable teachers to plan methods and use materials that are targeted sharply at meeting individual need.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 114 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (3%)	33 (29%)	58 (51%)	18 (16%)	2 (2%)	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.

13. The continuing focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning is having considerable success. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Lessons are carefully planned and motivate the students to work hard. The structure of the national strategy to improve teaching and learning has been wholeheartedly adopted and implemented throughout the school. This is providing a secure structure for the development of the students' learning. The most effective teaching is in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and citizenship, although in no subject is teaching less than good overall. Any shortcomings in teaching are relatively minor and there are no characteristics that consistently hold back the students' learning.
14. Lessons have clear objectives which are shared with the students at the start of the lesson and revisited at the end. These objectives are accompanied by the expected learning outcomes for the session. This gives meaning and focus to the lessons and to the students' learning, and enables both the teacher and the students to evaluate the progress made. Inventive starter activities set the scene and help to focus the

students' minds on the learning ahead. There is a seamless transition from one part of the lesson to the next. Methods and resources used are stimulating. Questioning is used very effectively to draw out ideas from the students and to probe how much they understand. The best teachers also make sure that as many students as possible are involved and participating. Methods are adapted to meet the various identified learning needs of the students, and a variety of styles adopted to take account of the different ways in which individuals might learn. Many teachers are highly creative and have a very high level of expertise. They challenge the students' thinking and promote rapid learning in their lessons.

15. The success of much of the teaching is based on a secure assessment of the students' needs and the use of this information to help to guide planning and methodology. Marking of work is to clear criteria, which are generally closely linked to National Curriculum levels. The students are then given a clear picture of what they need to do to reach the next level and work is planned to help them to do so. Students often assess each other's work in lessons and are expected to be able to justify why they have made a particular judgement. This helps to deepen their understanding of the content of each activity. Tracking of students' progress is sharply focused in Years 10 and 11 because of the structure provided by GCSE courses. Improving the tracking of students in Years 7 to 9 so that it identifies annual targets rather than targets across the three years is wisely identified by the school as an aspect for development.
16. Much learning is successfully promoted through the strong and productive relationships that have been established in virtually all classes. Teachers not only have high expectations for the students' learning but also for their behaviour. Students make very good progress in many lessons because the atmosphere is warm and encouraging, and the teacher has created the circumstances in which they all want to work hard. The recent increased focus on achieving a consistent approach to handling discipline in lessons is bearing fruit. Students feel secure because of this consistency and because their participation and answers are shown to be highly valued by teachers. One result is that teachers are able to exploit pair and group work very successfully as a means of extending learning. The students are developing a wide range of skills that enable them to support each other very effectively often without being specifically asked. Student groupings and seating arrangements are thoughtfully planned and skilfully utilised to promote and extend the effectiveness with which students work together.
17. One particularly successful characteristic of many lessons is the emphasis by teachers and support staff on developing the students' literacy and their English language skills. Geography teaching is particularly skilled in this respect as knowledge is developed through a sharp literacy focus. Similarly, teachers expertly develop scientific meaning through a literacy focus by ensuring that key terms and vocabulary are understood and can be explained by the students in the correct context.
18. Students with special educational needs are very well taught in the small group literacy and English classes when they are withdrawn from their normal lessons. They work with enthusiasm under their teacher's expert guidance. Pair work and discussion supports weaker students so that they quickly begin to achieve a good understanding of the topics they are working on. They are very well taught in the majority of subject lessons because teachers understand well the nature of their needs and are skilled at providing resources and strategies that help them to learn effectively. The teaching of

students learning English as an additional language is also very effective. Teachers know their students very well and use methods which develop language skills. Key words, technical phrases and general vocabulary are all taught, often combined with pictures. There is a collaborative approach to learning English that helps most students. In lessons, students are seated with someone who speaks the same language so that they can help one another.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. It has been developed well to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of students. It enables them to achieve very well overall and in most subjects, and prepares them well for their next stage of education, training or employment. A wide range of activities enrich the curriculum and provide extensive opportunities for learning outside the school day. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for students to extend their learning outside of the school day are excellent and contribute significantly to their overall achievement.
- Key learning skills are developed well, especially through citizenship, work related learning and personal, social and health education.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is very good and the school responds imaginatively to meet the needs of students for whom English is an additional language.
- Provision in physical education is not enabling students to achieve as well as they could.

Commentary

19. The school keeps its curriculum under regular review and ensures that it is updated to take account of new developments, expectations and requirements. It is also careful to ensure that the process of updating supports the commitment to motivate students and to enhance their aspirations. Much work is undertaken in collaboration with partners such as other schools, colleges and local employers. This has been particularly so as the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 has been broadened to offer more vocational opportunities. This ensures that the students are supported well in making transitions, including at the age of 11 and 16, and that routes for progression in their studies are clear. A very high proportion of students move on into post compulsory study. Statutory requirements are met. Many students enthusiastically take advantage of the opportunities provided to extend their studies outside the school day. Examples include taking extra time to convert short course information and communication technology into a full GCSE and studying Turkish to GCSE and even A Level.
20. The school has responded well to the National Strategy, intended to create sustained improvement in the standards of teaching and learning, and there is an increasing consistency in the way that literacy and numeracy are being developed across subjects. The school is also well advanced in the development of citizenship and work related learning. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good and again reflects the ethos and values of the school. These aspects enable students to develop appropriate skills, attitudes and values to enhance their personal development. Consequently, students are well informed and knowledgeable about a

range of topics. They are very well prepared to deal with key aspects of everyday life and their futures, including subject and career choice.

21. Many students who arrive in the school after the start of Year 7 are just beginning to learn English. They join an induction class for three lessons a week. These teach school routines, essential vocabulary for home and school as well as practice in speaking, reading and writing. For most this is good provision. Students are supported well in their lessons, as the general strategies used by teachers develop language skills effectively. The teachers attached to the mathematics and science departments support students actively and provide materials for all to use. In the humanities departments, a learning support assistant successfully provides materials suitable for early learners. However, further support in English is more limited with most given to Years 10 and 11.
22. The school provides very well for students with special educational needs. Thorough assessment procedures lead to proper provision for the needs of all who have Statements of need or are on the School Action lists. There are a few small group withdrawal classes for those with weak literacy but most of the provision is through subject lessons. Teaching assistants are attached to specific subject faculties, so that they develop expertise in the subjects. However, at the time of the inspection the number of assistants was not up to full strength, which in some subject areas meant that this support was not as effective as it might have been. Because of the comprehensive information they receive from the special needs co-ordinator, teachers are well aware of the needs of their students and in the majority of lessons they use a range of resources and strategies designed to promote the best possible achievement by all.
23. Many students of all ages attend the good range of enrichment activities. Provision for the arts is good. Considerable numbers of students are involved in workshops, concerts, dance clubs and festivals. The curriculum is enhanced by visits to art galleries, theatres and museums and through field trips. There is excellent provision for students to extend their learning through study support sessions, revision classes, homework clubs and weekly subject clubs as well as access to additional subjects. The co-ordinator closely monitors the quality of provision and participation rates in activities. The short lunchtime is a constraint to the further expansion of the extra-curricular programme, although students themselves are more concerned with others queue jumping and the limited food choice towards the end. Inadequate outdoor facilities and staffing difficulties in physical education limit the provision of sporting opportunities.
24. The school's accommodation and resources have improved since the last inspection and are satisfactory. One important weakness, which remains, is that the school has no plan for making the buildings and the curriculum accessible to all potential students as statutorily required. Most departments have adequate space, including offices. They all manage their accommodation well, even when it is too small, inadequately ventilated or inappropriately designed, thereby minimising the negative impact on students' learning. However, most outside surfaces are inadequate for physical education, which reduces the department's effectiveness. The school has prioritised the development of information and communication technology and there are some new suites and interactive whiteboards, with others on the way. There is excellent display in all parts of every building.

