

INSPECTION REPORT

ROOKS HEATH HIGH SCHOOL

South Harrow

LEA area: London Borough of Harrow

Unique reference number: 102240

Headteacher: Dr John Reavley

Lead inspector: Ms Margaret Julia Goodchild

Dates of inspection: 7 – 10 February 2005

Inspection number: 268455

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: | 12 – 16 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 917 |
| School address: | Eastcote Lane South Harrow Harrow Middlesex |
| Postcode: | HA2 9AG |
| Telephone number: | 0208 422 4675 |
| Fax number: | 0208 422 4407 |
| Appropriate authority: | Governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mrs Catherine Woods |
| Date of previous inspection: | February 1999 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Rooks Heath High School is a mixed comprehensive school with 917 pupils on roll, aged 12 to 16. The school draws many of its pupils from the local area, which suffers multiple deprivation, with others coming from Brent, Ealing and Hillingdon. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The school is ethnically very diverse and mobility is very high: the percentage of casual entrants has grown substantially since the last inspection to around 20 to 25 per cent in Years 8 and 9. Refugees or asylum seekers account for a quarter of the school population: many are not only new to the country but have had no formal education. English is an additional language for 54 per cent of pupils and over a quarter of the school's population is at an early stage of acquiring English. These figures are very high. Over 30 first languages are spoken. The school also has an exceptionally high proportion of pupils with special educational needs: currently, 44 per cent, which represents a significant increase since the last inspection. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs – mainly for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate learning difficulties or specific learning difficulties – is above average. The school has a special educational needs unit for 70 pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Attainment on entry at the beginning of Year 8 is well below average. When the high number of casual entrants is also taken into account, prior attainment is very low. Furthermore, the school loses some of its highest attaining pupils to a local 12 to 18 school during Years 8 and 9, and they are generally replaced by non-English speaking pupils or those who have been excluded from other schools.

The school is part of a Local Public Service Agreement cluster aiming to increase opportunity in the area and raise the life chances of residents. The school makes free community provision to promote lifelong learning, offers parenting classes, is involved with the Youth Inclusion Panel in providing family support services, and has drop-in facilities with counselling services. HSBC has just chosen Rook's Heath as one of six schools across London which it believes fall into the category of 'schools of excellence'. The school has gained a Sportsmark Award, Quality in Study Support Award and a Princess Diana Refugee Support Award. It has just been awarded specialist Business and Enterprise College status.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--|
| 15918 | Margaret Julia Goodchild | Lead inspector | English as an additional language |
| 9748 | Cliff Hayes | Lay inspector | |
| 2200 | Jim Stirrup | Team inspector | English Drama |
| 23031 | Ian Knight | Team inspector | Mathematics |
| 6432 | Mick Sewter | Team inspector | Science |
| 18542 | Gerald Griffin | Team inspector | Information and communication technology Work-related learning |
| 20533 | David Rogers | Team inspector | Art and design |
| 8552 | Wallis Hart | Team inspector | Design and technology |
| 10392 | Donaleen Ratcliff | Team inspector | Geography Religious education |
| 22458 | Gilbert McGinn | Team inspector | Business studies History |
| 12110 | Roger Bailess | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages |
| 8622 | Heather Housden | Team inspector | Physical education |
| 18846 | Philip Priest | Team inspector | Citizenship Music |
| 23886 | Declan McCarthy | Team inspector | Personal, social and health education Special educational needs |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is excellent. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is very low (in the bottom five per cent nationally), yet standards at GCSE are in line with the national average, indicating excellent achievement. The school is outstandingly successful in its inclusion of large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers, and pupils with special educational needs, many of whom were previously excluded from other schools because of their challenging behaviour. Teaching and learning are very good and the quality of education is excellent overall. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and the school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are that:

- Pupils' achievement is exceptional in science and excellent in mathematics; pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make excellent progress.
- The headteacher's inspirational leadership and clear vision have given rise to very high staff morale, and to a staff that gives of its utmost for the benefit of the pupils.
- Very good teaching and an excellent curriculum, with outstanding opportunities for learning outside school hours, lead to a high level of motivation and interest amongst pupils.
- The excellent care afforded pupils and the mutually respectful relationships and harmony amongst this ethnically very diverse population contribute much to their self-esteem.
- The school has excellent links with the community, increasingly good links with other educational establishments and very good partnership with parents.
- Although much assessment practice is good, aspects of assessment could be improved in order to raise standards even further.

The school has made very good improvement since it was last inspected, in February 1999. It has successfully addressed all the issues raised, with very good development in information and communication technology, greater consistency in the quality of teaching in mathematics, a full resolution of health and safety issues, and significantly increased rates of attendance. It has put in place procedures that are intended to ensure that all pupils take part in a daily act of collective worship, but their implementation does not fully meet statutory requirements. Standards have risen at GCSE, despite the admission of large numbers of pupils with high levels of need. Significant improvements have taken place in all areas of the school's work and pupils' achievement has improved accordingly.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Given pupils' very low attainment on entry to the school and the average standards they reach by the end of Year 11, their overall achievement is excellent. The 2004 National Curriculum test results in Year 9 were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science, but above those of similar schools based on the 73 per cent of pupils whose Year 6 test performance was known. The school's English results were well above those of similar schools at Level 5 and Level 6. Results in mathematics were above those of similar schools. Science results were in line with those of similar schools at Level 5 and well above at Level 6. However, these comparisons do not take into account the large number of pupils who joined the school during Years

8 and 9 with little or no English or the significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs. When these factors are taken into account, it is clear that the school's 2004 test results were remarkably good, indicative of at least very good achievement. At GCSE in 2004, the school's results were in line with the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C and A* to G grades and overall. They were well above those of similar schools based on pupils' prior attainment. These results indicated that pupils did very well in Years 10 and 11. Currently, standards are below average overall in Year 9 but average by Year 11, with excellent overall achievement from a very low starting point. Pupils' achievement is excellent in mathematics and exceptional in science, where standards are well above the national average. Achievement is very good in all other subjects, except in religious studies, where it is good.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. Pupils have extremely positive attitudes and behave very well. Attendance is very good, though punctuality is not yet satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is excellent. The school cares for its pupils exceptionally well and ensures that the needs of a very diverse school population are met. **The quality of teaching and learning is very good.** The curriculum is excellent overall, with outstanding opportunities for pupils to engage in learning activities outside normal school hours, and excellent support for pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language. The school's excellent community links, very good partnership with parents and increasingly strong links with other educational establishments all support pupils' achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher and his deputies provide creative and inspirational leadership, which ensures that everyone involved in the school's work shares in the same high aspirations and sense of purpose. Other staff in key positions provide very good support to the headteacher – with some excellent work in particular areas – and staff morale is unusually high. Governance is very good: the governing body is committed to the school and provides a great deal of support and challenge. Statutory requirements are met except that relating to collective worship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils alike are highly satisfied with the education the school provides.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is to:

- raise standards further by refining aspects of assessment, marking and target setting*;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that a daily act of collective worship is provided for all pupils.

** Assessment is a priority within the current school improvement plan.*

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Given pupils' very low attainment on entry to the school and the average standards they reach at GCSE, their overall achievement is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is exceptional at GCSE in science and excellent in mathematics.
- Pupils achieve very well in all other subjects, except in religious studies, where their achievement is good.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is excellent.
- The achievement of gifted and talented pupils is very good.

Commentary

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 30.4 (33.6) | 33.3 (33.4) |
| Mathematics | 31.5 (33.2) | 35.5 (35.4) |
| Science | 29.1 (30.4) | 33.1 (33.6) |

There were 213 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. The 2004 National Curriculum test results in Year 9 were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science, but above those of similar schools based on the prior attainment of the 73 per cent of pupils whose Year 6 test performance was known. The school's English results at Level 5 and at Level 6 and above were much better than those of similar schools, the overall results pulled down only by the significant number of pupils at an early stage of learning English. Results in mathematics were better than those of similar schools at Level 5 and at Level 6 and above. Science results were in line with those of similar schools at Level 5 and well above average at Level 6 and above. However, these comparisons do not take into account the 27 per cent of pupils for whom prior attainment data was unavailable – most of whom were refugees and asylum seekers who entered the school with no English and some with no prior educational experience. The large number of pupils with special educational needs, who typically progress at a slower rate than their peers, also needs to be taken into account. When these factors are considered, it is clear that the school's 2004 test results were remarkably good, indicative of at least very good achievement.
2. The school's Year 9 test results rose from 2000 to 2003 in English and mathematics. Compared with schools nationally, results in 2004 were lower than those in the two preceding years and the school did not meet its targets at Level 5. This reflects a decline in pupils' attainment on entry to the school, however, and must be seen in the light of the high level of turbulence in Years 8 and 9. There has been no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys in Year 9 tests, relative to national differences, in recent years.

Standards in GCSE/General National Vocational Qualifications examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

| | School results | National results |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades | 54 (47) | 52 (52) |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades | 89 (90) | 89 (88) |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades | 95 (93) | 96 (96) |
| Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) | 35.3 (34.5) | 34.9 (34.7) |

There were 260 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- At GCSE in 2004, the school's results were in line with the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C and A* to G grades and overall. They were well above those of similar schools based on pupils' prior attainment. These results indicated that pupils did very well in Years 10 and 11, with boys outperforming girls. Pupils of Indian heritage gained the highest results, and achieved somewhat better than any other ethnic group, closely followed by other Asian groups and British pupils. All pupils did particularly well in science and business studies; they did less well, relative to their performance in other subjects, in English language and literature. Based on their prior attainment, however, the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades was above average in English and placed the school in the top five per cent for mathematics and science, indicating excellent achievement. The upward trend in the school's Year 11 results from 2000 to 2004 has been broadly in line with the national trend. The school slightly exceeded its target for the number of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades in 2004 but it did not meet its overall target; given the school's success compared with similar schools, this tends to suggest that the target was rather too challenging.
- Inspection findings show that standards are below average overall in Year 9 but average by Year 11, indicating excellent overall achievement from a very low starting point. Standards are below average in English by the time pupils leave, because pupils with English as an additional language often have difficulty grasping the linguistic subtleties of GCSE texts. However, the school is extremely effective in its promotion of pupils' literacy skills, which supports their performance at GCSE. Standards are average in mathematics by Year 11, where achievement is excellent, and well above average in science, revealing exceptional achievement. A significant amount of excellent and very good teaching, in combination with an excellent curriculum, ensures that pupils also achieve very well in most other subjects. Their achievement in religious studies is good. Pupils with special educational needs and those at early stages in acquiring English as an additional language achieve exceptionally well, because they are included fully and their needs are met extremely well in lessons throughout the school. They typically exceed their individual targets and nearly all gain at least one GCSE, with some reaching A* to C grades. The achievement of gifted and talented pupils is very good; these pupils are highly challenged in some subjects, particularly in mathematics, and through a range of whole-school initiatives, but extending opportunities for these pupils has been identified, rightly, as an area for further development.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are extremely positive and behaviour is very good. Pupils' spiritual development is good, moral and social development is very good and cultural development is excellent. Attendance is very good, though punctuality is not yet satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's excellent ethos makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Staff have exceptionally high expectations and instil in pupils a desire to learn.

