

INSPECTION REPORT

DORMERS WELLS HIGH SCHOOL

Southall

LEA area: Ealing

Unique reference number: 101930

Headteacher: Mrs J A Leigh

Lead inspector: Mr M Beale

Dates of inspection: 28 February – 3 March 2005

Inspection number: 268377

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: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 902 |
| School address: | Dormers Wells Lane Southall Middlesex |
| Postcode: | UB1 3HZ |
| Telephone number: | 020 8813 8671 |
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| Appropriate authority: | Governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | The Reverend Ken Tombs |
| Date of previous inspection: | 11 January 1999 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This average sized school has grown in student numbers since the last inspection. It serves a culturally and ethnically diverse community. One-fifth of the students are of Indian heritage, 15 per cent are of Pakistani heritage and 15 per cent of black-African backgrounds. There are also substantial numbers of black-Caribbean and other Asian backgrounds. Student numbers include 176 refugee and asylum seekers, 12 traveller children and 14 who are in the care of the local authority. A large number of the students come from quite troubled backgrounds and their previous educational experiences have been disrupted. A large number of students join or leave the school during the middle of a term. One reason for this is that many families are initially placed in temporary accommodation before being moved to permanent housing. Current eligibility for free school meals, at more than 50 per cent, is well above the national average. Over 800 students receive support through grants for ethnic minority students and 108 are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The main languages spoken are Somali, Punjabi and Urdu. Considerably more than half of the students are identified as having special educational needs and the proportion of these with statements is well above average. The main reasons for higher levels of need are moderate learning difficulties as well as social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The attainment of students on entry to the school is very low and is adversely affected by later arrivals who in many cases are beginners in English. The school has specialist status as a Mathematics and Computing College, which was achieved in 2003. The school's participation in Excellence in Cities provides funding for learning mentors, the learning support centre and the gifted and talented programme. It is also a 'Leading Edge' school. It is in several other local and national educational initiatives. The school has received various awards, such as School Achievement Award (2000 and 2001), Artsmark Silver (2003), Sportsmark (for a second time in 2003), Healthy Schools (2003), Basic Skills Quality Mark (for a third time in 2003) and Investors in People (for a third time in 2004).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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| 4126 | Clive Parsons | Team inspector | Science |
| 1489 | Paul King | Team inspector | Art and design |
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| 23324 | Sylvia Greenland | Team inspector | Geography Special educational needs |
| 10759 | Lynn Bappa | Team inspector | History Citizenship |
| 8052 | Ken McKenzie | Team inspector | Information and communication technology |
| 12408 | Alan Frith | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages European languages |
| 8911 | John Witchell | Team inspector | Music |
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This highly effective school provides very good value for money. It operates in challenging circumstances and serves its community very well. Many students are refugees or asylum seekers and arrive at the school other than at the start of Year 7. High numbers of students are at early stages of learning English and attainment on entry is very low. Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, members of staff continually seek ways to meet these challenges, to improve their work and to meet the students' many needs. Students make rapid progress in their academic and personal development because much of the teaching inspires and motivates. They respond well to the commitment of the staff by working hard and demonstrating a very positive approach to their learning. This helps to generate a happy, harmonious and secure environment in which students can develop and learning can thrive.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the headteacher successfully inspires teachers and students to meet her high expectations; she is instrumental in the school's success and its improvement in recent years;
- much of the teaching is lively and interesting and focuses sharply on meeting the complex learning needs of the students; as a result students achieve very well;
- thorough systems to monitor the work of staff and improve their performance are supported by well developed arrangements for their continuing professional development;
- members of staff very successfully promote the students' personal development with the result that students develop respect for all and mature attitudes to their work;
- systems of support and guidance for individual students are based on a thorough identification and understanding of their particular needs, interests and aspirations;
- governors have not established procedures by which they can take an independent view of the school and its development.

Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Test and examination results have risen and the students' achievement has improved significantly. Teaching has also improved considerably and there is much more that is very good or excellent. The weaknesses identified at the time have been tackled successfully. For example, there is more support for students learning English as an additional language and there is much greater access to new technology in all areas of the school. However, aspects of provision for design and technology have not seen sufficient improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with: | all schools | | | similar schools |
|---|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2004 |
| | D | D | 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 throughout the school. The students make rapid progress from their levels of attainment on entry and standards rise as they move through the school. Year 9 test results are improving, although they were well below the national average in 2004. However, they were well above results in similar schools. Current

standards are below average overall by Year 9. GCSE results reached the national average overall for the first time in 2004 and the school exceeded its targets. The results were also in the top five per cent of similar schools. Current standards are average overall by Year 11. The school successfully tackles the individual needs of its students. Consequently, students with special educational needs or learning English as an additional language achieve very well. Early learners of English and newly arrived students are supported well so that they are able to access the curriculum and begin to achieve quite quickly. There is no significant difference in the achievement of students from different ethnic groups. However, students of Indian and Pakistani heritages gain better results at GCSE than the school average, whereas students of Somali and black-Caribbean backgrounds do less well. In each case, this is because of differences in attainment on entry to the school, not their rate of progress.

The students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. The students' attitudes are very good. They have a positive approach and are keen to do well. Consistent implementation of procedures is leading to good behaviour, although a small number of students cause problems that are dealt with firmly and successfully. One consequence is that the level of fixed-term exclusions is comparatively high for this size of school. Procedures to reduce absence are effective and attendance is good. Students are punctual to school and move purposefully between lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good overall as are teaching and learning. A high proportion of teaching is very good or better. Teachers have high expectations of the students' work and for their behaviour. This enables the students to learn new ideas and skills rapidly. The curriculum is used well to meet their needs through carefully tailored courses and focused support. However, aspects of design and technology are not taught in sufficient depth in Years 7 to 9. Students' experiences are enhanced by a wide range of additional activities. Well-planned arrangements aid the students' transfer into the school. This is particularly the case for refugee children and others who arrive mid-year. The arrangements to tackle the learning difficulties of students with special educational needs are highly effective as they are for those learning English as an additional language. Students' progress is carefully tracked so that support is sharply focused on each individual. A strong relationship has been established with other schools and colleges; this relationship is greatly enhanced through the school's recently acquired specialist status.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher works tirelessly for the good of the school and the students. She has high expectations of the staff and students, and sets a clear direction for the school's future. She is very well supported in the drive to improve the school by the senior leadership team. Thorough systems to review and evaluate the work of staff enable performance to be monitored and improved. Others with management roles fulfil these well and are providing a clear direction to the development of their areas. Strong teamwork is a particular feature of the school; there is a shared commitment to seek continually for ways of improving all that it offers. Governors support this and ensure that the school's statutory responsibilities are met. However, they do not take a lead in providing a strategic direction for the school's development.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students are very happy with the school and all that it provides. Parents are pleased with the support given, whatever their children's needs, and the commitment of the staff to ensuring that their children can achieve. The students also like the individual

support and guidance, and feel safe and secure within the routines of the school. They think highly of the headteacher and staff and are justifiably proud of their school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure that all aspects of design and technology are taught in depth;
- ensure that governors develop procedures by which they can share in the school's strategic development.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

From low attainment on entry, standards improve considerably as the students move through the school and are rising over time. Achievement is very good overall. Given the wide variety of background factors affecting this diverse school community there is no significant difference by gender or ethnicity in the rate of progress of students during their time at the school. Overall standards are below average by Year 9 but close to average by Year 11. Any variations in standards are due to differences in attainment on entry, free school meal eligibility, levels of English language acquisition and the length of time that the students are at the school. However, each of these does not always exist in isolation and several students are affected by a combination of these factors.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent GCSE results put the progress made by students during their time at the school amongst the best in the country and well above progress in similar schools.
- The students' very good achievement is based on stimulating teaching, a sharp focus on developing basic skills, very positive attitudes and a curriculum that meets individual needs well.
- The various needs of all students are met well so that achievement is consistently very good whatever their ethnic background, prior attainment or gender.

Commentary

1. Year 9 test results in English, mathematics and science rose in 2004 and were substantially higher than at the time of the last inspection. Results in science were below average and results were well below average in English and mathematics. Given the low attainment on entry of these students, their results represent at least good progress during Years 7 to 9, and compare much more favourably with similar schools. Against this benchmark group, results were average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Girls have performed better than boys with the exception of 2002 when results were similar. A comparison of the 2004 results with the students' standards on entry, shows that girls also made slightly more rapid progress overall than boys.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 30.6 (29.5) | n/a (33.4) |
| mathematics | 33.4 (31.5) | n/a (35.4) |
| science | 31.6 (29.0) | n/a (33.6) |

There were 180 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. GCSE results have also improved since the last inspection and have risen quite sharply since 2001. The 2004 results were in line with the national average and represented excellent progress for many students from both their standards on entry and from their earlier Year 9 test results. These results were also in the top five per

cent of similar schools. Girls have performed better than boys over the last few years. The exception to this was 2004 when results were similar, reflecting their Year 9 test results in 2002 and the slight advantage of boys on entry to the school in this year group. Results were below the national average in most subjects and were significantly so in design and technology and modern foreign languages. The exceptions to this were business studies, drama and history where results were above average and science, physical education religious education where results were close to the national average. There were relatively few A* and A grades, although both drama and physical education had above average proportions.

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 | 44 (37) | 52 (52) |
| Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades | 94 (90) | 89 (88) |
| Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades | 100 (94) | 96 (96) |
| Average point score per student (best eight subjects) | 278.1 | 282.8 |

There were 174 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Several factors impact on test and examination results, but these should not be viewed in isolation. The length of time that the students are at the school is of significance and affects progress and attainment. Students who arrive later than Year 7 do not perform on average as well as those who spend all of Years 7 to 11 at the school. However, this is often because later arrivals to the school are early learners of English, have little formal schooling or are refugees from traumatic backgrounds. Free school meal eligibility is also a key factor in examination performance. There was almost a 20 per cent advantage in the proportion of students gaining at least five A*-C grades at GCSE in 2004 between those not having a free school meal and those eligible for one. This lower performance is also partly because students entitled to a free school meal had lower overall attainment on entry to the school. Indeed, attainment on entry at whatever time this might be is the major factor in subsequent GCSE performance.
- There are variations in the overall attainment of different ethnic groups; however, these also generally reflect differences in attainment on entry to the school. Students of Indian and Pakistani heritages did better than the school average at GCSE in 2004, but already had better Year 9 test results. They were an able group on entry and came from established communities. By contrast, although students of Somali and black-Caribbean backgrounds did less well than the school average, they had lower attainment on entry and Year 9 test results. The group of Somali students were not only amongst the lowest attaining on entry, but also had a higher proportion eligible for a free school meal than the school average. The lower attainment of Somali students is a matter that the school is attempting to tackle through a variety of activities such as additional support, focus evenings, mentoring and homework clubs. Similarly, the GCSE performance of black-Caribbean students is also a concern for the school as they do not always do quite as well as their prior attainment indicates. Additional resources have also been directed towards this group of students.
- There are also some variations in test and examination performance by students learning English as an additional language. These students attain better overall by GCSE than others, largely because they include two of the better performing groups in

the school. Students learning English as an additional language also did better than others in Year 9 tests for mathematics and science in 2004. However, students whose mother tongue is English performed better overall in the English test. The evidence shows that once students learning English as an additional language reach an adequate level of fluency in English many become amongst the highest attaining in the school.