25. The learning resources centre is well managed, providing flexible learning materials for students of all ages and ability levels, as well as a useful service for staff. There have been improvements in resources in the centre since the last inspection, and also in several subject areas, notably in art and design, information and communication technology, geography, history, music and religious education. Some departments are not fully staffed with specialist teachers, and in humanities teachers are not deployed in a way which makes best use of their specialist knowledge and understanding. The match of support staff to the school's needs is satisfactory overall and the school manages graduate teacher recruitment schemes, such as Teach First, successfully to promote recruitment.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for the care, welfare, health and safety of students are good. Provision of support, advice and guidance is very good. The involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has developed a very wide and effective range of measures to support, advise and guide individual students so that they can fulfil their potential.
- Arrangements for child protection and personal safety are very good.
- Students are given good opportunities to make their views known and to be involved in school improvements.

Commentary

26. Care and support for the individual student are at the heart of the school's provision and ethos. Consequently, the strategies to help students in their academic and personal development are very carefully designed and targeted to meet individual needs. As a result, nearly all groups of students achieve very well. The pastoral teams work very effectively and consistently under the leadership of senior staff to provide a secure framework in which students can learn and develop. This starts well before primary pupils join the school, with a very extensive and well-planned programme which helps students adjust to secondary school life. Parents are very pleased with the arrangements for settling in their children. Students who arrive after the start of Year 7 - including travellers, refugees and asylum seekers - benefit from considerable support provided by a range of adults and the allocation of a 'buddy' from among their peers.
27. The pastoral teams use registration and collective times at the start and end of the school day very effectively to build relationships and to support literacy, numeracy, citizenship and reflection. They monitor students' overall progress regularly so that any underachievement is swiftly identified and tackled. Strategies employed include group sessions with a learning mentor, the creation of a special tutor group so that coursework can be completed, or targeted mentoring for Turkish and black-Caribbean students. The student support centre, supervised by a qualified teacher, is used successfully to help students with needs ranging from behaviour problems to a lack of any prior education. The school works very effectively with social workers in several London Boroughs to monitor the progress of children in public care; as a result, most are doing well. Students identified as gifted or talented are very successfully stretched and challenged to achieve the most they are capable of through a wide range of activities funded by Excellence in Cities. Guidance to help students choose their GCSE courses and post-16 options is well managed. Students whose families have no experience of higher education are very effectively encouraged to consider progression to university through the 'Aim Higher' programme.
28. All students with special educational needs are regularly monitored to ensure that they are receiving the best possible care, both in school and out. The co-ordinator liaises regularly with the outside agencies that play a part in supporting these students, such as the educational psychologist and social services. Students at an early stage of learning English as an additional language are well supported on entry to the school. Further support for a small group of students, often in Years 9 to 11 and with little prior experience of education, is limited.
29. The designated teacher for child protection is very experienced, and she is well trained and supported in her role by the local authority (Hackney Learning Trust). She makes sure that all members of staff are aware of the relevant procedures. Many other key members of staff have expertise in child protection. The school is a secure

site during the school day with very good arrangements for supervising the safe arrival and departure of students. The school works very effectively with the local police under the Safer Schools Partnership scheme. There are good procedures to ensure students' welfare, health and safety. The school business manager, who was in charge of this area at the time of the inspection, has used her training and the growing expertise of the Learning Trust very effectively to review and update systems. A health and safety issue in the design and technology department was identified during the inspection and notified to the school.

30. There are good arrangements for consulting students through questionnaires, year representatives and the school council. Students' views have been sought on issues ranging from the strategy to improve behaviour and the review of the school uniform. Students are pleased that the wooden furniture is being replaced, that toilets are being cleaned properly and that they can choose which charities to support. Students have been involved in efforts to improve the healthy eating options available at lunch-time. A few students on the environment committee are helping the senior business manager to re-design the outdoor areas. Students' concerns about the lengthy and unfair queuing arrangements in the dining room have been listened to and the senior business manager is appropriately investigating ways of improving these. Students are involved well in assessing their own progress, for example they write personal statements for their annual reports.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are given very good information about the school and their daughters' progress.
- Students benefit greatly from the school's very good links with primary schools and external organisations.
- The school makes an outstanding contribution to local educational partnerships.

Commentary

31. The school is very successful in its efforts to keep parents informed about, and satisfied with their children's education. As a result, nearly half of the parents completed the pre-inspection questionnaire and most expressed very positive views about what the school is achieving for their children. Parents are given very good information when their daughters start at the school. Those whose first language is not English have access to student interpreters as well as 'Welcome' booklets written in over 20 languages. Very attractive and regular newsletters are accessible to a wide readership and celebrate the school's successes very effectively. Useful information is also available on the school's website. Heads of year keep parents very well informed and involved if any difficulties arise, and parents are also contacted when there is positive news to report. The school operates a genuine 'open door' policy by ensuring that parents can see the senior member of staff on duty at any time during the school day. Parents are given three very helpful reports a year on their daughter's progress and they are also invited to discuss their daughter's progress twice a year, once with the form tutor and once with subject teachers. This system of reporting to parents is a model of good practice. Parents and carers are regularly involved in

reviews of the progress of students with special educational needs. They are consulted about individual educational plans and given copies of the completed plans. Parents and carers of Turkish and black-Caribbean students have been invited into the school to help them to understand requirements such as homework, punctuality and attendance. Overall, parents support the school and their daughters' education well.

32. Exceptional efforts are made to visit all the primary schools which send a pupil to Clapton Girls' Technology College. The school makes very good use of staff employed by external agencies to support students and their families during the transfer from primary to secondary education, with a particular focus on identifying those who need most help. Although the school is able to meet many of the students' needs itself, it makes very good use of outside organisations and individuals to provide further support. These include, for example, the Windsor Fellowship for boosting the achievements of black-Caribbean students and business mentors for raising the aspirations of selected Year 10 students. The special needs co-ordinator has links with a wide range of outside agencies, primary and special schools, and hospital departments where these are relevant. The school has a very good relationship with the local sixth form college which enables those students who transfer there for further education to do so very smoothly. Also, small numbers of students in Years 10 and 11 are able to study vocational or language courses at the college. Good links with London and Oxford universities enable students and their families to find out more about higher education.
33. The majority of subjects have developed community links which enhance their provision. One impressive feature, for example, is the link with the International Space School Educational Trust which has resulted in astronauts speaking at the school and a Year 10 student visiting space centres in the United States. Very good community links in music give students opportunities to learn from professional musicians and perform at prestigious venues such as the Royal Albert Hall. The school makes very good use of resources in London as part of its programme for gifted and talented students.
34. The school is highly influential in supporting other schools in the area and in delivering a vision of education being available to everyone in the community. A number of headteachers went out of their way during the inspection to pay tribute to the work of the Clapton headteacher in sharing her school's resources and expertise to the benefit of their pupils and staff. As well as being the lead school in the local Action Zone of schools and a specialist technology college, the school is also very active in other partnerships developing the 14-19 curriculum, the extended school and the City Learning Centre. The school makes its facilities available for adult learning classes as well as sports activities. It works very effectively with teacher training organisations and businesses to provide placements for student and new teachers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher's leadership is excellent and that of other key staff is very good. The school is very well led and managed and governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because of the headteacher's leadership, the considerable improvements in the school in recent years are thoroughly embedded in the work and practice of staff.
- Self-evaluation and the monitoring of performance enable the school to have an accurate and realistic picture of its strengths and the action needed to secure improvement.
- There is strong and shared commitment to identifying and meeting the needs of each individual student and to improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- There have been significant improvements in the effectiveness of the governing body since the last inspection under the astute leadership of the chair of governors.
- Financial planning supports the school's educational priorities; however, a large surplus has developed in recent years.