- The very good personal development of pupils and their extremely positive attitudes make them receptive and responsible learners.
- Pupils quickly develop confidence and high self-esteem, producing a 'can do' culture.
- Awareness and appreciation of others' cultures underpin the excellent relationships.
- Absence of worship or meaningful reflection in form tutor periods, and occasionally in assemblies, prevents the school from meeting statutory requirements for collective worship.
- Very good attendance makes a strong contribution to pupils' outstanding achievement; the school continues to work towards improved punctuality.

Commentary

5. Attitudes to learning are extremely good and pupils respond very well to the opportunities provided. Over half the pupils attend one or more of the after-school activities provided, while as many as 100 pupils arrive early to take part in the breakfast club. In lessons, pupils work hard and co-operate very well with each other. They are polite and friendly and enjoy excellent relationships with teachers. The school sets high expectations for conduct and academic performance, and the quality of teaching instills in pupils a genuine desire to learn. Pupils rapidly develop the self-esteem necessary to attain their full potential. The many pupils with special educational needs and who are at early stages in acquiring English grow quickly in confidence as teachers ensure they experience, and are rewarded, for their success. Pupils themselves have very positive views about the school.
6. The great majority of pupils display very high standards of behaviour. This is largely a result of the excellent ethos for learning created by dedicated staff, whose quality of teaching and care are very high, and by the excellent way in which staff and pupils support those with very varied needs. Where instances of misconduct occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively. The school has a strong record in dealing with some very difficult pupils, including some currently who would otherwise be in a secure unit. The exclusion rate is, at first sight, rather high, but the school uses exclusion judiciously to maintain control and reinforce acceptable boundaries of behaviour. The high proportion of pupils incurring only one exclusion is indicative of the success of this strategy. The school's improvement plan recognises the need to reduce exclusions as quickly as possible. Although some bullying occurs, pupils and parents alike say that any problems are quickly resolved. Very few racist incidents occur, despite the ethnically very diverse nature of the school population.

Ethnic background of pupils

| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
|---|
| White – British |
| White – Irish |
| White – any other White background |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean |
| Mixed – White and Black African |
| Mixed – White and Asian |
| Mixed – any other mixed background |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi |

Exclusions in the last school year

| No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 220 | 20 | 5 |
| 9 | 2 | - |
| 47 | 5 | - |
| 27 | 14 | - |
| 11 | 4 | - |
| 20 | 1 | - |
| 23 | 7 | - |
| 123 | 1 | - |
| 16 | - | - |
| 9 | 1 | - |

| | | | |
|---|-----|----|---|
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 144 | 20 | 2 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 88 | 14 | 2 |
| Black or Black British – African | 111 | 17 | - |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 19 | 4 | - |
| Chinese | 7 | - | - |
| Any other ethnic group | 23 | 4 | - |
| Information not obtained | 20 | 2 | - |

7. The spiritual development of pupils is fostered effectively in many areas of the curriculum, notably in religious studies. Pupils show the greatest respect for each other's feelings and beliefs. The system of weekly year assemblies and 'Thoughts for the Day' in tutor groups provides a basis for daily collective worship. Too often, however, form tutors pay only cursory attention to the need to allow pupils to reflect upon and discuss the subject chosen. Assemblies are meaningful occasions and those during the inspection contributed significantly to pupils' personal development, but they do not always include an act of collective worship. Consequently, despite good improvement since the last inspection, the school does not meet fully the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
8. Pupils' moral development is very good. Pupils observe rules of good behaviour and readily accept the fairness of punishment, should they transgress. In class and tutor groups, as role models, and in subject teaching, staff consistently promote strong moral principles and create opportunities to expose pupils to moral issues. Pupils willingly accept responsibility within lessons and other activities and, for example, as prefects, library helpers, peer listeners and counsellors to younger pupils.
9. The same is true of pupils' social development. Pupils are given, and willingly accept, responsibility for helping others in several areas. They collaborate well in class, and the school's many sporting successes testify to the high level of teamwork they display. Citizenship is taught well, pupils assist with helpful projects within their local community and the fledgling school and year councils are valued as democratic means of airing their views. Pupils not only understand how a community functions; they contribute greatly to the strong and caring community which is Rooks Heath High School.
10. The cultural development of pupils, including the appreciation of other cultures, is excellent. The ethnic diversity, and varied backgrounds, of pupils makes a positive contribution to this. Pupils' excellent relationships do not exist *in spite of* their differences; they exist *as a result of* these differences. This is because, in their relationships with one another, pupils respond to the high value placed on the individual within the school as a whole. Displays around the school reveal how well the school promotes cultural awareness and pride. In subjects, particularly - but not exclusively - religious studies, music, art, English and foreign languages, the nature and achievements of other cultures is given appropriate prominence.
11. Pupils' attendance is very good. In the last full school year, it was around the national average and presently is higher still. In the context of the school's intake, this is an excellent outcome of the schools' and parents' efforts to ensure regular attendance. The school improvement plan recognises the need to improve punctuality to school in the morning, but lateness stems partly from the significant number of pupils who travel from outside the borough and who are dependent on public transport.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Authorised absence | Unauthorised absence |
|--------------------|----------------------|

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| School data | 7.0 |
| National data | 6.9 |

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| School data | 0.5 |
| National data | 1.1 |

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

12. Since the last inspection, there has been an excellent improvement in attendance and a little in punctuality. Attitudes are extremely positive and behaviour is now very good, despite a potentially more challenging intake, including a significant number of pupils who were previously excluded from other schools. Spiritual, moral and cultural development have all improved from an already high level, though failure to provide a daily act of collective worship remains an area requiring improvement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is excellent. The school cares for its pupils exceptionally well and ensures that the needs of a very diverse population are met. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The curriculum is excellent overall, with outstanding opportunities for pupils to engage in learning activities outside normal school hours, and excellent support for pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language. The school's excellent community links, very good partnership with parents and increasingly strong links with other educational establishments all support pupils' achievement.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Assessment procedures are good overall but, as the school itself has identified, aspects of assessment practice require improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A high proportion of teaching and learning is very good or excellent.
- Teachers provide excellent support for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.
- Pupils' genuine interest in learning makes a significant contribution to their excellent overall achievement.
- There is some good assessment practice, but standards could be raised further by refining aspects of assessment, marking and target-setting.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 146 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 19 (13%) | 68 (47%) | 42 (29%) | 15 (10%) | 2 (1%) | - | - |

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

13. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. An unusually high proportion of the teaching seen – six in every ten lessons – was very good or excellent, and teaching was at least good in almost nine out of ten lessons. This is a significant improvement on the quality of teaching found at the last inspection. The strength of teaching reflects the excellent leadership of teaching and learning, the emphasis the school has placed on extending teachers' repertoire of skills, as well as the stable and committed team of teachers and support assistants who place pupils' well-being at the heart of everything they do.

14. Excellent teaching was seen in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology, Latin and physical education. These lessons were characterised by very high expectations, innovative and varied teaching methods, excellent use of time, and work carefully matched to pupils' differing needs. In these lessons and those where teaching is very good, excellent support is provided for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. This is achieved by making use of a range of techniques, including visual resources and practical examples to promote literacy skills and ensure all pupils understood, careful pairing of pupils to maximise peer support and excellent management of pupils' behaviour. Almost without exception, the relationship between teachers and pupils is warm and mutually respectful. In their turn, pupils are nearly always diligent, enthusiastic learners who co-operate readily with what is required of them and use every minute of the lesson to achieve their full potential. Teachers and pupils alike have learned how to support the many pupils who arrive in their classes with no English and, in some cases, no previous experience of education. As one teacher put it, 'We have just got used to the high level of pupils' needs and found ways of coping, so that it seems normal now'. They cope so exceptionally well with what, on the face of it, is an almost impossible situation that pupils achieve far beyond what might reasonably be expected.

Example of outstanding practice

In a geography lesson in Year 8, the teacher made excellent use of resources and shared her methodology with pupils so that they were party to the accelerated learning techniques she was using.

The teacher greeted the class at the door, wearing a kimono and with Japanese music playing in the background. She quickly gained their absolute attention and involved them as active learners from the outset, as they repeated a number of Japanese phrases. After showing a video excerpt about Japan, she passed Japanese artefacts around, pointing out to pupils that she was doing this so that they could 'feel Japan'. Using an excellent combination of humour and firm management of pupils' behaviour, she recorded the key vocabulary on the board in response to their observations. Quickly organising pupils into groups, she set them off on a trail of finding evidence around the room to complete a worksheet on Japanese culture. Pupils collaborated enthusiastically and gave the task their total focus. The teacher circulated, asking probing questions that deepened pupils' thinking and maintaining a rapid pace as she moved them on from one 'information station' to the next. Reorganised into three mixed ability teams, each team was given a pen and a large sheet of paper and competed, relay-fashion, to record the most facts about Japan from memory. The pace increased as pupils came closer to the three-minute deadline they had been set, and the lesson was drawn to a close by reflecting on what they had learned and how much they had enjoyed the activities. Several minutes after the bell went for lunch, many pupils were still reluctant to leave because they were so fired up about the lesson.

15. Teachers conduct regular assessments and keep careful records of how well pupils are doing, and there is some excellent assessment practice, most notably in science. Almost without exception, teachers use questioning very well to check pupils' understanding within lessons and adjust their teaching accordingly, as well as using assessment information to plan their lessons. In some subjects, particularly in business studies, teachers give up significant amounts of time to tutor individual pupils and the setting of academic targets is well established in a number of subjects. At the termly monitoring days, pupils are interviewed, new personal targets are set and past targets reviewed, but the school has rightly identified the need to ensure that all pupils have specific, academic targets in all subjects. Many teachers are very experienced in marking examination coursework, so that they are able to assess pupils' work and predict grades precisely. Frequently, teachers comment on pupils' work in a way that makes clear how they might improve, but there is some variation in the quality of marking. Pupils are involved in assessing their own work in some subjects; the further development of self-evaluation is a current priority in the school improvement plan. Detailed analysis of the previous year's examination results is used to raise standards, and the employment of two members of staff to manage data means that the school is now well placed to maximise its use of assessment information. It is in the process of centralising every piece of assessment information about each pupil so that it is instantly accessible.

