

INSPECTION REPORT

SWANLEA SCHOOL

Whitechapel, London

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 100973

Headteacher: Ms L Austin

Lead inspector: Mr J Bald

Dates of inspection: 18th to 21st April 2005

Inspection number: 268477

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1023
School address:	31 Brady Street London
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Telephone number:	020 7375 3267
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Appropriate authority:	The local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr H Rahman
Date of previous inspection:	March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Swanlea School is a specialist business and technology college, and is a national pathfinder school for business and enterprise. It received the schools achievement award in 2000 and 2002, has an award for quality in study support and is an Investor in People. It is of average size. Over nine-tenths of its students are Asian British, predominantly of Bangladeshi heritage, with small numbers from other ethnic backgrounds. Almost all students have English as an additional language, and a tenth are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above average, and includes an above average proportion of students with a Statement of special educational needs. These students have difficulties with language and with social development. Standards among students joining the school vary, but are overall well below average for their age, chiefly because of weaknesses in their knowledge, understanding and use of English. The school's social and economic circumstances are well below average, and the proportion of students who join the school after Year 7 is roughly twice the national average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Mathematics
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2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
20533	David Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design
8552	Wallis Hart	Team inspector	Design and technology
10392	Donaleen Ratcliff	Team inspector	Geography
4223	Garth Collard	Team inspector	Citizenship
1352	John Carnaghan	Team inspector	History
12110	Roger Bailess	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	8-11
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11-16
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16-19
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	20-34
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	35

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Swanlea School provides good education and has outstanding features. Students join with well below average standards for their age, and their skills in spoken and written English are a barrier to learning. They make satisfactory progress by Year 9, and achieve well at GCSE. Teaching and learning are good, and students develop positive and responsible attitudes to life and work. Leadership and management are very good overall, and the headteacher's excellent leadership gives strong and clear direction to the whole school. Value for money is good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- GCSE results show good progress from students' starting points.
- There is a harmonious working atmosphere, with good relationships among all groups of students and staff.
- Teaching is well matched to students' learning needs, and the best is of exceptional quality.
- Students who join the school with very little English make very good progress.
- Students' skills in spoken and written English need further and more consistent improvement.
- Provision for students' care and well-being is very good, and has excellent features.
- There is excellent provision for enterprise, and for learning beyond the school day.

The school was last inspected in March 1999. Improvement since then has been good overall, despite staffing difficulties in some subjects. There has been good progress in tackling weaknesses in behaviour, teaching and learning. Progress in ICT has been held up by staff shortages, but the subject is now moving forward. Provision for students in the early stages of English has shown great improvement, though further work is needed in improving most students' language and literacy skills. There have been significant improvements in learning opportunities beyond the school day, in work related learning and in enterprise. The school is very well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good. It is good at GCSE and in students' work in Year 11, and satisfactory in Year 9, where it is held back by weaknesses in students' language and literacy skills. The school is addressing this issue, but further work is needed. The grade A* for GCSE puts the school in the top five per cent of similar schools, but also reflects very low results among this group of students in Year 9 national tests. Students with a Statement of special educational needs achieve well, and the achievement of other students with learning difficulties is satisfactory. There are no other significant differences in the achievement of different groups of students.

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, is good. Students have good attitudes and behave well, and the school deals effectively with lapses in behaviour. Students are very willing to accept responsibility, and work hard outside lessons. Attendance is above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers know their subjects well, plan clear learning goals for their lessons, and explain work clearly. They manage classes well and involve all students. In most, but not all, lessons, they adapt work well to the wide range of learning needs among the students. There is a significant provision of very good teaching, often in mathematics, science, English and physical education, and some exceptional teaching in media studies. Teachers make good use of assessment to track students' progress, but could use it more effectively in planning work.

The school offers a good range of learning opportunities, with very good work related learning and excellent opportunities for learning beyond the normal school day. The business and enterprise college makes an excellent contribution to learning opportunities. Resources and accommodation are good, except for the library, which is too small and has too few books. The school has sufficient qualified staff, but some subjects are recovering from recent staffing difficulties. Students receive very good care and guidance, and the school has good arrangements to take account of their views. The school has very good relationships with parents and other schools, and excellent relationships with all sections of the community, including particularly strong links with the business community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher's leadership is excellent, and a key factor in the school's improvement. The leadership of other key staff is very good, with excellent features. Management is good, and very good to excellent in several key areas of the school's work, though further improvement is needed in the management of language and literacy, and in the use of assessment in some subjects.

The work of the governors is good. They contribute to the direction of the school and maintain good relationships with the community. They meet all statutory requirements except that for a daily act of collective worship.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students are very pleased with the school and closely involved in its work. A minority of students, mostly in Years 7 to 9, had concerns about behaviour. Inspectors found behaviour good overall, but with some lapses in lessons and in corridors, which the school deals with effectively.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Take further steps to improve provision for all aspects of written and spoken English.
- Make further improvements in the management of provision for special educational needs.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement from students' starting points is good overall. It is good in Year 11 and at GCSE, and satisfactory in Year 9. There are no major differences in the achievements of different groups of students, or of boys and girls. Achievement is not, however, consistent across subjects, partly because of staffing difficulties that have only recently been resolved.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results show good achievement from students' starting points in Year 7.
- Achievement in Year 11 is good in English, mathematics and science.
- Students achieve well, and sometimes very well, in practical and creative subjects.
- The standard of work seen in Year 9 was below average, but better than the most recent national test results.
- Students make very good progress in the early stages of learning English.
- Weaknesses in spoken and written English are a major barrier to achievement.
- Achievement in ICT is recovering from staffing difficulties, but is not yet satisfactory.
- Students achieve very well in work related learning.
- Targets for examinations and national tests do not take full account of students' difficulties with English.

Commentary

1. Results in national tests among students joining Year 7 have risen since the last inspection, and were close to national average levels for Year 7 students in the year of the inspection. However, many students join the school with limited knowledge and understanding of spoken and written English, and significant numbers of older students join with little or no previous knowledge of English. This gives students a much lower starting point than those in most schools, and continues to limit the learning and achievement of most students in Year 9 and at GCSE. Nevertheless, overall achievement is good among all groups of students. Although results in Year 9 national tests have been well below average in recent years, GCSE results showed sharp improvement in 2004, and the combination of GCSE and vocational results was in line with the national average. The standard of work seen during the inspection was below average in Years 9 and 11, but Year 9 work showed evidence of good improvement from the results of 2004 national tests, particularly in mathematics and science. Year 9 standards are, however, well below average in ICT, where the subject is recovering from an acute shortage of qualified staff, and achievement in this subject is not yet satisfactory. Overall, current achievement is satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Year 11.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30 (29.1)	33.3 (33.4)
mathematics	31.4 (29.4)	35.5 (35.4)
science	27.6 (29.3)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 197 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Students' good achievement at GCSE is the result of carefully focused teaching in and beyond lessons and students' own commitment to success, that leads them to work very hard and to take full advantage of the additional learning opportunities the school offers. The 2004 results

showed a substantial improvement from the previous year, and an above average improvement from these students' results in their national tests in primary schools. Within subjects, GCSE results are generally below average, though they reach average levels in media studies and drama. There are some examples of outstanding achievement at A* level at GCSE by gifted and talented students.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	42 (29)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (95)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	269.1	282.5 (34.7)

There were 200 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. A new system of calculating points was introduced in 2004.