Commentary

35. The impact of the headteacher's leadership has been instrumental in the school's successes in recent years. She is very ably supported by the senior leadership team and an increasingly influential governing body. The headteacher is highly thought of and has the confidence of all associated with the school. She is also influential in education beyond the school. She has high expectations of the staff and provides them with the means of achieving these and the school's goals. The headteacher's values underpin the work of the school and she provides staff with the resources, support and guidance to improve their performance.
36. The headteacher and senior staff work very closely as a team and provide a very clear direction for the work of the school. This results in clear and appropriate plans and strategies to eliminate weaknesses in provision. The school is particularly successful at developing leadership skills at all levels. Strong teamwork is a feature throughout the management of the school. Both of these have been skilfully promoted and developed by the headteacher. It is a key reason for the commitment of staff to a shared vision and the considerable degree of consistency that has been achieved in the implementation of policies and procedures. Improvement is securely embedded in the work of the school, which is in a very strong position to tackle the challenges it faces and to improve further.
37. There is strong commitment to enabling each individual student's needs to be identified and tackled so that they can achieve success. Data is evaluated carefully so that targeted action can be provided for individuals or groups of students. Policy to ensure racial equality is rigorously implemented and its impact monitored. The special educational needs department is very well managed. Progress of students with special educational needs is analysed regularly and students who no longer need support are removed from the list. Liaison with a wide range of outside agencies supports the achievement of the students. The leadership of the head of learning support who co-ordinates the English as an additional language programme, is very strong. Bilingualism is valued and this, with the emphasis on helping each other, contributes much to the school's excellent ethos.
38. The governing body is much improved since the last inspection. It fulfils its role very well through a highly effective structure of committees. Governors have successfully tackled the weaknesses that were identified at the time under the astute leadership of the chair and other key governors. Governors' expertise and experience have developed considerably and they share the headteacher's vision for the school's development. The governing body now has rigorous procedures to monitor the work

of the school so that it gains a clear picture of where improvements are needed. It is actively involved in helping to shape the school's strategic direction and in providing the support and resources to enable this to be achieved. Governors question the headteacher and senior staff and have the skills needed to challenge them to justify proposed action. All statutory responsibilities are met with the exception of having a plan to show how the school and its curriculum are to be made accessible to all students.

39. Strategic improvement and action planning is very thorough and have been instrumental in securing the improvements in recent years. New developments are carefully planned. They are based on a constructive programme of monitoring and self-evaluation and a rigorous analysis of the school's strengths and any improvements that are needed. Priorities for action are supported through effective financial planning. Members of staff at all levels are skilled at evaluating their work and supporting the development of their colleagues. The professional development of all staff is carefully planned to meet the major priority of improving teaching and learning. The senior staff team are all very able practitioners and, along with others, provide support and guidance for individual staff including direct coaching of them in specific aspects of teaching. The aim of working with and developing the expertise of staff is a priority for the school's recruitment and retention of staff. This is being successfully met as seen by the sharply reduced turnover of teachers in the last few years and the high quality of teaching throughout the school.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,402,954	Balance from previous year	708,287
Total expenditure	5,219,835	Balance carried forward to the next	891,406
Expenditure per student	5,865		

40. A very high budget surplus has developed over the last few years. However, a considerable proportion of this is earmarked for site developments while a significant amount of funding arrived too late in the last financial year to be allocated and spent. The school still has a healthy surplus once both of these factors are taken into account.

WORK RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work related learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of this aspect of the school's work have established a clear and coherent direction for developments and are driving them at a good pace.
- Effective preparation for work experience and subsequent debriefing ensures that this learning experience is of high quality.
- Students value the support and guidance that they receive when making decisions about future subject and career choices.
- Wide-ranging and effective partnerships enhance the opportunities offered.

Commentary

41. The school is well advanced in developing opportunities for pupils to learn about, for and through work. Very good leadership and management have ensured that a policy has been produced, current provision has been mapped and further developments identified. This has been done so that existing strengths have been maintained and built upon. Provision is developed further to support the school's overarching commitment to providing all students with the basis for a successful and fulfilled future. The school is well on the way to providing a coherent and systematic programme that enables the students' understanding to develop progressively over time.
42. The many opportunities that are provided ensure that students develop their skills for enterprise and employability to a high level. Teachers are already identifying some of these opportunities within their planning and communicating them to students. Schemes of work are being constructed to ensure a consistent experience for all students and mechanisms developed to involve the students in tracking their own experiences and skill development across lessons. Many students in Years 10 and 11 have a specific vocational or work related element within their subjects. Students benefit from activities such as 'Opportunities Day' in Year 11 and 'Business Dynamics' for Year 10. A wide range of other experiences are provided for specific groups of students, such as those following a particular course, or those identified as having a special interest or talent. Consequently, students are very well motivated to learn, take responsibility and act independently, both in lessons and in other aspects of school life.
43. Preparation for work experience is effective. During the inspection, Year 10 students were keen and enthusiastic in anticipating their forthcoming placements. The programme is very well managed and thorough debriefing ensures that students reflect on and learn from the opportunity. Wherever possible individual placements support and complement the students' option choices, thereby extending their understanding further still. Provision for careers education and guidance is also effective. Students are positive about the quality of the guidance and the way that it has enabled them to make key decisions affecting their intended option choices and subsequent career paths.
44. Productive partnerships have been developed that enhance this aspect of the school's work. This includes local schools and colleges in developing the vocational curriculum and local businesses in providing mentors, as well as work placements.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good.
- Students are highly motivated, responding very positively to the very good teaching.
- Leadership and management are very effective.
- Some students just beginning to learn English need more help.

Commentary

45. Standards are average at the end of Year 9 but are below average at the end of Year 11. Achievement throughout the school is very good. Students enter Year 7 with very weak skills in reading and writing. By the end of Year 9, their attainment is broadly average in lessons and work seen reflects the National Curriculum test results in 2004, which were in line with the national average and well above results in similar schools. The students' very good progress continues to the end of Year 11 when they reach average standards in the GCSE English Literature examination but are somewhat below average in GCSE English language. The students successfully work hard to learn their texts for the literature examination but they have been unable to overcome sufficiently the inaccuracies in their writing to obtain the same results in English language. However, GCSE results have been improving. Some classes have had changes of teachers and this affects continuity. Furthermore, the later entry to the school of many students means that they have not benefited from a stable programme over the five years. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others and so do most students who are still early stage learners of English.
46. By the end of Year 9, students speak confidently and fluently with a more precise vocabulary. Almost all listen carefully and as a result, class discussions are often a lively exchange of views. Comprehension skills are sound and the students enjoy the poetry and novels studied in lessons. Writing is the weakest aspect. Students can now organise and develop their ideas more effectively but accurate usage and formal language are still a problem for many. At the end of Year 11, students are articulate and sometimes persuasive speakers. They find their set texts challenging but enjoyable. They work hard to finish course work. Almost all Year 11 students, including those with special educational needs or who are in the early stage of learning English enter for both GCSE examinations and obtain a grade. A major factor is that, from Year 7, students are helped to develop a disciplined approach to learning. They respond to their teachers who know them well and there is mutual respect and trust. Behaviour is generally at least good.
47. The quality of teaching is very good and underpins the learning. Teachers plan interesting starter activities, linking these to the lesson objectives. There is a constant emphasis on literacy, not only on vocabulary but on sentence construction and

building up paragraphs and essays. All students benefit from the use of pictures and diagrams as well as methods that actively involve them. When lessons are less than good, this is because the pace has faltered and attention has slackened. Some students still in the very early stages of learning English need more support because they find a Shakespearean text, for example, very difficult and need more time and repetition than the others. Generally teaching is consistently well adapted to helping students of all abilities improve.