16. There are effective systems in place for the assessment of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language. These include precise target setting with clear strategies and guidance for teachers. Statutory requirements are met; however, diagnostic assessment systems are not yet fully developed to differentiate between those pupils with a predominantly special educational need or those whose learning difficulties arise primarily from their limited English. The school is aware of this and has rightly identified it as an area for development.

The curriculum

An excellent curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for pupils to engage in learning activities outside normal school hours and ensures that experiences are relevant to pupils' needs. The school is very well staffed with many experienced teachers. Accommodation is satisfactory and resources meet the needs of the curriculum well in most areas.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is exceptionally broad and reflects high expectations.
- The excellent range of extra-curricular activities greatly enhances learning and achievement.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is excellent.
- Very well planned provision for personal, social and health education greatly enhances pupils' personal development.
- Careers education and work related learning are very well developed.
- Although there have been significant improvements in the accommodation, there is still a shortage in some areas.

Commentary

17. There has been very good improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection. It now offers a broad range of subjects and courses, within and outside lessons hours, that are highly relevant to pupils' needs. High expectations are evident within the curriculum, for instance, all pupils study Latin and two modern languages in Year 8, then opt for two of these to continue in Year 9. A much wider range of option choices is now available to pupils in Years 10 and 11, which has increased their chances of gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE. All pupils now take citizenship at GCSE as well as a short course in religious education, and they have the opportunity to choose applied and vocational subjects, such as business studies, media studies and photography. This has contributed to excellent achievement with higher than expected numbers of pupils gaining five or more A* to C or A* to G grades at GCSE because pupils are able to choose subjects which they enjoy, as well as taking more subjects than before. Additional English is an option in Years 10 and 11, enabling beginners in English to gain accreditation, and the arrival of significant numbers of pupils who are proficient in languages other than English has been recognised in the inclusion of several community languages. GCSE options include: Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu and Tamil.
18. As a result of the very effective implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy, there is a sharp focus throughout the curriculum on promoting basic skills, especially literacy, within individual subjects, which impacts positively on pupils' achievement. Provision for information and communication technology has improved a great deal since the last inspection. With the award of specialist status, the school will have improved resources, enabling it to extend its provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum and to explore e-learning opportunities. Business studies and mathematics will also benefit particularly from the funding that goes with the award, and several more vocational qualifications will be added, along with vocational training.
19. The range of learning opportunities provided at lunchtime, before and after school is exceptional, considerably extending the possibilities open to pupils and providing them with a great deal of additional support, over and above that available in lessons. This provision is managed most effectively by one of the deputy heads, and teaching staff show excellent commitment by giving up their free time voluntarily to organise a wide range of activities, which are extremely popular with pupils. Out-of-hours learning also extends to holiday activities, trips and residential visits. This excellent range of highly relevant activities not only enriches pupils' learning, and has contributed to raised standards at GCSE, but also enhances their personal development and has improved their attitudes to school and the improved attendance rate.

20. The exceptionally well thought-out provision for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language includes a highly effective continuum of support, from withdrawal sessions in the support bases or the inclusion unit to in-class support for those that need it. All staff are made aware of pupils' particular needs and, where support is provided, all support staff and subject teachers are involved in joint planning. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties complete any work missed, such as GCSE coursework, in the inclusion base, which - but for that facility - they would find it very hard to complete. Provision for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English is mainly classroom based so that they are fully included in the same learning activities as their peers and the level of sensitivity to their needs enables them to make rapid gains in English. The school has developed a highly relevant alternative curriculum for pupils at risk of exclusion. This includes a combination of the new *Key Steps* ASDAN¹ award, the ASDAN bronze and silver *Challenge* Award, elements of work experience, GCSE English and mathematics, and various days spent in local colleges pursuing *Pathfinder* courses tailored to individual needs such as CLAIT² Levels 1 and 2, childcare and sport, which are accredited at NVQ Level 1.
21. Provision for personal, social and health education is very well planned. Drugs, relationships and sex education are given due emphasis with cross-curricular links to various subjects, and pupils benefit greatly from the contributions of outside professionals. Consequently, they develop highly responsible attitudes and leave school as well-rounded young people. Very good advice and guidance are provided in relation to further education and careers. The contribution made by the Connexions service and by external speakers is extremely helpful to pupils. They receive useful advice when selecting their options in Year 9, and whole-day careers seminars in Years 9, 10 and 11 are particularly effective.
22. A well-qualified and experienced teaching staff meet curriculum needs very well, ably supported by support assistants in special educational needs and English as an additional language. The school deploys the resources currently available in these areas effectively, to address the needs of the pupils. The local education authority has recognised the need for major redevelopment of the site and a modernisation programme is ongoing. In most areas, accommodation is adequate to support the curriculum; where there are shortfalls, these should be alleviated with special status and planned new building. Learning resources support achievement well in most subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils is excellent. Pupils receive very good support, advice and guidance. There is good involvement of pupils in matters affecting them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An ethos of care pervades the school and underpins all its work.
- A very wide range of extra-curricular activities provides excellent care and very good academic support.
- Excellent child protection, health and safety arrangements ensure pupils grow and work in a secure environment.
- Excellent integration of casual entrants fosters rapid personal development and promotes opportunities for all pupils.
- Pupils hold very positive opinions of the school; this encourages their high achievement.

¹ The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network.

² The Computer Literacy and Information Technology certificate.

Commentary

23. An overriding aim of the school is to provide pupils with a level of care and support that will enable them to achieve to their full potential: it succeeds admirably in this. From the moment of entry, all pupils - especially those who come from unsettled or challenging backgrounds - are cared for and supported within a system that encourages personal growth and responsibility, while providing any necessary help to overcome their problems.
24. The school pays detailed attention to health and safety matters and no areas of concern were identified during the inspection. The school receives a number of pupils who potentially need a high level of support and it has very effective child protection procedures. All staff are trained in child protection and there are several trained first-aiders in the school. The care and support given to pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language are excellent.
25. The pastoral system is very strong, with a director of studies and head of year for each year group, providing an additional resource to give pupils individual attention. The pastoral structure is underpinned by numerous other support activities, such as an inclusion unit, a drop-in counselling centre, the breakfast club and other study clubs, mentors, work-related learning, the Connexions service and other agencies, all of whom supplement the advice and guidance given by academic and pastoral staff.
26. Pupils say that they have a trusting relationship with at least one adult in the school and that they would feel confident in discussing personal or academic issues. The personal guidance available to pupils is very good and academic guidance is good. Directors of study track pupils' progress and at any suggestion of underachievement, support mechanisms are put into place. Pupils have personal targets, but academic targets are not set in all subjects; ensuring that this is the case is currently a priority in the school improvement plan. Individual education plan targets are regularly reviewed and new ones set, and the school has recently introduced useful individual language plans for pupils at an early stage in acquiring English.
27. Induction arrangements for pupils joining the school at the start of Year 8 are good. There is a particularly good welcome and induction system for the many pupils joining the school at non-standard times, many of whom present a high degree of challenge. It is largely through the very comprehensive pastoral structures that the many new arrivals are seamlessly and successfully integrated into the school. Their integration is also achieved by the commendable extent to which all teachers see themselves as teachers of special educational needs and English as an additional language. In their daily efforts to integrate pupils into their classes, they are assisted a great deal by other pupils, who readily support newcomers and help them to fit in.
28. The school values the opinions of its pupils and their views are accorded due respect in lessons. However, the formal process of seeking and acting on pupils' views is in its infancy. The year and school councils have made a good start and the school's ethos is likely to ensure that they develop successfully.
29. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in most areas of care, support and guidance, bringing the overall quality of provision in this area from good to very good, with excellent attention now to pupils' care, welfare, health and safety.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnership with parents is very good, links with the community are excellent and those with other schools and colleges are very productive.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent links with organisations of all types make an outstanding contribution to school life.
- The curriculum guides provided for parents give them an excellent opportunity to become involved in their children's learning.
- High parental involvement in special educational needs planning and reviews supports pupils' achievement.
- A rapid response to parental concerns builds their confidence and promotes their increased involvement.
- Parents' views of the school are very positive and active parental support for the school is high, allowing a greater range of activities to be offered.
- Very good links with other educational establishments bring many benefits to pupils.

Commentary

30. The school has developed very strong links with parents. They are kept very well informed through high quality information, including comprehensive progress reports, very informative termly newsletters, concise and easy-to-read governing body reports, school brochures and very good day-to-day contact.

Example of outstanding practice

The school's excellent curriculum booklets provide parents with a wealth of information about the learning experiences provided for their children.

Published annually, for each of the school's four year groups (Years 8 to 11), these booklets explain to parents, in detail, several aspects of each subject taught in the ensuing year's curriculum. What makes these booklets excellent is the comprehensiveness, conciseness and simplicity of language involved. The last of these is particularly relevant for the many parents whose first language is not English. The elements included in the booklet - for all subjects - are: 1) a course outline and content (by term); 2) assessment method(s) used for each subject; 3) the marking system used; 4) homework and coursework arrangements; 5) any special requirements for the subject, for example, equipment, fieldwork, educational trips and residential visits. For Years 10 and 11, details of GCSE and vocational examinations are included. The main benefit of these guides for parents is that they can use the booklets to support their children's education in a number of ways, for instance, by arranging additional relevant experiences, providing resources, being better informed to monitor and discuss progress, and providing a good home study environment. As a valuable adjunct to this, the school issues a termly schedule of its excellent, award-winning range of extra-curricular activities - sporting, cultural, social and academic.

31. Though the school values approaches from parents and deals rapidly with their concerns, it has few formal means of seeking, and thereby acting upon, their views on whole-school issues. The very good flow of information tends to be one-way, from school to parent. Nevertheless, parents make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Several help in school and the home-school link books are frequently used well. Attendance at consultation evenings and academic monitoring days is good. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are closely involved with planning and reviews: the collaboration between staff and parents impacts very positively on pupils' learning and achievement.
32. Parents hold overwhelmingly positive views about the school. They are especially positive about: their children's liking for school, the high expectations the staff have for their children, induction arrangements, leadership and management, the quality of staff and their support for pupils, and the friendliness and community spirit within the school. Inspectors agree with all these positive opinions. A small level of concern was expressed over the amount of homework, information received and pupils' behaviour. The inspection found that homework supports pupils' achievement well and that parents are kept very well informed. The amount of inappropriate behaviour is not significant and is managed very well. Some parents at the meeting commented that the buildings need improvement and that sports facilities are

inadequate. Inspectors agreed in some measure with each of these comments, whilst recognising that the school has firm plans to improve its accommodation and facilities.