6. Several factors contribute significantly to the students' achievement and to the rapid progress that they make during their time at the school. The high quality of much of the teaching that focuses sharply on the specific needs of the students has a beneficial effect. Basic skills are generally weak overall when the students enter the school and could be a barrier to achievement if they were not tackled so effectively. Consistent approaches to developing literacy as well as to managing behaviour underpin the very good progress made by the students from whatever time they enter the school. The latter also helps to produce a harmonious working environment and promotes high levels of motivation and commitment from the students. They are keen and work hard in lessons and participate with enthusiasm in the range of additional activities on offer. Achievement in individual subjects is generally at least good, more often than not very good, and in the case of mathematics in Years 10 and 11, excellent. This leads to rising standards so that by Year 11, standards are close to average in most subjects except for English, modern foreign languages and music where they are below average.
7. The early stage learners of English as an additional language make rapid progress and achieve very well through specialist support, induction programmes for students newly admitted and generally very good teaching across the school. They experience very good teaching and learning, and the cumulative effect is very good achievement. Similarly, students at later stages of learning English as an additional language also achieve very well in core subjects and others. Because of the very good level of support both in and out of the classroom, students with special educational needs achieve very well, at least in line with their peers and sometimes better. In 2004, ninety-five percent of students identified with special educational needs achieved five or more GCSEs at A*-G and eighteen percent achieved five or more at grades A*-C. Gifted and talented students are identified and challenged through specific enrichment programmes as well as activities in lessons. As a result they achieve very well.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attendance and punctuality are good. Their attitudes to school are very good and they behave well. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very high expectations of students' conduct and work extremely hard to achieve them.
- Students think highly of their school and enjoy taking part in the many opportunities provided.
- Relationships between students and with adults are very good and encourage students to work hard and do their best.
- Improved procedures for monitoring attendance have helped the school to reduce the level of authorised absence to below the national average.

Commentary

8. Teachers provide very good examples of how to behave. They are very consistent and go to great lengths to ensure that students understand fully what is expected of them. Misbehaviour is not tolerated and the school has developed a very effective system to reward good and sanction unacceptable behaviour. The school's code of behaviour is reinforced during lessons, assemblies and published in students' homework diaries. The school monitors any incidents of misbehaviour closely, analyses these in detail and uses this information to guide its actions and future planning. Students are pleased to be rewarded when they behave well and are clear about the sanctions that will apply if they do not. Members of staff work as a close-knit and mutually supportive team to ensure that the school's rules are consistently applied. A pre-inspection survey of students' opinions identified some concerns with bullying and the behaviour of other students. During discussions students say that, although there are some instances of misbehaviour, these are quickly and effectively dealt with by the school. There are very few racist or bullying incidents and the school monitors these closely. As a result, although the level of temporary exclusions remains high, the school has successfully reduced these by a quarter over the last year. There were two permanent exclusions during the most recent school year.

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 | 88 | 28 | 0 |
| White – Irish | 13 | 14 | 0 |
| White – any other White background | 18 | 7 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 20 | 9 | 1 |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 10 | 3 | 0 |
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian | 181 | 28 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani | 130 | 32 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 18 | 7 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 62 | 15 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 73 | 38 | 1 |
| Black or Black British – African | 153 | 41 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| Chinese | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group | 112 | 29 | 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.

9. Students look forward to attending school and some are reluctant to leave at the end of the day. They enjoy their lessons and many take part in a wide range of lunchtime and after school activities. These include football, chess and computing and students

say they find the homework clubs especially useful. Students are highly self-motivated and very quick to accept responsibility and use their initiative. They readily run errands, help in class, during assemblies and with parents' evenings and are proud to serve as class and school council representatives. The head and deputy head boy and girl are selected from the ranks of the older prefects and older students help Year 7 students when they start at the school.

10. Students get along very well with each other and adults and enjoy the time they spend at school. During lessons and around the school, students are polite and friendly. They are confident and articulate and are happy to engage in conversation with visitors. Students find the high level of challenge in lessons very stimulating and they develop a strong desire to learn and succeed. They trust their teachers and feel valued as individuals. Students particularly appreciate the way that teachers are always willing to give up their time in order to help with any personal or academic problems. The school holds end of term special assemblies to recognise and reward students for their achievement and these are well attended. Within this supportive atmosphere, students become increasingly self-assured, work hard and do their best.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 7.6 | School data | 0.6 |
| 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.

11. At the time of the previous inspection, attendance was satisfactory. Over the intervening six years it has improved and is now good. The school has introduced rigorous systems to monitor lateness and unexplained absences. Students with outstanding attendance receive congratulatory prizes, and individual forms compete for the class with the highest attendance. The home-school agreement sets out the school's expectations very clearly. The majority of parents understand the need for regular attendance and respond well whenever the school contacts them about their child's attendance or punctuality. Unexplained absences are quickly followed up and parents are strongly discouraged from booking family holidays during the term. However, a few continue to do so. For their part, students are keen to attend school regularly and they enjoy being praised if their attendance and punctuality have been especially good.
12. Provision for students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is very good. Students work harmoniously and productively in groups and appreciate and understand the rich diversity of cultures which make up the school. They work within a moral code where the values of honesty, openness and equality are celebrated. School planning for the students' personal development is explicit and all departments contribute well to this aspect. As a consequence of this students are very well prepared for living in a diverse, multi-faith and multi-cultural society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. The school successfully focuses on meeting the various needs of the students through all that it does. Much teaching motivates the students who learn new skills and ideas at a rapid pace. The curriculum is designed to cater for students' needs and aspirations and is coupled with interesting enrichment activities. Support and guidance focus well on the individual and are particularly effective in helping students to settle into the school. Links with parents and others outside the school support and enhance the students' achievement.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall as is the quality of assessment and the use made by members of staff of assessment information to plan the next steps in the students' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are skilled at developing the students' literacy and numeracy as well as using new technology to enliven their lessons.
- Much teaching is from enthusiastic teachers who inspire the students to work hard and take enjoyment themselves from the subject.

- The structure and guidance of the national strategy to improve teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 has been adopted very successfully; many of the methods also inform teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment processes are used very well to involve students in their learning and help them to identify how to improve their work and raise their standards.
- Teachers are very successful at ensuring that they plan to meet the learning needs of all students and that they adopt methods to meet these needs.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 126 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 7 (6%) | 50 (40%) | 41 (33%) | 28 (22%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

13. The school invests much time and considerable resources in providing training for its teachers and monitoring their work. This is very successful in enabling good practice to be shared and is instrumental in the high quality of much of the teaching. In several cases two teachers are allocated to a class. They adopt a variety of methods when working in partnership. In some cases both teachers share fully all aspects of teaching. At other times one will lead while the other acts in a support role working with specific students. This is an expensive use of resources but partnership teaching is highly effective. It helps teachers to share new ideas which then inform their own teaching. This also supports the very well planned focus on developing the students' literacy and numeracy skills. It means that methods can be adapted to meet the various learning needs of the students and tasks that they undertake can be carefully monitored. One of the further benefits of the training, monitoring and partnership teaching is that there is a very considerable degree of consistency in the approach of members of staff to the implementation of teaching and learning policies.
14. Lessons are planned with clear objectives for the students' learning. These are discussed with them at the start of each lesson and returned to at the end to evaluate their success in achieving them. Starter activities are inventive and set lessons off well by focusing the students' minds on the subject and the material to come. The teaching of new material is creative and teachers show considerable enthusiasm for their work and high aspirations for the students. This, and their high expectations, rubs off on the students who are inspired and motivated to try hard and do their best. Work is challenging where necessary. Questioning is used skilfully to draw out ideas for the students and to make them think at whatever level they might be. Students rise to this well. The range of methods used and the clear boundaries for behaviour help to develop very good social and learning skills in the students. This also leads to a harmonious atmosphere in most classrooms in which students' learning can develop at pace. This enables group work to function constructively and students to be able to work independently and take responsibility for their learning. The new technology available to teachers is used very well to make teaching more interesting and to support the students' learning. Teachers use interactive whiteboards with great confidence and students use their own information and communication technology skills very well to support the work they are undertaking. Review sessions at the ends of lessons are used skilfully to establish what has been learnt, to challenge students further and to set the scene for future learning.

15. In many subjects very good use is made of setting targets for the students to achieve and showing them how to improve. This is often based on very rigorous assessment processes and effective use of the information obtained to track the students' progress. In several subjects, students are required to evaluate their own progress and that of others as part of the assessment process. Teachers also give very good feedback during lessons and through their marking of the students' work. Consequently, they have a very clear picture of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, there are a few examples where marking gives clear indications of where errors have been made but not how improvements to work can be made.
16. Partnership work is benefiting teaching and is supporting the very good achievement of a wide number of students learning English as an additional language. All members of staff have been trained in the most effective methods for teaching these students, who consequently are very effectively supported either by subject specialists or English as an additional language staff whatever their level. This is in contrast to the position previously reported when support was inadequate. Subject teachers and English as an additional language staff work very closely to identify the necessary support for these students. Assessment is very effective. It is carried out regularly and information is shared with all staff. The school has introduced the nationally recommended scale for English as an additional language assessment well; it is used in line with the assessment in English. As a result, tracking of progress is systematic and clear. The initial assessment of prior learning is very well thought out and includes a non-language mathematics test which has proved very useful in assessing students' ability and level in the subject.
17. Students with special educational needs are very well taught in subject lessons. Their teachers know them very well and understand well how to provide for them, and so they always work in a positive and encouraging atmosphere. Group work enables their peers to give support by interpreting the work for them and enabling them to participate in decision-making exercises. Specially tailored tasks make effective allowance for different levels of literacy and verbal understanding. Teaching assistants are attached to students with particular difficulties to work with them on a one-to-one basis, and partnership teaching leads to all students having much greater access than usual to individual teacher attention. Students with a high level of literacy and numeracy need are withdrawn from some lessons for booster classes in small groups. Although these classes are well organised, they do not always provide sufficient challenge to justify students missing mainstream lessons. Assessments to determine the literacy and numeracy levels of students with special educational needs are thorough and frequent. They distinguish well between those with English language learning needs and those who are behind with literacy and numeracy, and lead to appropriate provision being made. Referrals for more complex assessment of need are made through the pastoral system and lead to assessment by the in-house educational psychologist who advises on appropriate strategies for support. Assessment criteria that indicate whether students have advanced far enough to be removed from the special needs list are less clear, with the result that many students who need no more than a low level of in-class support are still classified. However, the co-ordinator is aware of this situation and steps are being taken to clarify procedures.