48. Both leadership and management are very good. There is a consistent departmental approach to planning and teaching lessons that ensures continuity and helps the less experienced teacher. There is a strong commitment to raising standards that is shared by a hardworking team of teachers. After school activities support and extend learning; these are appreciated by the students. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good because standards, teaching and learning have all improved.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. There is a very good focus on developing the students' language and literacy throughout the school. Students enter Year 7 with well below average skills in reading and writing. Standards in language and literacy improve, although they are below average overall by Years 9 and 11. Many speak confidently although their vocabulary is not extensive and their use of language is often informal, whatever the occasion. Their speaking and listening skills improve steadily as they move up to Year 11. By the end of that year, students are fluent, able to use a wider vocabulary and vary their language to suit the situation. Their listening skills are very good and these are an important factor in their good general progress. Many students are poor readers in Year 7, but the constant emphasis on learning new words leads to a marked improvement in comprehension skills. For example, in history and sociology students learn definitions and are then required to link them together to bring out the meanings. In lessons such as food technology, very clear pictures illustrate meaning. Before reading stories or novels, teachers will explain the context and background. This stress on the understanding of concepts also helps many students who are still in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Writing improves by the end of Year 11 so students can explain and develop their ideas but many still struggle for accuracy in spelling and punctuation. In science and the humanities as well as in GCSE coursework there are good opportunities for extended writing. Students' achievement is very good though further improvement is necessary.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership leads to very good teamwork amongst all teachers.
- Standards have risen and are now average by the end of Year 9.
- Students of all ages and abilities enjoy their language lessons.
- Many students lack confidence when expressing themselves in French.

Commentary

50. The head of department has generated a very successful vision, underpinning recent improvement. All members of department work very well together, sharing ideas for improving students' learning, and this leads to consistency in all classes. The recent successful introduction of setting, with clear assessment procedures, enables all students to know how well they are doing. Teachers monitor progress to check if any group or individual is disadvantaged. The department values the many languages spoken by individual students, including them in colourful displays in classrooms and corridors. Every student regularly uses computers to improve their language learning. Very good contacts with other institutions help ensure that teachers' professional development is very well catered for. The department's objectives are linked closely to teachers' own objectives. Very good leadership and management have enabled the department to make very good progress since the previous inspection and few weaknesses remain.
51. Results in the French GCSE examination in 2004 were above the national average for girls and candidates did better in this subject than they did in the average of all their other subjects. Standards in French seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 were above average. The trend is upwards and the number taking French in Year 10 has risen significantly this year. Results in German in 2004 were slightly below the national average for girls and no students take German in the current Years 10 and 11. Standards assessed by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were below average, but those observed during the inspection were average. All students take French in Years 7 to 9 and the more able also learn either German or Spanish as an additional language. Students of all ages and ability are working to capacity and making rapid progress. They are keen to learn and demonstrate very good achievement. This is primarily the result of very good teaching and learning in all age groups.
52. All the students in Years 10 and 11 are highly motivated and are learning very well. Very good relationships within the classroom promote plenty of opportunities for excellent social development and students are very supportive of each other. Teachers use French most of the time and planning is very good. Teachers set objectives at the beginning of lessons and return to them at the end in order to ensure they have been met. Students are very active in lessons and enjoy being stretched. Younger students of all abilities also make rapid progress, including those with special educational needs, who have work tailored to their ability. Students learning English as an additional language make equally good progress, benefiting from the fact that teachers speak French most of the time in lessons. Teachers are creative and develop original ideas. Students enjoy these, but few are bold enough to use French themselves to communicate and express their own ideas. Links with other subjects and global themes are very good, but now that the French exchange has stopped, links with French speakers abroad have reduced. The French assistant works well to counteract this and the department is looking for another school to work with.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make very good progress during their time at the school so that standards rise to be in line with the national average by Year 11.
- Teaching is very good and gives students confidence in their ability to succeed.

- Assessment is very thorough and students know what they need to do to improve.
- The head of department is enthusiastic about the subject, committed to enabling every student to do their best and leads by example.

Commentary

53. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Planning, teaching and marking, which all had weaknesses in 1999, are now very effective. As a result the students' performance in tests and examinations has risen faster than the national average. The standards of students on entry to the school are well below the national average. By Year 9 the standards are better but still below the national average. By the time students take GCSE the results are comparable with national figures.
54. These standards represent good achievement in Years 7 to 9 as students of all abilities make good progress from a low start point. They consolidate basic ideas and develop reliable strategies for solving problems. Able students are quickly recognised and challenged and consequently make very good progress. Progress is very good in Years 10 and 11. Able students continue to forge ahead and this year a whole class are taking GCSE in Year 10. Students with special educational needs are encouraged to do their very best and given extra support in lessons and out of school time. All students enter for GCSE and virtually everyone achieves a grade. Many students arrive at the school with limited or no English. The department has a specialist who supports students at the early stages of learning English and advises staff on how best to ensure that their early competency in English does not impede their progress in mathematics. As a result these students make very good progress.
55. There is a purposeful working atmosphere in most classes. Teachers' explanations are clear and students are involved in the dialogue. They are often asked to respond by holding up their whiteboards which also gives the teacher a chance to assess who has understood the main ideas. Teachers value responses, and do not put students down if they are wrong. As a result students are willing to participate and supportive of each other. Challenging new materials are presented in a positive and encouraging atmosphere. There is an emphasis in many lessons on thinking things through, discussing ideas and justifying arguments. In order to help those learning English, but also useful for many other students, many lessons include visual, aural and action cues. All of these teaching strategies result in very good learning. Revision lessons are planned after asking the students which areas they need the most help with. Marking is thorough and as a result students know the levels they are working on and what they need to do to reach their targets. Teachers give generous amounts of time to out-of-school clubs where students can have extra help or become involved in maths-related activities.
56. Leadership is very good. The department works very well together and supports new members very effectively. There are clear plans for future development. Tracking student progress and organising extra support for those who are finding mathematics difficult is a strength of the department. Management is good. Responsibilities are clear and the head of department has a good overview of what is going on. The quality of teaching and of student work is regularly monitored, although departmental records are not currently organised for easy access or clarity. The department contributes to students' understanding of information and communication technology and to citizenship, but this has yet to be formalised or recorded.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57. The support for developing mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Students are able to cope with the mathematics they encounter in other subjects. Mathematical competence is below average by Year 9 but average by Year 11. The students are confident with number and statistical work but sometimes unsure about measurement in practical subjects. Students enjoy the challenge when teachers in other subjects pose mathematical questions, such as trying to work out how many schools 80,000 homeless people would fill.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management are having a significant impact on quality and standards.
- Some very good and exceptional teaching and learning are contributing to very high student achievement.
- There is a very good consistency in the approach and strategies used to support students' learning.
- Students respond very well and are determined to do well in partnership with their teachers.

