

INSPECTION REPORT

PLASHET SCHOOL

East Ham, London

LEA area: Newham

Unique reference number: 102782

Headteacher: Mrs B Nasir

Lead inspector: Brian Oppenheim

Dates of inspection: 7-10 March 2005

Inspection number: 268435

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll:	1333
School address:	Plashet Grove East Ham London
Postcode:	E6 1DG
Telephone number:	020 8471 2418
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Dona Henriques
Date of previous inspection:	1 February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Plashet School is an 11 – 16 community comprehensive school for girls. The school is larger than other secondary schools with 1333 pupils compared with the average size nationally of 1025 pupils. The school is a Leading Edge school, and is involved in the Excellence in Cities and Leadership Incentive Grant initiatives. Through these the school is involved with four local schools. It is also an ITT provider through links with the Institute of Education and other institutions. The school is also involved in a range of other national and local initiatives.

Just over 14 per cent of pupils were identified with special educational needs in 2004, including statements, which is broadly in line with the average and the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs (1.6 per cent) is below average. The school includes a unit for visually impaired pupils, managed through the LEA. Fifty one per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is well above the national average.

Pupils represent a very wide range of backgrounds and heritages with the largest proportion coming from a range of Asian backgrounds. The proportion of pupils' mother tongues believed not to be English is 92.6 per cent which is very high. Three hundred and ninety one pupils are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Urdu, Bengali and Gujarati are the main languages spoken by these pupils. There are 111 refugees and asylum seekers. Fifty one pupils left and fifty four joined mid-way through the year which is quite high when compared with national data.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9502	Rosalind Hall	Lay inspector	
12603	Tusha Chakraborti	Team inspector	English
31238	Gordon Clubb	Team inspector	Mathematics
33630	Alison Thompson	Team inspector	Science
31688	Brian McGonagle	Team inspector	Art and design
2735	Paul Burton	Team inspector	Design and technology
23430	Jenny Bax	Team inspector	Geography
2712	Derek Hawley	Team inspector	History
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19613	Sue Thomas-Pounce	Team inspector	Music Citizenship
1880	Garry Bignell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31163	Alison Brock	Team inspector	Physical education
19005	Anita Compton	Team inspector	Religious education
15303	Mike Smith	Team inspector	Special educational needs
8696	Abul Maula	Team inspector	Urdu, Bengali
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2652	Robin Lomas	Team inspector	Special educational needs (VI Unit)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Plasnet Girls' School is **very effective** and has outstanding qualities. Students are set demanding targets and achieve high standards. Very effective teaching means that students make excellent progress with their learning. The school meets the needs of all students very successfully regardless of their need or background. As a result all students get the most out of the high quality education provided by the school. Their academic and personal achievements are very strong indeed. The headteacher's excellent leadership and the very good and dedicated support from senior staff ensure that high aspirations and equality guide the school's work. Very effective partnerships with other schools help to improve and sustain high standards in all that it does. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well and build very successfully on their work in primary school to reach high standards in their GCSE examinations.
- The provision for special needs, for students' personal development, for those who speak English as an additional language and for gifted and talented students is very strong.
- Students are taught very well and make excellent progress with their learning. Occasionally the pace of learning is a little slow.
- The headteacher's outstanding drive for excellence means that the school's capacity to improve is excellent.
- Leadership and management are very good but the way the school checks the quality of teaching is not as analytical as it could be.
- Data about students' achievements are used very well to analyse the school's performance and check that it is doing as well as it should. Data is used well by many subjects but less so in others.
- The school's ethos is excellent: high aspirations, respect for each student and a belief in their potential all ensure that education is enjoyable and demanding.
- The wide range of out of school activities contributes very well to students' learning and personal development.

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. It has tackled successfully the key points for improvement. Students' achievements are higher and examination and test results are much better. They continue to improve. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly. Substantial improvements have been made to the accommodation including new showers and the remarkable new bridge that joins the two main buildings. There have been important improvements in information and communication technology.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Students' **achievements are very good**. They start at lower than expected levels, make increasingly rapid progress as they move up the school and achieve extremely well. As a result standards are well above average. Only five per cent of similar schools reach such high standards. What makes the results striking is the way these high standards have improved over the past five years. They are now much further ahead of the national results than they were at the last inspection. What is more, the results for Bangladeshi and Pakistani students are also well ahead of the national trend. All this is confirmed by the inspection. One of the significant qualities of the school is the way in which it enables all students to realise their potential. Here, the high standard

of teaching and the effective way this promotes students' learning are critical to the school's success. Targets are sharp and challenging but realistic. Students also do well in their examinations because there is very good support for everyone: those who are learning to speak English, those with special needs and those that have particular talents or gifts all make very good progress.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **excellent**. This is because the school's outstanding ethos is all-embracing: it is ambitious and challenging, and it values and respects everyone. As a result students have excellent attitudes to learning and are very keen to come to school. Relationships and behaviour are also excellent allowing students to learn and enjoy.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. One of the main reasons for this is that teaching and learning are **very effective**. There are examples of very good teaching right across the school but it is particularly strong in English, mathematics and science. It is also very good in French, Urdu, art, physical education and design and technology; it is good in history, sociology, religious education, CPSHE and music and often good in information and communication technology. What makes teaching so effective are the school's high aspirations for its students. Teachers expect the most from students, whatever their background. They give them work that stretches their thinking and encourages them to aim high. Lessons are organised very well so that students know what to do and what is expected of them. Relationships between teachers and students are very good as is the support for those with special needs or with English as an additional language. All this explains why students have such good attitudes to their learning. There are a few occasions where teaching does not promote learning quite as effectively. Often this is because the pace is a little slow or because the work is not quite demanding enough.

The curriculum promotes students' learning very effectively. It provides a very wide range of worthwhile subjects and as a result the school meets the needs of its students very well. There is a limited range of work-related courses but this is more than compensated for by the very good work-experience programme, excellent careers advice and good citizenship programme. They provide good opportunities that prepare students for the next stage of their education. The range of additional activities is outstanding. This is another reason why students' academic and personal achievements are so good. Students' health, safety and welfare are looked after very well. The school is very good at listening to students and using their ideas. All this helps to create the strong ethos and contributes very well to students' achievements.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The headteacher's excellent leadership and her very clear vision are central to the school's very strong climate for learning. Learning and achievement are at the heart of the school and of its leadership. The strong and expert support from other senior staff and many middle leaders contribute well to the very good leadership. Effective teamwork adds significantly to students' achievements. The school's status as a Leading Edge School is used very successfully to work in partnership with other schools. The management of the school's day-to-day life is also very effective. Governance is good and governors are not shy of challenging the school's performance.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students are rightly proud of the school and believe that it provides a good quality of education. Parents have some concerns about behaviour and the information they get about students' progress but inspectors found these to be very good. Students are most worried about behaviour and bullying; again, inspectors found that behaviour was very good and that bullying was rare.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Use data more consistently to set challenging targets and track progress in all subjects in order to promote students' progress;
- Ensure that teaching and learning are monitored methodically and evaluated to improve the small amount of satisfactory teaching.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students achieve very well and reach high standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make excellent progress and achieve very well.
- GCSE results are well above the national average: nearly three-quarters of students gain five good GCSE passes and all gain at least one pass.
- SATs and GCSE results are improving year on year at a faster rate than the national picture.
- The school does very much better than similar schools: its performance is in the top five per cent and standards have improved at a faster pace than they have nationally.
- The standards achieved in English, mathematics and science are very high. They are also very good in art, physical education, design and technology, French and Urdu.
- Standards in some of the humanities subjects are not as good as those in other areas of the curriculum.

Commentary

1. Students achieve very well. Overall, students start Plashet School with standards that are below average but make very rapid progress. By the end of Year 9, standards in the national tests are average: this represents good achievement between Years 7 and Year 9.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.3 (32.9)	33.3 (33.4)
mathematics	34.7 (35.3)	35.5 (35.4)
science	32.4 (34.9)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 263 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The rate of progress increases as students move up the school. As a result, they reach high standards in their GCSE examinations: the 2004 GCSE results are well above average and better than previous years. Two points need emphasising: first, the improvement illustrates convincingly the school's success in raising achievement; secondly, the school has done well to raise students' achievement from an already high point. GCSE results are now much further ahead of the national results than they were at the last inspection.

3. However, if the GCSE results are good they look even better when students' prior attainment is taken into account. Here, the data shows without question that students do extremely well: only five per cent of schools with similar students do as well as Plashet School. Moreover, all students do well regardless of their background or need and the results of Bangladeshi and Pakistani students are, for example, well ahead of the national trend. These are very significant achievements that show very clearly how effectively the school adds value to students' education.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	72 (63)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (92)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	54.7 (51.8)	41.4 (40.6)

There were 263 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. The inspection bears out the data: students achieve very well and reach high standards. The inspection also confirms that this is the case for all students. One of the significant qualities of the school is the way in which it enables all students to realise their potential: those who are learning to speak English, those with special needs and those who have particular talents or gifts all make very good progress. This is because the very good teaching and support promote students' learning very effectively.

5. In English, mathematics, science, French, Urdu, design and technology, art and physical education, students achieve very well to reach standards that are well above average. In nearly all subjects, including religious education, achievement is good and standards above average. While the standards achieved in information and communication technology are good, access to computers in some subjects is limited. As a result, the opportunity for students to use and apply their skills is not as strong as it could be although it is good overall. In geography, standards are average but overall students' achievements are good.

6. Students with special educational needs make very good progress in their learning, in line with their classmates. This is because of the very good support they receive in class and the additional intervention strategies employed by the special needs department.

7. There is a very wide range of students with special educational needs, including those with severe learning difficulties, visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech and language difficulties and those with specific learning difficulties. In 2004 all nineteen students gained at least two certificates. Seventeen of the nineteen students gained GCSE passes and many also gained other certificates. As in previous years, some students returned after examinations to follow literacy and numeracy courses which concentrate on increasing basic literacy and numeracy skills. Three students gained numeracy certificates and four received literacy awards

8. Ninety-five per cent of students at Plashet speak English as an additional language (EAL), though only 44 are classed as early-stage learners. Whilst the number in each year group varies, there are now more girls who are fully fluent by the time they take their GCSEs than in previous years. This is a direct result of the very good provision made for them. During their time at the school, they make very good progress and this gives them good access to other subjects. In the GCSE examinations of 2004, EAL students, including those who were not fully fluent in English, gained a total of 1482 higher grade passes. This compares well with the achievements of the small minority of girls who are native speakers of English.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students have excellent attitudes to learning. They are very keen to come to school where they feel secure and confident. The majority have successfully established very good working relationships with their teachers and with one another. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students display excellent attitudes to learning and to the range of activities offered by the school.
- Students have high self-esteem which is actively promoted by the school.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good and as a result students feel secure and confident.
- The school sets very high expectations for student behaviour which is excellent.
- There are very few instances of bullying or racism and any that do occur are dealt with promptly and effectively by the school.