The curriculum

The school provides a good range of curricular opportunities and makes very good provision for extra-curricular activities and support for learning outside the school day. Staffing, accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's specialist status in mathematics and computing makes a strong impact on curriculum provision.
- The school attaches importance to meeting students' individual needs in order to prepare them for the next stages of their education.
- The provision made for students with special educational needs and for those who have English as an additional language is very good.
- The school offers many worthwhile activities for students outside lessons.
- Staff shortages have meant that the design and technology curriculum has insufficient breadth.

Commentary

18. The award of specialist status in mathematics and computing has enabled the school to make significant improvements to its curriculum provision and to highlight its potential for further improvement in the minds of both students and parents. Improved facilities, especially the many new interactive white boards, are making a significant difference to the quality of work in lessons. By inviting specialist speakers and organising many activities and visits, including a mathematics weekend, the school has developed students' self-esteem and raised their aspirations. In these ways, the school has been able to increase students' motivation in these and other subjects, so that they achieve better.
19. With such a wide range of students from diverse backgrounds and with different levels of prior attainment, the school attaches considerable importance to meeting individual needs. Looking carefully at students' interests and aptitudes, the school introduces courses, which it knows will be worthwhile and popular, and which will provide opportunities for progression. Measures include the provision of additional curriculum time to meet students' needs for English language development, alternative accreditation to provide successfully for students with low prior attainment and an increase in the availability of vocational courses and opportunities for work related learning. Programmes to support and extend students who are identified as being gifted or having particular talents are also highly effective in ensuring that they are challenged in lessons and through additional activities. The school also provides activities to increase students' confidence, such as residential visits to promote team building for younger students and, where appropriate, specialised work-based activities for older ones. The school caters well for the progression of all students up to the age of 16 and, by providing effective careers guidance, ensures they can plan for the years beyond.
20. The curriculum support department offers a very good, wide range of provision in response to the special educational needs of a large number of students. Literacy and numeracy are boosted through a combination of small group work and well organised support in subject lessons. A school-based educational psychologist assesses students with more complex and emotional needs and gives guidance on the most appropriate strategies for each individual. Provision is very good overall in the majority of subjects because subject teachers have very good knowledge of all the students in their care and understand very well how to enable them to achieve. In general, the small groups to support students out of lessons are adequately managed but the level of work is not always appropriate for the students concerned. It lacks challenge, particularly in some numeracy groups.
21. The school provides a very effective curriculum for students with English as an additional language. It has tackled the issue identified in the last inspection by providing additional trained staff and training all staff into the teaching of English as an additional language. There is a range of support including in-class partnership work, induction for students new to English and support for the more able. There is also very effective support for late arrivals in Years 10 and 11, who often gain good GCSE grades within a short time. The school is developing partnership work with a range of subject departments. Provision is very good in most subject areas because teachers know the students' needs very well and understand how to enable them to achieve highly.

22. Students welcome and enjoy the wide range of activities that are available for them outside lesson time. They have good access to computers at lunchtimes and after school. Most departments provide clubs, which help the students to make more progress in the various subject areas and some teachers organise additional activities, such as chess. Students make use of the excellent games facilities and have access to a broad range of sports. Several departments organise excursions and trips and there is a very good range of arts and musical activities, including visits to galleries, theatre productions and concerts. The school takes care to ensure that activities reflect the diversity of its multi-cultural environment and that they engage the interests of all sections of its community.
23. There are few weaknesses overall, but the curriculum in design and technology fails to cover certain areas in sufficient depth, such as computer-assisted design in Years 7 to 9. The cause is that the school has encountered difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified staff. In music, there is too much emphasis on the western classical tradition and not enough on influences and cultures from other parts of the world. In all other areas, the curriculum is good and in science and personal, social and health education, it is very good.
24. The school manages its accommodation well to provide an effective learning environment as far as is possible. Accommodation is excellent in physical education, very good in art and design and good or satisfactory in all others. Improvements since the last inspection include the refurbishment of all science laboratories and the building of a new mathematics and computing area. Significant expenditure will be required to continue this improvement. Students treat the buildings with care and respect, despite its age and condition. All subjects are well resourced, with excellent resources in physical education and very good resources in art and design, languages and mathematics.
25. Specialist teachers and support staff have a positive impact on the achievement of many students, especially those learning English as an additional language or those who have special educational needs. The school's decision to employ a higher than average number of teachers contributes to high achievement. The availability of specialist staff is satisfactory or better in all subjects, except design and technology where there is still a shortage. It is very good in mathematics and physical education. A team of senior staff teach citizenship and personal, social and health education, and this means that provision in this area is very effective. The school has good relationships with training institutions and supports well those teachers who are entering the profession. Support for teachers in training and those newly qualified ensures that they quickly make a positive contribution to the life of the school and the quality of teaching and learning.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. The standard of support, advice and guidance provided is excellent. Involvement through seeking and acting on students' views is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school knows its students exceptionally well and has very effective procedures for caring for them.

- New students are looked after well when they enrol at the start of the school year and at other times.
- The school council is a very effective body and is highly regarded by staff and students.
- Health and safety procedures are effective.
- The school guides students well in planning for their future.

Commentary

26. Many of the students face challenging circumstances, which can significantly affect their learning and ability to achieve. The school fully recognises this and has developed an outstandingly successful framework of pastoral care. The school has very close links with a very wide range of support services and draws upon these as required. This ensures that the care provided meets the students' needs very closely hence putting students in a good position to make rapid progress in their learning. Learning mentors provide very good support for students who have particular difficulties and very close links with the educational psychologist ensures that students receive the help that they need. The school closely evaluates the impact of all the strategies it employs to ensure that they are as effective as possible and are geared towards meeting the students' needs. During discussions, students confirm that the school knows them extremely well and that they can approach any member of staff in complete confidence to discuss any concerns. Systems to track academic progress keep a close watch on students' progress and are used very well to inform planning. Most homework is issued according to the homework diary, is promptly marked and students receive very clear guidance on how to improve it and their class work.
27. The school works very closely with contributing primary schools and students are well prepared for their move at the start of Year 7. Teachers visit each others' schools and help each other to plan and teach lessons. The school's specialist status provides a specific focus for lessons and after school clubs in computing and mathematics. Many Year 6 pupils also undertake bridging modules in English and mathematics and there are regular opportunities for them to attend school productions and other events. Students in Years 8 and 9 play a large part in supporting their smooth transfer and act as guides when showing Year 6 pupils around the school. They also help during sporting events and ensure that new students can find their way around school. In addition, those who join during the year are very well supported through a 'buddy' scheme. During discussions, students confirm transition arrangements are good and that they were provided with the best possible start.
28. The introduction and support for new arrivals including refugee and asylum seekers is of exceptional quality. There is a very well-designed programme that speeds up new students' integration into school. Students new to English are introduced to the language in induction classes, where they have greater opportunity to acquire skills in English in a supportive environment than in their normal lessons. Some of these students come from war-torn countries and are traumatised by recent experience. The school gives them a sense of security and the potential to develop academic and social confidence through group work, the 'buddy system' and lunch-time clubs. They are fully included in the life of the school.
29. Students run class and school councils and these provide them with a very effective 'voice' in the running and future development of the school. The distinct roles of class and school council representatives ensure that the opportunity to contribute actively to

the life of the school is given to as many students as possible. Students take these responsibilities seriously and understand clearly the democratic process through which they are elected. They rotate the chair to ensure that succession is well planned. Students are very proud of their school council and know that it makes a significant contribution to school life. For example, students have requested the provision of additional benches, water dispensers in the canteen and influenced the range of coat colours that boys and girls can wear. The school also consults the school council when reviewing after school clubs and school visits.

30. The school has effective procedures for monitoring health and safety. Record keeping is thorough, overseen by governors and independently audited. There is a clear policy and individual responsibilities are well defined. Risk assessment and medical procedures are thorough and several members of staff are well trained in first aid. The school's systems for recording incidents are effective and records are complete and up-to-date. The school promotes healthy living well and students have welcomed the improved menus in the canteen.
31. The school provides good guidance to students about their future choices. Information is clear and well timed and students confirm that they are very happy with, and value, the advice they receive.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has good links with parents and very good links with the community. Links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's specialist college status has resulted in close and highly beneficial links with other schools.
- Parents are well informed about the school and the progress their children are making.
- Strong links with the community and local businesses support students' personal development well.

Commentary

32. The school's specialist status as a mathematics and computing college creates many opportunities to engage and interest students, parents and the wider community. Extensive curricular links with primary schools help to make a major contribution to the excellent transfer arrangements and prepare students well for their entry at the start of Year 7. The school also works hard to boost the standard of primary school students' work. For example, teachers advise their primary colleagues on the most effective ways to raise the standard of students work in mathematics and support their after-school mathematics and computing clubs. The school also provides computing support and access to its computing and mathematics facilities. Teachers from the physical education department provide guidance to primary colleagues and this promotes the sharing of good teaching practice. The school has hosted several dance and drama workshops in collaboration with the English National Opera and the Globe Players. Pupils in partner primaries are also invited to attend. These close working relationships with contributing primary schools provides them with a valuable source of support and expertise and ensures that the school is a familiar face to its future students.