3. The school sets challenging targets for standards in Years 9 and 11. These do not, however, take account of the additional difficulties caused by students' weak language and literacy skills. Results in 2004 were well short of the target in Year 9. At GCSE, the school met its target for students achieving one or more pass grade, but did not meet its other targets, despite the sharp improvement in GCSE results from 2003. The school's current action to raise standards in Year 9 and at GCSE is well organised, with many additional learning opportunities, clear targets for all students and clear tracking mechanisms to keep teachers aware of progress towards them. The need for further steps to tackle weaknesses in language and literacy is recognised in the school development plan.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students have good attitudes to school and behave well. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good. Provision for students' personal development is good, and includes very good provision for their moral and social development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students work hard and enjoy learning; many take part in learning activities beyond lessons.
- Students' relationships with each other and with teachers are very good.
- Opinions are respected, and students of all backgrounds mix well with one another.
- Students behave well, both in and out of classrooms; lapses are dealt with effectively.
- Students accept responsibility with maturity and enthusiasm.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.
- Students learn to understand and appreciate a wide range of cultures.

Commentary

4. Students enjoy coming to school and are proud of their work and achievements. They work hard, and a high proportion take part in additional learning and sporting opportunities after school, during holidays and on Saturday mornings. Students are happy to accept responsibility, and to contribute to the school community. Students have respect for their own and other people's belongings and school property. No graffiti or litter were seen during the

inspection. SPARC (Swanlea Pupils are Resolving Conflict) counsellors from Year 10 help and advise students in lower year groups and help encourage good relationships. Students of all age groups and ethnic backgrounds make friends and enjoy each other's company. This makes for a positive and co-operative working atmosphere throughout the school, and helps all students to grow in maturity, confidence and self-esteem.

- The behaviour policy is well constructed and understood by most students and applied evenly by all staff. Students told inspectors that there was very little bullying, and that teachers dealt immediately and effectively with instances that did occur. Almost all students in Years 10 and 11 told inspectors that behaviour was good, but a significant minority in Years 7 to 9 said that there was some misbehaviour. Behaviour during the inspection was good, but there were some lapses, which were generally tackled effectively. Permanent exclusions are kept at a low level and are used only to protect the community from unacceptable threats to learning and the well-being of other students. Fixed term exclusions have been high in recent years, but the school has taken effective action to reduce them, and the rate of exclusion during the year of the inspection had fallen to a broadly average level.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	29	1	0
White – any other White background	9	4	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	12	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	16	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	846	120	5
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	21	6	0
Black or Black British – African	31	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	5	0	0
Chinese	6	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	39	1	0

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

- Attendance is above average and the school's active promotion of good attendance has created a trend of improvement. Students are punctual in the morning and during the day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
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School data	5.3
National data	6.9

School data	1.1
National data	1.8

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

Personal development

7. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. In some lessons, time is given for students to reflect on learning outcomes and to analyse feelings. The use of poetry in geography, the consideration of Egyptian funerary rites in art and the sense of purpose with individual projects in design technology are notable examples. There are missed opportunities for reflection in many tutorial periods and in numerous departments. There is no daily act of collective worship. Many attractive and stimulating displays around the school enhance the environment and contribute to students' spiritual development.
8. The aims and positive ethos of the school provide a firm foundation for the moral development of boys and girls, and overall provision for students' moral development is very good. Many departments encourage students to reflect on moral issues. This is particularly strong in English and drama with their work on emerging issues in a changing world such as conflict, racism, fear and bullying, and in PE where students demonstrate very good acceptance of the discipline and rules associated with sportsmanship. Teachers give a strong lead in helping students to distinguish right from wrong behaviour. Students are expected to accept responsibility for their actions and to be tolerant and respectful of each other. This works well in most lessons, and very well when teaching is good or better. This is ably supported by the contributions that a number of outside agencies also make to promoting student welfare in terms of counselling and in advising on additional ways to take on responsibility in school as part of personal development.
9. Provision for social development is very good. Students have good opportunities to interact with others in lessons through the use of paired and group work and this is particularly strong in art, science and PE. There is good social learning in the school. Relationships are very good and students demonstrate positive attitudes to work. New students from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds are very well integrated and the school's arrangements to ensure that all students are fully included in its work are excellent. There are some very good opportunities for students to take on responsibilities. Working as trained counsellors in conflict resolution, contributing to the life of the school as appointed senior students and participating in the school council are very good examples. The visual and performing arts productions do much to raise the self-esteem and confidence of those who take part and make a very positive contribution to the ethos of the school.
10. Provision for cultural development is good. The strong emphasis on the study of poetry from different cultures and traditions in English and the wide range of cultural styles and traditions studied in music are very good examples. Work in art is inspired by a good range of non-European cultures and there are good opportunities for visits to France, Germany and Spain with the modern foreign languages department. The school provides a good range of opportunities for students to participate in trips to the theatre, to museums and to galleries.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good, and has several outstanding features. Teaching and learning are good, and teachers assess and track progress well. The overall quality of the curriculum is good, and provision for learning beyond the normal school day is excellent. Provision for students' health, safety and well-being is very good. They receive very good guidance, and are closely and effectively involved in the school. There are very good links with parents and other schools, and excellent links with all sections of the community.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. The quality and use of teachers' assessment is good overall, but needs to be made more consistent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned, with clear and appropriate goals for learning, and teachers manage classes well.
- Teachers know their subjects well, and explain work clearly to students.
- Teaching is very good for students in the early stages of learning English; provision for more advanced learners of English as an additional language is satisfactory, but less consistent.
- In three-tenths of lessons, very good and at times excellent teaching leads to accelerated progress.
- The best marking is very good, but some gives too little guidance on improvement.
- Teachers give much additional support and guidance to students outside normal lesson time.
- Homework is set regularly in most classes, but students do not always record it.
- The school's central assessment systems provide very clear information on overall progress.
- The headteacher and senior managers monitor the quality of teaching closely and take action to improve it.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 131 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3(2%)	35 (27%)	48 (37%)	41 (31%)	4 (3%)	0	0

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

11. The headteacher and leadership team's high priority to maintaining good teaching and developing teachers skills has led to good improvements in teaching since the last inspection despite staffing difficulties in some subjects. Teaching is well organised and effective. Teachers plan work carefully, with clear learning goals for each lesson, and manage classes well, fostering good relationships and a good pace of work. They know their subjects well, and have developed high levels of skill in explaining work to students in terms they can understand. In most subjects, they make good use of national strategies to organise their lessons, though sometimes activities take longer than planned, so that the final summary session is rushed or omitted. While students do not always use their planners to record homework, it is set regularly and makes a good contribution to learning.
12. Students told inspectors how much they appreciated the additional support and teaching teachers provided outside the school day, both in their work and in sporting activities. Inspectors agreed that this was of high quality and an important strength of the school. In the three-tenths of lessons where teaching is very good, work is particularly closely matched to the learning needs of all of the students in the class, and tasks for students are very well planned to provide the right balance of challenge and support. While the provision of excellent teaching is small, its impact on learning is great, and the exceptional teaching of magazine production in media studies has much to contribute beyond the school. The other excellent teaching seen was in science, mathematics and in preparation for the finals of the Young Enterprise competition.