Commentary

9. Attitudes toward learning are excellent and the headteacher and staff in the school have been highly successful in creating an environment in which students are encouraged to work hard to achieve their full potential. The very positive ethos of the school is one in which each individual feels valued, and in which students' self-confidence and self-esteem can grow and flourish. This can be attributed to the fact that students develop group and community skills from their form tutor who remains with the group for five years and academic and personal support from the year co-ordinator and the deputy headteacher, who also remain with the cohort for five years.

10. Relationships are excellent and students make very favourable comments about their teachers. This mutual trust is a major factor in the very high standards achieved by students at the end of Year 9 and in their GCSE public examinations. Students are very highly motivated and work with concentration and perseverance to achieve the goals that have been set by their teachers. The majority show that they have acquired the capacity for working with a high degree of independence and are willing to be enterprising and take responsibility for their actions. Behaviour around the school is disciplined and any instances of bullying or racism are dealt with promptly by the school managers. Behaviour in lessons is excellent and teachers engage students in lively discussion and debate. Their opinions and views are actively sought in most lessons and teachers take their ideas, concepts, values, attitudes and beliefs very seriously.

11. In most subjects students are very attentive and keen to learn. They are prepared to take on responsibilities and work collaboratively in small groups where they are supportive of one another and helpful to those who are struggling to learn. In English, maths and science for example, students are highly motivated to succeed and persevere to achieve high standards in their work. The vast majority display very good listening skills and respond positively to tasks that have been set by their teachers. They work effectively in pairs and in small groups. They respect one another's views and support one another very well. In art, students display the capacity for working independently and for sustaining concentration over long periods of time. They are very articulate and capable of discussing complex concepts and ideas.

12. The Staff Handbook has a very clear statement of Aims, which makes clear the importance that is placed on the contribution that each individual is expected to make to the life of the school. It contains a very informative section on Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions, which emphasises that management of behaviour should be fair and equitable to students from all backgrounds. There is also a very clearly drawn up Code of Conduct, which states emphatically that all members of the school community should show respect for other people regardless of their religion, culture, race, gender or ability.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	18	0	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	9	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	3	1
Mixed – White and Black African	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	8	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	389	4	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	414	11	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	317	5	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	43	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	30	3	0
Black or Black British – African	63	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	6	4	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	18	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

13. The school has very clear guidelines for dealing with poor behaviour, racist incidents, bullying and any forms of harassment. The school has devised a set of procedures for managing behaviour that is fair and equitable to students from all backgrounds. All staff are given helpful support to develop good behaviour management strategies. The very clearly defined code of conduct, which emphasises the need for tolerance and respect, is effective. A good example of the respect that students show for the views and values of others is their choice of assembly: many attend assemblies for religions other than their own. Between 2003 and 2004 only one student was excluded permanently despite the school taking students who have been permanently excluded from other schools. In the first term of this academic year exclusions had fallen quite significantly to only seven, the majority of which were for one day. This fall illustrates clearly the success of the school's behaviour management strategies.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.5	School data	1.0
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.

14. Attendance is very good and has improved since the last inspection. High levels of attendance are having a positive impact on the standards achieved. The school is successful in this area because of the work of the on-site education welfare officer, the attendance officer and the very good communication that takes place between them, the year co-ordinators and the form tutors. Registers are monitored very carefully and students with lower attendance levels are targeted and telephoned each day if they are absent. Daily spot checks are also carried out on all year groups and all absentees are phoned to confirm reasons for absence. Checking of the attendance at individual lessons ensures internal truancy is low. The punctuality of students, both at the start of the school day and to lessons, is good.

15. Overall, the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The Plashet ethos is extremely strong and features in the Leading Edge Strand programme from which other schools will benefit. A talented teacher from the religious education department has been chosen to lead this initiative.

16. Spiritual development is very good, because the school provides ample opportunities for students to explore values and beliefs and express their views. Rich examples are found in RE lessons, in displays of work around the school, the reflective space in the mosaic garden, and in the collective worship led by members of different faith communities. The statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students is, however, not fully met. In assemblies observed, some opportunities were missed to promote spiritual development.

17. Moral development is excellent. In lessons and assemblies observed, staff are quick to commend students for the right decisions and actions they have taken. Students have a highly developed moral conscience and give generously to causes such as Tsunami relief and helping the disabled in the community. In design and technology, students discuss moral actions in relation to recycling and the depletion of the world's resources. Planned opportunities for discussing moral issues feature in many subjects, for example, the Holocaust in history where girls reflect on the meaning of life, death, persecution, the human spirit, good and evil.

18. Social development is exemplary and a major strength of the school. In many lessons seen, girls were happily working together in pairs and small groups, sharing responsibilities and respecting each other's roles. Teachers train students from Year 7 to be buddies and to support their peers in lessons. This provides opportunities for collaborative work, individual support and group activities. A great sense of team spirit and healthy competition is developed in subjects such as PE and drama. Students' social development benefits from the many opportunities provided for acting in the interests of the community, for example, on residential visits and through the school council.

19. Cultural development is excellent. The students themselves provide a rich resource for cultural and intercultural development. Their tremendous capacity to accommodate cultural differences and respect the integrity of individuals is inspirational. Year 9 students work with an organiser of the Newham carnival to produce designs and drawings for costumes which are made by other students and worn at the event. Girls enjoy many educational visits such as those to art galleries, theatres, museums, places of worship and trips to France.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. One of the main reasons for this is that teaching and learning are very effective. The curriculum promotes students' learning very effectively and meets the needs of its students very well. The range of additional activities is outstanding. Students' health, safety and welfare are looked after very well and the school is very good at listening to students' views.

Teaching and learning

The very effective teaching promotes students' learning very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is particularly strong in English, mathematics and science and is very good in French, Urdu, design and technology, art and physical education.
- Teachers expect the most from students and have high aspirations for them.
- Teaching stretches students' thinking and encourages them to aim high.
- Lessons are organised very well: students know what to do and what is expected of them.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Occasionally, the pace of lessons is a little slow or the work is not demanding enough.
- The support for those with special needs, with English as an additional language and gifted and talented is very good.
- All this explains why students have such good attitudes to their learning. There are only a few occasions where teaching does not promote learning quite as effectively.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in [number] lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10 (6%)	67 (42%)	52 (32%)	31 (19%)	1 (0.5%)	0	0

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

20. Teaching is very good overall. This explains why students achieve so well and make such good progress. Very good teaching is evident right across the school in nearly all subjects. Teaching is very good in nearly a half of the 160 lessons seen during the inspection. Teaching is very good in English, mathematics, science, French, Urdu, art, design and technology and physical education. In Bengali, history, ICT, sociology, religious education and music teaching is good. It is satisfactory overall in geography but there are examples of good teaching. This very good teaching is one of the main reasons why students make such rapid progress during their time at the school and achieve so well. This explains why gifted and talented students, those who speak English as an additional language and those with special needs all do so well.

21. One of the characteristics that makes teaching so effective is the way the school's ethos of high aspirations for its students is translated into classroom work. Teachers most often set work that is demanding and challenges students' thinking and understanding. For example, in an excellent drama lesson, the task provided exemplary opportunities for students to develop their performance and evaluative skills and was thus very challenging. Most significantly, teachers have the same high expectations of every student whatever their background. This explains why students achieve so well in their GCSE examinations: teaching encourages students to aim high and always to their best.

22. Another factor is the very effective way lessons are organised. Planning is very thorough so that lessons are structured very carefully to secure students' success. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, exemplary planning ensured that students not only achieved very well but also enjoyed their work. This is a feature that is evident right across the school: students enjoy the demands set by their teachers and rise to the challenge. This also explains why students have such good attitudes to their work.

23. There are very good relationships between teachers and students. This partly stems from the way teachers make their lessons enjoyable and exciting. It is also because teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and the way they organise lessons effectively to promote

progress. The support for students is also very good. Sometimes this is about giving individual support as well as providing clear instructions or making well-timed interventions to keep the pace of learning brisk. As a result students respect their teachers and work hard for them.

24. Occasionally, teaching does not promote learning quite as effectively. There are two reasons for this: first, the pace of lessons is a little slow; second the work is not quite demanding enough. Sometimes, teachers spend too much of the lesson talking so that there are too few opportunities for students to extend their learning. Although work is never undemanding, it sometimes does not stretch students' thinking sufficiently and allows them to be passive learners.

25. Assessment is good. Teachers use the information they have about students' strengths and weaknesses to set them targets to aim for in the future. The school's high aspirations are translated very effectively into challenging targets. There are one or two weaknesses: occasionally, students do not get enough information about what they need to do to improve their work: this is one of the characteristics of those lessons that are satisfactory.

26. All teachers are given comprehensive and useful information, including suggested strategies, on the learning needs of all students who struggle with their learning for whatever reason. Many teachers use this information to ensure their planning and lesson delivery offers appropriate work and challenge. Special educational needs teachers have a wide range of specialist knowledge and know the learning needs of the students very well. This combined with excellent relationships ensures that all lessons provide the students with very good learning opportunities, where very good progress can be assured.

27. Individual student targets are acknowledged, but currently, they are not always used in such a way by all teachers to ensure students are aware of them, or the progress they are making, and students themselves do not monitor and record their own progress.

28. Additional support in lessons by learning support assistants ensures that there is appropriate curriculum access and that learning for these students is in line with and similar to, their classmates. Students appreciate the support they get in lessons as they are very keen to make progress in their learning. The quality of support ranges from excellent to satisfactory and there is a need to develop more strategies to ensure the excellent practice is effectively shared in order to maximise the potential of students' learning and progress fully. There are some classes with students with learning difficulties which do not receive any learning support and this can have a negative impact on their learning.

29. The quality of teaching in the additional special needs lessons by teachers and learning support assistants is generally very good and ensures students make rapid progress in their learning and understanding as well as in their general confidence and self-esteem.

30. Great care is taken to assess the language needs of new entrants to the school accurately. For mid-term admissions, this is done by individual interview with the help of an interpreter where necessary. Staff work with all new Year 7 classes in order to get to know individual students and their language backgrounds. Induction groups are formed where small numbers of early-stage learners of English are helped to express themselves using pictures, maps and ICT. In these sessions, students often receive individual support. The use of writing frames and teaching techniques, which include visual prompts, gestures and verbal clues, enables students to make connections between written and spoken English. In classes where EAL teachers work in partnership alongside subject specialists, students are able to take a full part in lessons and to achieve in line with their English-speaking peers. Very good practice was observed in several subjects including religious education and Urdu.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good and the range of additional activities is outstanding. The accommodation is good overall. It has been improved significantly but some difficulties remain.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is very good and meets the needs of all students very well.
- A very broad range of subjects is provided for all students and they make very good progress and achieve high standards as a result.
- The excellent range of activities and additional opportunities for learning outside school hours has a positive impact on pupils' personal development and achievement.
- A very good range of community languages adds very effectively to the breadth of the curriculum.
- The accommodation is good and has been improved well but some difficulties remain.