33. Parents receive comprehensive information on everyday school life and the work their children will undertake. The school issues termly newsletters, letters and information and students' reports provide parents with clear information about how well their children are learning. The school holds regular meetings when parents can discuss their child's progress and runs a number of focus evenings to help parents support their child's learning at home. In addition, students' homework diaries offer another means of keeping parent and school in touch, as well as a reminder of the commitments both have made to support students' education. The school maintains good links with parents from minority ethnic groups and those of students learning English as an additional language. There are members of staff from the same backgrounds as the students, who help to maintain close links with their parents.
34. Nine out of ten parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire confirm that they would feel comfortable approaching the school with a concern or a complaint. On the rare occasion when this has happened the school deals with it effectively. Parents are well consulted through close contact between the school and a number of associations which provide help to parents. Their views are also captured through focus groups, surveys and consultation evenings and this reflects the pre-inspection survey where the views of parents were overwhelmingly positive. Parents provide practical support for events such as a multicultural evening and invigilate during examinations. The parent, teacher and friends group supports the school well and funds raised are used to provide additional learning resources.
35. The school works closely with the local community and businesses and has a good relationship with a number of organisations including the BBC, British Airways and Brentford Football club. Businesses support the work experience programme and representatives visit the school to talk to students about their jobs and careers options. The school works closely with a number of organisations to help parents support their child's learning, including the travellers education service. The Somali Teachers Association also collaborates with the school to run a homework club. During Black History Month, the school received substantial help from the community and a number of poets visited to give readings. The school is a clear focal point for the local community. The sporting facilities are regularly used and the school premises are made available to a variety of groups, for example, a Sikh temple, a Pentecostal school and a Dyslexia support group.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and that of other key staff is very good. Management procedures and practices are highly effective and bring a high degree of consistency throughout the school. Governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has high expectations and inspires the staff to meet the challenges facing the school and the students.
- Teachers are very reflective of their practice; their performance is thoroughly monitored and improvements supported by well-targeted and highly effective training and guidance.

- Processes to review the work of staff and evaluate the impact of action taken lead to carefully planned action to meet the school's aims and educational priorities.
- There is shared commitment to meeting the complex needs of the students and to ensuring that all are able to benefit from the educational opportunities provided.
- There has been little change in the effectiveness of the governing body since the last inspection.

Commentary

36. The strong, thoughtful and innovative leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in the progress made by the school in recent years and in its many successes. The headteacher is highly influential both in the school and beyond. She has very high expectations of the staff and the students and projects a strong presence around the school that enables her to lead by example. She has successfully promoted a culture within the school where every individual is valued and their development supported. This includes staff as well as students. This has helped to develop a very strong sense of teamwork in which all members of staff are keen to improve their performance and support each other so that they can meet the various learning and personal needs of the students. The headteacher provides support, training and guidance to improve performance, but takes action where persistent underperformance is identified.
37. Leadership development is a key feature of the work of the school. Leadership is very strong at all levels in the school and is being successfully developed further through targeted training and guidance. Senior members of staff are very good role models for others and demonstrate refined leadership skills. They motivate their colleagues while challenging them to achieve even higher standards in their teaching and general performance. Although the current leadership team has been fully in place for only a short time, their influence is seen throughout the school. This, and the commitment of staff to the school's aims, values and priorities, brings a high level of consistency to the implementation of procedures. This helps the students to operate in a safe and secure environment in which boundaries are clear, expectations are high and individuals are treated consistently. Members of staff are keen to improve their performance and are very supportive of the development of others. There is very strong teamwork and a consistency of approach to the implementation of policy. Leadership and management are very good in virtually all subjects and good in design and technology and modern foreign languages; the latter being an improvement since the last inspection.
38. There is a very successful focus on developing the skills of individuals so that teaching and learning can improve. Rigorous processes to review the work of departments and members of staff are focused on meeting the school's priorities. Data evaluation has become increasingly sophisticated not just to track students' progress but also as a management tool to help to identify action needed to improve performance. Observation of teaching, the evaluation of assessment and other data and the monitoring of other aspects of work lead to clear targets for improvement. These are supported by high quality arrangements for the professional development of all staff. Introduction and training arrangements for newly qualified teachers and other members of staff who are new to the school are thorough and much valued. Further professional development opportunities are carefully planned and generously funded. The school is very effective at developing teachers from within. In a difficult area of

the country for the recruitment of teachers, the school has developed many creative strategies to ensure that it is fully staffed with subject specialists.

39. Ensuring that all students have the opportunity to be successful is a key aim of the school and one that is met highly successfully. There is a very detailed and thorough Race Equality Policy that is implemented and monitored. It demonstrates the school's commitment to harmony, tolerance and meeting the needs of all. The school has made significant strides since the last inspection in improving the provision for students learning English as an additional language. The combined efforts of the staff have resulted in very effective provision for students learning English as an additional language and ethnic minority students. The very good leadership and management of this important aspect of the school display vision and aims for improvement. The co-ordinator has identified the main areas for development within a very short time and acted upon them. Liaison between the English as an additional language department and the special needs department ensures that all students receive appropriate support. The new special educational needs co-ordinator has already succeeded in building a strong and cohesive team. All paperwork is in place and reviews of students with statements are properly carried out. At present there are no clear criteria for removing students from the special needs list who have progressed well, although the co-ordinator has this matter in hand and consultations are under way to rectify the situation. Special educational needs provision is extremely well supported by the designated governor and the senior management team. The provision for students who have been identified as gifted and talented is also very well organised and focuses well on ensuring that they are challenged in lessons and through other enrichment activities.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Total income | 4,599,176 | Balance from previous year | 379,372 |
| Total expenditure | 4,334,438 | Balance carried forward to the next | 644,110 |
| Expenditure per student | 4,821 | | |

40. Key governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths, the challenges that face it and how these can be approached. However, the governing body as a whole still does not have procedures that are sufficiently independent of the senior leadership team and the headteacher to monitor the impact of their decisions. They are provided with much high quality information from these sources to guide their work, but are not involved in improvement planning at an early stage where they can provide a clear strategic direction for the school's work. They justifiably hold the headteacher in high esteem and are very pleased with the school's progress. They support the school in many ways particularly where site improvements and developments are concerned. Annual financial planning is thorough, particularly the use of additional funding sources. Resources are carefully and successfully targeted to meet the school's priorities. A large budget surplus has accrued, but this is earmarked to fund planned building developments in the immediate future and to balance the 2004/05 budget. The school provides very good value for money given the quality of all that the school provides set against the students' backgrounds, the challenges they face and their low standards on entry.

WORK RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work experience is very well managed and it makes a strong contribution to developing the students' knowledge, understanding and key skills.
- Students demonstrate high levels of the skills, attitudes and qualities that are valued in the work place.
- Students value highly the support and guidance that they receive when making decisions about future subject and career choices.

Commentary

41. The many opportunities that are provided by the school ensure that the students develop their skills for enterprise and employability to a high level. Teachers often identify these opportunities within their planning, but are not yet consistently identifying and communicating them to students. Plans are well advanced to involve the students in tracking their own experiences and skill development across lessons. A good proportion of students in Years 10 and 11 have a specific vocational or work related element within their subjects. All students benefit from industry and enterprise days when their normal timetable is suspended for these focused activities. Consequently, students are very well motivated to learn, take responsibility and act independently, both in lessons and in other aspects of school life.
42. Preparation for work experience is effective and the programme itself very well managed. Debriefing and using the students' experiences in lessons afterwards ensure that they reflect on and learn from the activity. Wherever possible individual placements support and compliment the students' option choices, thereby extending their understanding further still.
43. Provision for careers education and guidance is also effective and well-targeted, so that all students receive individual support through the Connexions service, but those requiring most receive most. Students themselves speak positively 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 with local employers have been developed to support this aspect of the school's work. Some activities, such as mathematics in the work place, are also linked closely with the school's specialist status. Effective leadership and management have resulted in an accurate evaluation of current provision and a secure strategic plan for sustained development.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

45. English and French were inspected in detail. Several lessons were also observed in Spanish, Punjabi and Urdu.
46. GCSE examination results in **Spanish** in 2004, obtained by a very small number of candidates, were well below average. Standards observed during the inspection in Year 11 were below average. Teaching is good, with good timing and good planning. The curriculum leader often visits lessons to monitor teaching and give useful feedback. Most teachers speak Spanish much of the time in lessons and this benefits all students, bringing particular advantages for students learning English as an additional language. Teachers use new technology resources very well, but sometimes they do not challenge students enough or promote independent learning skills by explaining the purpose of activities.
47. A sample of Urdu and Punjabi lessons was seen during the inspection. Standards in speaking and listening in **Punjabi and Urdu** are average by Year 9 but no judgements have been made about reading and writing. In Punjabi, standards in Year 11 are above average with about two-thirds of students achieving A*-C grades because of good teaching and the students' very positive attitudes to learning. In Urdu, standards in Year 11 are below average in terms of A*-C grades and only a few students are working at higher grades. Urdu teaching has suffered recently due to the illness and departure of the previous teacher whereas Punjabi teaching is more secure with an established teacher. Of the four lessons seen, one was good and three were satisfactory. A strength of the teaching is the way the teachers use the target language and provide good models of pronunciation, but there is not always sufficient insistence on students to use it. Good teaching was seen in a Year 11 Punjabi lesson where interesting activities and authentic materials were used to engage the students so that they achieved well.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been steady improvement in standards over the past three years which are now below average in Years 9 and 11.
- Achievement by students, many of whom come to the school with very low standards in English, is very good and often excellent.
- Leadership and management are very good, and a stable team of teachers has been effective in raising standards.
- Teaching is good: some very good and outstanding lessons were seen.
- There is scope for more sharing of good practice so that all teaching has the qualities seen in the best lessons.
- A strong English department supports and also benefits from the focus on literacy throughout the school and from the contribution made by the special educational needs and English as an additional language teachers.