13. Where teaching is satisfactory, work enables students to make reasonable progress, but is not planned closely enough to meet individual needs. In particular, the difficulty of pitching work at the right level for students with a basic knowledge of English, but limited understanding of more advanced features of the language, is not consistently overcome. The main weakness is in allowing too few opportunities for students to talk work through before they write, and in teaching techniques that involve too much copying, so that students have too few opportunities to put their own thoughts into clear written English. This issue has good priority in the school development plan, but it is the most important single obstacle to success in the school, and arrangements for its co-ordination need further development. The provision of unsatisfactory teaching is low; when it occurred during the inspection, the main cause was weak planning, which led to a lack of interest among students and problems in managing the class.
14. Within subjects, the overall quality of teaching is very good in physical education, in work with students in the early stages of learning English, and in mathematics in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is good overall in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and music, and has good features in other subjects. Teaching meets the needs of students with Statements of special educational needs very well, with well-organised additional work for those who most need it. This area of teaching is, however, recovering from the effects of serious staff illness, and students with learning difficulties who do not have a Statement are not consistently supported in all of their lessons. Teaching meets the needs of boys and girls equally well. It meets the needs of gifted and talented students well, with excellent provision for these students in additional learning activities.
15. Overall, teachers' use of assessment is good. They give students good feedback on their work, and mark it regularly. The best marking is carried out in great detail, though much does not pay close enough attention to errors in English, and some does not provide clear guidance on improving work. Teachers in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, assess and track progress well from the time students join the school. In the most successful lessons, information from this assessment is used to pitch work at the right level for all students, but this is not consistent, and some teaching is less effective as a result. The school's central systems for collating information from assessment are very well organised, and present each teacher with a clear picture of each student's current performance and target grades, with information on areas of underachievement.

The curriculum

The curriculum makes good overall provision for the needs of all groups of students. It has some important strengths, though some areas require improvement. Opportunities for enrichment and learning beyond lesson time are excellent. Accommodation and resources for learning are good, and the school has sufficient qualified staff.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for additional study and learning is exceptionally wide-ranging and effective.
- There is very good provision for work related learning, and excellent provision for enterprise.
- The business and enterprise college is making an important impact on learning throughout the school.
- There is very effective provision for students in the early stages of learning English, but little specific planning to meet the needs of more advanced learners of English as an additional language.
- Some subjects are still recovering from the effects of staffing shortages.
- There is good provision for Bengali, but there are some weaknesses in the curriculum for European languages.
- There is too little time for physical education in Years 10 and 11.
- The library is well used, but is too small to support independent learning across the school.

Commentary

16. The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities for all students, and is increasingly well adapted to their learning needs. Work related learning and careers education are very good and developing rapidly, and the business and enterprise college is spreading a culture of enterprise and innovation that closely reflects the values of parents and the community. Despite serious recent problems with staffing, provision for ICT is expanding, and the present position is a good improvement from the weaknesses noted at the last inspection. The new subject of citizenship has been successfully introduced throughout the school, and there is effective provision for personal, social and health education, though in some classes the centralised planning system needs to be more closely adapted to the needs of the students.
17. The school has developed a very effective system to enable new students with little knowledge of English to make rapid progress and to take part in lessons. Once students are beyond the initial stages, it continues to track progress well and to provide support. Specialist teaching of students with special educational needs is very effective, though planning does not always take account of the needs of students with learning difficulties who do not have Statements. Additional provision for guided reading is very effective, but some students do not have enough opportunities to consolidate basic skills in writing, speaking and listening. There is satisfactory provision for the development of mathematics and ICT skills, though these could be made more consistent across subjects.
18. Managers and teachers throughout the school ensure that all students are involved in their work, and students with special educational needs make good long-term progress. Support is much more consistent for students with Statements of special educational needs, however, than for the larger number who do not have a Statement.
19. There is some very effective provision for gifted and talented students, including the opportunity to take some examinations early, and to study three sciences to GCSE, though these students could still be more fully challenged in some of their work. Students have good opportunities to study Bengali. However, those who do not choose Bengali begin with two European languages in Year 7, normally continuing with only one language in Year 8. This limits these students' progress beyond the initial stages of language learning. There is insufficient time for the teaching of physical education in Years 10 to 11, and for the delivery of ICT courses in Years 8 to 11.
20. Enrichment and other opportunities for learning outside lessons are excellent. A large proportion of students are actively involved in before school, lunch -time and after- school clubs and societies. These include study support and homework clubs, theatre visits, keyboarding, singing, reading, art and a highly successful Young Enterprise group. There is a very good range of sporting activities, including inter-school matches. Students make very good use of the "Learning Eye" website which enables them to use the school's ICT facilities to support their curriculum studies. The school and the community greatly value this work, which helps students to overcome the difficulties many face in studying outside school hours.

Example of outstanding practice

A Saturday morning school regularly involves 150 students in a wide range of learning, sporting and cultural activities that contribute to examination success and to personal development.

The school was hard at work when the inspector arrived at ten o'clock. A full class of GCSE drama students was rehearsing a range of examination presentations in a spirit of mutual support and common purpose, with only light supervision from their teacher. This class contained some students with behavioural difficulties, and they were still working at maximum pace over an hour later. Other classes provided additional teaching for students taking three sciences, for those wishing to improve their grade in Year 9 national tests, and for advanced mathematics. Teachers matched work carefully to the needs of the students, particularly in their explanations, and created a working atmosphere that subtly recognised that this was Saturday morning, while maintaining a brisk pace. Students with little knowledge of English received very effective support, and there was scope for all to pursue their interests in a wide range of subjects, including art, languages and sport. One group was preparing materials to use with younger students in the school's programme of conflict reduction, and a youth worker helped students organise and officiate in an energetic and popular football tournament. The informal atmosphere was backed by strong organisation, with students targeted to attend specific classes, and attendance monitored by a member of the support staff using ICT. All students were happy in their work and proud of their efforts. There was a high rate of progress and achievement in all classes, and the goodwill generated by the school was seen in the relationships between these students and their teachers during the inspection.

21. By the time of the inspection, the school was adequately staffed with qualified teachers and teaching assistants, but some subjects, particularly ICT, were still recovering from a serious shortage of specialist staff, and there was a long-standing vacancy in history. The headteacher and senior managers pay close attention to staffing, and in particular to the recruitment and retention of well qualified staff. Careful financial management has enabled them to secure a lower turnover than most schools in the area.
22. The school occupies an attractive, well-designed building that is respected by the students and well maintained by the site manager and his staff. The school has good access to the City Learning Centre, and this has helped to resolve the criticism of ICT facilities made in the last report. The issue of limited physical education changing facilities has been addressed. The library is well managed but too small, and has some outdated stock. This places limitations on students' opportunities to undertake independent research, and there are too few dual language books. The overall quality of resources for learning is good, and there are extensive ICT facilities, though these are not always easily accessible to teachers in all subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Provision of care, guidance and support is very good and has outstanding features. Management and leadership in this area of the school's work are excellent, and the school takes great care to provide equally effectively for the needs of boys and girls. The school has very good arrangements for involving students in its work and taking account of their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students trust the staff, and know that they can share problems with them.
- Guidance is based on very close and effective monitoring of students' work and personal development.
- Provision for children in public care is excellent.
- High levels of support extend the learning opportunities of students with the most significant learning and behavioural difficulties.
- Child protection and health and safety arrangements are very good.
- The school uses external agencies very well to provide additional support to students.
- Student members could usefully take more responsibility within the school council.

Commentary

23. The school offers a very good standard of care for all students. Staff form very good relationships with students, who have confidence and trust in their teachers' ability to support

them well. This level of support enables students who have difficulties in their lives outside school to make very good progress and thrive. Additional support for children in public care is particularly sensitive and effective. The school makes very good use of external agencies to provide support students with behavioural and other difficulties, receive targeted attention from a variety of resources. External mentors and teaching assistants ensure that this group of students' needs is well addressed and they make very good progress.