Commentary

58. Although results in the Year 9 tests in 2004 were well below the national average, they were in line with those schools whose students had similar starting points on entry. Results were above the 2003 level; they were similar to mathematics but below English. This represents secure progress from the students' test results in Year 6. GCSE results were in line with the national average in 2004, but very high when compared with schools whose students had achieved similar Year 9 test results. Results were equivalent to results in English and mathematics, although a smaller proportion of the year group were entered for the examination. Results in both Year 9 tests and at GCSE have improved since the previous inspection.
59. Students in Years 7 to 9 are performing at higher levels than indicated by recent test results and standards by Year 9 are below average. This difference is because many students do not demonstrate as secure and sophisticated a written response to test questions as they do verbally to questions raised by their teacher. Nevertheless their level of knowledge and understanding provides them with a good basis on which to take their ideas forward in Years 10 and 11. Consequently, student achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good and this is sustained through into GCSE, so that they make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. This is resulting in very good achievement by the end of Year 11 where standards are in line with the national average.
60. Teaching and learning are good overall, with a high proportion of good and better lessons, including some which are excellent. Conversely, a small proportion of lessons are not taught well enough so that learning in them is unsatisfactory. Although the quality and outcomes of lessons do vary, there is a very good degree of consistency in the approach and strategies used by teachers. Lessons tend to be well

structured and provide many opportunities for students to review and consolidate their ideas, before moving on to develop them in more complex or demanding contexts. There is a very good focus on students learning and developing their understanding, with a variety of well considered activities used to support the planned learning outcomes. Sometimes the pursuit of understanding means that the planned timings slip, which can lead to some missed opportunities to make learning absolutely secure. Most lessons are very rich in language, with teachers taking time to ensure that key words are known and their scientific meaning and use understood. Visual stimuli are used effectively, often linked to the words and concepts being used. New technology is used well to add another approach, and teachers skilfully guide students in developing models to understand and explain key ideas. This approach ensures that all students and especially those with special educational needs or those learning English as an additional language make secure progress and achieve highly.

61. Teachers have a good knowledge of their students and use this to provide them with a good level of challenge. However, there are a few occasions when higher-attaining students could be moved more quickly to a more demanding level. Students respond very well to the high expectations established by teachers. They take responsibility for their own learning, with a commitment to do well and with a good amount of homework completed to a high standard. The very good relationships evident between teachers and students lie at the heart of the partnership developed between them and underpin the effective learning taking place. This even results in fun and laughter accompanying the learning on many occasions.
62. Very effective leadership and management are systematically strengthening provision, with a drive to raise students' achievements further still through transforming teaching and learning. This is based on routine monitoring and evaluation and an accurate evaluation of strengths and areas for development. The head of department provides an exceptional role model of excellence in the classroom. There is a very clear sense of purpose and direction and consistency within the team in taking developments forward. Partnerships with external agencies, such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy, are used very effectively to achieve this. The curriculum is evaluated and reviewed so that strategies that work well are developed further and those that work less well are strengthened or removed. Out-of-hours learning opportunities, including booster programmes, are also used well to raise standards. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and there is very good capacity to sustain this and to continue to improve at a good rate. The department is very close to establishing very good provision and is capable of excellence in the medium term.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because of well taught lessons and the commitment of students to extra curricular work.
- All students in Years 10 and 11 can now follow an examination course in information and communication technology, although lesson time for examination classes is currently below average.
- The number of computers is now above average for a school of this size.

- Extra-curricular access to resources is good and computers are used well outside lesson times to enable students to cover the GCSE syllabus fully.

Commentary

63. GCSE examination results in 2004 were well below average with a fall in A*-C grades from the previous year. Achievement and standards were adversely effected by staffing difficulties last year. Inspection evidence indicates that the achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is now good overall and some is very good. There is a similar picture in Years 10 and 11 where several information and communication technology examination courses are followed. Many candidates work very hard to improve their achievement before and after school. There is also a voluntary Saturday morning session to compensate for the limited number of lessons timetabled this year. Standards in the last term of Year 9, by which time students have covered appropriate aspects of the National ICT strategy, are now just below average, which is a good improvement on previous years. Standards in the short and full GCSE courses are below average but improving. The school is now in a position where it is able to allocate the recommended curriculum time for the examination courses next term. In the information and communication technology aspects of business communications course, standards are below average but are also improving.
64. These improvements are taking place because of good teaching and learning in all years. Lessons are now taken by specialists with very well prepared teaching resources. Assessment is thorough and used effectively to inform planning and to ensure that students know how to improve. Teaching and learning are supported by an effective, reliable and well-managed computer network. The number of computers is just above average for a school of this size, which is a significant improvement from the last inspection. Interactive whiteboards are now used effectively to enhance teaching and learning. Students are increasingly using this technology to become more actively involved in whole-class activities. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good, and is based on the effective use by teachers of specifically designed learning resources. Most students learning English as an additional language are making at least satisfactory progress, although this is not always the case for recent arrivals who are at the early stages of learning English. There is scope for greater use of the multi-lingual capabilities of the Internet to support some individuals.
65. Leadership and management of this aspect of the curriculum have improved significantly at both senior management and departmental level and are now good. The school is continuing to invest a great deal in developing information and communication technology provision. The number of computers and other specialist equipment is increasing throughout the school, and students are being well motivated in this department. The ventilation in some computer rooms is inadequate. The improvement in provision has been very good since the last inspection and is beginning to have a positive impact upon achievement and standards. This curriculum area now has the capacity to improve further.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is now satisfactory and planning for further development is well underway. A number of factors have resulted in improved cross-curricular use of information and communication technology. A member of the senior management team works

effectively with heads of department to ensure that the curriculum is audited appropriately and that further opportunities are identified as the level of resources continues to improve. In addition, the improved discrete information and communication technology curriculum, together with more specialist teaching is providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to use a range of software and equipment with growing confidence. There has been an improvement in the promotion and monitoring of information and communication technology use in subjects. The increasing number of data projectors and interactive whiteboards is a very positive stimulus.

67. The students' competence in the use of information and communication technology is broadly average throughout the school. Some subjects such as design and technology, science and modern languages make good use of new technology resources and students' skills. It is also used well in the promotion of citizenship. There is still a great deal of scope for greater planned use in most other subjects where it is currently satisfactory. The situation in mathematics is more mixed and the use of new technology to enhance teaching and learning in the art and design department is unsatisfactory. Information and communication technology facilities, particularly in the learning resource centre, are very well used by students before school, at lunchtime and after school. This helps to ensure that students without computer access at home are not disadvantaged. Good advice and guidance is usually available during these sessions to support learning across the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

68. Two lessons of **sociology** were sampled – one in Year 10 and one in Year 11. The teaching ranged from good to excellent. The teacher took every opportunity to extend literacy and vocabulary skills so that the large number of students learning English as an additional language were not disadvantaged. The content of the lessons was challenging; a lesson about immigration and racial prejudice was sensitively handled. The subject is taught in Years 10 and 11, to GCSE. It is proving increasingly popular, with one group in Year 11 and two in Year 10. In 2004 GCSE results for A*-C were below the national average, those for grades A*-G were in line with the average. This represented good achievement for students who had no prior knowledge of the subject before Year 10.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are improving.
- Teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching.
- The emphasis on literacy in lessons is outstanding and enables students to develop their English language skills very well.
- Some non-specialist teaching in Years 7 to 9 is adversely affecting standards.
- Ineffective management of the geography curriculum in Years 7 and 8 is leading to inconsistencies in delivery of the subject.
- Insufficient provision for fieldwork and investigatory work in Years 7 to 9 leaves students at a disadvantage.