Commentary

31. The school very successfully includes all students in access to the curriculum and in academic success. As a result it meets the needs of all its students most effectively and its arrangements ensure that everyone is able to follow a set of subjects that enable them to fulfil their ambitions and aspirations. Care is taken to ensure that no student or parent/carer feels that a curriculum programme compromises their religious or cultural beliefs. For example, special arrangements are made for all-female swimming sessions and there is a religious assembly programme led by members of the local community.

32. The range of languages from which pupils can choose adds very effectively to the breadth of the curriculum. Schemes of work in both key stages promote the cultural diversity of the school offering Urdu and Bengali from Year 7; entering students for GCSEs and A-level in mother tongue languages. Students are grouped by ability in French, in Years 10 and 11, and in mathematics throughout the school. This enables the school to vary the size of classes: higher attaining groups being larger than lower attaining groups, which enables teachers to meet students' needs better.

33. To provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum within a stimulating environment, is central to the school's work. On account of this, the school plans to implement changes to the 14-19 curriculum to meet the needs of students; the successful GNVQ ICT course being an example of this.

34. The curriculum is planned well to ensure smooth transition from primary to secondary school. However, the school takes pupils from a large number of primary schools each with a different way of organising their curriculum. This makes it somewhat difficult for some of the non-core subjects to build on what has been learnt at primary school but as the high standards show, teachers tackle this successfully.

35. An excellent careers advice programme prepares students well for their transition into post-16 work or education. This is supported by the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. The broad range of courses, including information and communication technology for all, means that students have a good range of skills and experiences with which to tackle more advanced courses or work after they leave Plashet. The school is very successful in giving its students a love of learning: most move to local sixth form colleges or sixth forms because they have high aspirations.

36. Senior staff monitor and review the curriculum well. As a result they have a good grasp of the impact of the curriculum on teaching and learning and are well aware of the quality of education. One of the outcomes of this is that modifications are made to the curriculum on the basis of good information: where necessary, changes are made although the school is right to judge that current arrangements meet students' needs most effectively: standards are high and achievement very good.

37. The programme for citizenship, personal, social and health education is planned and taught well. It provides a broad range of experiences and provides students with the skills and understanding about topics such as sex education, citizenship, drugs and alcohol awareness, and relationships. This is one of the reasons why students' personal development is so good.

38. There is an excellent range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities during lunchtime, after school and on Saturdays. This has enabled the school to extend the curriculum by running twilight classes, booster classes and a wide variety of clubs and other activities. The majority of students use the school's facilities outside normal school hours. A strength of the school is staff and student commitment to out of hours learning.

39. The school also offers a GCSE holiday revision programme to Year 10 and Year 11 students in a wide range of subjects. The library and resource centre open regularly on Saturday for older students for research and quiet study. The extent to which the school's curriculum goes beyond the usual lessons is excellent and all activities are open to every pupil. As a result the school caters well for gifted and talented pupils: they are encouraged to follow their interests and develop their expertise in a wide range of activities.

40. There is a good range of visits that support the students' learning well. There is very good careers education and the school was awarded a 'quality mark'. The work experience programme gives students in Years 10 and 11 the opportunity to learn about the World of Work, mainly in their local community. It also enables them to develop their confidence and self-esteem: for example, the sports leaders programme where students lead sessions for primary school pupils. There was also a visit to the House of Lords in 2003 where students took part in a debate on faith schools. The sports and dance clubs during lunchtimes and after school provide excellent opportunities for all students regardless of ability. Students who attend regularly are included in teams and play in inter-school matches. There is active promotion of community-led sports opportunities and trips to special events, for example, a three-day visit to the Commonwealth Games in 2003; students regularly represent Plashet in volleyball, cricket and netball.

41. Overall the accommodation is good but there are some difficulties. The use and range of outdoor play areas, parking facilities, upgrading of storage provision, refurbishment of a few classrooms and replacement of some window frames all remain areas for improvement. However, the school and the LEA have made significant progress since the last inspection to address the majority of health and safety issues. This has included the installation of a bridge with a unique architectural feature to join the two main buildings together, which means that students do not have to cross a main road. Further major refurbishment work is planned for the school as part of Building Schools for the Future for which the school is in wave one within the national programme. The school has worked extremely hard to ensure that it is as attractive as possible; an important aspect of its ethos. Students' work forms an integral part in creating two and three dimensional features and displays in classrooms, around the school corridors and in public areas which celebrate their achievement. Staffing is very good and all teachers are well qualified and experienced to teach their subjects and deliver the planned curriculum.

42. Students requiring learning support have access to the full curriculum where appropriate. The access is supported and enhanced by learning support assistants who are deployed appropriately across the curriculum. This enables students to regain and retain their learning confidence and to work effectively alongside their classmates. Students with behaviour and/or social needs are managed sensitively, have appropriate targets and are carefully monitored to demonstrate improvements. Subject teachers, the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and special needs staff work together to plan their curriculum to accommodate all students' needs.

43. There is a wide range of appropriate additional opportunities for students to work in smaller, more specifically planned lessons that meet their individual learning needs. These opportunities are effective because a range of strategies is used that, for example, help improve basic speech and language skills, including the use of signing to aid communication and language. The additional voluntary learning opportunities one afternoon a week are very well attended by students who are very keen to improve their learning and make progress. These sessions are very well taught with learning made fun and which students greatly appreciate.

44. Additional support opportunities such as the reading club and homework club enable students to have good quality small group tuition that further enhances their overall confidence and general progress and achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Students receive very good support, advice and guidance. The school has very good arrangements for the health, safety and welfare of its students. Students' views are highly valued and the school acts on them very effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good and very trusting relationships with adults in school and as a result feel secure and valued.
- Health and safety and child protection issues are dealt with very efficiently in school by staff.
- Students receive very good advice and support from their teachers.

Commentary

45. A continuing strength of Plashet is the very good quality of arrangements in place to provide very good support, advice and guidance to students. The school's procedures for promoting students' personal development and behaviour owe much to the caring and sensitive attitude of all staff. This makes students feel safe and valued and contributes to the raising of self-esteem. Staff know students well and monitoring of student personal development is very good.

46. The school has worked hard to build up links with primary schools and post 16 establishments. These effective links ensure that Year 7 students adapt well to their first experience of secondary education. Year 11 are provided with well informed support as well as impartial advice and guidance. The school continues to celebrate academic and personal achievement very well both in and outside school. There is a strong focus on the inclusion of students in all activities. High quality support and guidance underpin the work of the school so that every effort is made to overcome any difficulties that could stand in the way of learning.

47. All staff work closely together to ensure the well being of the students entrusted to their care. Relationships between adults and students are very good and are characterised by mutual respect. Students feel safe and secure, knowing that their individual needs matter to staff. Very good induction procedures enable Year 7 students to settle in as quickly as possible.

48. Policies and procedures for important areas, such as child protection, health and safety and first aid, are very clearly laid out, well known to staff and effectively implemented. The measures taken to promote students' health and safety are very good. Well-kept records covering incidents such as illness or accidents mean that students' individual welfare is carefully monitored. As a result of these, standards of care are consistently high.

49. The extent to which the school seeks, values and acts on students' views is excellent. Students have been effectively consulted over policies; their views are well sought in lessons, assemblies and in curriculum reviews. Students are very clear about the system of communication to enable their views to be heard. Questionnaires are given to students to seek their views on their learning. The findings are fed back into a comprehensive school development plan.

50. The school council is very active and meets regularly. In this forum, class representatives effectively champion their concerns with great success. Lockers for students are now in classrooms; there are healthy food choices in the canteen which includes chip-free days; students are allowed to have drinking bottles in lessons; the toilets are now cleaner and air fresheners have been introduced. The school council has also represented well the views of fellow students at the Newham Youth Council Parliament. Students show their initiative and are willing to undertake positions of responsibilities with a buddy system in Year 10 for students in Years 7 to 9.

51. Students with statements of special educational need are given appropriate support and annual reviews are managed well. The policy document and development plan require reviews to

include recent inclusive guidance that emphasises whole-school responsibility and that targets require prioritisation and clearer strategies as to how monitoring will take place.

52. Some students with specific learning difficulties are granted special examination arrangements, such as a reader and writer. This is effective because it helps them to achieve the level they are capable of without being held back by their particular difficulties in literacy.

53. Very good records are kept of EAL students' progress which is reviewed at the end of each term. This information is widely shared amongst the teaching staff. In-service training has been provided for all staff and guidance booklets have been produced to assist subject teachers plan lessons when no support is available. A very good range of targeted lunchtime activities includes regular buddy reading sessions where more accomplished readers – sometimes with the same mother tongue – listen to girls read, comment on their progress and set targets for improvement.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The very positive relationships with parents, other schools and the local community support the work of the school and the learning of students very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's partnership with parents is very positive and parents are involved very well in the education of their child and are highly confident in the work of the school.
- The involvement with the local community is excellent and enriches the personal development of students.
- The involvement with other schools is very good and particularly enhances the quality of teaching and the management of the school.

Commentary

54. The school has established very good relationships with parents and the support the school receives from parents in ensuring students' good attendance, high aspirations and very good achievement is key in enabling students to attain high standards. Parents are well informed about the life of the school and the curriculum taught through a detailed prospectus and very informative newsletters. Reports are well written and outline achievements and areas for improvement. There are regular opportunities to discuss students' progress and for parents to find out more about what and how their child is learning, for example a Family Learning Week is targeted at parents of girls in Years 7 and 8. During this, after-school sessions on topics such as Science, IT and literacy are open to the family. Curriculum meetings for parents of older girls and a Family Careers Event are very well attended. Translators are available for all interactions with parents. Parents are consulted regularly through questionnaires and evaluations and action is taken as a result of these. Concerns and complaints are handled quickly and effectively.

55. The school hosts social events for the students and their families and these are well attended and contribute to the girls' social and cultural development very well. For example, families are invited to mark the end of Ramadan at the *Iftar* evening and a disco is held to celebrate the Sikh festival of *Vaisakhi*. These events are open to all.

56. Community links are excellent. The school is used by members of the community for a range of language classes and a faith group and an old time dancing group meet there regularly. Parts of the building such as the library and ICT rooms are open at the weekends for students to use and a programme of practical sessions for Year 11 students runs on Saturdays with revision classes organised for the Easter holidays and summer half term. Students work with the organiser of the Newham Summer Carnival designing and making costumes and participate in it and in the *Rangarang* light parade through local streets that takes place in November. Students have set up a website for local issues and activities which has won an award for its contribution to the local community.