24. Students' progress and personal development are very closely monitored, and they are effectively involved in the process. As a result, students generally know their targets in good detail, and are aware of what they need to do to improve their work. The school's very good relationships with other schools, and its very well organised system of assessment of new students ensures that students in the in the early stages of learning English receive immediate and effective support. Support for students with special educational needs has suffered recently from staff illness. It has been restored to a good level for students with a Statement of special educational needs, but some other students with special educational needs do not receive consistent support in their work. Child protection procedures are very good and comply fully with the requirements of the local authority. The school has an appropriate number of first-aiders, accidents are well recorded and formal risk assessments are carried out correctly.
25. Students told inspectors that they felt staff sought and appreciated their views, and that they were well listened to and acted upon. The school council is active, but more could be done to ensure that student members took responsibility within it, for example by chairing meetings and taking minutes.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good relationships and links with all groups of parents, and with other schools. Its excellent relationships with all sections of the community, including faith communities and the business community, are a major strength.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Business and Enterprise College status provides an excellent focus for relationships with the business community.
- The school has developed very effective working relationships with all groups of parents.
- The school takes a leading role in the development of educational provision in the area.
- Parents receive clear and accurate information on their children's progress.

Commentary

26. The number of parents completing the pre-inspection questionnaire and attending the meeting with inspectors was small. However, almost all had a very positive view of the school and its work, and felt they had a strong partnership with it. Information for parents is of high quality. Annual reports on students' progress are clear, concise and contain targets for improvement. The prospectus is professionally produced and accessible to parents, and the governors' annual report is informative and well presented, though financial information is not set out in sufficient detail. There are good and regular newsletters. Parents are given every opportunity to see the headteacher, without an appointment, and the school has a dedicated parents room and website. Parents' evenings are very well attended.
27. The school consults parents annually on a variety of issues. Some parents help in school, for example by giving talks on their faith or life experiences or by accompanying students on school outings. A friends association is in the early stages of development. There are very effective arrangements for students joining Year 7.
28. The school has very effective working partnerships with local primary schools and with a wide range of secondary schools within the local authority as a leading edge school. The

headteacher contributes to the leadership and management of education in London as a member of ministerial committees. Links with the community are excellent. The business and enterprise college provides a focus for a wide range of major business partners to invest in the school, both through sponsorship and active involvement of their staff as mentors and reading tutors. The headteacher and governors have fostered effective relationships with all sections of the local community, and have made the school an important focus for harmony and co-operation.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The headteacher's excellent leadership has set a clear direction for the school, and is consistently reflected in its work. The leadership of other key staff is very good, with excellent features. Management is good, and very good in several key areas, though further work is needed to ensure that the barrier to learning caused by students' language difficulties is tackled consistently in all subjects. The governors are well organised and effective. All statutory requirements are met with the exception of that for a daily act of collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has provided clear and strong direction for the school since its foundation.
- Leadership and management are very good in English, mathematics, science, and in provision for students in the early stages of learning English. The management of students' care and well-being is excellent.
- The headteacher and senior staff give high priority to monitoring teaching and improving its quality.
- Most other subjects are well managed, but there are some weaknesses in the management of assessment.
- Some aspects of the management of provision for literacy and language skills need further development.
- Arrangements for the professional development of staff are comprehensive and very effective.
- Development planning is well organised and effective, with clear priorities.
- The business and enterprise college is having a positive impact on all aspects of the school's work.
- The headteacher and governors have built strong relationships with all sections of the community.

Commentary

29. The headteacher's leadership is based on commitment to high levels of care and equal opportunities for all students, and to teaching that enables them to reach the highest possible standards. These values are consistently reflected in the work of the school and have enabled it to make good improvements in its work since the last inspection despite significant staffing difficulties. With the governors, she has built up excellent relationships with all sections of the local community, and has expanded learning opportunities beyond the school day to enable students to overcome difficulties that many find in studying outside school. This is particularly important in ICT, as the proportion of students with computers at home is well below average.
30. The business and enterprise college has enabled the school to develop a highly productive relationship with major city companies, and has extended career opportunities for all students. Systems for the support of students with the most significant learning and behavioural needs are now sophisticated and highly effective, resulting in a falling exclusion rate and a working atmosphere that is significantly better than at the last inspection. The new workforce arrangements are being effectively introduced, and the school received a very favourable report on its arrangements for professional development immediately before the inspection. This included praise for the support received from the headteacher and senior management from all sections of the staff.

31. The leadership team is well organised and effective, and the leadership of senior and middle managers is very good overall. All aspects of the school's work, including involvement in new initiatives, are carefully analysed and evaluated, and data is used effectively to track its performance. Teaching and learning are closely and effectively monitored, and action taken to improve teaching where necessary. The overall quality of senior and middle management is good. It is very good in English, mathematics and science, and in provision for students in the early stages of learning English. Excellent management of all aspects of students' care and well-being makes a crucial contribution to the working atmosphere of the school and to students' personal development. Management in other aspects of the school's work and in subjects ranges in quality from satisfactory to good. There is, however, a need for more consistency in the management of provision for students with English as an additional language who are no longer in the early stages of learning English, and in the management of assessment within subjects, where it is not always used effectively to match work to students' learning needs.
32. The governors work closely with the headteacher and senior staff and contribute effectively to development planning and the direction of the school. Prudent financial management by the headteacher and governors has enabled the school to continue to pay retention allowances to teachers despite financial pressure, so that staffing is more stable than in many comparable schools. Governors and the headteacher have made attempts to provide a daily act of collective worship, but have not been able to find a system that meets the requirements of the full range of students. The issue does not affect achievement. While the cost per student is significantly above average, the proportion of students with additional learning needs is high, and the headteacher and governors ensure that funds are spent effectively in the interests of the students. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	6,174,379	Balance from previous year	762,556
Total expenditure	6,464,582	Balance carried forward to the next	472,353
Expenditure per student	5,852		

Work-Related Learning

The effectiveness of work-related learning is **very good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of enterprise is outstanding.
- The range of vocational courses offered is very good.
- Arrangements for work experience are very effective.

Commentary

33. Work related learning plays a key part in the life of the school. All statutory requirements are met. Students begin learning about employment and work in Years 7 to 9. They consider their aspirations and personal futures, learn about the skills needed at work and undertake visits to local companies. In Years 10 and 11, a very good range of vocational courses at applied GCSE, GCSE and entry level are offered alongside other relevant activities. The courses cover a very wide range of subjects including manufacture, media studies and enterprise. All

students take at least one vocational course, and achievement is very good. In these courses students are able to apply what they learn in lessons to the world of work. Work-related activities are very well supported by companies and other outside agencies in London.

34. The school's designation as a business and enterprise college is acting as a catalyst to improve work-related learning throughout the school. The school aims to produce well qualified, confident young people who can contribute towards making Whitechapel an economically sustainable community. Students engage in specially prepared practical activities in Years 7 to 10. They learn about "Our Nation", Face to Face with Finance (NatWest Bank), business and key skills at work. In Year 8, students undertake the one-day Merrill Lynch Enterprise and Entrepreneurship programme. Visits are undertaken to the Bank of America to learn about commodity trading, Clifford Chance ethnic minority enterprise project, the Jagonari Women's Centre, Pentonville Prison, the Bankside Restaurant (a winner of the Small Business of the Year award) and Halkevi Kurdish Refugee Centre. The work done by groups of students for the Young Enterprise of the Year Competition is outstanding.
35. The two weeks of work experience students receive at the end of Year 10 is very good. Nearly all of the placements are found by the Education Business Partnership, Tower Hamlets. Most students are able to select the work experience they undertake. They are prepared for the experience in personal, social and health education lessons and are visited by teachers whilst at work. Staff report on each student's performance and employers report when students have done particularly well. Students share their experiences with each other in PHSE lessons and records are kept in Progress Files. Provision for work related learning is managed very well, and all students have opportunities to take part. Resources and accommodation are good.