Commentary

69. GCSE results in recent years have fluctuated because the subject has only attracted small groups of students and percentages have been statistically unreliable in some years. Results in 2004 were below the national average. The trend over the last three years has been upwards due to improved teaching strategies and a change in syllabus to better suit the aptitudes of the students. Standards in Year 11 continue to rise; those seen during the inspection were in line with the national average overall. This is an improvement on the standards of the same cohorts at the end of Year 9 and shows good achievement. The majority of students on the GCSE course take a pride in their work and understand the major concepts they are studying, such as the implications of international trade, climatic differences and ecological damage. They are learning to think for themselves through debate and decision-making exercises. Spreadsheet and word processing programmes are used effectively to present information. The work of the weaker students shows a lack of organisation and they are not as willing as their peers to present their knowledge orally in lessons.
70. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. However, this represents good achievement because the majority of these students come into the school at the start of Year 7 with very little geographical knowledge and understanding. Some have started with no map skills and no concept of place at all. Despite being good overall, this achievement is uneven in Years 7 to 9 because of the organisation of the subject as part of the humanities cycle. This leads to some topics being taught by non-specialists and as a result they are not covered in sufficient depth or breadth to meet requirements. Furthermore, there is very little fieldwork or practical investigation so that geographical skills are not well developed and students are left at a disadvantage when they begin their GCSE courses. Under the present humanities management structure, monitoring of the delivery of the geography element in Years 7 and 8 is ineffective, so there is no way of knowing that every student is receiving her full entitlement of the subject.
71. This major shortcoming is compensated to some extent by the good standards of teaching and learning. Teaching by subject specialists in Years 10 and 11 is very good and because of the constant individual attention and challenges to think for themselves, students learn very well. Their personal development is enhanced by pair and group work which encourages co-operation and positive attitudes. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is less consistent, varying from very good to satisfactory with a marked difference between the quality of organisation and the depth of learning from one group to another. An outstanding feature of all the teaching is the attention given to the learning of students with special educational needs, and those whose first language is not English. Without exception, every lesson is structured with an element of vocabulary development, ensuring that all students understand key words. Teachers are aware of the level of understanding of each student and are particularly skilled at devising work that enables students to learn at their own pace, and also at giving individual help where it is needed. For example, in one Year 11 lesson about coastal landforms, groups of students devised and acted out tableaux illustrating how the landforms developed. This ensured that all students could understand what was happening to the coast, regardless of their level of language development.
72. For some time in the past the interests of geography within the humanities structure have been neglected. The recent appointments of an acting head of the humanities faculty, and a geography specialist with responsibility for Years 9, 10 and 11 have clearly begun to effect improvements. There have been changes in the GCSE

syllabus and moves towards more specialist teaching in Year 9, which have raised standards. Because these steps have been taken the overall leadership and management of geography are satisfactory. However, the responsibility for Years 7 and 8 is still not resolved. This has led to lack of monitoring and inconsistent delivery of the curriculum, and this area of the management is currently less than satisfactory.

73. The department is well resourced and recent improvements in the information and communication technology resources are already beginning to enhance the quality of the curriculum. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards are rising, achievement is now good, the quality of teaching has improved and management of students' behaviour has improved so that there is minimal disruption of lessons. Once the problems of the management and curriculum delivery in Years 7 and 8 are unlocked, the drive and enthusiasm of the present leadership team has the potential to develop a strong department.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved because teachers are laying the foundations in Years 7 to 9 needed to cope with GCSE history, particularly in the area of source analysis and comprehension.
- Teaching is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11; particularly effective use is made of learning assistants and learning mentors.
- More emphasis is needed on developing skills in analytical writing.
- Leadership and management are good in Years 9 to 11, because a specialist teacher has responsibility for the subject in these years.

Commentary

74. Results in the GCSE examination in 2004 were average in terms of the percentage of students who achieved grades A*-C, and the proportion achieving A*-G grades was just above the national average.
75. When students enter the school, standards in history are well below average. Standards rise to average by the end of Year 9. This represents very good achievement for all students, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. By the end of Year 11, students opting to take history at GCSE achieve average standards. This also represents very good achievement for all groups of students, given their prior attainment. Teachers in Years 7 to 9 are working hard to lay the foundations needed to cope with GCSE history, particularly in source comprehension and analysis. This is beginning to have a positive impact on standards throughout the school. Additional emphasis is now needed to focus on helping students to improve their skills in analytical writing.
76. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is very good in Years 9 to 11 where the specialist teachers are based. A particular strength of the teaching is the way in which learning assistants and learning mentors support students with special educational needs or those learning English as an additional language so that they understand the tasks and achieve their best. For example, in Year 11 lessons the

classroom assistant teaches alongside the class teacher and can focus her attention very effectively on those students who need it most, following this up with individual support sessions when needed. Teachers have clear behavioural and work-related expectations of students so that they know exactly what is expected of them and why. Teachers are enthusiastic and imaginative and, as a result, students enjoy their lessons and want to work hard. However, despite their clear enjoyment many younger students do not take very much care with the presentation of their work. Students behave very well in most of their lessons and the number taking the subject at GCSE is increasing. Marking of students' work is often good, with detailed comments showing them what they have done well and what they need to do in order to improve. There is scope to ensure that good practice is shared more systematically between teachers, particularly in Years 7 and 8 where history lessons are taught by humanities teachers, rather than the two specialist historians.

77. Leadership and management are good overall, particularly in Years 9 to 11 where there is a specialist teacher with overall responsibility for the subject. However, currently there is a gap in strategic management in Years 7 and 8 where history is taught within a humanities programme. Although the head of humanities has a very clear vision of what needs to be done in a broad sense, and has made a very good start to her work, she is not a specialist historian and has responsibility for a large number of subjects. The next stage should now be to ensure that someone focuses specifically on standards and achievement in Years 7 and 8. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently high quality teaching is contributing to rising standards.
- Students are increasingly encouraged to give their views on issues.
- In some lessons there is insufficient variety of materials to suit the needs of all students and the use of constructive comments in marking and feedback is variable.
- Attitudes to religious education and relationships within the classroom promote a good learning environment.

Commentary

78. The weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been tackled successfully. Consequently, improvement since the last inspection is good. Resources have significantly improved, teaching, learning and attitudes to the subject are better and now all students in Years 10 and 11 take an examination course. The resulting impact is that standards are rising.
79. Standards at the end of Year 9 as measured by the teacher assessments in 2004 were below those expected by the agreed syllabus. This is similar to the standards currently observed in Year 9. In Years 10 and 11 approximately half the students take a full GCSE course and half take a short course. Standards of students at the end of Year 11 are broadly in line with the national average, being better in the full course where they are above average. Work seen in books and lessons confirms this. Students do better in religious education than in many of their other subjects. As they

move through the school students are increasingly encouraged to give their views on issues, supporting their views with reasoned arguments. Achievement is very good from the time the students enter to the time they leave the school although this is not consistent in every year.