33. The school has outstandingly good links with the local community. Its embracing of a Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) has several positive effects, notably the provision of free adult education at the school and providing offices for, and engaging in, the Youth Inclusion Panel. The LPSA lies at the heart of the school's commitment to extend its already excellent community links. In gaining specialist school status for business and enterprise the school has been supported by several business organisations. Local enterprises and various voluntary and service agencies contribute widely to the curriculum, to careers education and to support activities within the school. The school provides office space for the local Community Police Unit and this relationship contributes well to pupils' social development, as well as much to the immediate community. The school participates in local events and competitions and its pupils are presently engaged in social community projects.
34. There are very good links with local schools and colleges. Pupils are given very good guidance to enable them to make appropriate further study choices and this involves considerable input from other educational establishments. The school provides dynamic leadership to its cluster and promotes strong inter-school bonds. One outstanding example of this is the 'Cluster Day' it hosts, during which up to 400 teaching and other staff avail themselves of personal or professional development opportunities organised by the school. A few pupils are provided with opportunities to study subjects at other schools and the school provides curricular access for a few from other schools. The arrangements for this linked provision are good.
35. Parents' rightly have fewer concerns about the school than they did at the time of the last inspection, and are much more involved. In other areas of parental liaison, the school has moved from good to very good. Community links were good at that time; they are now excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher and his deputies provide creative and inspirational leadership. Staff in key positions, provide very good support to the headteacher – with some excellent work in particular areas - and staff morale is unusually high. Governance is very good: the governing body is committed to the school and provides a great deal of support and challenge. Statutory requirements are met except that relating to collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The management structure is innovative and utilises the talents of a significant number of staff.
- The headteacher is highly skilled in motivating staff and pupils alike.
- The quality of provision from one subject to another is unusually consistent.
- The school has used the workforce reforms to excellent effect, under the exceptional leadership of the school manager.
- Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school and are involved closely in decision-making.

Commentary

36. When the headteacher joined the school four years ago, recognising the potential in a number of members of staff, he offered any teacher with a significant middle management role the chance to join the senior leadership team. This empowerment of managers showed flair and gave rise to a senior team that is thirteen strong, enabling the school to move forward simultaneously on several fronts at once. The very good improvement found in so many areas of the school's work since the last inspection reflects the effectiveness of this powerful management structure, in which academic and pastoral issues are closely aligned.

37. Because the staff feel that their skills are utilised and valued the school has retained many who might otherwise have moved on, and has led to a situation where staff turnover is low and morale very high. Teaching, and non-teaching staff alike are given excellent opportunities to develop their potential and teamwork is of the highest order. It is clear from the enthusiasm with which staff carry out their duties that they love working at Rooks Heath. This goes a long way to explaining the quality that pervades all aspects of the school's work and its success in integrating pupils who have failed in other establishments or had no previous formal education.
38. A high degree of consistency is found at departmental level: subject departments are led very well and any dips in performance are acted upon swiftly. The management of subjects is very good overall; it is good in some subjects where monitoring could be a little more rigorous. At a whole school level, provision for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is excellent as a result of the absolute commitment of the whole staff to the inclusion of all pupils. With such large numbers of pupils in both 'categories', and refugees and asylum seekers arriving continuously, the school has rightly identified that a new system of co-ordination is required. It has taken sensible steps to streamline its central organisation of support for pupils with special educational needs, emotional and behavioural difficulties and those at an early stage in acquiring English.
39. The school is ahead of the national agenda in its workforce remodelling. The potential of members of the non-teaching staff has been recognised and their skills developed extremely well. The creation of some key new posts has already freed up teachers to concentrate on honing their teaching to raise standards further. Its impact is evident in the very good quality teaching seen during the inspection. The development of the role of school manager, which is fulfilled with exceptional effectiveness, has made an outstanding contribution to the school's efficiency and provided invaluable support to the headteacher.
40. Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and bring considerable experience to their role. The governing body is skilfully led and governors provide a high level of challenge, as well as a clear commitment to the school. Following the last inspection, procedures were put in place that should enable the school to meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship, but this is not fully implemented. Other statutory requirements are met and this breach, although requiring further attention, does not seriously undermine the school's good overall provision for pupils' spiritual development.
41. The school rigorously evaluates its own performance and seeks always to improve. Financial management is excellent, ensuring resources are used judiciously, and best value principles adhered to. From a very low starting point, with many challenges along the way, the school enables pupils to reach national standards by the time they leave. It cares exceptionally well for its pupils, academically and personally, and meets with a remarkable level of success. It does this with average costs and, so, gives very good value for money.
42. At the time of the last inspection, leadership and management were good; they are now excellent. Senior managers are exceptionally effective in dealing with the daily challenges that face a school such as this, but are also outward looking in embracing local and national initiatives. The decision to bid for specialist status in Business and Enterprise was very well judged, and Rooks Heath is an active player in discussions within the local education authority over educational initiatives in Harrow. A number of exciting further developments are planned for the school, which should take it from strength to strength.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Total income | 4,008,471 | Balance from previous year | 55,023 |
| Total expenditure | 3,977,682 | Balance carried forward to the next | 85,812 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 4,163 | | |

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work-related learning is very well planned and managed.
- The vocational and alternative curriculum pathways provide well for many pupils.
- Work experience is very good.
- Pupils have very well developed concepts of work.
- Aspects of good practice that are not currently in place have been addressed in the business and enterprise plan.

Commentary

43. Work-related learning is a high priority for the school and was a key element in its successful business and enterprise bid. There are five vocational option subjects for pupils in Years 10 and 11, ceramics, photography, media studies, business studies, and leisure and tourism. These subjects all promote work-related learning. Currently, thirteen pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow an alternative pathway, which – in addition to core subjects – provides an individualised programme of work-related learning, including beauty therapy, car repair and childcare. These extended work placements are well supported through extra study at the local college. All aspects of this provision are carefully monitored by the school and are successfully keeping the pupils in full-time education.
44. All Year 11 pupils undertake a two-week work experience. Pupils are very well prepared for this, through meetings with 40 business advisors over two days. After their placement, pupils write a comprehensive report that includes their experience and understanding of health and safety, skills and qualification requirements, and working practices. As a result of their success, many pupils are offered part-time jobs after their placement, further developing their understanding of work.
45. The school has many links with industry that develop pupils' awareness of the world of work. During the inspection, ten employers visited the school to lead a day of work-related activities for pupils in Year 9 as part of the enterprise and citizenship programme. Many departments organise visits to places of work that focus pupils' attention on skills and practices. Seventy-six Year 10 and 11 pupils undertake the ASDAN award and experience work visits to the police, a fire station and retail outlets.
46. As a result of this provision, pupils are very highly motivated and very well informed about the world of work. They are able to take responsibility well and are enterprising in their outlook. They achieve very well in all vocational courses. Pupils know the value of qualifications and work-based skills in a competitive job market and strive to ensure that they are well placed for future employment.

47. Careers guidance is very good. The school has an excellent relationship with the local Connexions agency and with local businesses and uses these well within its provision of a comprehensive and thorough programme of careers education. Guidance is equally good, where the focus of attention may be on further education. Particular attention is given to those who may find it more difficult to decide on appropriate courses of study or careers.
48. The school meets statutory requirements fully in its work-related learning curriculum, and is very well placed to expand learning opportunities from the beginning of the next academic year. Its successful business and enterprise specialist college bid is enabling a number of improvements to be introduced. Currently, pupils have no opportunity to undertake a mini-enterprise; this has been a very successful element of work-related learning in the past and will be resurrected and undertaken by all pupils in Years 10 and 11 under the guidance of six advisors. Pupils are not taught management of personal finances at present but there are plans to include this in personal, social and health education next year.
49. Leadership and management are very good. The senior leadership team is active in its support of work-related learning: there is a co-ordinator and a very comprehensive policy for the subject. Monitoring is very well established and reported through a detailed annual review. The vocational and alternative pathways have been carefully planned. Liaison with industry, employers, the local authority and the college to promote work-related learning is very good.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good, and a significant amount of excellent, teaching in the subject results in pupils' very good achievement.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is excellent.
- Very good leadership and management and the strong commitment of all members of staff provide the department with a clear sense of direction and purpose.
- All pupils are provided with a challenging, interesting and relevant curriculum.
- Pupils are not provided with clearly identified, sharp targets for improvement.

Commentary

50. Attainment on entry to the school is very low in all areas of English and a quarter of the school population is at an early stage in acquiring the language. Very good teaching, an imaginative curriculum and excellent support for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language enable pupils to achieve extremely well, though standards are well below those expected of pupils at the end of Year 9. This is reflected in the most recent National Curriculum tests, in 2004, where pupils' well below average literacy skills inhibited many from reaching the national expectation of Level 5, though an average proportion of pupils reached Level 6. Standards were significantly above average, however, when compared with similar schools. Achievement continues to be very good in Years 10 and 11, as pupils respond to some difficult and demanding poems, plays and novels, though standards at the end of Year 11 remain below those found nationally. This was confirmed in the most recent GCSE English Language and English Literature examinations in 2004.
51. Many pupils in Years 8 and 9 display good speaking skills in social situations, though some pupils have problems in speaking at length in a formal context. Teachers try to ensure that all pupils make an active contribution to oral activities and explain their ideas in detail. Pupils continue to make very good progress in Years 10 and 11. As a result of very good provision, speaking and listening skills in Years 9 and 11 are broadly average, with pupils' impressive listening skills outweighing their competence as speakers.
52. Regular chances are provided for pupils in Years 8 and 9 to develop their reading skills through some very good quality literature modules of work and regular visits to the library. As a result, reading skills improve over time, though a number of pupils with special educational needs and those at early stages in acquiring English do not always grasp the full meaning of the books they read. Critical and analytical reading skills are taught well in Years 10 and 11. Pupils who are still grasping the subtleties of English as an additional language have problems, however, in appreciating how writers use language to convey tone, atmosphere ideas and issues. Standards in reading are, therefore, well below average at the end of Year 9 and below average by Year 11.
53. Pupils in Years 8 and 9, including those with English as an additional language and special educational needs, develop basic English skills within a good range of demanding, yet interesting, writing activities which allow them to write for a range of purposes and in different

styles. Pupils are given regular opportunities to improve the quality of their work through drafting and re-drafting, so that their written work improves over time. Standards of written work in Years 10 and 11 vary significantly. Higher-attaining pupils produce written work that is above average. A number of pupils with English as an additional language and special educational needs have problems in writing in detail and at any great length. Standards in written work in English are well below average in Year 9 and below average by Year 11.