Commentary

48. Year 9 test results showed steady improvement from 2000 to 2002 but fell slightly in 2003. Results rose in 2004 to be the best achieved by the school, although they were well below the national average. This represented excellent achievement and progress by students whose levels of attainment on entry to the school were very low. Further good progress was shown in the GCSE results. High numbers of students were entered for both English language and English literature examinations. These figures were above the national average for entry and indicate both the very good progress since students entered the school and also the high expectations which the department has of its students and teachers. A particular improvement in 2004 was the performance of boys in English which had previously lagged far behind that of girls. The proportion of boys attaining grades A*-C went from 27 percent in 2003 to 46 percent in 2004. Although results in English language were below and in literature well below the national average, they compared very well with those attained by similar schools. Overall, achievement is very good and often excellent.
49. Work seen during the inspection indicates that the department is sustaining these standards at GCSE. Standards are rising in Years 7 to 9 and are now below average by Year 9. A good deal is being done to establish reading as the basis of work and progress in English. Library introduction and regular library periods in Years 7 to 9 ensure that books are available and familiar to students. Reading logs are generally well kept. Much written work is linked with students' reading and reflects their interest and enjoyment as readers. Work in students' GCSE folders includes good critical analyses of literature and it is clear that most students have worked steadily to develop their knowledge of the set texts.
50. Students listen well. In lessons, form time and assemblies, they concentrate thoughtfully and are usually courteous in their response to what others have to say. The quality of speaking and reading aloud is more variable and some of the examples heard during the inspection were disappointing. Students reading in class and in assemblies were not clear and audible and in lessons students presenting their findings to the class read instead of talking. An exception was some lively improvisation by Year 9 students, based on the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and recorded on video by their teacher in a previous lesson. Overall, the quality of presentation, performance and discussion could benefit from a wider range of activities and strategies including more use of drama techniques. In preparation for their reading of their set play, *All My Sons*, a Year 11 lower group listened to a very good dramatic reading by the teacher and the support teacher, then read the same scene in pairs with good understanding, in preparation for whole class shared reading. This lesson was an excellent example of team teaching and of the skilful adaptation of material and method to meet students' needs.
51. The quality of students' writing reflects high expectations by teachers and careful attention to the requirements of the National Curriculum as well as the literacy strategy. Language knowledge is developed, and revised, but not at the expense of a wide range of reading and writing activities. Creative and imaginative work is stimulated by good starting points for writing. Students are encouraged to explore their own ideas and experiences in personal writing and to respond creatively to literature. They submit written work regularly and it is conscientiously marked, with reference to targets for improvement. They write for a wide range of purposes including stories, letters, poems, reports, argument and persuasion. Students who

start with little or poor English make steady progress. They are encouraged to use the vocabulary and structures they know and then, gaining confidence, to extend and experiment.

52. Teaching is good; the quality of the individual lessons seen ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Lesson objectives were well defined and shared with students, and the use of the three-part lesson structure was well planned. Good use is made of the department's resources including interactive whiteboards and laptops. The department's policy for the use of information and communication technology is well implemented. Year 9 students produced impressive newspapers reporting the events at Dunsinane Castle and in many folders there were examples of information and communication technology skilfully used for individual and group work.
53. Where extra support is available, liaison between teacher and support teacher or assistant is effective in helping students with special educational needs or those in the early stages of learning English. Where no extra help is provided, teachers are usually careful to ensure that students have appropriate materials, help and teacher time. The good relationships between teacher and class, and among students themselves, are a key factor in the confidence shown and the progress made by these students, particularly those who arrive at different times in the school year.
54. In some lessons seen, the drive to get through the planned material reduced the opportunities for students to talk, and good opportunities to explore some of their own ideas, associations and reactions were missed. An abundance of worksheets or handouts occasionally seemed a little confusing for students and the use of the whiteboard as the focus for questions was sometimes more successful.
55. Extra-curricular activities include extra support for students with special needs of various kinds, including the gifted and talented. Book clubs and projects for World Book day make good use of library liaison. There have been some theatre visits and workshops and this is an activity which could now be usefully extended, particularly for Years 9 to 11.
56. Very good leadership and management have created an enthusiastic and successful team. Departmental documentation, recording and forward planning are very efficient and new members of staff are welcomed with good induction and support. There is excellent analysis and use of the data provided by school and local education authority, and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching are well established within the school's framework. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The department is making a strong contribution to the success of the school and to the personal, social and cultural development of its students.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Students enter Year 7, or join the school later, with a very wide range of literacy skills. A minority have reached the nationally expected Level 4, on leaving primary schools, and overall attainment is very low. Furthermore, 80 per cent of students are at various stages of acquiring English as an additional language and half the students have special educational needs. An excellent range of policies and strategies has been developed to meet the challenge and to ensure that every student has access to the curriculum and can benefit from all that the school offers. Consequently, standards of literacy are below average by Years 9 and 11. Although the literacy strategy has been mainly the concern of the English department, the responsibility for developing literacy

is shared by all departments. The improvement in standards and achievement owes much to their efforts and to the support and expertise provided by members of staff working in special educational needs or English as an additional language.

58. Key words and subject-specific vocabularies are being developed well. In mathematics there is high profile work on vocabulary, with key words shared at the start of each lesson. The technical vocabularies in physical education and science are given good emphasis and there are opportunities for speaking and listening. In religious education all lessons have a literacy emphasis and improvements in literacy have had a major impact on standards in history, contributing to the very good results achieved in 2004. There is excellent work in geography, with vocabulary extension providing a starter to most lessons and students making rapid progress in extended descriptions and explanations. Good opportunities for improvising, talking, reading aloud and listening contribute much to the development of language and to students' confidence in using it. Drama, religious education and citizenship are providing such opportunities with some excellent outcomes. The friendly and supportive relationships which are the norm in lessons at all stages also encourage interaction and experiment as students improve their language skills. This is leading to considerable improvements in skills and their impact on achievement across the school, although standards of literacy are still below average by both Years 9 and 11.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are still well below average in Year 9 and below average in Year 11, but achievement is good.
- Teaching is good and is improving.
- The curriculum leader for languages has a very clear vision of the department's future.
- The department has established a very good set of priorities by carefully evaluating its provision.

Commentary

59. GCSE examination results in French in 2004 were better than those gained in 2003, but still significantly below average. There was hardly any difference between boys' and girls' results, after taking into account the national difference. The number entered for Spanish in 2004 was too small for valid comparisons to be made, but the results were similar to those in French. Standards in Year 11 observed during the inspection are a little better, but still below average. Teacher assessed results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well below the national average, with girls' results closer to the national average for their gender than boys'. Standards observed in Year 9 were also well below the national average, and the difference between girls' and boys' results was similar to the national difference. Students of all ages achieve well to reach these standards. They work diligently, learning well because of good teaching. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good as is that of students of all ethnic groups. Boys achieve as well as girls in all age groups.
60. Students with special educational needs achieve well in language lessons because teachers always respond helpfully to their written work. In lessons, they usually also

receive good support from their teachers, who are all well aware of their individual needs. Students who are learning English as an additional language are well supported. They learn well when teachers use French as the medium of instruction because they already possess a good ability to switch from one language to another. Teachers also refer to the languages spoken by some of them, mentioning particular features, such as the gender of nouns, which help them with their French.

61. Most teachers use the foreign language constantly in lessons, enabling the many students who speak languages other than English to make good progress, and benefiting all other groups as well. Lessons are well planned and most have good pace. Teachers use the new interactive white boards very well to motivate students, who also use new technology to improve their learning. Students understand the importance of literacy skills, although in many cases, these are not highly developed when they arrive at the school. Teachers refer appropriately to other languages in lessons, reminding students of the instinctive knowledge they already have. Marking has improved recently and is responsive to individual students' needs. New assessment procedures give information about the levels achieved and provide good guidance on how to improve. There are still weaknesses in some lessons, for example where English is used when the foreign language would be understood, where the level of challenge is too low or where the purpose of individual activities is unclear. There are no links with schools abroad.
62. The new curriculum leader, in post for less than two terms, has a clear vision for the future, shared by all staff. Priorities are rightly focused on teaching and learning and improvements are already visible. The department is innovative, adopting new means of accreditation and new course materials, which are successful in motivating students to learn. The school regularly monitors the department's work, reviewing results and keeping aware of the progress of individual students and groups of students. The curriculum leader frequently monitors the quality of teaching, providing valuable feedback, which has already proved beneficial. The department has canvassed the views of students to find out how they think it can improve. There are no significant weaknesses in leadership and management, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of recent developments in terms of outcomes and, whilst the members of staff work well as a team, some of the improvements in teaching are not yet embedded. Leadership and management are good and have potential for ensuring considerable improvement in future. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good** with some excellent features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the department is excellent.
- There is exceptionally good marking and feedback to students about how they can improve.
- The majority of teaching is of very high quality and is leading to rising standards and excellent achievement.

Commentary

63. When students arrive at the school their standards in mathematics are very low in comparison with those reached by students nationally. In the past their results have remained well below the national ones in the tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE. However, the standards are improving. One significant factor is that teaching is very good. Consequently, achievement is very good in Years 7 to 9 and excellent in Years 10 and 11. Students are now working below the national average in Years 7 to 9 and at almost the national level in Years 10 and 11. This reflects the high aspirations of the department and the improving competence of students. Very few students in the past have achieved A or A* at GCSE but more students in the higher sets are currently working towards those grades.
64. The curriculum leader has very high aspirations for all students and detailed plans for achieving this. She is extremely well supported by senior leadership and leads an enthusiastic, hard-working team. They work co-operatively, exchange ideas and share a determination to make mathematics as interesting, relevant and meaningful as possible. They give freely of their time to run extra sessions and clubs to help anyone who is struggling, to stretch the thinking of gifted and talented students and just to enjoy mathematical puzzles and games. Every opportunity is taken to use mathematical speakers, organise visits and enter competitions. The links with local schools are very strong and many primary school students come to clubs and activities run by the maths department.
65. This shared sense of purpose results in very high quality teaching and learning. Clearly planned and structured lessons help students understand what they are being taught and judge how well they have succeeded. Teachers use this evaluation to decide what to do in the next lesson. Every classroom has an interactive whiteboard and in most lessons these are used very effectively to demonstrate and to allow students to test ideas. This is particularly powerful when teaching about geometrical relationships, and the department has a collection of very good materials for a wide range of mathematical ideas. This emphasis on visual demonstration enables even those who are at an early stage of learning English to understand the mathematics. Teachers are very good at managing behaviour, often in a low-key but extremely effective way. This leads to a purposeful atmosphere where students stay attentive, discuss mathematical ideas sensibly and work well at whatever tasks are set. Most lessons have a variety of different tasks, often including short games and practical activities, which keep students motivated and allow them to consider a concept from different perspectives. Teachers use questioning extremely well to probe understanding and to include every student in the lesson. Students are encouraged to explain their ideas to the class and to use the correct mathematical language. This contributes to the development of their literacy skills. Although there is no unsatisfactory teaching, a few lessons are less well organised, ignore the available technology or use materials which are confusing.
66. This high quality teaching coupled with extremely thorough marking and feedback in books is resulting in excellent achievement for students of all abilities. Progress is tracked and whenever students' results indicate they are not reaching their potential, they are offered extra support and tuition. This is so effective that achievement in mathematics is better than in most other schools in similar circumstances. Teachers know their students well and expect them to succeed to the best of their ability. This belief in their potential, coupled with the variety of teaching styles and opportunities to have extra help whenever needed, means that the majority of students with special educational needs make very good progress.

67. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good with results improving faster than the national trend. This improvement is a result of excellent leadership and management. Strategies are now in place to prevent students' lack of English slowing their progress in mathematics. The quality of teaching has improved, assessment had improved and the department now uses new technology very effectively. The curriculum has broadened to include statistics GCSE for more than a third of the students in Year 10.

Mathematics across the curriculum

68. The students' ability to apply their mathematical knowledge in other areas of the curriculum is satisfactory. They are able to manage the data handling encountered in business studies, use formulas successfully in science and find data from different countries on the Internet for geography. The mathematics department has worked hard with the rest of the staff to ensure that students have planned opportunities and support in applying their mathematical skills in other subjects. This has included regular staff briefings, sharing resources, weekly numeracy sessions in tutor time and a slot on all lesson plans for listing the mathematics to be used.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in all year groups.
- All lessons have good elements and teaching and learning are good or very good in a high proportion of them.
- Students show interest, engage well and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Leadership and management are having a strong impact on improving provision

Commentary

69. Results in Year 9 tests in 2004 were below the national average, but well above those in schools whose students had similar attainment in Year 6 tests three years earlier. This performance represents good progress through Years 7 to 9 and is just above that of students in English and mathematics. Standards have risen faster than the national rate over the previous five years. GCSE results improved significantly in 2004 to be just below, but broadly equivalent to the national average. This demonstrated very good progress from the students' attainment in their Year 9 tests and students performed as well in science as they did in their other subjects. Girls have historically performed better than boys but results in the 2004 Year 9 tests and at GCSE show that they are much closer than at the time of the last inspection. There is no evidence of variation in achievement in lessons, where all students make good progress and achieve highly.
70. Students' achievement is very good because they are well taught and they engage willingly in the learning activities planned by teachers. Current standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are at the same level as the 2004 test and examination results. Teaching and learning are good. The achievements of individual lessons build progressively and systematically over time because teachers make effective links to prior learning and students have a strong commitment to succeed. Teachers are very clear about

what they expect students to learn and the activities planned support the intended outcomes well. Teachers have very high expectations of what students can achieve and enable them to take increasing responsibility for their own learning over time. Students' work is monitored well and some effective feedback is provided to enable them to improve further.

71. There is a very strong emphasis on English language and teachers use interactive whiteboards very well in supporting this development. The focus on use of English is particularly helpful for students learning English as an additional language. Teachers monitor students' progress and understanding throughout lessons and provide many opportunities for students to review their ideas and to apply them to new contexts. This systematic development provides a secure and effective framework for learning so that all students, and especially those who have special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language, achieve very well. Learning is usually strengthened further by teachers using a wide range of visual stimuli that enable students to build pictures and models and associate objects and processes with key words. Technicians also play an important part in ensuring that resources are organised and available at the right time to maximise time for learning.
72. Teaching and learning are appropriately monitored and results of tests and examinations comprehensively evaluated. This is enabling the curriculum leader to focus development and improvement where they have most impact. Improvement since the previous inspection is consequently very good. An effective team has been established which has an ethos of trying new methods and approaches to learning through carefully supported professional development. There is a very good capacity to continue the current rate of improvement and to sustain the successes achieved. Leadership and management are very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students have information and communication technology lessons from Years 7 to 11 in which to improve their capability and all follow an examination course in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is very good and teachers frequently work in pairs to enhance the learning of specific groups.
- Leadership and management are very good; the department works very effectively as a team.
- Students are well informed about their progress and data is used effectively to inform planning.
- The good learning resources are used very effectively to raise standards.
- Opportunities for students to use information and communication technology for control are limited.

Commentary

73. The school's specialist status is having a positive impact upon student achievement and standards have improved significantly in the last two years. Although results in the 2004 GNVQ foundation and intermediate examination courses were well below

average, this represented good achievement for the students. Results in the short course GCSE in 2004 were below average but candidates' achievement was good. In the full GCSE course, which was taken by a small number of higher-attaining students, results were above average and achievement was very good. The range of examination courses has been appropriately reviewed and refined to make the curriculum more suitable.

74. Standards on entry and in the early stages of Year 7 are well below average. Standards seen during the inspection, in lessons and samples of work, are improving well and are just below average overall by the second half of Year 9. A small but increasing proportion of students are now reaching good standards by this stage. By Year 11, standards are now broadly average. The number demonstrating good and very good skills and knowledge is increasing quickly.
75. Achievement in all years is very good because of very good teaching. The department works very effectively as a team of specialists. This results in very well planned courses and individual lessons. There is great attention to detail and to ensuring that resources, both computer and paper based, provide appropriate challenge. Departmental resources also provide good support and guidance for the whole range of abilities in each teaching group. Internet based learning resources, which the school makes available for use both inside and outside school, are used to good effect, and the frequency of use is well monitored. The department is able to operate a timetable which provides additional staff support in many lessons. This improves teachers' ability to ensure that individuals and small groups of both lower and higher-attaining students can receive specific support to match their needs. Very good support was seen for recently arrived non-English speakers in one lesson. This considerably enhanced their learning. Interactive whiteboards are used to very good effect by teachers and increasingly by students, enabling them to make a greater contribution to during lessons. Teachers are careful to ensure that students know the requirements of their respective examination courses. Marking is thorough and contains detailed and informative comments where appropriate. Assessment is very good particularly in examination courses and students know what they need to do to improve.
76. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good and the school has the capacity to improve further. Development planning is very good. There have been many well-judged changes and refinements to the curriculum from Year 7 to 11. Lessons in Years 7 to 9 are based upon the national strategy to ensure requirements are met, although opportunities to use new technology for control are limited. The range of examination courses ensures that all abilities are catered for. The number of computers is higher than average for a school of this size, and the high number of interactive whiteboards are used well to enhance the growing information and communication technology curriculum. The department is developing a range of community links as part of its commitment as a specialist computing college. It works closely with a local primary school and is planning vocational training courses for adults.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

77. The use of information and communication technology in other subjects is good overall and continues to improve as resources and students' skills increase. Standards in the use of information and communication technology in the curriculum are below average by Year 9 and average by Year 11. Students' develop their skills

through the timetabled information and communication technology lessons in all years. The number of computers is above average and the installation of a significant number of interactive white boards throughout the school is having a very good impact on the effective use of new technology for teaching and learning. Teachers in many subjects are using them well and students are becoming more involved in their use as teachers become more comfortable with the technology. Students usually respond with confidence when asked to contribute to a lesson by using the interactive board. Students have good access to computers outside lesson times enabling all students to use information and communication technology for homework and examination coursework in all subjects. The use of new technology to enhance teaching and learning is very good in mathematics and physical education. It is good in English, media studies, science and religious education and by members of staff supporting students learning English as an additional language. New technology use is satisfactory in the remainder of subjects with the exception of design and technology where use is unsatisfactory. Improvement in the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum has been very good since the last inspection.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching engages students' enthusiasm and leads to good achievement.
- Provision for the full range of students is very good, so that all have access to the curriculum whatever their level of attainment or first language.
- Leadership and management are well informed and innovative.
- Use of new technology for both teaching and learning is excellent.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 have insufficient experience of fieldwork and other investigations, which affects their overall success rate at GCSE.

Commentary

78. In 2004 GCSE results were below the national average for grades A* to C, in line with the average for grades A* to G and in line with the results for other subjects in the school. Standards seen during the inspection were in line with expectations for Years 10 and 11, showing an improvement by the current cohort of students. These students have achieved well, improving on their standards at the end of Year 9. Although the best students can recall information and present explanations for phenomena to a high standard, there are weaknesses in their ability to produce coursework based on their own investigations because they do not have enough experience in Years 7 to 9 of fieldwork and other investigation exercises.
79. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well below average. The work of current students in Years 7 to 9 is below average overall but shows a marked improvement from Year 7 to Year 9. This represents good achievement considering that these students had very low standards of geographical skills and knowledge when they came into the school. Because of the high quality emphasis on reading and vocabulary in every lesson, students' literacy skills develop particularly well so that by

Year 9 the majority can write extended descriptions and explanations to standards that are approaching average.

80. This good achievement is due to the very good standards of teaching in the department. Teachers ensure that every student is in a position to understand the lesson, which leads to them all being well motivated and appreciating the opportunity to succeed. Lessons are planned in short, well focused tasks that engage a range of differing learning styles. Students with special educational needs are always known to the teachers who provide discreet support according to need, working productively with teaching assistants when they are present. Students whose first language is not English benefit from the consistent practice of every lesson starter being a vocabulary exercise or game, defining the key terms to be used in the lesson. Teaching partnerships, having two teachers in the classroom at the same time, are very successful because they enable every student to enjoy twice as much teacher attention as normal, which increases the achievement of all groups of students.
81. New technology is extremely effectively used to advance learning, both in the presentation of lessons and the use of websites for research. In one very effective Year 7 lesson, students were being taught to use spreadsheets to represent the findings of surveys they had carried out. Assessment of learning in the lessons is very good, although on occasions the teacher ran short of time to assess learning by questioning in review sessions. Regular extended assessment tasks enable students' progress to be tracked and lead to regular reviews of teaching and learning styles. Although the majority of students were well behaved and positive through all the lessons seen, there were two occasions when the pace of lessons was slowed by unco-operative behaviour by a few, which interfered with the learning of the majority.
82. The subject co-ordinator is committed to raising standards. Leadership is very good, with a constant drive for improvement. The very good management of a number of teachers is leading to a very good consistency of teaching. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good; new teaching and learning styles have been adopted, literacy and vocabulary are constantly emphasised, new technology use has been expanded, and assessment data is well used for tracking progress and for planning further learning.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen in recent years and are broadly average.
- Students achieve very well because teachers focus on helping them to improve their literacy skills and making tasks challenging but achievable.
- Students enjoy their lessons and are prepared to put in a great deal of effort.
- This is a very well led department with a clear focus on what needs doing.
- There is scope to provide more strategies to improve students' skills in extracting key information from sources of historical evidence.