57. The school has Leading Edge status and has developed very good links with other schools, which are having a very positive impact on its work. Staff have offered support to other schools in the development of their curriculum provision and this has increased staff confidence in their own work and has had a positive effect on the quality of teaching. The work of middle and senior managers is also improved through their role in these links with other schools, for example, by building on their mentoring skills. The provision for gifted and talented students is particularly enhanced by links with other schools, for example, in the organisation of a local Saturday school. Very positive links have been forged with the local sixth form college which ensures a smooth transition for the girls who go on to study there.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher's excellent leadership together with strong support from other senior staff and many middle managers make for very good leadership. The management of the school's day-to-day life is also very effective. Governors support the school well and act effectively as critical friends.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is extremely well led by the headteacher: her very clear vision, widely shared by those who work in the school, is the key to its strong and coherent ethos.
- The leadership provided by senior managers and other key staff is very good: teamwork is a strong feature. This adds significantly to students' achievements.
- Planning for future development is very effective and takes account of the views of all groups connected with the school.
- There is a thorough process to check the quality of the school's work: self-evaluation is accurate but capable of being made sharper still.
- The school is very successful in using its status as a Leading Edge School to work in partnership with other schools: this has a very positive impact on teaching, learning and achievement.
- The use of data about the school's performance is thorough but detailed information on students is not yet being used to full effect by all teachers to drive forward the school's ambitions for even higher achievement.

Commentary

58. The school is led very effectively. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. She leads the school with clarity, drive and humanity. This wins the respect of students, parents, staff, governors and those who work with the school in local partnerships. The effect of this strong and principled leadership is a school with high ambitions for its students. It sets out to meet the needs of all students and to help them grow into mature and responsible adults who make the most of their potential and achieve very highly. Because the vision is so clear and the leadership so strong, the school is very successful in achieving its ambitions.

59. The headteacher and staff together are very successful in translating the school's vision into a coherent ethos. There is very effective leadership from senior managers and other key staff including heads of year and departments. Staff across the school are signed up to the vision of high standards and a strong ethos and work hard to achieve them. There is a very strong climate for learning which pervades everything the school does and helps to explain why students achieve such high standards. Also very significant is the way the school is involved in a wide range of initiatives and developments while at the same time maintaining a very clear sense of its own purpose. It is this that makes leadership very good.

60. The school's strong ethos, clarity of purpose and confidence in its work provide the framework for effective partnerships with other schools and organisations. The headteacher is a strong force in leading collaborative initiatives with other schools. Plashet is a Leading Edge school

which readily shares its expertise in leadership and management, in working with gifted and talented students and in creating a strong and inclusive school ethos which values all whatever their background. Partner schools speak highly of the school's generosity in offering leadership and support. At the same time, Plashet staff gain confidence and improve their own expertise while providing training and support for other schools. This, together with the involvement of staff from partner schools in Plashet School, has a very beneficial effect on the quality of teaching and learning.

61. The school is very well managed. Its daily life runs smoothly because staff at all levels understand what is required. The school plans extremely well for future development and in the process seeks the views of staff, students, parents, governors and outside partners. Planning is closely related to the achievement of the school's aims and a continuing quest for improvement. The school constantly reviews how it is doing. There is a thorough process to monitor and evaluate the quality of many aspects of its work. Self-evaluation is honest, accurate and detailed. The school recognises weaknesses and takes action to remedy them. The school has already identified and is working on the main issues for further improvement identified by the inspection. However, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by departments are not yet as sharp or systematic as they could be. This is because they are not consistent across all subjects. The subject departments with the highest achievement tend to have the most rigorous focus on how effective their teaching is in helping students to learn well.

62. The school has a great deal of data by which it can track its steadily improving performance. The information is well used within some subjects to set very challenging targets and to track students' progress towards them but there are departments where the meaning and potential of the data are not fully understood and this holds up progress.

63. The governing body meets its statutory requirements and governance is good overall. Governors have a good grasp of its strengths and weaknesses. The school provides governors with detailed information about the school's work and as a result they are well-informed. There is a good development plan for the governing body that identifies clearer ways to improve its work. This is one of the reasons why governors challenge the school and help to set priorities for development. The steps the governing body has taken to improve governors' involvement have been reasonably effective but more needs to be done.

64. Arrangements for evaluating and managing the performance of staff are well established for teaching staff and currently being implemented for support staff. The school is well advanced in meeting national requirements for the reform of the school work force. Opportunities for professional development are very good and linked both to individual performance management of staff and whole-school objectives. The emphasis the school places on improving teaching and learning through staff development - using in-house and outside expertise - is one of the reasons for the very good teaching and learning. The school's involvement in the national strategy for teaching and learning has a good impact on teachers' thinking and daily teaching.

65. The induction of new staff is very effective and newly qualified teachers value the support they are given. The school has a very strong commitment to initial teacher training and, through strong links with a range of providers, has a steady flow of student teachers. It welcomes many visitors who are considering taking up teaching. These very good arrangements also help the school to recruit new teachers from amongst those who already have experience of the school as trainees. There is a named governor who has appropriate experience and knowledge and who takes an active part in monitoring and discussing SEN developments. There is clear and productive communication with the special needs coordinator.

66. The learning support department is very efficiently led and strategically managed by the special needs co-ordinator, very ably supported by the senior learning support assistant. The department is effectively organised to ensure that there is clear communication between staff, parents and students. Learning support assistants are effectively deployed, and clearly make a difference to the students' learning and progress where they are deployed, although there are some classes which do not receive any learning support and this situation requires further consideration.

There is an increasing emphasis on monitoring and recording student data and considering appropriate intervention strategies based upon the evidence. Support documents and student information booklets are very good.

67. Provision for English as an additional language is very well managed. The co-ordinator has produced a comprehensive handbook which sets out procedures and responsibilities very clearly. Progress through the stages of learning English is tracked and performance data are systematically analysed by English as an additional language stage and by ethnicity.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,903,518	Balance from previous year	237,108
Total expenditure	5,986,630	Balance carried forward to the next	211,087
Expenditure per pupil	4,484		

68. Financial management is very effective. The school uses the available budget efficiently and targets spending carefully to its educational priorities. As a result, spending on staff accounts for the great majority of its budget. This has a strong impact on students' achievements. Very good teaching leads to high standards. This is why the school gives very good value for money. The principles of best value are applied well. The views of students and parents are regularly canvassed and used to help improve the school: for example, new showers, extra outside seating and a cleaner employed during the school day to clean the toilets.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Visual Impaired Unit

Provision for visually impaired students is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standards which some students with visual impairment achieve approach or equal national expectations. The progress of all students with visual impairment is very good.
- The teaching of students with visual impairment, both by specialist and non-specialist teachers and teaching assistants, is very good.
- Students with visual impairment have very positive attitudes to learning.
- The independence training provided by Newham visual impairment service is particularly effective in promoting students' personal achievement.
- There is a lack of clarity about responsibility for various aspects of provision. This prevents the school monitoring the impact of different forms and levels of intervention on achievement, and evaluating their efficiency.

Commentary

69. The level reached by some students, as in a Year 9 science lesson, approaches or equals national expectations, and they achieve very well. This is because of the effective teaching and support provided by the subject teacher and the teaching assistant from the visual impairment service and the very positive attitude to their learning displayed by the students.

70. Students with visual impairment learn to manage in the local environment because of the very effective independence training provided by the visual impairment service. The 'walking escort' programme, for example, teaches the students to become confident in finding their way to school unsupported. This significantly increases their self esteem and re-assures their parents and carers.

71. Very good relationships exist at an individual level between staff working with students with visual impairment. As the school does not monitor the work of teaching and support staff from the visual impairment service, it cannot ensure their work fits well with its own systems. It cannot be sure that it is providing a consistent approach for all students because of a lack of clarity about this aspect of management responsibility. The school is thus unable to evaluate the effectiveness of different forms and levels of intervention on the achievement of visually impaired students.

Work-related learning (WRL)

72. Aspects of the work-related curriculum were sampled. These included the GNVQ course in information and communication technology, the school's citizenship, personal, social and health programme, the careers' programme and arrangements for work experience. Overall, the school makes **good** provision for WRL.

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement by the end of Year 11 is very good.
- Teaching is very good overall and invariably so in Years 10 and 11, leading to high standards in GCSE examinations.
- Students have excellent attitudes to their learning and all persevere consistently to achieve as well as they can.
- The subject is led and managed very efficiently to raise standards of achievement across the school.

Commentary

73. Students' attainment when they enter the school is below average. Standards in national tests in 2004, at the end of Year 9, were average when compared to all schools and very high in comparison with similar schools. At the end of Year 11, all girls entered for English and English literature GCSE achieved grades A* to G with almost 75 per cent achieving A* to C grades in both. These represent very good achievements and are the results of the very effective teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the well above average standards at GCSE level have been further improved.

74. The standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the very good achievement of all students. Standards have improved in Years 7 to 9 and students are now on course to achieve standards that are above average. Standards at the end of Year 11 remain well above the national average for GCSE. The language and literacy skills are reinforced and further developed by very effective teaching, with most students able to identify stylistic features in reading and analyse texts with great insight. Writing is also well organised and extended by high expectations of accuracy; so they write imaginatively in a range of styles. The teaching and learning styles encourage students to explore their ideas orally, rehearse their thinking and articulate their thoughts using a range of imaginative and suitable vocabulary.

75. Teaching and learning are very good overall, with almost all in Years 10 and 11 being very good or better. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They have high expectations of what the students can achieve and very good relationships with them. Students feel valued, become very confident learners, respond well to challenging expectations and persevere consistently to achieve as well as they can. This leads to learning that is productive and enjoyable for all of them. Lessons are well planned, have brisk pace and are often very challenging. For example, in a Year 11 review session on "Of Mice and Men", teaching was characterised by the teacher instantly using demanding questioning to promote recall, and then a very skilled debate about the characters and their interaction with each other within the context of the American society of that time period. Students responded very effectively with their group presentation of character analysis. Effective use of resources supports students' learning well across the school very well. Students at the early stage of learning English and those with special educational needs are supported very effectively in classes as well as in small groups to ensure their full access to the syllabus. As a result, they make very good progress in English.

76. The leadership and management are very good. Regular meetings, clearly defined responsibilities and a comprehensive departmental handbook with clear guidance characterise the very professional work of the department. The head of the department has a very clear understanding of strengths and areas for development and has ensured that the department works effectively as a team. Staff are committed to the welfare of students and their academic improvement. A very effective and thorough assessment system is in place and used well to set targets.

Example of outstanding practice

English lesson for Year 10 girls studying 'mise en scene' to apply this to a modern version of 'Romeo and Juliet'.

The teacher's structured plan for the lesson and outstanding skills in selecting and using stimulating resources enabled all girls to gain a secure understanding of the genre of Shakespearean plays, and how the director of the modern version of 'Romeo and Juliet' film developed the themes and events. The lesson began with a fast-paced discussion on the main techniques of 'mise en scene' and their impact on audience. Teacher's excellent questioning skills supported the girls to use a wide range of vocabulary and to extend their ability to analyse the selected parts of the film very effectively. Girls engaged in exciting debate about the differences between the modern and the traditional posters of 'Romeo and Juliet' and the language used in both versions of the play. This brilliant strategy resulted in some very perceptive analysis of how 'mise en scene' techniques can be applied to modern version of a Shakespearean play, preparing them very well for their written work.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

77. The school makes very good provision for developing the literacy skills of its students and this has a very good impact on pupils' learning and achievement. There is a strong central literacy policy, managed by the literacy co-ordinator, who regularly reviews the support given in all subjects. Reading skills are developed in a variety of ways; there is intensive help for individual students given by staff in the special educational needs and English as an additional language departments. Professional development of teachers has enabled all curriculum areas to appreciate the importance of a concerted approach to literacy development. Most departments have developed the strategy for extending subject specific vocabulary to support students' learning. In subjects such as English and history, where essay writing is an important feature of the work, students are given specific guidance on how to organise and express their ideas appropriately to assist persuasive writing. In science, there are conscious attempts to develop language and study skills, which are improving achievement. As a result of these measures in all faculties, most students gain confidence and skills in all aspects of language as they move through the school.