54. Pupils' positive attitudes to work and their wish to learn make a significant contribution to their very good, and sometimes excellent, progress in lessons. The quality of teaching is very good overall and a significant amount of teaching is excellent. Lessons are extremely well planned, organised and managed, with resources and activities matched to the needs of pupils at all levels of prior attainment and language acquisition. Pupils' work reveals that the English strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy is helping to raise standards in the subject, with relevant homework activities consolidating and extending what pupils have learned in the classroom. Where teaching is excellent, teachers provide outstanding support for those with English as an additional language and special educational needs, so that pupils make rapid gains in a range of skills within a single lesson.
55. Leadership and management are very good. The head of English has a clear understanding of the strengths of the department and the areas for development. The very hardworking members of the department have a strong concern for the welfare of all pupils' in their charge, and a clear commitment to raising standards in the subject. The English curriculum is imaginative and challenging: high quality modules of work and supportive documentation respond to the needs of all the pupils. Effective assessment and monitoring procedures enable staff to measure pupils' progress and attainment, though this information could be used in a more effective manner to provide all pupils with sharp medium-term targets for improvement.
56. Increased numbers of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language, together with the very high rate of mobility, have impacted on standards since the last inspection, so that results in National Curriculum tests and at GCSE have declined somewhat. However, pupils' achievement and overall provision in the subject have improved.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. The school is extremely effective in promoting language and literacy across the curriculum and the literacy skills of the majority of pupils support their achievement at GCSE. By Years 10 and 11, the written work of lower-attaining pupils is significantly better than that found in most schools amongst similar pupils, despite the very low literacy levels on entry. This is because pupils are given regular opportunities to develop their language and literacy skills in lessons. All subjects emphasise vocabulary and display key words. Pupils are encouraged to make active contributions to class discussions and a range of support strategies is used to develop their writing skills. Teachers make excellent use of visual resources and practical examples, especially in the best lessons in English, mathematics and science. They are careful to check pupils' understanding of vocabulary and immediately clarify any misunderstanding. This is particularly beneficial for pupils with special educational needs and those at an early stage in acquiring English.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in German are above average at GCSE.
- Pupils from a wide range of prior attainment achieve very well in all language skills.
- Teaching is carefully planned and very effective, especially in German.
- The department is led and managed by two highly skilled and experienced teachers.

- In some lessons, teachers' spoken French and German are too rapid for pupils to understand fully.

Commentary

58. On entry to the school, pupils' general language skills are well below average. By the end of Year 9, their work in French and German is in line with national expectations, and higher-attaining pupils produce work in German that is above national expectations. This represents very good achievement, particularly as pupils have studied French or German for two rather than the three years that is usual in schools where pupils enter at Year 7.
59. GCSE results for the last two years have been in line with the national average. This is a greater success than it at first appears, because the school enters a much higher proportion of pupils for GCSE than many other schools and this is particularly so for German. A number of pupils enter the school in Years 10 and 11 with little experience of learning a language. They are given the same opportunity to take the examination as all other pupils and their results clearly pull standards below what they would otherwise be. The GCSE results therefore show that pupils continue to build on their language learning in Years 10 and 11 and achieve very well. This is true for boys and girls, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. There are no significant differences in the performance of pupils from different ethnic groups.
60. The quality of teaching is very good overall. As a result, pupils make rapid progress and learn particularly well in Years 8 and 9. Carefully planned lessons, excellent teacher-prepared resources and plenty of opportunities for practice, result in pupils achieving very well in listening, speaking, reading and writing. In German in Year 8, for example, higher-attaining pupils are able to write accurate letters and other compositions after only a few months of study. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, insisting on correct pronunciation and well-presented work. Homework clearly reinforces what has been taught in class. Written exercises are usually carefully and consistently marked with sufficient detail to help pupils learn from their mistakes. Relationships between teachers and their classes are often excellent. Praise, humour and support for individuals provide a good climate for learning, which is particularly beneficial for pupils with special educational needs.
61. The majority of lessons in Years 10 and 11 are also very taught well. Teaching is lively and relevant: in French, real clothes are used to teach about fashion and motivate pupils to work well. In German in Year 11, the use of contemporary television weather forecasts ensures that pupils reach good standards in listening skills. In a minority of lessons, however, pupils have difficulty in fully understanding their teachers' French or German, which is spoken too fast. As a result, they lose interest, particularly when only a narrow range of practice activities is planned for them.
62. The languages team is very well led and managed. The two teachers who share this responsibility work effectively together, being skilled teachers who bring high levels of expertise and dedication to their work. Newly appointed teachers are particularly well supported and guided. A positive ethos for teaching and learning has been created. Very good progress has been made in putting right weaknesses identified at the last inspection particularly in raising pupils' achievement.

Latin

63. All pupils learn Latin in Year 8 and have the opportunity to continue to GCSE, where they meet with a high rate of success. Lessons observed and work analysed show that standards are above average and achievement is very good. Teaching is of very high quality, characterised by enthusiasm and excellent subject expertise. Planning is meticulous and resources to support and guide pupils are carefully and conscientiously prepared. The subject makes a very effective contribution to pupils' language and literacy development, particularly in Years 8

and 9, and reflects the extent to which the school is determined to provide pupils with every possible opportunity.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is excellent because of the cumulative effect of a great deal of very good teaching and learning.
- Teachers take great care to ensure that all pupils are challenged very well.
- Very good leadership ensures that there is a clear vision for the subject that is shared by the teachers in the department.
- Marking does not consistently inform pupils how well they are doing.

Commentary

64. In the 2004 National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 9, standards were well below the national average, but above average compared with similar schools. At GCSE, standards were in line with the national average and very high (in the top five per cent) compared with similar schools. Whilst there is little consistent difference in performance between boys and girls, Indian and other Asian pupils do better than Caribbean and British pupils. African pupils have the lowest attainment. However, performance by ethnicity is affected significantly by the amount of movement of pupils into and out of the school. This includes significant numbers who join with little or no English and, sometimes, no formal schooling.
65. Standards in Year 9 are currently below national expectations, with relatively few pupils working at the highest levels. In Year 11, standards are in line with the expectations of GCSE. Standards on entry to the school, taking all factors into account, are very low. The standards pupils attain, considered in the light of the progress they make and the levels of challenge they meet in the classroom, indicate excellent achievement.
66. Teaching is very good overall and leads to very good learning. Whilst not every lesson is of this high standard, the effect on achievement of a high incidence of very good – and some excellent – teaching is to enable pupils to make great strides in their learning and to achieve outstandingly well. This is the single most important factor in the department's success. The most notable features of the teaching include teachers' very rigorous expectations: they make no concessions in expectation. Pupils know that they are expected to be attentive, work hard and accurately, and do so, regardless of whether their command of English is weak, they have special educational needs or are particularly talented mathematicians. Teachers emphasise technical vocabulary continuously in lessons with a particular focus on key words. Pupils are also expected to write at length, for example, when reporting on an investigation, or, at a recent 'Mathematics Day', when they wrote a mathematical poem. Pupils with a special educational needs are supported extremely effectively in lessons, both by teachers and support assistants, and have modified work when that will better meet their individual needs. As a result, they are able to make the same progress and achieve as well as their peers. Pupils with a talent for the subject are well supported in lessons, with exceptionally challenging work, and also through outside activities in conjunction with the local education authority and provision made for gifted and talented pupils by universities. Consequently, all pupils share the same excellent achievement.
67. The high quality teaching comes about because of very good leadership. There is a shared and clear vision of how mathematics teaching should be and this is checked through effective monitoring. Data is analysed rigorously and the department's work is closely reviewed to ensure that the drive for higher standards continues unabated. In a recent review, the department identified a need to improve assessment. This is shown in the inconsistency of

marking in pupils' books and completed work is not annotated with National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. Whilst pupils complete self-assessment sheets, these relate to the topics in the schemes of work and not directly to their progress through the levels of the National Curriculum. At the time of the last inspection, pupils made satisfactory progress as a result of satisfactory teaching and good leadership. There has been very good improvement since then.

Mathematics across the curriculum

68. Provision for mathematics across the curriculum is good. Pupils apply their skills in other subjects well. For example, in science, pupils use formulae, graphs and measuring in their day-to-day learning. In geography, statistical techniques in particular are used very well to increase understanding. Pupils use basic formulae well in spreadsheets as part of their work in information and communication technology, and time lines are used in history and religious education to set work in its historical context.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is excellent and they reach high standards at GCSE.
- Teaching is very good overall and excellent in some lessons.
- Expectation and challenge are very high and all pupils are supported and encouraged extremely well.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Assessment strategies and the analysis of data are used very well.
- Some accommodation and chemical storage is of poor quality, dated, and insufficient.

Commentary

69. Pupils enter the school with very low prior attainment. Although the 2004 results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average at Level 5, they were average at Level 6. Compared with similar schools, these results were above average. In recent years there has been a significant and rising trend in pupils gaining Level 6 and above. GCSE results were well above the national average in 2004 and, compared with similar schools, results were very high (in the top five per cent nationally). About four out of five pupils successfully study double award science to GCSE. Of the remaining pupils, about half study three separate single science subjects (triple science) at GCSE and attain very high standards. Overall, pupils enter Year 10 with prior attainment which is well below the national average and the proportion of pupils who complete the courses with passes in the A* to C range is well above the national average. This represents outstanding achievement over the two years of the GCSE course. There is no obvious trend or significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. However, pupils of Indian heritage and other Asian pupils achieve significantly better than other ethnic groups.
70. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall and there is some excellent practice. Levels of expectation and challenge are very high and teachers insist on high standards of behaviour. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their specialist subjects and provide excellent support to pupils learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. The successful use of starter and plenary activities, together with rigorous and regular assessment, helps pupils to make rapid progress and many respond with energy and enthusiasm. Thorough and detailed planning, and the effective use of focused questioning, are also strong features in many lessons. In almost all lessons, pupils work hard, and show initiative, responsibility and maturity in the way they work independently

and in small groups. The recent use of interactive whiteboards by the majority of teachers adds interest and engagement to lessons.