80. Students join the school with variable knowledge, skills and understanding that are generally well below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Students have literacy levels well below average and come from a variety of schools some of which do not follow the same agreed syllabus. The students follow a humanities course in Years 7 and 8 and their religious education experience is variable. In Year 9, they follow a specific religious education course and attain better levels than those predicted by their previous levels; achievement here is good. In Years 10 and 11, students build on the work in Year 9 are challenged well and achieve levels above those predicted by prior attainment levels and here achievement is very good. There is no significant difference in the achievement of students from different ethnic groups or by students with special educational needs.
81. Teaching and learning are very good, being slightly more effective in Years 9 to 11 than in Years 8 and 9. In the best lessons teaching is challenging has a good pace and uses a variety of methods that stimulate the students' interest. Students are encouraged to express their views, give reasons for their answers, apply their knowledge and give examples to show their understanding of issues. In most lessons there is an emphasis on developing the literacy skills of the students by extending their vocabulary and through general support; in the most effective lessons specifically designed support materials are available for students with weaker literacy skills. Attitudes of the students to religious education are good. The good relationships ensure that all students are included and feel confident in expressing personal views. Students support each other in a variety of ways and are used to supplementing information on world religions by demonstrating or developing aspects from their own religion. This contributes to the students' very good progress.
82. Weaker aspects within lessons are seen when the teacher tends to fill in the answers of the students rather than using probing questioning. This limits the amount of student contribution. When the work suited is not matched carefully to individual student learning needs, the teacher spends a greater proportion of time in individual support with certain students. In all years the marking of the students' books gives positive encouragement but the use of constructive comments that show the students how to improve their work is variable and a number of comments are not followed up. This is especially seen in the books of Years 7 and 8 where more classes are taught by non-specialist staff.
83. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a clear vision to move the department forward and new support structures are being put in place to support the non-specialist teachers. The use of data to target areas in need of further improvement is not yet fully developed. There are some visits to places of worship. There have not been any recent visits by external speakers sharing different faiths to enhance the curriculum, although good use is made of those in the school, both staff and students.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students achieve well in lessons, owing to good teaching, well prepared resources and effective assessment procedures.
- Standards are rising although GCSE results in 2004 were well below the national average.
- Leadership of the subject has ensured that weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been rigorously tackled.
- There is not always sufficient focus on supporting the learning of students with special educational needs or those learning English as an additional language.

Commentary

84. The students' overall standards on entry to the school are well below average in knowledge and understanding of tools, materials and skill development when designing and making. Standards are below average by the end of Year 9 and in line with the national average by the end of Year 11. This is an improvement over GCSE results in 2004, which were well below average, except in textiles. This is due to staffing that is now stable, following a period when the school had difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers. This accounts for why examination results have remained low during the past three years.
85. Achievement by Year 9 is particularly good in gaining knowledge and understanding of technical terms and processes. Students learning English as an additional language are curious about the meaning of language and teachers are very skilled in providing resources and practical activities to help students to understand and achieve appropriately. One Year 7 class had problems with measurement when marking out the spots on a wooden dice. Low self-esteem acts as a barrier to further achievement particularly for students with special educational needs. This was evident as Year 8 designed a moisture sensor and Year 9 made observational drawings of hats and labelled the parts.
86. Information and communication technology skills are well developed and students enjoy using computers such as when Year 8 recorded information on spreadsheets and Year 11 students used them for research and nutritional analysis as part of the food course.
87. Achievement by Year 11 is good overall. Students have produced good quality research, analysis, product development and evaluation in course work. Opportunities to work with a professional chef and a fashion designer have raised Year 10 students' awareness of possible career choices. Students learning English as an additional language are very good at reading pictures and symbols as an aid to understanding. This was evident in both graphics and food technology. Most students understand more than they can communicate in writing; this can adversely affect their examination performance. This was seen from reactions and verbal responses as Year 11 girls worked in pairs assessing each other's written answers to examination questions. Weaknesses in estimating measurements were evident as Year 11 students followed and interpreted bread recipes.

88. Teaching is always good and occasionally very good. All lessons are planned well to cover the curriculum and also to take account of students with different learning styles. Resources such as clearly labelled photographs are very good for helping students learning English as an additional language to understand processes. Learning objectives and expected outcomes are shared with students. Peer support and assessment is a good feature in Year 11 lessons. Written feedback on students' work does not always identify gaps in learning and provide clear written guidance on how to improve. Currently there is insufficient focus in lessons to help students to acquire the appropriate grammar and sentence structure to help them to become better communicators on paper. Although teachers record assessment information after lessons no provision is evident for recording gaps in learning as they occur during lessons.
89. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Improvement from the previous inspection report is good; standards are improving, the curriculum now meets requirements, information and communication technology is having a significant impact on achievement and assessment is being used well to inform learning and to set targets for improvement. The subject is well supported by a skilled technician. A minor health and safety issue, regarding cross contamination from chopping boards, was shared with the school.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

90. Art and design and music were inspected in detail. Lessons were also observed in drama and media studies.
91. Students' attainment in **drama** at GCSE is somewhat below average. Teaching in the two lessons seen was very good and the lessons were much enjoyed by the students. Standards were average in both the Year 9 and Year 11 lessons, which represented good achievement for the students. The department has established a system of assessment that the students understand and helps them to identify targets to work towards. There is very good emphasis on key words and that helps to develop general vocabulary further.
92. **Media studies** is a GCSE course in which students have attained at least average standards. This was confirmed in the lesson seen. Students are well taught and benefit from the use of the very good facilities in a local college.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership provides a clear direction for the development of art.
- Teaching enables most students to achieve well but in some cases planning could be more closely matched to meet individual needs.
- Tonal drawing from observation and work using computers do not support research and development of students' ideas well enough.
- Art makes a good contribution to the cultural and social development of students through visits to galleries and extra curricular clubs.

Commentary

93. By the end of Year 9, students were working at a level in line with that expected nationally in 2004 according to teacher assessments. According to work seen during the inspection, achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and standards in Year 9 are in line with the national average. GCSE results were significantly above the national average for all students and well above the national average for girls in 2004. Students in Year 11 are working at a standard that is above average. This represents good achievement for all students, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language and is due to a standard of teaching and learning that is good overall.
94. Students in Years 7 to 9 gain a good understanding of colour, pattern, the work of artists and other cultures and most are successful with linear drawing. However, how to use shading to create form is much less well understood. Students in Years 10 and 11 also experience working in clay and with textiles. High attaining students create some interesting and exciting padded, appliquéd and embellished pieces and some very effective repeat patterns in silk screen printing. Computers are not used enough to develop ideas, although some higher-attaining students in Years 10 and 11 successfully use specialist software to improve presentation and record stages in their work.
95. Teachers ensure that all students learn well by using practical demonstrations to show them what to do and through plenty of personal attention in lessons. Students are aware of how well they are doing and know how to improve. Sometimes lesson planning lacks the necessary detail to ensure that the needs of all students are met, especially to provide challenge for higher-attaining students in Years 10 and 11.
96. The subject is very well led and well managed. Consequently, overall improvement since the last inspection is good. The quality of teaching and standards in Years 10 and 11 have improved. Homework has more emphasis and all students work in sketchbooks. Very clear direction is given in forward planning and there are clear lines of communication within the team. Good systems are used to record progress and identify various groups but this information is not being always being used in sufficient detail to inform lesson planning. Art makes a good contribution to the cultural development of students through looking at the work of artists and other cultures and by visiting galleries and museums. There are good opportunities for enrichment through clubs and by having artists visit and work with the students in

school. However, the development of drawing is impeded by a lack of good quality artefacts to inspire students. The pictures that teachers use are too small and sometimes of poor quality and they do not support learning well. Displays in classrooms and around the school are used well to inform and inspire. They raise self-esteem and enhance the school environment.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are achieving well as a result of good teaching and learning and very good attitudes.
- New technology is not used to support teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 resulting in weaker composing skills compared to performing.
- Instrumental lessons are very popular.
- Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