BENGALI

Provision in Bengali is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- There is a high success rate and achievement.
- A good range of teacher-produced resources impacts on learning, but these are not matched sufficiently to full ability range.
- Students' very good attitudes and behaviour lead to high motivation, but their speaking skills are not well developed.
- Lesson structure, organisation and management are insufficiently focused.
- Students with learning difficulties do not always have access to specialist support in Bengali lessons.

Commentary

78. The latest GCSE results in Bengali represent high standards. They are among the best in school and compare well with local and national trends. The majority of students throughout the school make good progress over time and achieve well because teaching is good overall and

student motivation is high. However, students with learning difficulties do not receive specialist support in Bengali lessons on a regular basis.

79. Students in both key stages demonstrate fairly well developed listening and responding skills, though their speaking is limited to the use of single words and phrases. They respond well to role playing opportunities. Higher attaining students are able to sustain a simple conversation, unaided. In reading, the majority of students in Years 7 to 9 have a developing recognition of the Bengali alphabet and familiar vocabulary relating to topics such as family and home, but some have difficulty with reading sentences. Students in Years 10 and 11 recognise names of different types of shops and what they sell.

80. Their reading of a familiar text shows a fair degree of accuracy, though less understanding or fluency. Higher attaining students in both key stages have started using contextual clues for meaning. Students generally have difficulty with standard Bengali pronunciation with particular a reference to aspirated and un-aspirated sounds. Writing is generally concerned with copying, but work seen in both key stages shows the use of appropriate vocabulary. Spelling of familiar vocabulary is often accurate, but pupils, with the exception of a minority of higher attainers, need support with writing simple descriptions. Handwriting and presentation are of good standard, but students' use of information and communication technology in Bengali is at early stage of development.

81. Teaching and learning are good overall. Activities offered are consistent with the requirements of the National Curriculum and provide access to authentic Bengali text. Topics used enhance students' awareness of Bengali culture and society whilst contributing to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Extra-curricular activities include visits and there is evidence of homework and wide-ranging teacher-produced resources having an impact on learning – an area of good improvement since the last inspection. The overall quality of teaching is also rooted in good subject knowledge. This impacts on learning and reflects students' highly enthusiastic response and very good behaviour. Both teaching and learning would, however, benefit from tasks being matched appropriately to the full ability range and lessons being more rigorous in structure, organisation and management. The subject is satisfactorily managed, and it benefits greatly from the very good leadership of the head of community languages.

URDU

Provision in Urdu is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- High standards enhance the subject profile.
- Very effective teaching and learning enable students to achieve very well, but opportunities for developing independent learning are somewhat limited.
- Well-developed teacher-produced resources have a good impact on learning, as do students' very positive attitudes and behaviour.
- Students having learning difficulties do not always receive specialist support.
- There is insufficient focus on speaking to an audience and the use of information and communication technology to promote Urdu.

Commentary

82. The 2003 GCSE results in Urdu compare favourably with those of modern languages nationally and locally. Test results at the end of Year 9 reflect above average standards. This is consistent with inspection findings. The majority of students throughout the school achieve very well, enhancing the subject profile in the school as well as in the community. Specialist support is not, however, available in Urdu lessons on a regular basis for those who have limited English and who are also on the SEN register.

83. Students' oral skills are fairly well developed, particularly in the case of higher attainers, though some do not readily contribute to discussion. These students, especially in Key Stage 3, need a great deal of encouragement to answer questions in Urdu and to speak to the whole class. This does not, however, ignore the fact that students respond positively to role playing opportunities, when available. With regard to listening skills, most students demonstrate high levels of concentration and follow instructions appropriately. They can read familiar texts with understanding, though not with fluency or appropriate expression. A minority of younger students has difficulty with reading. Students' writing generally reflects the use of simple sentences in short descriptions and letters, with higher attainers producing extended writing on topics such as shopping and leisure. Older students were observed consolidating their use of nouns with particular reference to their number and gender. Handwriting and presentation are generally of a high quality, though some were observed copying long texts gaining little from the exercise. Many students have developed excellent skills in Urdu calligraphy.

84. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils are highly enthusiastic about learning Urdu. This is evident in their active participation in activities and the excellent way they relate to one another and to their teachers. Teachers' very good subject knowledge, high expectations and an excellent range of locally produced resources have a very good impact on learning and achievement. However, activities are often teacher led. This inhibits the development of independent learning skills, though students respond well to such opportunities, when available, as in the case of their project work. They demonstrate fairly well developed collaborative skills in a group situation.

85. The Urdu scheme is consistent with National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Curriculum enrichment activities include visits, and the school facilitates examinations for those who wish to study Urdu and other community languages without attending lessons. This, together with the successful adaptation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy for Modern Foreign Languages, reflects good improvement since the last inspection. Most topics studied contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as does homework to their attainment. Appropriate assessment procedures are in place and the school has already identified this aspect and the use of information and communications technology for further development. Urdu is led and managed very well.

FRENCH

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are mostly very good and lead to very good achievement.
- Standards at GCSE in French are well above national averages and continue to improve.
- The best lessons include the use of modern technology and traditional techniques to promote very effective learning.

Commentary

86. At the end of Year 9, students achieve standards, which are above national expectations and teacher assessments in 2004 confirm this picture. This represents very good achievement from below average starting points for many students. Nearly one in three girls is reaching the higher Level 6 in French. Students in Year 8 are already familiar with a range of verb tenses and can express themselves confidently and competently. Students with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are very well provided for and achieve as well as their peers.

87. By the end of Year 11, many students have made sufficient progress to achieve very well at GCSE and the number of higher grades achieved is very impressive: some 77 per cent of those entered reach the higher grades. Standards are therefore well above national averages and this

represents very good achievement over the five years. There is a high level of entry to the examination and results have been consistently improving over the years. An analysis of students' written work shows that it is well-presented and largely accurate; the most common errors being incorrect or missing accents. A relative weakness in standards is students' pronunciation although this is not the case in all year groups. It is particularly significant where meaning is affected by incorrect pronunciation.

88. Students achieve very well in French for a number of reasons. Firstly, they are taught very well and most have very positive attitudes to learning in language lessons. Secondly, preparation for the GCSE examination is thorough and good materials are used to support this, for example, ensuring that coursework is of the highest possible standard by producing very good guidance notes on what is required for A*/A and B grades. Thirdly, there is careful targeting and monitoring of students who are capable of reaching a higher grade at GCSE, so that the potential of all students is maximised. Students make good use of information and communication technology to enhance their language study, including the Internet, word-processing, e-mail and PowerPoint displays.

89. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use students' prior knowledge to good effect and provide lots of opportunities to reinforce the language through repetition and practice. Expectations are usually high and good use is made of the interactive whiteboard to focus attention on key words. These qualities were found in lessons seen in all years. In a very good Year 10 lesson, for example, students were challenged to manipulate the language during their role play following a pattern modelled by the class teacher and SEN support teacher. The best lessons are those in which 21st century technology and traditional techniques, such as choral repetition, combine to provide a stimulating and vibrant learning experience. Humour typifies several teachers' approaches and this adds to the general enjoyment of lessons.

90. Assessment overall is very good. Marking is regular and follows a structured format. Short-term goals are included in comments made by teachers on students' work. Good records are kept of the outcomes of regular assessments and effective tracking procedures are in place. Data and analysis of examination results are used to target under-performance.

91. The acting curriculum manager is an experienced teacher who has a good overview of the progress made to date and the improvements which are necessary to move the department forward. She is very ably supported by her predecessor who continues to teach in the department. The team is further strengthened by a deputy headteacher who is also a modern linguist. Leadership and management are both very good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good because of the continuing improvement in standards.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In lessons very good individual tuition ensures that all students achieve very well.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and work hard in response to the teachers' encouragement, support and expertise.
- Assessment systems are underdeveloped and are not promoting achievement.
- Strong leadership has ensured improvement in test and examination results.

Commentary

92. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment in mathematics is below average. In 2004 results at the end of Year 9 were below national averages and above the average for those schools with a similar intake. The number of pupils obtaining the higher grades at the end of Year 9 is above the average for similar schools. It is high when compared to schools with a similar intake. Results at the end of Year 11, in 2004, were well above average.

93. Standards seen during the inspection are in line with national averages at the end of Year 9 and well above at the end of Year 11. Pupils achieve very well in all areas of mathematics, with major strengths in algebra and data handling. Orally, and in written work, pupils recall facts and apply skills confidently. In Years 7 to 9 arithmetic activities at the start of lessons sharpen pupils' mental mathematics. In a Year 9 class pupils were able to find a value for pi by practical methods and use this value to calculate the length of a sector. In Year 11 good investigational skills were seen in well-presented coursework. Teaching in all sets ensures pupils of different abilities do well by providing clear exposition and very good individual tuition. In response to supportive teaching, pupils behave very well, concentrate and take a pride in the presentation of their work.

94. Teaching and learning are very good. The experience and expertise of the teachers are significant strengths. There is an emphasis on the correct use of mathematical processes and language. Pupils receive thorough preparation for examinations. Teachers ensure that classrooms are stimulating environments which enhance learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. The pupils have confidence in their teachers and there is mutual respect. This means that pupils are keen to tackle difficult questions without fear of ridicule if they make mistakes.

95. An assessment policy which includes target setting linked to national curriculum levels has been introduced in Year 8. Where implemented this is helping to raise achievement as it is making pupils think about their mathematics. Generally pupils do not know the level at which they are working or what they need to do to improve. The system is not fully promoting achievement.

96. In an excellent Year 10 lesson, students worked in pairs to construct cuboids. These enabled them to visualise the angles being calculated by trigonometric ratio. Pupils shared their findings using the interactive whiteboard. The variety of teaching activity resulted in high achievement and excellent learning.

97. The adoption of the national strategy has raised achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 through the delivery of structured and stimulating lessons. Lesson objectives, relayed to pupils at the start of the lesson, are assessed at the end. This enhances learning and aids teacher planning.

98. The focus of the department is clearly on raising standards. The teachers work well as a team and are mutually supportive. Emphasis is placed on the sharing of good practice particularly regarding the introduction of initiatives such as the interactive whiteboards. The choice of GCSE examination has been reviewed. This has improved pupil aspirations and increased the number of A*-C passes. Leadership and management are very good, providing clear vision. Since the last inspection results have improved, schemes of work have been finalised and the provision for ICT, through the introduction of graphical calculators, has been enhanced. Progress since the last inspection has been very good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

99. An emphasis on numeracy across the curriculum has been launched in Year 7. All pupils have been issued with worksheets to be tackled during form time. These are designed to accommodate different levels of attainment.