71. Leadership is inspirational and management is outstanding. The head of department demonstrates exceptional clarity of vision, commitment and high aspirations and has successfully identified and tackled areas for improvement. She is an excellent role model for both teachers and pupils. Teaching and learning are effectively monitored and staff are supported very well. Pupils' experience is enriched through a varied range of extra-curricular activities, and science has a popular and positive image with all pupils. The accommodation presents problems, however, with some old and deteriorating laboratories, and chemical storage is of poor quality.
72. There has been considerable improvement in the organisation of the science curriculum since the last inspection. Courses have been reviewed, updated and resourced and impressive information and communication technology facilities have recently been introduced. Marking has improved and a wider range of teaching and learning styles is evident. The encouragement of pupils towards greater responsibility for their own learning, through self-assessment, additional support for gifted and talented pupils and increased liaison with other schools and colleges are areas for continued development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is excellent.
- Achievement is very good, the result of very good teaching.
- Assessment in Years 10 and 11 is effectively raising standards.
- There is insufficient different work planned for higher-attaining pupils in some lessons.

Commentary

73. Standards in the Key Skills Level 2 examinations, taken by pupils in Year 11, were average in 2004. Boys' and girls' attainment was similar. This represents very good achievement, and the results were an improvement on the previous year.
74. For current pupils in Year 11, standards are average. Pupils use word processing software competently to produce detailed reports. They enter simple formulas into spreadsheets to calculate accurately and use spreadsheets to produce appropriate graphs to display data. Standards using databases are below average because few pupils use the software's advanced features. Pupils started the Key Skills course with well below average standards and their achievement is very good. This is because of the very good, and occasionally excellent, teaching they receive.
75. In Year 9, standards are below average. Pupils have a clear understanding of technical words. Their understanding of computer control is average but few are able to program accurately enough for expected outcomes to happen. Pupils competently use spreadsheets to record data and draw graphs. Most can use simple formulas to calculate. Overall, few pupils attain higher levels in their work. Pupils started in Year 8 with very low standards and their achievement is very good because of the very good teaching they receive.
76. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is excellent because of the very good personal help they receive from teachers and the different materials provided for them that meet their needs very well. The achievement of gifted and talented pupils in lessons is good. The department provides good

opportunities for these pupils to gain the Level 3 Key Skills qualification in information and communication technology after school.

77. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan a very good range of activities and maintain good pace in lessons. Pupils find the work very challenging and engaging because it is set in a business and enterprise context. As a result, pupils work very hard and strive to attain high standards. Attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Pupils learn well from the regular homework that reinforces and extends class work. While teachers plan very well for the needs of most pupils, the work set for higher-attaining pupils in lessons is not always different enough to enable them to fulfil their potential.
78. Leadership and management are very good. There is a very clear vision and strong commitment to raising standards, and a very strong team of dedicated teachers. The work of the department is very well monitored and effective action taken if standards are in danger of dropping. Examination and other results are very carefully reviewed and used to improve standards. Assessment is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. Here, self-assessment is providing pupils with methods of improving their work and making them more aware of deadlines for its completion. This is also promoting very good achievement. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The school now teaches the full National Curriculum and standards have risen considerably. Teaching, leadership and management are now all very good. The provision for cross-curricular information and communication technology is also good now.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

79. Provision is good. The use of computers across the school is co-ordinated effectively. Most departments offer good opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their information and communication skills. Opportunities are very good in mathematics, where pupils regularly use computers to analyse data and draw graphs. In design and technology, pupils use computer-aided design and manufacture very effectively. In history, modern foreign languages and drama, computer use is satisfactory. While these departments include information and communication technology in their planning, access is a problem. The school is aware of this and has firm plans to extend computer provision now that it has been successful in gaining specialist school status.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' positive attitudes, stimulated by very good and some excellent teaching, contribute to rising standards and high achievement.
- Very good leadership and teamwork promote a culture of learning.
- Assessment, although very good overall, does not always inform pupils about ways to improve.
- Due to limited resources, not all pupils benefit from regular experience of information and communication technology in lessons.

Commentary

80. Standards in the most recent teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have improved and were close to national expectations in 2004. Girls do better than boys, many of whom remain at lower levels. The broad span of pupils' prior attainment taking GCSE is reflected in average standards, with significant numbers reaching the highest grades and a minority of pupils unclassified. Boys and girls do equally well at GCSE. Indian pupils do particularly well. Given

the well below average standards on entry to the school, pupils achieve very well, especially those with special educational needs and English as an additional language.

81. Pupils' listen well, sustain their concentration and work well individually and collaboratively. By the end of Year 9, most have acquired a broad knowledge and understanding of physical processes and human activities. Pupils are fairly confident in analysing and using statistical data, identifying indicators of development and evaluating ideas through discussion. Standards overall are above average and achievement for all pupils is very good. By Year 11, higher-attaining pupils - including a significant number for whom English is an additional language - write well and bring together their knowledge, understanding and a range of skills to produce some impressive coursework. Pupils' application of their prior knowledge to current work is good; however, the standards of a significant minority are lowered by the descriptive nature of written work and insufficient care. Overall, standards are currently above average for most pupils by Year 11 and achievement for all groups is very good.
82. Very good and some excellent teaching allows pupils to move smoothly through a range of progressively more challenging activities, which alternately extend and consolidate their learning, hold their interest and make them think. Most resources are visually stimulating and, together with active learning opportunities, make learning an enjoyable experience. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge is applied to detailed planning, which addresses pupils' prior attainment and takes into account the learning difficulties of those with special educational needs. Strategies, such as seating those with language difficulties with fluent English speakers and/or higher-attaining pupils, foster a support network within the classroom and successfully integrate newcomers. Assessments are designed to allow all pupils to show what they know, understand and can do. Guidance procedures for assessment are very good and the use of information and communication technology is encouraged. However, as information and communication technology resources are confined to one room, not all pupils benefit from a regular experience of their use in lessons. Most pupils meet teachers' high expectations of academic achievement and personal conduct very well: behaviour in lessons is very good and often excellent. Probing questioning keeps everyone alert and precise instructions ensure all pupils know what to do. Marking, although very supportive, does not always inform pupils about ways to improve their work and short-term targets are not always set.
83. Leadership is very good with a clear focus on providing a positive experience for pupils and enabling them to achieve. Together, the team of experienced and highly skilled teachers has established a culture of learning for themselves and their pupils. Expertise is shared and collaborative planning, using the detailed schemes of work, is the norm. Management is good, and efficient day-to-day organisation ensures a calm and orderly atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning. Tracking of pupils' progress is well established but monitoring of teaching and learning, other than for performance management, is informal and does not always pick up on inconsistencies. The strengths evident at the previous inspection have been sustained. Standards, although higher in the intervening time, are back to previous levels. Areas for improvement, other than information and communication technology, which needs further development, have been addressed effectively. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils throughout the school achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Teachers' very good planning and care for the pupils ensure that they are all successfully engaged in the work.
- The subject is very well led so that high expectations are being set.

- Assessment procedures are used well in Years 10 and 11 to target pupils' improvement, but are undeveloped in Years 8 and 9.
- The use of computers is not fully established as a valuable resource in history.

Commentary

84. Standards in Year 9 are in line with national expectations and match teachers' assessments for 2004. This represents very good achievement by all pupils, given their low prior attainment in history on entry to the school. Pupils develop effective skills of enquiry and of explaining different interpretations of events. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress in developing these skills, as they are very well supported by suitable materials and teachers' very caring attitude. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 have good skills of critically analysing different sources and of extended writing. Although from a relatively small entry, GCSE results improved significantly in 2004 to just above average at A* to C and A* to G grades. The proportion of pupils attaining A* and A grades was average, representing very good achievement. Although pupils from all ethnic groups achieved equally well, those of Asian heritage other than Indian performed best, followed by British and Indian. Inspection findings show that standards are average in Year 11. Given that this year group attained just below average results at the end of Year 9, they have continued to build on their skills. They successfully evaluate sources for reliability and usefulness and make clear links between events. Higher-attaining pupils write well-structured essays with balanced arguments, although some lower-attaining pupils find this difficult.
85. Overall, teaching and learning are very good, which represents a significant improvement since the last inspection, when both were satisfactory. Teachers have high expectations and use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons thoroughly with a variety of sharply timed and challenging activities. These extend pupils' knowledge, their analytical skills and their ability to work by themselves. Teachers expect all pupils to perform to their full potential and successfully provide them with the means to do so through well-chosen resources such as writing frames. This caring help encourages and engages all pupils and is a strength of the teaching. Very good learning is also promoted by the very good relationships teachers have with pupils and by pupils' very good attitudes to work. They are enthusiastic, work very well together and quickly build up confidence to tackle challenging tasks by themselves. The good range of resources helps to encourage this, although computers are not used regularly yet by whole classes to promote learning. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 know how to improve through very effective marking and knowledge of examination criteria. Assessment procedures in Years 8 to 9 have been improved, but do not yet track pupils' progress effectively or lead to the setting of individual targets that pupils fully understand related to the National Curriculum.
86. Leadership of the subject is very good. The head of department has a very clear vision for improvement and a strong determination to achieve it. She is a very good role model, setting high standards of teaching and expectations. Management is good. Thorough schemes of work provide good guidance in stressing the development of skills. Regular monitoring of teaching, through mutual classroom observation, promotes the sharing of good practice. Improvement has been good, as the concerns in the last inspection report have been tackled, except the use of information and communication technology and more effective use of assessment.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership inspires confidence in teachers and pupils, leading to high standards at GCSE and very good achievement by many pupils over time.

- Very good planning includes opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Monitoring of pupils' progress and of teaching and learning, given the number of non-specialist teachers, is insufficient.
- Resources, particularly books to support learning and information and communication technology, are inadequate.