Example of outstanding practice

Practical experience of running companies and taking part in the Young Enterprise competition has helped students develop a wide range of business, ICT and communication skills to a high standard. As a part of the work of the business and enterprise college, Year 10 students undertake a range of enterprise projects including a Tsunami T-shirt Project, Fair Trade and Veyron Technology. The most successful has set up a company to design and sell websites to outside organisations. They are being assisted by a website designer from Learning Eye. The clients for the group include the Royal Parks and Arnhem Wharf Primary School. The project involves advanced computer practice and learning about business and finance, and the students have made a profit. Their rehearsal of their multimedia presentation to the East London regional final of Young Enterprise was excellent. Members of the group explained the roles of salesman, designer and producer very well. They displayed great maturity and pride in the work they had done. They had learned that it was most difficult to negotiate and meet the needs of clients. Students said the project had change their view of their future and made them want to be entrepreneurial. They had beaten several teams of older students from other schools to reach this stage of the competition.

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 **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good long-term achievement to GCSE, but results at Year 9 need further improvement.
- Teaching is good overall, and is very effective for students joining the school with little English.
- Achievement, particularly in Year 9, is held back by weaknesses in some students' basic writing skills.
- New teaching initiatives, such as guided reading, make a positive contribution to achievement.
- Students' confidence and self-esteem are boosted by high levels of additional support outside lessons.
- In some lessons, students do not have enough opportunities to practise their speaking and listening skills.
- It is very difficult for teachers to meet the exceptionally wide range of learning needs in some classes.
- There is very good leadership by a highly skilled teacher.

Commentary

36. While a minority of students join Year 7 with above average standards for their age, overall standards among students joining the school are well below average. The school's tests show particular weaknesses in many students' use of English for reasoning, and a significant number of older students join the school with very little knowledge of English. Results in Year 9 national tests have been well below average in recent years. The standard of work seen during the inspection was better, though it remained below average, with significant weaknesses in the writing skills of lower-attaining students. GCSE results are close to national average levels, and much better than those of similar schools. Gifted and talented students, including some who join the school with very little English, do very well and achieve very high standards. Students with Statements of special educational needs make good progress as a result of close support, but other students with special educational needs do not receive such consistent help, and the overall achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Overall, achievement in English is good. It is good in Year 11 and satisfactory, with some good features, in Year 9.
37. Teaching and learning range in individual lessons from satisfactory to very good, and are good overall. Teachers prepare lessons well, and introduce varied activities to interest students at all levels of ability including those with special educational needs. The best teaching excites students' curiosity and stimulates their interest in language as well as extending their skills. This includes work that is closely matched to the requirements of national tests and examinations, as well as new initiatives such as guided reading, which is very effective in building fluency and understanding. Individual teaching for students with little previous knowledge of English is highly effective across all subjects.
38. Students' good attitudes contribute to learning, but the very wide range of learning needs in some classes makes it very difficult for teachers to match work closely enough to the needs of the weakest students. Students do not always have enough time to discuss work before they write about it, leaving some with too little to say, even when they have shared in note-making

with the rest of the class. Marking is diligent, particularly in Years 10 and 11, though students do not always follow up specific points for improvement. Each student's progress is tracked through meticulous assessment schemes which are used to plan schemes of work to meet students' individual needs. The assessment of students joining the school with little English is a particular strength, and is supported by a very well planned induction course. Teaching makes good use of ICT facilities, particularly in presenting coursework.

39. Leadership and management are very good, and the recently appointed subject leader is engaged in a series of innovative schemes for raising standards. These are well thought out, though they do not yet address the full range of students' learning needs, particularly those of older students whose literacy skills are still at a basic level. Nevertheless, the school's response to the range of challenges it has faced in English since the last inspection has been highly effective, particularly in the major extensions it has made in its provision for students in the early stages of learning English. Overall, improvement has been good, and the school is well placed to improve its work further.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

40. Provision is satisfactory. Teachers throughout the school recognise the particularly important role that literacy and language development play in the education of its students. They communicate very effectively with all groups of students, and are skilled in phrasing explanations clearly and in terms students can understand. Since the last inspection, however, a visit from Her Majesty's Inspectors has found that students in some lessons had too few opportunities for discussing topics they were later to write about, and evidence from the present inspection showed weaknesses in the design of writing tasks across several subjects, often involving too much copying and not enough attention to composing texts. There were particular weaknesses in writing in modern languages, but it was also a weakness in some English lessons. These weaknesses have still to be effectively addressed across the school.

Modern foreign languages

Provision for modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers speak foreign languages fluently and use them extensively in lessons.
- Achievement in Spanish is unsatisfactory, particularly in Year 11.
- The teaching of German is consistently good.
- The range of activities in some lessons is too narrow to motivate all students, and there is too much copying.
- Most students who start two European languages in Year 7 make slow progress.
- The recently appointed subject leader provides good leadership and management.

Commentary

41. Spanish, French and German were inspected fully, and work in Bengali was sampled through observing lessons in Years 9 and 11. The quality of teaching and learning sampled in Bengali was good, and students were achieving well. Activities were well prepared and delivered at a brisk pace which focused students' learning and maintained a good pace of work. Lessons are conducted entirely in Bengali, which challenges students to listen carefully and maintain high levels of concentration.
42. Students join the school with little previous experience of foreign European languages, and their overall achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9, standards are below average in French, just in line in German, and well below average in Spanish. Overall, achievement in Year 9 is satisfactory. It is good in German but unsatisfactory in Spanish. The best progress is in learning new vocabulary and set phrases, together with listening and reading skills.

Students have limited opportunities to speak at length, and oral responses are short as is their writing which, apart from some higher-attaining students, does not usually progress to composing series of sentences. GCSE results are below average overall, and well below average in Spanish. However, there is a rising trend in French and German results, and an average proportion of girls passed with grades A* to C in German in 2004.

43. Work seen during the inspection broadly reflects these GCSE results. In German, for example, work from students with different levels of ability shows the use of a range of tenses and the development of more complex language. This represents good achievement. Achievement is satisfactory in French, but many students in Spanish are still learning basic vocabulary, simple dialogues and are unenthusiastic learners by the time they reach Year 11. This represents unsatisfactory achievement.
44. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good features, particularly in German. Teachers use the foreign language confidently throughout most of their lessons. This focuses students' attention and listening skills. Work is marked in good detail and assessed very conscientiously. In some lessons there is a narrow range of activities, which results in passive rather than enthusiastic learning, and too much written work is copied. Students at the early stages of learning English achieve as well as other students as a result of careful guidance and individual support. In Spanish there are examples of work planned that is too difficult for average and lower-attaining students. There is some use of ICT, but it is limited in scope.
45. The recently appointed subject leader provides good leadership and management, and the department has good teamwork and a strong focus on raising standards, including Saturday lessons. Students have good opportunities to visit the countries whose languages they are studying. The opportunity to learn Bengali is appreciated by students and the community. However, the system of having students who do not take Bengali begin two languages in Year 7 hinders progress through the early stages of both languages, and no students take two European languages in Years 10 and 11. Since the last inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress overall, maintaining its strength in German, but losing some ground in Spanish.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good, and standards are rising in all year groups.
- Teaching is good overall, and very good in Years 7 to 9.
- Very effective leadership and management result in very good teamwork.
- There is very good use of data to monitor standards, and to set work at the right level.
- There are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking, and in the use of ICT.

Commentary

46. Students join the school with overall standards that are well below average, particularly in their understanding of mathematical language. Results in Year 9 national tests are well below average in most years, and were very low in 2003. The standard of work seen during the inspection was below average in Years 9 and 11. Boys have generally performed better than girls in tests and examinations, but there were no consistent differences between the quality of boys' and girls' work during the inspection. Department targets are challenging, and approach national standards in Year 11. Students with very high standards are encouraged to take GCSE a year early. Students with special educational needs, and those with language difficulties, generally receive good support, and make good progress. Overall, achievement is good, and standards are rising.