100. A policy for the development of the cross curricular use of the subject has been created. The main focus areas are science and geography. A collaborative project between geography and mathematics has taken place. This involved pupils gathering primary data in the former subject and analysing it in the latter.

101. During the inspection there were few examples of the pupils being asked to use their mathematical skills in the wider context. They were asked to translate written statements into co-ordinates on a graph in science; use scale drawing and perspective in art; measure, calculate and estimate in design technology and use rhythm in music.

102. Overall the provision is good.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievements are very good. They build successfully on their work in primary school to reach above average standards at the end of Year 9, and high standards at the end of Year 11.
- The quality of teaching and learning overall is very good.
- The leadership and management by the head of department are excellent.
- The curriculum offers very good opportunities for the majority of students. There are, however, some missed opportunities for the very highest ability students to have a greater degree of independence in their work.
- The department makes very good use of data to focus planning for improvement in the grades which students attain in public examinations.
- There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection.

Commentary

103. The standards which students attain in the national tests taken in Year 9 show a rising trend over the past four years. The results fell last year to be in line with the national average, but standards seen during the inspection show that attainment is now again above average. Students achieve very well when their results are compared with their previous attainment in Year 6 and standards in Year 9 are well above those attained by students in similar schools. Students' achievement at the end of Year 11 is also very good. Their attainment at GCSE is well above the national average and is very high when compared to the results attained by students in similar schools. The inspection findings confirm this very good achievement. From Year 7 to Year 11 students make very good progress and the work of all students, regardless of ethnicity or ability, shows year on year improvement.

104. The quality of teaching and students' learning is very good. Eleven lessons were observed. Teaching was judged to be excellent in one of these lessons, very good in six, good in two and satisfactory in two. The lessons judged satisfactory were taught by less experienced teachers, and the department has an on-going programme of support to help staff improve their teaching. A significant factor in the high quality teaching is the good relationships that teachers have with the students who, in consequence, have a very positive attitude towards their learning. In one Year 7 lesson, students were particularly enthusiastic in their responses when asked to predict what would happen when testing for hydrogen and oxygen. Day to day assessment is used very well to ensure that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve. All lessons are well planned and most teachers make good use of tight timescales for tasks within the lessons. This ensures that students' learning is moved forward at a good pace. The impact of this very good teaching is that students are very actively engaged in their learning. They ask searching questions of their teachers and work very well individually and in groups. This sets a very high quality learning environment in the majority of lessons. Students' attitudes are good and they behave well. Students with SEN and those whose first language is not English are very well supported and are enabled to achieve as highly as other students.

105. The leadership and the management of the science department are excellent. The head of department's vision is outstanding. She has worked very hard and to very good effect to establish and develop a very effective team, many of whom are young and inexperienced. The documentation she has developed along with the very comprehensive schemes of work ensure that the department runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis and all staff are well supported. The staff are highly valued by the head of department and consequently respond extremely well to her challenge and encouragement. Accommodation for science is in three distinct areas and much of it is old, but well maintained. The department is serviced by three full time technicians. They are

valued highly as members of the team and work effectively to support teachers and students. Most of the laboratories are equipped with interactive whiteboards and staff and students use these very well. The laboratories have stimulating displays, for example to illustrate key concepts, and these support learning very well. Overall, the curriculum is very good and well matched to the needs of the students. The quality of teaching and students' learning is so good, however, that some opportunities are missed to give the highest attaining students a greater degree of independence in lessons. The head of department constantly strives to improve the provision in science. She has addressed the drop in last year's SATs by putting in place an additional module of work to assist the students with data handling. She is already exploring the different possibilities which will open up within the new science curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11.

106. Since the last inspection the quality of the provision in science has improved significantly.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress with their learning and achievement is good.
- Assessment in Years 7-9 is not robust enough to provide enough information about students' progress and performance.
- Every student in every year has the opportunity to make good progress in their ICT capability.
- Standards are lower than they could be if the school kept closer to the National Strategy for ICT.
- Good use of resources and accommodation improves the learning opportunities of students.

Commentary

107. Standards of work seen during the inspection show that by the end of Year 9 the standards that students attain are in line with national expectations. Results for the Year 11 students who have followed the GCSE short course are below average but above average for the GNVQ Intermediate course. Standards have steadily improved over recent years.

108. Students start with a level of ICT capability that is below national expectations and by the time the end of Year 9 it is broadly average. This represents good achievement. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language also make good progress. This also represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Year 7 students confidently present and evaluate presentations about themselves and in Year 8 they master mail merges. Too little emphasis is given to improving students' literacy and numeracy.

109. Every student is taught ICT in Years 10 and 11 and although too little time is provided for the GNVQ Intermediate course, they make good progress in their ICT capability and achievement is good. Year 10 students are able to create a web page for the sports shop "Kit for the Fit." In Year 11 students complete course work involving a database and modelling with a spreadsheet.

110. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory but some aspects are very good. Lessons are planned thoroughly and are well organised. The teachers are enthusiastic and committed to their students. They have good knowledge of ICT, there is good technical support and good use is made of the resources and accommodation. In some lessons, a descriptive response is accepted a little too readily and students are not expected to explain how or why a particular software program, for example, is used. A weakness in teaching is that assessment is not strong enough. In Years 7, 8 and 9 students have too little idea of how well they are doing in ICT or what they need to do to improve.

111. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The department is made up of newly qualified teachers and there is no experienced head of department. However, with a

senior manager, the department staff has defined a clear sense of purpose and direction that has resulted in good planning and organisation. Progress since the previous inspection though has been good, the work of the new teachers in the department is monitored regularly and there are weekly departmental meetings. The quality and quantity of computers have improved significantly since the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

112. As in the previous inspection this continues to be good. Evidence indicates that students make good use of ICT in English, mathematics, science, French and music. Opportunities for students to enhance their learning through ICT are less good in art, geography, history, RE and PE. Use of computers in Bengali is limited. E-learning credits have been used well but departments have been frustrated by difficulties associated with the network and its lack of compatibility with some software. There is good access to computers outside lesson times and teachers are beginning to make good use of interactive whiteboards.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

- Students have positive attitudes to their work because the school has a strong belief in learning.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are well developed in the subject.
- There is inconsistency in teaching standards across Year 7 to Year 9.
- Monitoring does not guide teachers' planning sufficiently.
- The use of data to target pupil attainment is underdeveloped.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons.

Commentary

113. At the end of Year 9, standards are just below the national average. However, results have been improving over the last six years. Students are now working in line with national expectation and make good progress. At the end of Year 11, standards are below national average but there has been steady improvement over the last four years with a slight dip last year. This is explained by staffing difficulties in the department. This improvement is shown by the percentage of students achieving at least a pass at GCSE which is better than in other schools.

114. From below average attainment on entry to the school, pupils achieve well. They are able to show their understanding of the range of indicator links to the quality of life. They begin to show the correlation between wealth and adult literacy. Similarly, the achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is good overall. However, achievement is sometimes only satisfactory where teaching does not demand enough of students. Students are able to examine employment structures and are able to explain the terms primary, secondary and tertiary employment with examples. With historical data on this topic, students are able to draw bar graphs and interpret the findings well. Procedures for assessment and marking of work are in place but they are not yet giving students help on how they can improve their work. Students with special educational needs and with English as an additional language achieve well.

115. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but there are some inconsistencies. Where teaching is good, there is a lively delivery by the teacher using a good range of resources. Where teaching is less than good, the aim of the lesson lacks rigour and challenge. Questioning skills are ineffective and too much teacher talk detracts from students showing their understanding of topics. In Year 11, teaching and learning are good. Good lessons are characterised by effective planning, challenge and a stimulating pace. All lessons take place in rooms which are vibrant in display work. Students have a very positive attitude to their learning. Literacy and numeracy skills are well

developed in this subject. Key words are displayed prominently around classrooms. Numeracy skills are shown through the range of graphs drawn and the use of data and its interpretation.

116. Leadership is good. There are clear lines of responsibilities and a good team approach to activities and tasks. There is a well-developed plan for the department. However, the department is only at the initial stage of using data to set targets and to inform students of their potential. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory. Students' knowledge has improved. Field trips are now organised for all year groups except Year 9. There are now some effective systems for assessment in Years 10 and 11. However, the use of ICT is still not widespread and the monitoring of the work of the department is underdeveloped. This means that teachers do not always have a shared view of teaching standards.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are well motivated and learn effectively; overall, their achievement is good.
- Students' history skills are well developed.
- Planning for students' individual needs is good.
- Teaching is good overall, though there are also shortcomings.
- The use of data to set targets and track achievement in Years 10 and 11 requires improvement.
- The evaluation of teaching and learning is not sharp enough.

Commentary

117. Recent results in GCSE are close to the national average and have improved steadily in recent years. Standards are similar in lessons. Recent examination results show that, overall, students in history do not achieve the very high standards in Years 10 and 11 that they do in many other subjects, though some do very well. For this reason students' achievement, including that of students with special needs and those in the early stages of learning English, is satisfactory rather than good.

118. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 shows that standards are at the national average and have improved strongly in the last two years. Similar standards are seen in lessons. Students' achievement is good. Their portfolios of work show that there is clear development of their skills over their first three years in the school. This is because teaching encourages students to analyse and organise information and approach historical sources critically. Some answers to questions in class show considerable insight. Students with special needs and at an early stage of learning English also achieve well.

119. Teaching is good overall but there are some shortcomings. Students are willing learners. Teachers use a range of active approaches which usually capture students' interest. Teachers know the subject well and have a good grasp of examination requirements. In the best lessons teachers' strong management of the learning ensures that students understand that teachers' expectations of the levels they will reach are high and they respond accordingly. Questioning in these lessons is probing and makes students think because they are asked to explain and elaborate their answers. Good attention is given to improving students' literacy skills. Good relationships are a feature in almost all lessons; teachers are sensitive to students' different learning needs and plan carefully for them. Students in a Year 9 group of very mixed ability, preparing for the visit of a Holocaust survivor, were good at working in groups, sharing ideas, building a case and presenting it to others because they understood what was expected, recognised the importance of the topic and were actively supported to give of their best. The well-organised work on the Holocaust makes a very good contribution to citizenship and students' personal development.

120. The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Sometimes teaching is tentative. In such lessons the work is organised, students get through it but there is little to excite and the pace drops. More often teachers are good organisers of learning and set up interesting tasks but, so great is their desire for students to learn actively and find things out for themselves, that there is too little direct teaching and explanation to bring the story of history to life. Teachers are not always explicit enough about what students should know and be able to do by the end of the lesson. There are several good features of marking and assessment including self-assessment by students and opportunities for students to comment on their marked formal assessments and set personal targets for improvement. Considerable attention is given to formal assessments but regular marking does not consistently provide enough feedback, focused on history skills, to enable students to respond by making small incremental steps to higher achievement.