Commentary

83. When students enter the school, standards are low. Standards are average by the end of Year 9, representing very good achievement for all groups of students,

including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Results in GCSE examinations were above average in 2004 when a particularly able cohort of students opted for the subject. By the end of Year 11, students currently opting to take history at GCSE achieve broadly average standards, representing very good achievement given prior attainment. This applies to students throughout the ability range and also to ethnic minority students.

84. Teaching and learning are very good overall. A particular strength is the focus on helping students to develop and improve their literacy skills. The impact of this is evident even after just over a term's work in Year 7 in the writing that the students are doing on what makes a good Black Death story. Another strength is the way in which teachers have established clear behavioural and work-related expectations. As a result, students work hard, behave well and show pride in their achievements. The pace of learning is always brisk; and clear teaching and learning objectives are effectively met. Lessons begin and end well, so that students are always clear about what is expected of them and why. As a consequence, students make rapid gains in their understanding and develop enthusiasm for the subject. The teaching of source analysis has improved since the previous inspection, although there is still scope to spend more time on ensuring that students extract as much information as possible from pieces of historical evidence. Teachers are very enthusiastic and make sure that tasks are challenging but achievable.
85. Leadership and management are very good. The teacher in charge has a very clear vision for the department and has very clear strategies to achieve his aims. Teachers work very well together, sharing both good practice and concerns. The day-to-day running of the department is very efficient with clear procedures and expectations. Teachers are beginning to make good use of the new interactive white boards. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A consistent high level of teaching is enabling students to achieve very well.
- The very good relationships within lessons provide a very good learning environment.
- Very good leadership and management give a secure and consistent framework for the subject.
- Marking does not always give students focused guidance on what specifically needs to be improved and how to improve it.

Commentary

86. Students join the school with poor literacy levels. Their knowledge, skills and understanding of religious topics are variable and poor overall. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good and, by the end of Year 9, students' attainment is in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. The students have a secure knowledge of aspects of Christianity and a number of world religions and apply their knowledge giving reasons for their answers. In Years 10 and 11 a small number of students take the full GCSE course. Their results in 2004 were broadly in line with the national average and these students did better in religious education than in their other

subjects. The rest of the students take the short course and in 2004 results were above the national average. Current standards of Year 11 students are in line with the national average. Students are maintaining and building on the achievement levels of earlier years and so achievement is very good. The analysis of these results shows that all groups of students are achieving at a similar rate.

87. Very good teaching and learning are enabling the very good achievement of all groups of students and is leading to these improving standards. There is a consistency of approach to lessons with very good starter activities that develop the literacy skills of the students and stimulate thinking. Students are well challenged; members of staff know the students well. They provide very good support to students learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs; tasks set are suitable to the varying ability levels of the students. This enables their achievement to be comparable to others in their classes. The diverse ethnic backgrounds of the students add to the lessons, with students sharing from their own experiences and personal knowledge of different faiths. Students have a desire to learn about each other's beliefs and show respect in all situations. The very good attitudes to religious education combined with the very good relationships between teachers and students allow a positive learning environment. The students respond well to the firm management of any behaviour that is less focused on the work and respect is shown to students who contribute ideas and views. Students are asked to apply their knowledge and give reasons for their answers. Relatively weaker aspects of teaching that affect learning are seen in the marking of the students' books when the constructive comments are rather general so students are not always clear about what is specifically needed to raise their attainment level. In some cases there is lack of sufficient variety of activities to add vitality to the lessons.
88. The leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear vision for improvement with very good evaluation and understanding of the department. The subject is well-monitored and new staff very well supported to ensure a consistency of teaching. The members of staff are very good role models for others. Since the last inspection the school has dealt successfully with the need to provide religious education for all students, teaching and learning have improved leading to a rise in standards and the students' knowledge of Christianity is stronger. This represents very good improvement.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is now very good in Years 10 and 11 but has been lower in the past as shown by recent examination results and the current standards of older students.
- Teachers planning and classroom organisation is very good and generates a very positive response from the students.
- The time total allocation for technology is low in Years 7 to 9 when compared nationally and there are not sufficient suitably qualified teachers to cover all aspects of the subject.

Commentary

89. Students enter the school with very varied backgrounds in technological experience and low attainment in the core subjects. Attainment at the end of Year 9 has been very low until 2004 when teacher assessment results show that they have improved to below average. This represents a good achievement. These results also show that girls did better than boys. Overall GCSE results for 2004 were well below average for resistant materials and electronics. Results for food technology were below average. However, these results are near the average for other subjects in the same school. These results represented satisfactory progress for the students while in Years 10 and 11. However, standards are now rising and achievement is very good for the current Year 10 and 11 students. This means that standards are now below average by Year 11.
90. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. Students make good progress during the initial three years when their previous knowledge is taken into account, but their work shows insufficient use of graphic drawing and information and communication technology. The development of practical skills and an understanding of the complete design process also need more emphasis. Consequently, standards are below average by Year 9.
91. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 with some of it being excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Lessons are very well planned and are clearly presented in at least three parts. Skill in the use of the interactive whiteboards is developing. The teachers provide good knowledge in resistant materials, food and electronics but there are too few opportunities provided to develop presentation and graphical skills. The rapport between teachers and students is very good in both subject areas contributing to an effective learning environment. There are a large number of students with a variety of special educational needs. Teachers provide adapted materials for them, but there is insufficient support for developing reading, writing, numeracy and language acquisition for many of the students. Pace was seen to be excellent in a Year 11 lesson when an additional teacher was present. Both were able to contribute to learning thus providing a wealth of valuable knowledge about manufacturing techniques in the plastics industry. Teachers use many opportunities to develop the students understanding of conservation, recycling and the variety of multicultural lifestyles.
92. The assessment process is well structured and provides National Curriculum levels for each student at the end of each unit of work. Comprehensive data is provided by the department and analysed by senior management. This provides teachers with comparisons, progress information and possibilities for curriculum modification. Further opportunities for formative rather than final assessments are usefully being included in some lessons.
93. The management of the department is good. The curriculum leader has a strong sense of purpose and has developed comprehensive documentation which includes detailed schemes of work. He provides positive support for other teachers and is well respected. This is a considerable improvement to the situation at the time of the last inspection. The number of staff is insufficient to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum can be covered in Years 7 to 9, but a wide range of activities has been included in the relatively short curriculum time. There is a particularly effective liaison between the curriculum leader and the senior management team. Easier access to

computers would encourage students to use more information and communication technology in the production of coursework.

94. The below average curriculum time in Years 7 to 9 makes it difficult to provide a broad and balanced range of technological activities; however, the combined art and textiles course provides valuable additional experiences that support the students' development of technology skills. Computer-aided manufacture has been difficult to deliver in Years 7 to 9. Various extra-curricular activities are provided to extend the range and depth of activities for some students. Although standards are still below average, the improved teaching, organisation of the department and the positive achievements during Years 7 to 9 are a good improvement since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

95. Art and design and music were inspected in detail. Lessons were also observed in drama and media studies.
96. **Drama** is taught to all students in Years 7 to 9 and is a very popular and successful GCSE option choice in Years 10 and 11. In 2004, the 46 students who took drama in GCSE achieved excellent results, with an A*-C pass rate well above the national figure, and an overall pass rate of 100 per cent. Students also achieved well at the highest levels, with A* and A grades exceeding the national average. No other subject available to all students did as well as this, an achievement particularly commendable since drama requires confidence and skill in the use of language. Three drama lessons were observed during the inspection week and these good standards were evident in the work seen and in the high quality of the teaching. Students keenly enjoy their drama work and respond very well to the disciplines and opportunities of the drama studio. With its clubs, productions and theatre visits, the subject is playing a significant part in the cultural and social development of the school.
97. This year the school has introduced a new GCSE subject, **media studies**, currently taught in Year 10 by the curriculum leader of English. Take-up is good, and work was going well in the lesson observed, students showing both interest and aptitude. As the subject develops, the dedicated space now being planned for it should help support student achievement and learning.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make very good progress from a low base in Year 7 to above average levels in Years 10 and 11 through good teaching and learning.
- The art and design curriculum is very good and the department makes very good use of accommodation and resources.
- Teaching is well planned, well organised and students respond very well.
- The department is very well managed and a good team ethos is developing.

Commentary

98. Students start in Year 7 from a low base of attainment. The department use a good screening mechanism to establish their standards on entry. Students' overall progress through Years 7 to 9 is very good and they achieve very well. As a result they reach average standards by Year 9. GCSE results in 2004 were below the national average. However, in the art and design options in Years 10 and 11, they continue to make good progress and achieve well. Hence in some groups standards are at and above national levels.
99. The standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are at average levels. Overall drawing and painting are good and mixed-media, collage, and textiles work are very good. The standard of ceramics is satisfactory and there are some good pieces of work through information and communication technology. The students sometimes use the Internet well for research and some students use other software quite well but overall the use of new technology is not well developed. Students' knowledge of the work of artists such as Braque, Picasso, O'Keeffe, Gaudi and others contemporary artists is good. Students use styles of artist very well in their work. The standards of work of boys and girls are about equal. Students with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make similar progress as others in their classes. Literacy standards are well developed in the department in both writing and reading. The use of numeracy is satisfactory.
100. The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 is often above average. The numbers of students choosing to take one of the three options is good. Standards of drawing and composition in art graphics are often good. Students can use computer software well and their course work and sketchbooks are good. In art and design, standards are often well above average. Sketchbook work is very good, making good use of starting points. Photography is well used and students explore images, objects and artefacts very well. Their finished work is imaginative and well presented. Some of the work in art textiles is excellent. The development of mixed-media work is usually very good and sometimes excellent. Printing is well done and the best students develop and finish their work very well. They display their finished pieces well around the room and this motivates others and leads to better work.
101. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Where it is good teachers display very good knowledge and teach the subject with passion. Lessons are always planned well and taught with pace, encouraging all students to succeed. Expectations are high and teaching methods are good. However, there is scope to improve the extent to which new technology is consistently used to support teaching and learning. There is a good level of student behaviour and they apply themselves well and develop good independent learning. Their acquisition of skills and knowledge is good. Teachers use assessment data well and rooms have excellent visual displays of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grade descriptors on walls for students to use. Feedback in lessons on coursework is very good and students are all aware of what they need to do to improve.
102. The joint leadership and management of this curriculum area are very good and have led to very good improvement since the last inspection. The planning of the curriculum includes a good range of visits and multicultural themes. There is a good sense of vision and purpose in the department; members of staff have high aspirations. More work is needed to ensure that the very high standards of teaching in some areas of the department are replicated throughout. Both curriculum leaders demonstrate good role models for other staff and students. They analyse data very well and undertake good self-evaluations. They create development plans, which are

thorough, ambitious and realistic. They know how to build on the strengths of the department and what needs to be done to tackle the weaknesses.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Music lessons are characterised by good teaching and active learning.
- The department is very well led, and there is a creative and positive climate for learning.
- Although much care is taken to promote inclusive activities, there is too much emphasis on the western classical tradition in the scheme of work.