47. The overall quality of teaching is good; it is very good in Years 7 to 9, and in some lessons in Years 10 and 11. Teachers know their subject well, and planning is detailed. In many lessons, work is set at two or three different levels in order to provide an appropriate challenge for every student. This ensures that all students enjoy their work, and can experience success. It contributes to the very good attitude to work seen in most classes. Good habits of presentation are developed, and teachers use their new interactive whiteboards well. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, so that students make a good contribution to lessons. They achieve particularly well when working in groups, and this makes a very effective contribution to their English skills. There are some good examples of detailed marking, but there is inconsistency across the department in the depth of marking, and in the quality of teachers' comments. There is also uneven access for students in the use of ICT to extend learning opportunities.

Example of outstanding practice

Detailed planning, with a very close match of work to students' learning needs, led to excellent learning and achievement in a Year 7 lesson in an ICT suite.

The class had some students working at an above average standard for their age, and some who had joined the school with well below average standards, including language difficulties. Meticulous planning enabled the teacher and support teacher to meet all of these needs. Learning goals were set out clearly, and a very effective starter linked them with work completed in earlier lessons. The teacher made very effective use of the interactive whiteboard to illustrate key ideas, such as complementary angles, symmetry, and tessellations. The range of activities for students was wide, and very effective groupwork that ensured that they discussed the work and developed their understanding of vocabulary. Relationships were excellent, and students were absorbed in their work for the whole of this double lesson. A final session consolidated the mathematical principles covered during the lesson. Students were provided with question papers, requiring written answers, at either Level 4 or Levels 5 to 6, according to aptitude. These questions maintained the very high level of challenge evident throughout the lesson, and enabled all students to show excellent progress from their wide range of starting points.

48. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department leads by example in his enthusiasm for teaching, and his dedication to improving standards. As a result, there is very good teamwork, leading to good provision in lessons and to a strong contribution to the school's provision for learning beyond the school day. There is a detailed development plan, with clear priorities for the future, and high expectations. The importance of high quality teaching skills is recognised. Data and assessment are used very well to improve provision and match work to students' learning needs. There have been good improvements since the last inspection. Department targets are challenging and indicate that further improvement is expected, particularly since standards are beginning to rise when students enter the school in Year 7.

Mathematics across the curriculum

49. Provision is satisfactory, and has good features. All teachers have received training in the use of number across the curriculum, and the numeracy policy provides further guidance. Teachers understand the need to provide consistently for mathematics, and there is increasing consistency in the use of mathematical terms and processes across subjects. Many are making a significant contribution to mathematics. In science, there is regular data analysis through graphs and spreadsheets. Students use equations, and terms such as 'ratio', when studying transformers. They use numeracy skills in design technology when undertaking market research, and when using recipes. Some students, however, are too ready to resort to calculators for work they should be doing mentally, and many need more practice with simple calculations and number work in order to raise standards and confidence.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good among all groups of students
- Teaching is well matched to students' needs, and engages their interest.
- Very good leadership and management have given science a positive and exciting image.
- There is some good written work, but also too much that is copied.
- Assessment systems are well developed, and information is accessible and successfully used.
- There are many opportunities for students to extend and develop their learning beyond lessons.

Commentary

50. Students join the school with well below average standards, chiefly because of their limited understanding of scientific language. Results in Year 9 tests and at GCSE have been well below average in recent years, though there is a trend of improvement, particularly in Year 9, where the 2004 results were the school's best ever. Boys generally do slightly better than girls. The standard of work seen during the inspection showed further improvement, and was only a little below average in Years 9 and 11. The current pattern of achievement is good overall among all groups of students.
51. Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good and outstanding practice. Teachers adapt their language very effectively to ensure that students understand scientific concepts. Learning goals are clearly set out, and starter and summary activities are well developed. Teachers use a wide range of strategies and activities, including good use of ICT. Teachers' thorough and detailed planning of lessons and focused questioning help students to learn well. Their enthusiasm is reflected in the way students respond with energy and interest. Students take good care over their written work, which is well marked. Where the teaching is excellent, particularly clear organisation and planning, with excellent use of resources in pace, leads to learning that is significantly faster and more assured than would normally be expected. In some lessons, however, they copy too much rather than making their own notes, and this limits their ability to write independently. There is good support for students with English as an additional language, and there is an extensive range of breakfast, after school clubs and Summer schools. The Saturday school for science in the week of the inspection was particularly well attended, both by Year 9 students working to improve their grades in national tests, and by students taking three sciences at GCSE.

Example of outstanding practice

Very detailed planning, with effective support to pupils in the early stages of learning English, enabled a Year 10 class to build their own transformers and relate this to the operation of the national grid.

Students had previously studied the use of transformers in the national grid and their role in supplying electricity to the home. They knew the basic links between electricity and magnetism. This lesson began a clear and humorous introduction to electrical transformers and ways in which they could change the characteristics of current. This was closely matched to what students already understood, and was very carefully phrased so that complex terminology was clearly understood. Students then chose to construct a step-up or step-down transformer, and calculated the ratio of input to output voltage, based on the number of turns of wire in each of the two cores of the transformer, using a formula supplied and explained by the teacher. The teacher then related their calculations to the larger calculations involved in the national grid. The group contained some students who were still in the early stages of learning English, and who had been identified as academically gifted. The teacher planned very effectively to ensure that all students with additional learning needs had the support they needed, including support from other students, to learn to the same standard as others in the class. All students' progress was carefully tracked, with very clear guidance in marking. As a result of consistently effective learning across a series of lessons, of which this formed a part,

all students were on track for very high grades at GCSE.

52. Leadership and management are very good. The new head of science has very good vision and high aspirations, and has already identified priorities for action. The team of teachers and other colleagues are very well supported and the image of science is positive. Technicians provide excellent support to teachers and students in practical science. There is a keen sense of purpose, and specialist knowledge and understanding are high. Schemes of work, policies and other documentation are developing well, and a common format for lesson preparation is firmly established and successful. There are good opportunities for higher-attaining students to take three science subjects, and some gifted and talented students have achieved very well at GCSE.
53. Substantial recent changes in staffing and curriculum have brought about a clear climate of improvement. Assessment is now regular and rigorous and the use of information is developing well. Students' work of very good quality is on display throughout the department and supports a popular and positive image throughout the school, though the contributions to science of women and of scientists from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds are not given enough prominence. Current provision represents good improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have been seriously affected by staffing difficulties, but have now begun to recover.
- Leadership is very good, and new staff are committed to raising standards.
- Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9, but needs to engage students more in Years 10 and 11.
- Literacy and language difficulties affect achievement in GCSE coursework.
- Teaching time is below average in Years 8 to 11, but students have good opportunities to learn outside lessons.

Commentary

54. Particularly serious staffing difficulties have affected standards, and the subject has only recently begun to recover. Standards remain, however, well below average in Years 9 and 11, and the school accepts that further improvements are needed. Students are making very good progress in Year 7, but most students in Years 8 and 9 are roughly a year behind those in most secondary schools, though they are currently making satisfactory to good progress. While GCSE results were well below average overall in 2004, they were better in the applied examination, where six out of ten students passed with grade C or above. All groups of

students are currently making satisfactory or better progress, but long-term achievement is not yet satisfactory.

55. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and it is good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well. Students in Years 7 to 9 are provided with good worksheets and the work is explained and demonstrated effectively. Students are responding well to the more interesting and challenging work provided as a result of the introduction of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory, but learning is hindered by many students' difficulties with technical language and with written work. Many cannot write quickly and accurately enough to complete their coursework on time, and this limits their chances in examinations. While the range of activities in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory, they do not always capture students' interest, and teachers in some lessons need to do more to ensure that all students are positively engaged in their work.
56. Current leadership is very good. Most staff have joined the school this year, and share a strong commitment to improving provision as quickly as possible. Management is good. New systems are being introduced quickly, often to make up for earlier gaps in organisation, and these are having a positive impact on teaching and learning, though further work is needed on assessment. There were significant weaknesses in provision at the time of the last inspection, and the current position represents satisfactory improvement, with good improvement in facilities.

ICT across the curriculum

57. The use of ICT in other subjects is satisfactory, and sometimes good. Because the priority has been to improve the ICT as a subject, co-ordination of applications in other subjects remains to be improved. However, many specialist teachers in other subjects are trained and eager to apply ICT in their work. The use of interactive white boards is becoming more widespread and having a big and beneficial impact on learning in many subjects.
58. ICT is used well in art, business education, design and technology, history, media studies, physical education, science and work-related learning. It is also good in Years 10 and 11 in English, geography and music. The uses of computer aided design and manufacture in technology and spreadsheets to analyse data in science are particularly good. ICT is used well in physical education to record and analyse movement and performance. Computers are also used well in art to capture and manipulate images. Computing plays a central part in business education to research topics, analyse performance data and publish work. In work-related learning students have set up a company to design and sell websites to outside organisations as a part on the Young Enterprise Scheme excellently. The use of computing in religious education and in modern languages needs improvement.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make steady progress and from a low starting point, and achievement is satisfactory.
- Teaching in some lessons is not adapted closely enough to the needs of lower-attaining students.
- Students in the in the early stages of learning English receive well-planned support.
- Data are not analysed sufficiently to identify standards and achievement and inform planning.
- The good practice of the subject leader provides a good model for teachers.

- Teachers share planning well, but there is too little monitoring of teaching and learning within the department.

Commentary

59. Standards rise slowly from well below average in Year 7 to below average in Year 9 and at GCSE. A small number of students reach higher standards, and students with special educational needs do well at GCSE. This represents satisfactory long-term achievement. There is good achievement among higher-attaining students, but the progress of many others is limited, particularly in Years 7 to 9, by weaknesses in students' skills in using English for learning and reasoning.
60. By the end of Year 9, most students can use atlases and interpret maps, diagrams and graphs. However the weak literacy and language skills of many students limit detailed explanations about physical processes and human activities. Students at an early stage of learning English benefit from specialist support and their standards rise perceptibly. Although most students take a pride in their work a few, mainly lower attaining students, do not finish their work. By the end of Year 11 improved language and literacy levels enable most students to bring together enough skills to successfully undertake enquiry based fieldwork and apply their finding together with prior knowledge to some good quality coursework.
61. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Detailed planning emphasises activities to consolidate and reinforce learning; this however limits new learning within lessons. The comprehension difficulties of students in Years 7 to 9 slows learning. In a minority of lessons, time runs out work is incomplete and summary sessions are rushed or lost. Some lessons rely too heavily on texts that some students find difficult to read, but others make good use of interactive whiteboards and video sequences to stimulate interest and complement teachers' clear explanations. Continuous assessment linked to a sequence of lessons is effective, and involves students well. The choice of oral coursework for GCSE advantages students with weak literacy and supports good social development. However, not all teachers mark in sufficient detail, and some marking does not tell students how to improve their work. Good relationships create purposeful and happy learning environments. Collaborative planning with specialist language support teachers is effective, but the same attention is not always given to students with special educational needs or those at a slightly higher level of competency in English.
62. The clear thinking and good practice of the subject leader provides a good role model for teachers and builds students' confidence. Teachers share planning, and day-to-day management is efficient. There is, however, too little monitoring to ensure consistency in assessment and in the use of resources for lower attaining students. Resources other than GCSE textbooks are adequate. The analysis of national and school data to evaluate standards and achievement in the subject is insufficient to inform planning especially in years 7 to 9. The use of ICT is much improved since the last inspection, with further improvement and INSET planned. The strengths of the previous inspection have been sustained and the slightly rising trend of standards and achievement reflects satisfactory improvement.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards are below average, but achievement from students' starting points is satisfactory.
- Students' achievement is inhibited by weak literacy and language skills.
- Marking of students' work is inconsistent and does not promote achievement sufficiently.
- ICT is used well to support teaching and learning.
- Provision suffers from a lack of suitably qualified staff.

Commentary

63. Students join the school with well below average standards. By Years 9 standards are below average. Students in Year 9 have a satisfactory knowledge of the middle ages and of Britain from 1750 to 1900. However, their understanding of historical skills and the analysis and interpretation of sources is much weaker. For the small number of students who opt to take the subject in Years 10 and 11, standards are below average but this is better than the 2004 GCSE results. They have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the First World War and the inter-war years. Written work is good in terms of its historical content but it is weaker with the explanation of events. At all ages presentation of work is often scruffy and achievement is restricted by low standards of literacy. Achievement amongst all groups of students is satisfactory.
64. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is only one history specialist teacher and some inconsistency of practice amongst history staff. However, lessons are planned thoroughly, with clear aims and objectives that are shared with the students. Teachers use a variety of activities to promote good learning and most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Good support teaching helps students to maintain concentration. Good questioning engages students in discussion but their oral responses are weak. They have insufficient support with developing answers that use historical language and evidence to support their views. There are very many students whose first language is not English; however, there is insufficient attention given to developing students' literacy skills so work is often untidy and inaccurate. Good ICT resources promote independent learning and research well. Marking of students' work is unsatisfactory. Its quality varies between teachers but overall, students are given little indication about the level at which they are working or what they should do to improve.
65. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of subject provides good documentation and guidance to his colleagues, and less experienced staff receive good support. However, there is a long-standing vacancy for a permanent teacher, and this leads to some inconsistency in teaching. The department plan identifies priorities for improvement, but these are not always implemented in practice. There are good procedures in place to review the work of the department and to scrutinise students' work but these have had a limited impact on teaching and learning. While the department is maintaining satisfactory overall provision, it has made little progress in its work since the last inspection, and serious issues remain to be addressed.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of department ensures that all lessons are well planned.
- Higher-attaining students achieve well, but some aspects of the GCSE course could be more challenging.
- Some marking does not give enough information on improving work, and some work is left unfinished.
- Students in the in the early stages of learning English achieve well as a result of good individual support.

Commentary

66. GCSE results were below average in 2004, though they compared well with those of other subjects in the school. Girls achieved significantly better at GCSE than boys. The standard of work seen in Year 9 was also below average, but represented satisfactory progress from students' starting points. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.

67. Standards of work seen in the inspection were below average, both in written work and in students' oral answers. Students in Years 7 to 9 make satisfactory progress. Students in Years 10 and 11, all of whom take either the full or the short GCSE course, make satisfactory progress, but could achieve more in some aspects of the subject which they already know in good detail from their religious studies outside school. Students for whom English is an additional language achieve well through good individual support within lessons. Higher-attaining students also achieve well through the provision of extended tasks. However, lower-attaining students and some with special educational needs achieve less well because their needs are not fully met through additional support or modified work.
68. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and there are examples of good and very good teaching. Teachers have good skills in managing classes and foster good relationships. Lessons are well planned, and students learn patiently. They are interested in religion and its place in the modern world, although they are not always challenged to explore new and stimulating ideas for themselves. The good programme of talks and visits to places of religious interest enables younger students to acquire understanding of various faiths. Teachers mark books thoroughly, but some students are allowed to leave work unfinished. This limits the subject's contribution to these students
69. Leadership and management are good. The head of department's leadership is competent and committed. A non-specialist teacher of religious education himself, he has mastered the requirements of the subject and provides good support and training to his team. Since the last inspection some features, such as the provision of GCSE courses to all Year 10 and 11 students, have improved. The achievement of students then, as now, was satisfactory. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- • Achievement is good from Year 7 to year 11.
- • Teaching and learning are good and have very good features in years 10 and 11.
- • The students enjoy exciting, interesting and relevant activities.
- • Adults work well together to give very good individual guidance in lessons and after school.
- • The leadership is very good and has led to the creation of an enthusiastic team of specialist teachers.
- • Recently introduced systems to enable students to learn more independently are not consistently used by all teachers.