121. History is led and managed with commitment. The department is well organised and efficient. However, background data on students is not well used to set challenging targets and track whether progress is appropriate. More needs to be done to evaluate the impact of teaching on learning. There is limited use of ICT to enhance students' learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory and seen mainly in improved examination results and Year 9 assessments.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in RE are good and lead to very good achievement especially in classes taught by subject specialists where some teaching is of very high quality.
- Standards at GCSE in RE are well above national averages, have risen dramatically in the last three years, and are some of the best results in the school.
- The best lessons include the use of images, sources, creative writing and ICT to promote imaginative and reflective learning.
- RE makes a very strong contribution to students' personal and spiritual development where pupil views are highly valued.
- Marking is a weakness across the department.

Commentary

122. By the end of Year 9 standards are in line with those broadly expected by the Newham Agreed Syllabus with some students achieving beyond. Students' knowledge and understanding of the beliefs about God, especially the nature of God in Christianity and Islam are profound, as is their use of religious terms such as omnipotent, immanence, incarnation, Trinity and transcendent.

123. By the end of Year 11 standards are well above the national averages for the short course in GCSE and have risen dramatically over the last three years with an impressive number of students achieving the highest grades. In 2004 the percentage of A*-C grades almost doubled since the previous inspection and were some of the highest results in the school. Students are very well prepared for the short course GCSE and they are helped, in particular, by good revision materials for all students provided by the department.

124. Achievement is very good overall and especially in Years 10 and 11. Most students achieved very well with a significant proportion of high attainers gaining A*, A and B grades. Students come into school with below average attainment and leave with above average results in the short course GCSE that is taught in one period a week. Teachers cover the syllabus well and give their time to support students with Saturday and booster classes. These enable students to achieve very well. Attitudes to learning are very good which promotes high achievement. By the end of a good Year 10 lesson students had made significant gains in their understanding of the

Islamic concept of Akhirah, the Day of Judgement, Heaven and Hell. They linked these ideas to worshipping Allah, being tested by Him, and following the Right Path.

125. Good teaching and learning overall mean that students make very good progress. Their learning is enhanced by some excellent teaching. Teachers expect students to work in an ethos that values and respects everyone. This ethos coupled with the very high standards of work and behaviour provide an environment where students can flourish and develop confidence. Learning is consolidated by encouraging pupils to express their views and give reasons for their opinions. Some excellent teaching in Year 7, by an RE specialist, enabled all students to make progress in understanding key events in the life of Jesus by problem solving images associated with his birth, baptism, death and resurrection. Paired and group discussions enabled pupils to ask and solve questions they posed of the four pictures and then to connect these to the teachings about Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit in Christianity. One pupil enthusiastically made the connection between a 'pure white bird above Jesus' head in an image with the Holy Spirit' by saying that 'it was a pure bird sent from God from Heaven.'

126. The inclusion of aspects of the Key Stage 3 strategy has accelerated literacy and key concept acquisition of religious language and symbolism. All students, including those with EAL, are actively encouraged to express their ideas, and contribute with confidence to class discussions. Teaching and learning promote students' personal and spiritual development where reflection on meaning is actively encouraged. Assessment for learning takes place in the department, but needs to be strengthened and used consistently by everyone so that students know exactly what they need to do to improve. Marking does not help students distinguish between learning about and learning from religion.

127. Overall, leadership and management are good. Leadership by the curriculum manager is effective in promoting a collaborative, inclusive and dedicated team that enables other members to contribute their skills and develop innovative practice. There is a clear vision for RE and the role it plays in promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is excellent. The department successfully reviews examination results and patterns and takes appropriate steps to improve results by targeting students within D-G grades. The department seeks extra finances for enhancing RE resources, including, books, artefacts, videos and ICT programmes and is well resourced.

128. Since the last inspection the school has introduced the Newham Agreed Syllabus and achieved even higher examination results maintaining its prominence as one of the leading departments in the school.

Sociology

Overall the provision for sociology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching and learning are very good in the majority of lessons.
- Systematic monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet well established, which prevents the sharing of good practice across the department.
- There is a very good working atmosphere and excellent relationships in lessons and as a result attitudes and behaviour are very good enabling students to make good progress.
- Students display confidence in oral discussions and take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Assessment strategies are under developed with work not always marked regularly. Insufficient diagnostic feedback and lack of student self- assessment means that students do not always appreciate the action needed to improve further.
- Support for students in the preparation of their course work is under developed.

Commentary

129. Standards in sociology in 2004 were slightly below national averages with 51 per cent of students gaining grades A* to C grades. When compared to other related subjects in the school the results for sociology were lower. However, given the large cohort size and the starting points of many students, attainment overall is in line with national expectations with the results for 2004 showing an improvement of 7 per cent on the previous year and the predictions for 2005 indicating an upward trend. Currently the majority of students studying sociology in Years 10 and 11 have attained at least Level 5 in their end of Year 9 English tests. Year 10 students perform above national expectations overall. Performance in Year 11 is variable with many students achieving very good levels while others perform less well. Students for whom English is an additional language are supported to reach satisfactory standards, as are students with special educational needs. Gifted and talented students are presented with challenging activities to enable them to reach the higher levels of attainment. Students were able to demonstrate deep thinking strategies in making links between labelling theory as applied to the topics of social stratification and crime.

130. Students are keen to learn and make very good progress both in lessons seen and over time. They are able to produce well-written accounts of sociological phenomena and use standard sociological terms appropriately. Most develop good research skills, which are used well in their coursework projects. Support to improve the level at which students are working in their course work is underdeveloped in some areas. Oral skills are very well developed with most students able to give sustained answers with reasoned arguments in support of their points of view. Students work very effectively in small groups and further each other's understanding through guided discussion as seen in a Year 10 class working on gender and education where all members of the group brainstormed the reasons for differential educational achievement.

131. Excellent attitudes and very good behaviour are key features, which lead to the good progress made by students in both Year 10 and 11. Students show high regard for their teachers and each other as demonstrated by their readiness to discuss topics in a sensible and courteous manner. Students take advantage of the opportunities to develop socially and culturally for example in relating topical issues such as International Women's Day to their study of feminism. Students are sensitive to cultural differences and are keen to learn from each other as demonstrated in a class looking at the Indian caste system.

132. Teaching is of a high standard in most lessons with very good planning providing a major contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. Clear learning outcomes are presented with most teachers returning to them throughout the lesson so students have a clear sense of what is expected of them at every stage. Teachers make every effort to build on previous knowledge and understanding by using interesting starter activities including for example a true/false show board exercise on gender pre-conceptions in one Year 10 lesson. Teachers ensure that the needs of different groups and abilities are taken into account and use a range of strategies to promote the learning of all students. By insisting on a brisk pace a considerable amount of work is covered in the better lessons. Overall the subject knowledge of teachers is secure.

133. The area is well led by an experienced head of department. Both he and other members of the team hold other responsibilities across the school. Although leadership and management are good there is not a well-developed system of monitoring teaching and learning which means that some lessons are less well structured. The staff overall are well experienced and enable students to make a commendable rate of progress. Continued professional development is a clear priority for the department as is the development of assessment for learning. Although there is evidence of a more constructive approach to written feedback, some students do not benefit from regular diagnostic marking which gives them a clear statement of their current level and an indication of the steps needed to improve further.

134. The accommodation for sociology is good and there is good use of space, which allows for varied classroom arrangements. Display is a particular strength of the department. Resources are good with interactive whiteboards in use in most lessons. ICT training for staff is in place. Book provision is good.

135. Although sociology was not inspected as a separate subject during the previous inspection it was noted that standards in this subject were above the national average. This trend continued over the following three years. After a dip in 2003 an upward trend is now emerging with a higher forecast for 2005.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and management is good.
- The range of staff expertise and their subject knowledge are very good.
- Students achieve a very high quality in the artefacts and products they design and make.
- Internal monitoring of teaching across the curriculum area in all of the contributory subjects needs to be more regular and systematic.
- Organisation of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 gives an inconsistent experience of the subject areas.

Commentary

136. GCSE results in 2004 for food technology, textiles, graphics and resistant materials were well above the national averages and the trajectory of the department's results has been in an upward trend year on year. Students do particularly well in the coursework part of their examinations.

137. On entry to the school in Year 7, students' attainment in their designing and making skills is very variable and in the majority of cases, below the national average. However, during the course of Years 7, 8 and 9 they make very good progress and standards seen during the lessons observed and in the results at the end of Year 9 tests are well above national averages. Less well developed is their use of computer-aided manufacturing and control within the contributory subject areas. Good examples of electronic and mechanical control using gears and pulleys were evident in resistant materials in the making of moving toys and model fairground rides. By the end of Year 11 standards continue to be well above average and achievement is very high. This is essentially due to the strong subject knowledge and expertise of the teachers and the way in which they impart these to students in an enthusiastic, supportive and encouraging manner. Students produce a range of quality products and gain good knowledge and experience of using tools, computer aided design skills and techniques with a variety of materials to make products such as Salwar Kammez in textiles for teenagers, perfume packaging in graphics and jewellery holders in resistant materials.

138. Teaching and learning are very good with examples of excellent practice particularly in textiles through the use of shared 'mood boards'. Students contributed pictures, photographs and written thoughts which were placed on a central board for all the class to refer to as part of a theme for fancy dress designs for young children.

139. The majority of lessons seen across all the contributory subjects were well planned, had good pace and a strong work ethic. They took place in an enjoyable atmosphere where relationships between students and teachers were very good. The teaching engenders very good attitudes in students, promoting high values and celebrates achievement.

140. In Years 7 to 9 there is a well balanced experience of designing and making. However, the carousel approach to timetabling and organisation of the contributory subjects in Years 7 to 9 means that some students do not have a regular and consistent experience in food, textiles and resistant materials and progression in these subjects is being hindered. Students' work is regularly marked with positive supportive comments to help them make improvements in their design folders.

Very good use is made of a digital camera to document, sequence and celebrate students' work; this was particularly evident in food technology.

141. Literacy and numeracy are promoted very well across the curriculum. For example, all pupils in Year 7 are provided with a list of relevant technical vocabulary of key words to be put into their folders. Numeracy is promoted well within design areas and good examples of the use of tolerances, drilling and marking jigs, and calculations were seen in the work of Years 9 and 10 in resistant materials.

142. The subject is very well managed and well led; the leadership of the contributory subjects is of high quality. There is some highly effective practice, which is one of the reasons why students do so well; however, it is not always identified and shared as a way of raising standards even further. Very good use is made of the high quality support staff. Apart from the issue of timetabling arrangements at Key Stage 3, the curriculum area has made very good progress since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make very good progress from the start of Year 7 to Year 9.
- Teaching is very good with some excellent features.
- Standards in the GCSE examination are well above the national average.
- Achievement is very good from the start of Year 10 to Year 11.
- Students make very effective use of ICT to produce highly personal images.
- Accommodation and resources are adequate, but there are issues concerning two art studios.