Commentary

87. Pupils reach average standards in relation to those established by the Local Agreed Syllabus at the end of Year 9, with a significant number of pupils reaching higher levels, although girls do better than boys. Standards in the second year of the GCSE short course were above average in 2004. Given pupils' very low attainment on entry to the school and the fact that all pupils take the examination, this represents very good achievement for all groups of pupils, particularly girls, all of whom passed the examination.
88. Standards in Year 9 are in line with expectations and achievement in Years 8 and 9 is very good. Most pupils have good knowledge and a fair understanding of world faiths, and each world faith and deity is spoken of respectfully. Most pupils think quite deeply and their answers, both oral and written, show understanding, particularly of religious belief and also scientific theory. Most pupils write well but the work of pupils with special educational needs tends to be descriptive and too brief. By Year 11, pupils are quite mature in evaluating perceptions of the quality and sanctity of life. They use their own experience well in discussions. Higher-attaining pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language, write well and in some depth. Standards are above average and achievement is very good overall.
89. Teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching. Only one teacher is a specialist; of the six others, all but two are experienced teachers but all are new to the subject. This has led to some dependence on the specialist teacher to plan and provide resources, and weaknesses occasionally arise where teachers use an unfamiliar style and unfamiliar resources. Once pupils detect any insecurity, attention wanders and behaviour deteriorates. Most teachers, however, ensure their subject knowledge is secure. Their planning is very good - providing opportunities for pupils to reflect, discuss and record ideas about moral, social and cultural issues and abstract concepts linked to the world faiths. Teachers make an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development as well as extending their learning. Class management is good and most teachers enjoy good relationships with their pupils. Assessment in Years 8 and 9 is well designed to allow all pupils to show what they know and can do. As coursework is not required, assessment in Years 10 and 11 is confined to homework. Marking is detailed but comments, although very supportive, do not always inform pupils how to improve their work.
90. The subject is strongly led and non-specialist teachers benefit from a supportive, inspirational co-ordinator who builds their confidence and does all she can to ensure that teaching is effective. Management is good overall. Departmental reviews are detailed and self-critical. However, the analysis of statistical data – now expected by Harrow SACRE and the school – and the tracking of pupils' progress are insufficiently developed. Efficient day-to-day organisation ensures sufficient resources are available to support learning. Although artefacts and illustrations are good, books are outdated and there are not enough for the short course. There are no computers within the department and although their use is encouraged, pupils have insufficient access to them in lessons. Monitoring of teaching and learning, other than for newly qualified teachers, is insufficient, given the number of non-specialists. Nevertheless, the strengths identified at the last inspection have been sustained, standards have improved, assessment is now in place, the short course in GCSE is effective and pupils learn more from, as well as about religion. Staff recruitment has been a real problem but the school is striving to appoint a new subject specialist teacher for the beginning of the next academic year. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve high standards in food studies and textiles at GCSE.
- Very good teaching and learning mean that pupils achieve very well.
- Information and communication technology is having a strongly positive effect on standards in textiles and graphics.
- Assessment is not as well developed as it might be and pupils are not always aware of the marking criteria.

Commentary

91. On entry to the school, pupils' prior attainment is well below average and they achieve very well throughout the school to reach standards that are average overall. Moreover, the excellent support provided for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language enables them to make excellent progress. Standards at the end of Year 9 were in line with national expectations in 2004, as they are now. Pupils in Year 9 are competent and confident in a range of skills, from programming sewing machines to designing fuse-testers. Overall standards at GCSE were average in 2004: results in food studies and textiles were well above the national average, those in systems and control were low. The latter was a new course that attracted mainly low attaining pupils, whereas food and textiles are very popular option choices. British pupils did particularly well at GCSE in resistant materials and pupils of Indian heritage did well in graphics and textiles. Other Asian pupils performed best in food studies and systems and control. Currently, pupils in Year 11 produce work with excellent precision and finish, although they do not generally annotate their designs sufficiently to show their thinking.
92. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' very good knowledge of their subjects, and their excellent knowledge of national trends and developments, enables them to give the best possible advice to pupils. In many lessons, exceptionally respectful relationships between pupils and teachers make the joint enterprise of teaching and learning highly productive. Skills are very well demonstrated and pupils take pride in their strong involvement in discussion about the next best step for them. The stimulating learning environment and positive ethos within the department motivate pupils, sustaining their interest and keeping them engrossed in their work. Teacher-produced materials encourage creativity, and homework makes a very positive contribution to pupils' achievement. Older pupils are given very good opportunities to choose their own projects or to modify existing products. Excellent lessons were seen in food studies and textiles. In food lessons, pupils are required to take responsibility for quality assurance and the celebration of success involves excellent use of the digital camera. Information and communication technology is also used to very good effect, often for problem solving, especially in textiles and graphics. Pupils have very good opportunities to gain certificates of competence, for instance, in food hygiene, and teachers use their excellent understanding of the standards required at GCSE and assess work regularly and accurately. However, pupils are not systematically involved in identifying possible improvements in their own work or informed of the criteria by which their work will be marked.
93. The department is led and managed very well and improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Teamwork is strong and staff are self-critical and reflective. Whereas achievement was good at the time of the last inspection, it is now very good; pupils needing additional help achieved well then; their achievement is now excellent.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are above the national average; standards at the end of Year 9 are below average.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The achievement of all groups of pupils is very good.
- Attitudes are very positive and behaviour is very good.
- There are inconsistencies in the use of assessment.
- Monitoring and evaluation needs further development.

Commentary

94. On entry, the standard of pupils' work is below national expectations. By the end of Year 9, standards are in line with expectations and have improved rapidly as the result of very good teaching and learning throughout Years 8 and 9. Good features of the work are the emphasis placed on the development of drawing and painting skills and building techniques in clay. Pupils learn the value of research and experimentation, with regular homework that supports and extends class work as well as encouraging individuality. This good achievement is impressive in view of the very low levels on entry and the relatively short space of time pupils spend in the lower school. The single, hour-long weekly lesson is a further constraint to progress in this practical subject.
95. By the end of Year 11, standards are above national expectations. At GCSE in 2004, results in A* to C grades showed a significant improvement on the previous year, reflecting the very good planning and teaching. This represents rapid progress and very good achievement. Many pupils have developed good skills in a range of two- and three-dimensional media in the two GCSE courses on offer. In many cases, drawing and painting skills and work in ceramics are developed to above average standards of artistic competency and originality. Research is broad and presentation is imaginative. The department is working hard to improve the quality and presentation of written work and this needs further development. Pupils' knowledge of artists and other cultures is broad and influential in their work. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language also achieve very well and this is a strength of the department. Pupils who are gifted and talented have been identified but planned opportunities to challenge them appropriately are not yet in place.
96. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils, who are well informed of the criteria by which their homework and coursework are regularly and helpfully assessed, although there are some inconsistencies in the use of assessment. The best lessons have very good pace, learning is strongly reinforced by questioning and there are very high expectations of pupils' active involvement. The use of a good range of support strategies such as effective demonstrations, very supportive illustration on the board and numerous work sheets to aid the development of vocabulary and writing skills also enhance learning. There are occasions when learning outcomes are not reviewed with sufficient rigour to identify areas for improvement. Visits to galleries and opportunities for learning outside the school day enrich learning. Relationships and attitudes are very positive and behaviour is very good, sometimes exemplary.
97. The subject is led very well. Very high standards are set by a highly experienced specialist with a commitment to raising standards further. There is a strong team of specialists and the department is well managed. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, particularly with regard to the development of accommodation and use of information and communication technology. A more consistent approach to procedures for monitoring and

evaluation, as well as a more thorough analysis of assessment information, should inform planning and help to raise standards further.

Drama

Provision for drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and pupils' enthusiasm for subject result in their very good overall achievement.
- Pupils reach high standards at GCSE and the subject makes a significant contribution to their personal development.
- Pupils are provided with an imaginative and demanding drama curriculum, which could be extended by increased opportunities to study the work of influential directors and practitioners.

Commentary

98. The majority of pupils enter Year 8 with a limited knowledge of drama and role-play. As a result of very good teaching and an imaginative drama curriculum, pupils achieve very well over time, with the result that standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Very good specialist teaching and pupils' commitment to the subject give rise to accelerated learning in Years 10 and 11 and high standards at GCSE.
99. Pupils make good progress in gaining skills in Years 8 and 9 and use these in an increasingly demanding range of dramatic techniques, including improvisation, gesture, movement, facial expression and voice. Drama is a popular option at GCSE, and pupils' enthusiasm for the subject is a significant factor in their success in examinations. They explore themes with sensitivity, listen to and value each other's ideas, and approach their work from different perspectives using a range of dramatic techniques. Although pupils have a simple understanding of some leading theatre practitioners, the chance to consider and explore the working practices of a wider range of influential directors and practitioners would extend their practical skills and contribute to raising standards in the subject.
100. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, and provide them with an imaginative range of activities. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and convey it to pupils in an informed and enthusiastic manner.
101. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The department's annual review indicates that the head of drama has a clear understanding of the strengths of the subject and what needs to be done to improve it. She has put together some very good modules of work and relevant documentation to support the non-specialists who teach the subject in Years 8 and 9. The department has good assessment and monitoring procedures to measure pupils' attainment and progress. These include pupils' evaluating their own work. Pupils are given the chance to see a range of commercial productions in order to extend their wider knowledge of theatre, and all pupils are given the option of taking part in annual school productions. These opportunities are much appreciated by pupils, teachers and parents. With the need to work together in an interactive manner and the chance to explore a number of contemporary and universal issues, the subject makes a positive contribution to pupil's social, moral and cultural development. The high standards found at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.

Music

Provision for music is **very good**.

- Very good teaching and learning enable pupils to achieve very well in all years, and standards in Years 9 and 11 are improving.
- Pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language make very good progress.
- Pupils engage enthusiastically in extra-curricular activities, displaying high levels of skill and collaborative effort.
- Leadership and management are very good so that provision is continuously developing.

Commentary

102. GCSE results in 2004 were just below the average for schools nationally, having been just above in 2003. Standards in lessons and in pupils' work are in line with national expectations, with a few pupils in Years 10 and 11 producing work worthy of the highest grades at GCSE. Teacher assessment of Year 9 pupils in 2004 showed that standards were well below the national average. Now, a greater proportion of girls and boys are working at the expected Levels 5 and 6 in performance, composition and response to listening. The overall standard is at least in line with national expectations. This is in spite of pupils' very varied level of experience of music education on entry to the school.
103. Pupils in all years make very good progress in practical work, in understanding through listening and writing, and in knowledge and appreciation of a wide range of music. A high proportion of those with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve as well as the rest of the class, particularly in practical work. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 respond enthusiastically in lessons and behaviour is very good. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 do their best to meet deadlines for course work, and many show a strong commitment to music. They are versatile, with ambitions to continue professionally or in an amateur capacity. Six pupils in Year 11 are taught voluntarily after school as an extra subject. Many pupils in all years achieve as well as they do because they use the school's resources for practice and extra study beyond lesson time. Thirteen per cent of the school's population help to fulfil their potential by taking instrumental lessons, giving much time and energy to performing groups in school and beyond.
104. Teaching and learning are very good. Detailed preparation and good knowledge of individual pupils means that time is used to optimum effect in lessons. Teachers ensure that the ethnic and cultural diversity of the pupils is used to good effect in their learning. Despite pupils' differing prior attainment, teaching has high expectations of engagement and progress from all. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good because teaching is enthusiastic, encourages all pupils and shows respect for the music of all cultures. The musical knowledge and skill of the main teacher is excellent, including the use of information and communication technology. Teaching therefore provides a very good role model for aspiring musicians. Very good assessment in all years supports learning and means that pupils know how to improve.
105. Leadership and management are very good. After a period of unstable staffing, the new, experienced head of music has worked hard to re-establish very good quality schemes of work for all years. Support provided by a member of the senior leadership team is very good. The new system and practice of assessment is precise, used consistently, and is effective in raising standards. All documentation is in very good order and therefore easily accessible to all users. Plans for development have appropriate priorities, are well thought through and project to 2010. Technical help is available, especially to support the use of computers. Full advantage is taken of opportunities for professional development. The subject benefits from its association with art, drama and dance, especially for extra-curricular activities such as carnival and stages shows. The 12 visiting teachers cover a wide range of instruments, including sitar,

tabla and harmonium, and appreciate the good management of their work by the head of music. There are issues of accommodation and resources that need prompt attention: these include making the available office and storage space useable and increasing the number of keyboards, computers and pitched percussion instruments. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Teaching and learning, leadership and management and pupils' behaviour and progress are all better than they were. Music has an increasingly high profile and does much to raise pupils' self-esteem.