Commentary

103. The results of teacher assessments in music for Year 9 students are currently lower than the national average, but students' achievement is good overall in Years 7 to 9. Standards are rising and are now average in Year 9. GCSE results have remained significantly lower than the national average in recent years, but are in line with students' grades in other subjects, and participation and interest in the subject is increasing. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and standards are below average.
104. Many students, including those learning English as an additional language, have a natural feel for the practical aspects of music: they explore rhythmic and melodic ideas, often linking the expressive dimensions of music to visual stimuli. All students have opportunities to express musical ideas, either in group improvisations in Years 7 to 9, or by using composing software in Years 10 and 11. During the observation some students, who had recently joined the school from abroad, were actively involved in developing their own Blues pieces. Students with special educational needs, learning English as an additional language or with particular musical talent were engaged actively and on equal terms, enjoying making recordings of their work and performing to others at the end of lessons.
105. A significant number of students experience difficulties in understanding theoretical aspects of music, especially if they are less familiar with the English language, even though clear explanations are given in lessons. Students in Years 10 and 11 struggle to retain and recall historical information about musical contexts. Although instrumental tuition is offered at the school, some GCSE students do not have lessons. These factors impede their progress and contribute to the relatively low examination results.
106. Teaching and learning are good overall with some very good features in all years. The teaching is supportive, well paced and marked by excellent organisational strategies. Students are encouraged to celebrate their achievements in playing and performing and their work is recorded and photographed regularly as part of good assessment procedures. Interactive whiteboards are utilised fluently in order to reinforce musical examples, keywords, notations and processes. Students take responsibility for learning, but also work co-operatively with others in small groups. The classroom environment is conducive to relaxed learning. Students respond

positively and enjoy their lessons, sustaining their concentration and motivation for most of the time. Some of the lessons focus on topics that are less familiar to the students: consequently they have difficulty in getting to grips with aspects of style. There is scope for the scheme of work to build more on students' own cultural backgrounds and less on the western classical tradition in order to strengthen the relevance of some activities undertaken.

107. The department is very well led and managed. The creative and positive climate for making music in the school is generated by the enthusiasm and expertise of the teacher, who has vision, energy and excellent management skills. The environment is well ordered and supported by positive systems that suit the teacher and motivate the students. The teacher also organises extra-curricular activities, including jazz and pop choirs, the school musical and instrumental teaching. The ethos of the department is characterised by inclusion and celebration of achievement that contributes significantly to the school's aims. Music is well regarded, but the subject works in comparative isolation. The department is developing effective self-review procedures and takes care to monitor its performance and progress in order to make further improvements.
108. Opportunities for live music, and trips to concerts are provided regularly. Achievement and multicultural evenings are arranged to provide a stimulating platform for students to perform. The department is in the process of acquiring sufficient computers to introduce music technology in Years 7 to 9 and is expanding instrumental tuition. However, there is a need for sustained development in both these areas. It has made good progress in addressing issues raised in the last inspection, but further work is needed to improve examination results.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very well prepared and structured lessons enthusiastically taught are promoting very good achievement from students of all abilities.
- The high expectations and clear vision for developing the subject area are shared by all teachers.
- The school's excellent sports facilities provide a very good learning environment but there is no dedicated physical education classroom for theory lessons.
- The very good range of extra-curricular activities is enthusiastically taken up.
- There is insufficient curriculum time for core physical education.

Commentary

109. The very good teaching by all teachers has made an impact on attainment and achievement particularly in the GCSE examination. There was a significant improvement in results in 2004, when results were also much higher than in any previous year. Whilst these remained below the national average for all students, the boys' results matched the national average; nonetheless the 2004 results represented very good achievement for both boys and girls. Current students are also achieving very well, having developed well written personal exercise plans, being able to analyse

each other's performance and with a good level of practical performance in a range of sports. Overall standards are average by Year 9 and Year 11. Students enter the school below the level expected nationally but by the end of Year 9 the majority are around the level expected nationally with some students performing better than this. Many talented students have represented the borough in a range of sports and some have won international recognition in athletics. Students with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are well known and catered for by the department. The most able are identified and have access to a range of outside clubs and coaches.

110. There were no lessons judged less than good on the inspection all being characterised by very good planning, authoritative teaching with clear learning outcomes and very good engagement of students in a range of activities. With students' very positive attitudes they make good, often very good progress in lessons. This was evident in two very good netball lessons, a Year 8 lesson developing students' dodging skills and a Year 10 lesson on the more advanced skills applying attacking moves in a game. GCSE students in a very good Year 11 basketball lesson participated with great commitment and responsibility leading the warm-ups and demonstrating a very good range of skills. Written Year 10 theory work is poorly presented and would benefit from a more structured approach. There have been significant improvements in the assessment of students' performance, including the department undertaking an initial assessment of students entering in Year 7, this is now being used to inform lesson and curriculum planning.
111. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. High expectations of performance and participation are set and achieved. There is a clear vision for developing the subject further with clear strategies for raising attainment and achievement and developing the curriculum, for instance in extending the range of accredited courses for students in Years 10 and 11. Whilst the curriculum is broad and is taught using the school's excellent on-site facilities, particularly the very well equipped sports hall, there is insufficient core curriculum to drive attainment and achievement levels higher. However, the curriculum is enhanced by having a very good range of extra-curricular clubs and teams which are enthusiastically taken up by boys and girls. Teaching of GCSE theory is hampered by not having a dedicated subject classroom to provide an appropriate learning environment for these students. The good features identified in the previous report have been maintained and overall improvement is good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

112. No subject was inspected in depth in this curriculum area. However, lessons were observed in business studies and travel and tourism.
113. A lesson of **business studies** was observed in Year 11. Teaching and learning were excellent in this exceptionally well-planned lesson with a very mixed ability examination class. Learning objectives were very clear and the teacher ensured that students understood them. A variety of individual, group and whole-class practical activities were very successful in helping students to understand the concept of break-even analysis. This was supported with excellent use of a spreadsheet on the interactive whiteboard. The activity was skilfully linked to a recent examination question and an excellent final session reviewed learning objectives and students understanding. Students were also very well supported by a specialist in information and communication technology; several students with specific learning difficulties had

additional specialist support, ensuring that all students' needs were met. Within the wide range of ability standards were average overall, which represented excellent achievement for the class as a whole.

114. One Year 10 lesson of **travel and tourism** was sampled. The teaching was very good with a high standard of planning and use of interesting resources. Students were fully engaged in a series of tasks studying the components of a successful ski resort. They were putting themselves in the places of a range of different age groups of tourists, from teenagers to pensioners, and writing postcards home explaining what it was that appealed to them in particular about the resort. Students were extremely well motivated which led to them achieving very well. This is a popular subject, linking GCSE with practical experience in the hotel and catering industry. GCSE results in the subject were above the national average in 2004, showing steady improvement over the past five years.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

115. Provision for students' **personal, social and health education** clearly reflects the ethos and values of the school. Personal, social and health is seen as an important tool for enabling students to develop the appropriate skills, attitudes and values concerned with their personal development. A team of experienced teachers is very effectively led and managed. They teach a very carefully planned and comprehensive programme. Teachers deal very well with sensitive issues. Because of this provision, students are well informed and knowledgeable about a range of topics such as personal safety and being a good parent; they are very well prepared to deal with key aspects of everyday life. Teaching is enthusiastic and challenging with high expectations of students. All students are treated with respect. The very good relationships between teachers and students create a very good climate for learning. Both teachers and students express very positive opinions about this aspect of personal development. Schemes of work and other documentation are thorough, supportive and non-bureaucratic. The curriculum leader has a very clear view of what is needed to develop this aspect of personal development further.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has fully implemented the requirements for National Curriculum citizenship.
- Teaching is very good. Students enjoy their lessons and are prepared to work hard.
- The citizenship team is hard working and committed to raising standards in the subject.
- It would be useful if teachers could observe each other's lessons in order to share good practice more systematically.

Commentary

116. The school has a timetabled subject that covers personal, social and health education as well as National Curriculum citizenship. This is taught to all students. Some

aspects of citizenship are also taught via other subjects of the curriculum and through special one-off events or extra-curricular activities.

117. Standards of work in citizenship are in line with the national average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Students are becoming informed and responsible citizens with the knowledge and skills to play an effective role in society. Students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve very well in the context of their prior attainment. They are learning to understand their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society. Students consider difficult and challenging moral and ethical issues. They learn to appreciate opinions and cultures that differ from their own – this aspect of their personal development is particularly well-developed.
118. Teachers are enthusiastic, and make use of relevant examples to illustrate what they are saying. There is some very good display in the dedicated classroom that provides students with a very positive learning environment. Teachers work very hard at behaviour management and some excellent practice in this area was seen during the week of the inspection. The very good teaching means that students are able to build up their knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a good citizen in today's society. Students show considerable interest in what they are doing and are prepared to work hard and take an active part in their learning. There is scope for teachers to observe each other's lessons in order to share good practice more systematically.
119. Management and leadership are both very good. The citizenship curriculum is effective and has been very carefully designed to meet the needs of the students. The co-ordinator has a very clear vision of what needs to be done and significant progress has been made with the introduction of this new subject, including the assessment of students' work at the end of Year 9. A pilot GCSE group has recently started and just over 20 students are studying for the short course during their lunch time and after school. The school shows a very clear commitment towards the 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 | 1 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 2 |
| How well the curriculum meets students needs | 3 |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities | 2 |
| Accommodation and resources | 3 |
| Students' care, welfare, health and safety | 2 |
| Support, advice and guidance for students | 1 |
| How well the school seeks and acts on students' views | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents | 3 |
| 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 | 4 |
| 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).