Commentary

143. Students enter the school with weak drawing, painting and craft skills and attainment on entry is below expectations for students of their age. However, there is evidence in the visual diaries that they make good progress in the first year. This progress continues throughout Year 8 and there is improvement in basic skills over those displayed in Year 7. By Year 9, students are making very good use of line, tone and colour and the standard of their drawings and paintings is above national expectations. Many of these students are making very good use of ICT to produce highly personal images. Achievement is very good from the start of Year 7 to Year 9.

144. In the 2003 GCSE results the number of students to achieve the highest grades A*-C was well above the national average. In 2004, there was further improvement and 95 per cent of students achieved grades A*-C by comparison with the national figure for all schools of 65 per cent and 75 per cent for similar schools. Work seen in the portfolios shows that these students have acquired the capacity to work with a high degree of independence. They carry out research into a very wide range of subject matter that is derived from their own cultural backgrounds, their own values, attitudes, ideas, concepts and beliefs. Students with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English also make very good progress. The majority of students produce artwork of a standard that is well above national expectations. Achievement is very good from the start of Year 10 into Year 11.

145. Teaching is very good with some excellent features. Teachers are very well informed, possess very good subject knowledge and carry out thorough planning before the start of lessons. They are very enthusiastic about the subject and convey this enthusiasm to students. They have very high expectations that all students will work to the best of their ability to communicate their ideas and express their feelings through drawing, painting and craftwork. Management of time and

resources is very good, and in one lesson excellent use was made of the interactive whiteboard as a highly effective teaching tool to introduce the students to the work of artists such as Leonardo Da Vinci and Andre Derain. Homework is set on a regular basis, is assessed and feedback given promptly to students to help them improve the quality of their artwork.

146. Leadership and management are both very good, with some excellent features. The head of department has a very clear vision of how she would like to see the department develop over time. She is an excellent role model for both staff and students alike. She has infectious enthusiasm for the subject, which is communicated readily to all others in the department. Relationships in the department are very good and she has created a very effective team. The Departmental development plan is relevant, thorough and detailed and is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

147. Accommodation is just adequate, but there are significant issues surrounding two of the art studios. There is very little natural lighting in the basement studio, consequently it is a rather depressing environment, one that is not conducive to learning through art, craft and design activities. In one of the other studios, there are holes in the ceiling, which means that it leaks when it rains. Resources are adequate within the context of a traditional model of the curriculum, but the limited provision of ICT in the art studios themselves means that students are restricted in terms of producing computer-generated images during art lessons. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Standards remain well above national expectations and teaching is now very good with some excellent features.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good sometimes very good teaching across the department.
- Teachers' good relationship with students helps them achieve well.
- ICT is used well to help student learning.
- Standards are improving.
- Enthusiastic and committed teachers especially those with management roles.
- Implement planned strategies to raise standards of attainment.

Commentary

148. The music department has suffered from staffing difficulties since the last inspection, this has impacted on standards. At the end of Year 9 in 2004, standards were judged to be below average, work seen during the inspection is close to average. Student attainment in Year 11, although below national average, demonstrates good achievement in view of the relatively low prior attainment. Overall progress is good and standards are improving. Students with special educational needs or who have recently joined the school learn well through a very practical approach to music used in most lessons. Students with English as an additional language benefit from a structured approach, which encourages the use of correct musical terms. This gives students the technical vocabulary to appraise with understanding. The department is working hard to provide opportunities for the development of performance skills both in the timetabled lessons and extra-curricular activities. Music production and song writing courses are held to make the curriculum relevant to individual student needs.

149. Overall the quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good leading to good achievement for all students. Work is carefully planned to suit different ability groups, so that all students can take part successfully. Teachers use the improved resources, display boards, keyword cards and vocabulary lists to reinforce music terminology. Teaching is lively, based on very good subject knowledge and varied teaching methods. Students are attentive and co-operative and their learning takes place through a range of experiences. Activities are well organised and resources

well chosen especially the use of technology. ICT is contributing positively to student motivation, skills and learning. Assessment procedures are good and teachers are able to track the performance of students. The department is adapting the national Key Stage 3 strategy initiatives and good use is made of target setting.

150. There are good links with music teachers and musicians worldwide which enrich the musical life of the school. The curriculum is further enriched by extra-curricular activities, visits to external venues and regular performances both in and outside school. Overall resources are good and the recently refurbished accommodation is providing an attractive and stimulating musical environment.

151. Leadership of the department is very good. The head of department has a clear vision for music and has planned well to raise standards, student achievement and thereby the profile of the department in the school. In Years 7-9 the curriculum has been planned to include a wide range of musical styles from different times and areas of the world reflecting the cultural diversity of the school. The department has a development plan linked to school priorities. New staff and beginner teachers have an effective induction programme. They are monitored and given sensitive and constructive support. The department is managed well and has made good progress since the previous inspection. Recent initiatives, a well-developed extra-curricular and enrichment programme together with very good management of this subject are beginning to impact on standards.

Drama

152. Only four lessons were seen in drama; two in Years 8 and 9 and two in Year 11. It is not, therefore, possible to judge the school's provision for drama. Discussion with the head of the department and examination of students' work show that drama is not taught in Year 7 and is taught for only one lesson a week in Years 8 and 9. The teaching of drama in Years 10 and 11, however, is very strong. The quality of teaching and learning in these two years is very good and this makes a very positive contribution to students' learning, developing their confidence and self-expression well. This was evident in an excellent session in Year 11 where students, following a workshop by one of Arts Partners, were preparing for their GCSE Performance examination. The teachers' excellent teaching techniques ensured that students had the opportunity to experiment with a full range of performance techniques to enhance the quality of their final piece. Very effective planning and high expectation of what students can do enable students to plan and write and to improvise their own scripts very effectively and imaginatively, using the themes and quotes from the plays and novels they read in English. Students are taught to use peer assessment to assess each other's performance. They are confident in evaluating their own and other's performance and in suggesting ways for further improvement. There is a thorough assessment system for Years 10 and 11 and these are used well for planning. The delivery and teaching of drama in Years 10 and 11 is managed very efficiently.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and student achievement are very good with aspects of excellence.
- Very good relationships and student attitudes create a climate for positive learning experiences.
- Leadership and management are strong and dedicated to securing and maintaining high standards.
- The teaching team are an impressive resource for teacher training with a very good range of methodology.
- Effective implementation of the Secondary Strategy allows all groups of students to achieve well.
- A more rigorous approach to monitoring would allow the team to identify specific areas of strength.

Commentary

153. Students start school with varying levels of skills and knowledge in physical education. Overall, these are slightly below what might be expected nationally. Year 9 students were not observed, but by the end of Year 8, standards are broadly in line with, or slightly above in the case of dance, national averages. This is due in part to the emphasis placed on acquiring the basic body management skills of balance, co-ordination, spatial awareness and weight bearing to a good level in Year 7. There is good transference of these skills to other activities as the girls' progress through school. In Years 10 and 11, students benefit from a wider curriculum, which promotes activities undertaken in adult life for example weight training and aerobics. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above what might be expected nationally. Overall, standards are above average.

154. GCSE Dance was not inspected during the inspection due to the absence of the teacher. As a result, the evidence base was too small to form a judgement about provision.

155. Achievement is good in Years 7 and 8. All girls make progress in basic skills, which they then transfer to games extending their skills to include eye hand co-ordination, simple tactics and rules. A collaborative approach to work and a climate of mutual respect also supports good progress. Good use of paired and group work using gifted and talented students in leading roles also has a significant impact on learning. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language also make good progress mainly due to the very good knowledge teachers have of their students and because of very good attitudes to learning. In Years 10 and 11, girls demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of how their body works and what to do to improve the tone and condition of different parts of the body. Overall, progress is very good and is supported by energetic and knowledgeable teaching.

156. The quality of teaching and learning overall is very good with aspects of excellence. Lesson planning is exemplary and fully takes into account the Secondary Strategy, which the team delivers effectively. Learning objectives are clear and students know exactly what is to be achieved and how they will achieve it. There is an extensive range of methodology used to ensure that different types of learners engage. A particularly good example of this was seen in a Year 7 dance lesson. Teaching is energetic, enthusiastic and expectations are high. Excellent subject knowledge and expertise ensures good quality modelling of correct technique. A particularly good example of this was seen in a Year 10 weight-training lesson. Visual learning is successful and contributes to the very good progress made by all groups of students. This team of teachers makes a very good resource for the extensive trainee teacher programme the school is involved with. Relationships with students are very good and the activities covered offer a good level of challenge whilst motivating and involving all groups of students.

157. Leadership is excellent and management of the department is very good. There is a clear vision for constant improvement. The department works excellently as a team and provides good role models for the girls. Ongoing student assessment in lessons is good and students are encouraged and are able to evaluate their own work and that of others. Levels of attainment are clearly displayed and girls use these confidently when asked. Monitoring does take place in a systematic way but there is a need to be more specific in identifying why teaching is good and why certain aspects have a greater impact on learning. Since the last inspection the subject has made good progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Co-ordination of citizenship is very good.
- Audit has been carried out to determine contribution to citizenship in all curriculum areas.
- Good systems for monitoring and evaluating provision exist.
- Citizenship is brought together with PSHE to form CPSHE.
- School has won Newham Young Citizen of Year Award 2005.

Commentary

158. The school recognises the distinct nature of both citizenship and PSHE. Curriculum planning has been developed so that lesson plans indicate the difference between the two areas for tutors and students. The policy had recently been updated and all subjects have audited their schemes of work so there is an overview of how citizenship is provided in the curriculum. Other contributions to citizenship come through the school council, elections, and debating of student issues of concern.

159. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Improvements have been made with methodical and well-organised efficiency. Good planning ensures students benefit from all curriculum areas so that, whilst much of the programmes of study are delivered through the form tutor programme, some elements are also taught through different subjects such as RE. The school makes good use of outside speakers such as the Borough Community Liaison officer. The school has encouraged 30 students to take part in the Borough Shining Through Award. Students formed themselves into the Access and Mobility Project Action Group and carried out research on how accessible the local environment was for disabled people. They also found out whether the new standards set by the Disability Discrimination Act were met. The group presented their findings to teachers, classmates, parents and school governors. As a result of this work the students won the Borough Young Citizens of the Year Award. This provides additional evidence that the subject is seen as an important way to reinforce the ethos of the school.

160. Staff have received training and support, and opportunities for assessment have been identified to help student development. Key assessment tasks are tied into the reporting cycle and parents receive a report on citizenship. Inclusion is a key feature of the school and teaching styles ensure active participation in learning using a variety of media to present ideas. There is a range of activities that reflect many of the requirements of citizenship including raising money for charities and extra-curricular activities such as the Year 7 residential trip. Another activity which provides a rich and varied range of experiences and which helps students understand about their responsibilities as both national and global citizens, is the successful International Women's day. There is a coherent system for monitoring and evaluating provision, which includes student evaluation. The school is providing students with the opportunity to problem solve, debate and actively engage with contemporary issues.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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