Photography

106. Photography was not inspected in detail, so it is not possible to make a judgement about provision, teaching or achievement. Pupils reached high standards at GCSE in 2004, and teaching and learning were very good in a Year 11 GCSE photography sampled. The course is well planned and resourced, and pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching, learning and achievement lead to high standards and outstanding examination results.
- A minority of pupils, particularly girls, underachieve in games because of unsatisfactory accommodation.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress.
- Assessment procedures are not used consistently to raise standards.

Commentary

107. Very good, inclusive and imaginative teaching boosts standards from below average in Year 8 to average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. This represents very good achievement in practical work and outstanding achievement in examination work. Nevertheless, a significant minority of girls underachieve in games and this depresses standards at the end of Year 9. This is partly due to staffing difficulties, and some inappropriate grouping of pupils, but mainly to lack of facilities. Examination results are consistently above national averages with a significantly higher than average proportion of A* and A grades. British pupils obtain higher grades than other ethnic groups. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress because their needs are largely met. In 2003, the school was awarded Sportsmark in recognition of its commitment to promoting the benefits of physical education and school sport. Girls are strong in trampolining and basketball: boys in football and outstanding in basketball. The school's team is English Basketball Under-16s Champion.
108. Teaching and learning are very good, and a significant amount of excellent teaching was seen during the inspection. Excellent planning ensures that lessons are challenging, interesting and relevant. Consequently, pupils' skills develop effectively: they gain in confidence, understanding and knowledge and make very good progress in acquiring technical language. Teachers reinforce key words visually and orally and, in examination groups, with skilful use of information and communication technology. Pupils are managed extremely well in a calm, controlled and respectful manner and relationships are excellent. Participation in lessons is almost 100 percent, with a good standard of kit, and pupils are ambitious to succeed. All pupils learn in a safe and hassle-free environment, which enables them to practise and refine their skills and to learn new work very effectively. Informal assessment is good but links between formal and informal assessment are unclear and pupils are not familiar with National Curriculum levels.

109. The new head of department has made a good start in identifying priorities, and day-to-day management is very good. Teachers work unstintingly to raise standards and give pupils every opportunity to widen their experiences. The Junior Sports' Leaders Award makes an excellent contribution to pupils' citizenship education. Innovative curriculum provision maximises pupils' interest and minimises lack of appropriate accommodation. However, provision for girls lags behind that for boys and fewer girls than boys participate in extra-curricular activities. The School Sports Co-ordinator Programme is successful in developing strong curriculum links between family schools. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Examination results have risen, the quality of teaching has improved from good to very good and practical standards have risen overall from average to above in relation to national expectations.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well as a result of very good teaching and their own strong motivation.
- Teachers' very good monitoring of pupils' progress promotes very good learning.
- The subject is led and managed very well and high expectations are established.
- There are very good links with local businesses, although the Young Enterprise scheme has lapsed.

Commentary

110. GCSE results in 2004 were above average, as they have been in recent years, and – relative to their performance in other subjects – pupils gained some of their best results in business studies. Although pupils from all ethnic groups achieved very well, those of Indian heritage performed best, followed by British and Asian pupils other than Indian. Standards in work seen are above average and all pupils achieve very well as they have no prior knowledge of business terms or concepts at the beginning of the course. By Year 11, pupils' understanding of these is good, helped by teachers' strong reinforcement of key words. Pupils develop good skills of research and recording, often using the Internet and computers to present their findings. Pupils in Year 11 produce thorough word-processed market plans for coursework on setting up their own business. However, skills of critically evaluating the conclusions in their coursework are undeveloped in the work of some pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

111. Teaching and learning are very good, which is a significant improvement on the situation at the last inspection. Teachers set high expectations and a variety of challenging activities. They use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons thoroughly, using good resources which meet the learning needs of all pupils. These extend pupils' knowledge and their enquiry skills as they now have regular access to computers for research, a criticism in the last report. However, information and communication technology is not available in the main classroom. Pupils strongly develop their ability and confidence to work by themselves, as teachers successfully provide them with the means to do so through well-chosen materials that support their learning needs. Very good use of assessment information is a strength of the teaching. Pupils know how to improve through very effective marking, knowledge of the examination criteria and the frequent, individual feedback meetings with teachers on their progress, often provided outside of lesson time. Very good learning is also promoted by the very good relationships with pupils, who are highly motivated, often because they have strong ambitions to set up their own businesses. Pupils are enthusiastic and work very well together. Consequently, business studies is one of the most popular subjects in the school, and opting for business and enterprise as the focus of the specialist school bid reflected this.

112. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department has a very clear vision for improvement and a strong commitment to raising standards. She is a very good role model in her excellent relationships with the pupils and in setting high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Examination results have been carefully analysed and responded to positively, with challenging teaching and very close tracking of pupils' progress. Regular monitoring of teaching through mutual classroom observation promotes the sharing of good practice. There are very good links with local business through visits and outside speakers. These will be strengthened when the lapsed Young Enterprise scheme is restarted in September. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good as all the concerns raised have been tackled, standards raised and the quality of teaching significantly improved. The department is in a strong position to take advantage of the new business and enterprise college status and has challenging activities planned.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at GCSE are above the national average, which reflects pupils' very good achievement.
- Occasional 'special days' help to raise pupils' awareness of key issues.
- The subject is led with enthusiasm, and citizenship has an increasingly high profile in the school.
- More training is needed to develop teaching and assessment in Years 8 and 9.

Commentary

113. Standards are above average overall and all pupils in Years 10 and 11 take GCSE in citizenship studies. Results in 2004 were above the national average, and the work of pupils currently in Year 11 shows that this standard is being maintained. In Years 8 and 9, standards are in line with national expectations for knowledge and understanding and skills of communication. The school's excellent ethos contributes significantly to pupils' achievement and to their understanding of citizenship.
114. Achievement is very good overall, especially in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils have very good attitudes to learning. Very good behaviour enables the development of knowledge and skills needed in discussion of contentious issues, and means that the subject contributes significantly to turning pupils into mature young adults. Opportunities for taking responsibility and participating in the community are very good. The new school council, chaired by a pupil, has been established democratically with effective procedures for building agendas and for feedback to year councils and tutor groups. It is too early to judge its effectiveness as a forum for pupils' views but good achievement by representatives is already clear.
115. Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 10 and 11, teachers prepare well and have high expectations for pupils' participation and completion of tasks in class and at home. Teachers ensure that seating arrangements enable support to be given efficiently to those with special educational needs or whose fluency in English is at an early stage. Discussion in pairs or groups is a prominent feature in lessons and teachers' questioning is a strength. Pupils learn well because they are encouraged to think before expressing their opinions, to listen carefully to others and to be prepared to modify their initial views. In Years 8 and 9, citizenship is taught across the curriculum. Good examples of teaching and learning were seen in geography, including pupils' computer-aided work on fair trade, and in religious studies. Planning for citizenship Programmes of Study was seen in the schemes of work of most subjects, but this is not always specific enough. Most teaching in the Year 9 'Citizenship in Enterprise' day was by visitors: the sample of sessions observed showed good levels of

learning, overall. The range of national and local services and organisations represented heightened pupils' awareness of issues very well, for example about victim support, trading standards and human rights.

116. Leadership and management are very good overall. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic, and stable leadership has enabled continuous development of the subject since 2002. Teamwork is strong amongst the five members of staff who teach the GCSE course and all follow common assessment procedures. Provision in Years 8 and 9, especially to promote pupils' knowledge and understanding, needs to be tightened and monitored to provide a coherent foundation for study in Years 10 and 11. Various methods of assessing and recording standards and the achievement of individual pupils in Years 8 and 9 have been trialled. Citizenship receives very good support from the senior leadership team and implementation of plans from the subject review should bring about the necessary improvements in the subject.

Personal, social and health education

117. Personal, social and health education was not inspected in full, although a small number of lessons were sampled, assemblies with a personal, social and health education focus were observed, and the co-ordinator was interviewed. Insufficient evidence was gathered to form a judgement about achievement or teaching, but sufficient to tell that overall provision is very good.
118. There has been good improvement in planning for personal, social and health education since the last inspection. Planning is reviewed annually, taking full account of pupils' and parents' views. Personal, social and health education is taught as a discrete subject in tutor periods, with close links to assembly themes, and all teachers now contribute to planning. A range of themes and topical issues is considered in lessons, which helps pupils to make informed choices. Pupils' learning is supported through a series of booklets and teacher-made worksheets. Pupils also benefit from the contribution of outside professionals and speakers, including a community drugs education group. Some modules of work are formally assessed and the subject is monitored closely. Teaching and learning were good in most of the lessons sampled. Moreover, the excellent ethos of the school, the provision of high quality pastoral care, the total commitment of staff to the needs of individual pupils and the excellent relationships greatly enhance provision for personal, social and health education. The extended out-of-hours curriculum and very good provision for work-related learning also make a very good contribution to personal, social and health education, impacting positively on pupils' personal development.

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 | 4 |
| Pupils' achievement | 1 |

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | 1 |
| Attendance | 2 |
| Attitudes | 1 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 2 |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of education provided by the school | 1 |
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| How well pupils learn | 2 |
| The quality of assessment | 3 |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs | 1 |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities | 1 |
| Accommodation and resources | 4 |
| Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety | 1 |
| Support, advice and guidance for pupils | 2 |
| How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views | 3 |
| 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 | 1 |
| The governance of the school | 2 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | 1 |
| The leadership of other key staff | 1 |
| The effectiveness of management | 1 |

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