Commentary

97. Standards in Year 9 are average. As students enter school with below average standards they are achieving well. Students with special talents and needs also achieve well as do those who have come to this country recently. Standards of playing and singing are above average. Students play and sing with a sense of conviction, enjoyment and style. When playing together in small groups or as a class they listen well and play together with understanding. When talking about music they use appropriate language and some musical vocabulary. Standards of composition do not match the standards seen in playing yet, but so far they have not used new technology to help them develop their music. Currently computers are not available to them. The impact of this was reflected in the teacher assessments for Year 9 students in 2004. Although an above average proportion achieved the national average of Level 5 few achieved the higher levels.
98. Standards in Year 11 are average overall and given their low starting point at the beginning of the course they are achieving well. Coursework for performing and composing was not available for analysis, but confirmed examination marks show that these components are strong for most students. In lessons though, their listening skills and background knowledge were much weaker. They also find it difficult to work quickly enough at their terminal task to secure good marks. In the GCSE examination results in 2004 the overall percentage of students achieving grades A* to G was similar to the national average but there were fewer students achieving grades A* to C than nationally. No students achieved the highest grades of A* and A. Overall these students did slightly better in music than they did in all their other subjects in the school.
99. Students are achieving well now because of good teaching and learning, which has improved considerably since the last inspection. There are many very good features of teaching especially in Years 7 to 9. Students behave very well because teachers manage and engage their classes with interesting topics and practical work. They make good progress because their teachers provide good face to face support, which is appropriate and individually focused. The music they play is well chosen for their capabilities so that all can play together successfully. Students with special talents are appropriately challenged and supported. Those who have recently arrived in this country are also well supported in class and given appropriate music to play. Students assess themselves and each other. In some lessons, students enjoyed very good opportunities to hear each other play. The subsequent class discussions revealed very good relationships and enjoyment of each other's success. The

students talked about the quality of what they had learnt and reflected on how to improve. These occasions were very worthwhile but not consistently used across all lessons.

100. The marked improvement since the last inspection is very good. There is a planned strategy for improvement following careful evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of music in the school. The interesting programme allows all students to build their skills well and assessment procedures are effective. Leadership of the department is very good with a clear plan for building strong extra-curricular groups from highly enjoyed instrumental lessons. Students now have wonderful opportunities to work with professional musicians in and out of school. Management is good. GCSE results are analysed thoroughly but it is too soon to glean useful information from assessments in Years 7 to 9.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum in Years 8 to 11 cannot be taught in enough depth because of lack of time.
- Teaching and learning are good; current staffing difficulties are minimised by the support of a specialist teacher from the local sports college.
- Good relationships are a feature of lessons.
- The inadequate outdoor facilities reduce standards and opportunity.
- Students do not have the opportunity to undertake the GCSE examination.

Commentary

101. Students do not achieve as well in physical education as they do in many other subjects. This is due to several factors. Firstly, insufficient time is available in Years 8 to 11 to teach the curriculum in sufficient depth. Secondly, there have been staffing difficulties in recent years. Finally, the outdoor facilities are currently unsatisfactory although this will be remedied shortly by the provision of a multi-use games area. The 2004 teacher assessments show attainment at the end of Year 9 to be well below national expectations, although current standards are higher. Standards in lessons of Year 9 and Year 11 students are below average. The GCSE examination in physical education is not available to students. Students, including those with special educational needs, the talented and the large number learning English as an additional language are achieving satisfactorily across Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily across Years 10 and 11. The achievement of a minority of Year 11 students is affected by inconsistent attendance.
102. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. On-going staffing difficulties are currently minimised by the temporary support of a specialist teacher from the local sports college. Lessons are challenging and work is planned to suit all groups of students. Those with special educational needs and students learning English as an additional language make good progress, because teachers modify tasks, simplify language and use demonstrations effectively. The learning of higher-attaining

students is accelerated by extension tasks and grouping. Teachers provide good opportunities for students to learn independently. In a Year 9 dance lesson, students planned and evaluated work and performed to an audience. In a weaker lesson, students were given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas. The pace dropped and some students became restless. The subject contributes well to the improvement of students' literacy skills. The use of new technology to enhance teaching and learning is an area for further development. Good relationships are a feature of lessons.

103. Leadership of the subject is presently undertaken well by the head of expressive arts; he has a strong commitment to improvement and success. Management of the department by the faculty head and the young specialist teacher is satisfactory. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and students' standards. Assessment systems are good overall, but there are some inconsistencies in the use of data to determine standards at the end of Year 9. The subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved, but standards at the end of Year 11 have fallen from average to below average.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

104. Two **business communications systems** lessons were sampled in Year 11. Teaching and learning were good in both lessons, which were taught by a business studies specialist. Lessons were well planned with clear learning objectives, which were discussed carefully with the class. In both lessons the majority of students were able to make appropriate links between various aspects of prior learning. They were able to discuss business objectives in groups and used flip charts effectively to present their interim conclusions to the rest of the class. In a second lesson the Internet was used competently to research the activities and objectives of specific businesses and produce computer presentations. Students demonstrated a wide range of standards, which were just below average overall, although a growing number are now producing work of an average to good standard. This represents good achievement for the students on this course as their skills, knowledge and confidence increase in response to good teaching.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

105. Citizenship was inspected in detail and lessons observed where the focus was on personal, social and health education. Provision for students' **personal, social and health education** is good and reflects the ethos and values of the school. Personal, social and health education is seen as an important pastoral tool in enabling students to develop the appropriate skills, attitudes and values for enhancing their personal development. Because of this provision, students are well informed and knowledgeable about a range of topics and are very well prepared to deal with key aspects of everyday life. Teaching is good overall. The programme is carefully planned and helps to foster self-esteem and a sense of responsibility. Teaching is enthusiastic and well planned with high expectations of students. All students are treated with respect. Teachers deal well with sensitive issues. The good relationships between teachers and students create a good climate for learning.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has fully implemented the requirements of the National Curriculum for citizenship and provides students with an imaginative and very effective curriculum.
- Students make the most of a very good range of opportunities to become active and responsible citizens.
- Teaching is very good and results in very good achievement. Particularly good use is made of team teaching as a strategy to ensure that students stay focused on their work.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Some students need more opportunities to develop their skills in formal discussions.

Commentary

106. All students are taught citizenship within their personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons. Some aspects of citizenship are also taught through other subjects and through a very good range of planned extra-curricular activities. These

include the Year 8 Trade Event and the debate on whether voting should be compulsory planned for election week. This provision covers all three strands of the National Curriculum in citizenship in a very carefully planned and effective manner.

107. Standards of work in citizenship are average at the end of Year 9, and average by the end of Year 11. Standards for those students who sit the optional GCSE short course are also broadly average. Students of all abilities achieve very well in the context of their prior attainment. They learn to understand their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society and can consider difficult and challenging moral and ethical issues. All students show high levels of appreciation and tolerance of opinions and cultures that differ from their own – in this regard, they are above average. By the time they are in Year 11, the great majority of students have taken an active part in a very wide range of group and decision-making activities. They willingly make suggestions for improvement, both within school and in the local and wider community. This means that achievement in the third strand of citizenship (skills of participation and responsible action) is also very good. Students with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language also make very good progress and their achievement is very good. One reason for this is that teachers are very skilled in making sure that work is very well matched to students' needs. In GCSE classes, very good use is made of team teaching with a classroom assistant to ensure that students stay focused and work hard. Teachers also work very hard on improving students' literacy skills and this is having a positive impact on their standards.
108. Teaching is very good. Teachers are very enthusiastic, and make use of up-to-date and relevant examples to illustrate what they are saying. This means that students are able to build up their knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a good citizen in today's world. Students are interested in what they are doing and are prepared to work hard and take a very active part in what they are doing. Teachers provide students with good opportunities to share, discuss and participate in their learning. However, a few students need to be more actively encouraged to join in discussions, particularly of the more formal kind. This is because, although most students are keen to answer questions or to talk informally about their work, many find it more difficult to take part in more formal discussions or in front of larger audiences.
109. Leadership and management are very good. The citizenship curriculum is imaginative, effective and has been carefully designed to meet the needs of the students. There is a very clear vision of what needs to be done and very significant progress has been made with the introduction of this subject, including the assessment of students' work at the end of Year 9. The school shows high levels of commitment towards this subject.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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