Commentary

70. In 2004, GCSE standards and those in Year 9 tests were close to average. Results have improved over the past four years with especially good improvement between 2003 and 2004. Standards in the work seen by the end of Year 9 are average. Students make good quality products, follow plans, extend their technical vocabulary and use a good range of tools. They are not so good at doing their own research. Standards in Year 10 and Year 11 are just below average. Students evaluate their products well and understand the benefits of using computers when designing. However, many middle ability students do not annotate course work well enough. Students have only limited access to computer aided manufacture so standards in this regard are relatively low. From Year 7 to Year 11 students' achievement is good because, throughout the course, they are challenged and guided by capable specialist teachers and supporting adults who are constantly developing better approaches to individual

learning. Additionally in Year 10 and Year 11 new courses in manufacturing and food technology enhance well-established graphics and resistant materials courses.

71. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to challenge whole classes, individuals and groups so the majority of students work hard. However, systems to make individual students more self-reliant as learners are not yet having their full effect in all lessons. Teaching and learning in Year 10 and Year 11 are good and have very good features. Three examples follow. Firstly, in the manufacturing course individuals were competently trained in skills such as metal turning or laminating sheets of wood before being asked to take on a specialized role in a manufacturing team. They concentrated hard knowing that their skills would be put to the test. Secondly, the effectiveness of the one to one support in resistant materials was revealed in both product quality and pride of ownership. Thirdly, the teachers worked in teams with supporting adults to give expert guidance about packaging, display language and marketing skills.
72. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because standards have been maintained through difficult times. The recently re-established specialist team has very good leadership. Management is good. Identified priorities for development, though very good, have not been in place long enough to be fully and consistently applied.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

73. Art and design and music were inspected fully and provision in drama and media studies was sampled.
74. The quality of work sampled in **drama** was very good. 2004 GCSE results were broadly average. All students were achieving very well, and lower-attaining students benefit particularly from the work, as they can convey the message of their acting piece through a variety dramatic conventions and techniques as well as spoken language. Drama students forge links with other subject areas, and some eloquent performances were produced using masks that were made in co-operation with the art department. In Year 11, students support their very good practical work with thoughtful analysis of the purpose of the drama, the impact on their audience and the techniques needed to communicate effectively. Students are encouraged to interpret material from a range of sources and learn to weave their own ideas and experiences into their drama performances. An extensive programme of extra-curricular activities enriches students' learning, and participation in the Saturday school in the week of the inspection was outstanding. Drama makes a strong contribution to students' speaking and listening skills, and boosts their confidence and self-esteem.
75. The overall quality of work sampled in **media studies** was very good. 2004 GCSE results were within the average band, and individual magazines produced for Year 11 coursework are excellent, though students are not fully challenged in all of their lessons.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 11 teacher's excellent knowledge of media and ICT enables students to write, design and produce their own magazines to a professional standard.

Inspectors' first impression was that these were published magazines that the students were studying. In fact, they had produced them all themselves, using an excellent range of design and printing techniques, and completing interviews and articles to a professional standard. Every magazine was different, reflecting the diversity of the students in the group, and all showed a high level of understanding of the use of techniques and design to generate interest and to communicate. Colourful artwork was combined with strong drawing and expert layout that showed high levels of mathematical skill and understanding of proportion. In discussion, students explained their work clearly, showing strong understanding of key media concepts such as target audience, purpose, genre, symbolism of colour, form of representation and professional presentation. They had combined their own ideas with research from many published magazines.

All of their magazines had an impressive range of features, including eye-catching front covers and titles, double page layouts and different types of features and articles to seize and sustain the attention of a range of readers. The headteacher and inspectors agreed that achievement in this work was exceptional.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average in Years 9 and 11, but are rising.
- Teaching is good overall, and sometimes very good.
- Boys achieve less than girls, and there are no effective arrangements to tackle this issue.
- There are too few opportunities for three-dimensional work.
- There is a wide range of opportunities for students to improve their work beyond lessons.

Commentary

76. GCSE results in 2004 were below average in the higher grades, but broadly average in grades A*-G. Results have shown a marked improvement over the past three years since staffing stabilised. Year 11 work during the inspection was below average, but showed good approaches to research and experimentation in sketchbooks. There is a strong emphasis on the improvement of drawing and painting techniques, using a variety of media, including oil pastels and acrylic, and on the development of critical studies using well developed learning aids. There are examples of high quality work in some students' files, but there are very few opportunities for three-dimensional work. Saturday classes provide a good opportunity for GCSE students to improve their standards.
77. Students join the school with well below average standards, and teachers' assessments in Year 9 were well below average in 2004. Work seen during the inspection was below average, but showed a markedly improving situation as the result of a significant reduction in class sizes this year. Students learn a variety of drawing and painting techniques, inspired by the work of famous artists, but the range of media they experience is narrow. Homework, linked to coursework is set regularly and marked helpfully across the department. Provision for ICT is good. Those choosing to study art for GCSE now have the opportunity to begin the course in the summer term and this is helping to raise standards.
78. Achievement overall is good, particularly in years 10 and 11 as the result of planning and teaching strategies. The achievement of students with special educational needs, and those for whom communication using English poses additional problems, is similar to others as the result of a very good support and learning aids. Gifted and talented students are identified and given additional learning opportunities. There is a significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls which has not been addressed.
79. Teaching and learning are good overall, and sometimes very good. The best classes had a brisk pace and an enthusiastic delivery. Learning was reinforced by regular questioning and there were very high expectations of students' active involvement. There was a small amount of teaching where expectation and challenge only resulted in satisfactory learning, and one occasion where the poor behaviour of a minority of boys effectively disrupted the learning of others. Aspects of literacy are being well planned but difficulties in this aspect of learning hinder achievement for many students. There were several occasions when teachers made good use of the opportunities for spiritual development. Assessment procedures are thorough and informative. They contribute to individual target setting as an aid to raising standards.
80. Leadership is good. The department is well led by an experienced specialist who is committed to raising standards after a period of instability in staffing. Strong community links have been forged through a number of impressive art projects. Management is satisfactory, but

monitoring and evaluation of learning and standards is not rigorous and frequent enough to have an impact on standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, although not all issues have been fully resolved.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses.

- Standards in Years 9 and 11 are below average, but achievement is good.
- The quality of teaching is good and has a positive impact on students' achievement.
- Good relationships between teachers and students promote interest and involvement.
- Instrumental teachers and the composer in residence make a valuable contribution to students' musical development.

Commentary.

81. Students begin with well below average standards. They reach below average standards by Year 9, but their achievement is good. The 2004 GCSE results for A*-C grades were very low, although all students gained A*-G grades. The standard of work seen in Year 11 was below average overall, but a few students reach average to above average standards in performing and composing. Achievement by Year 11 is good, and a few students achieve very well. Achievement is enhanced by the provision for extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons. Gifted and talented students make very good progress. Overall, achievement is good.
82. By Year 9, students understand simple chord structures and use keyboards to practise a short accompaniment. They show a satisfactory ability to compose and perform a rap. They discuss the way a video is used to promote a pop song, but do not always make sufficient reference to musical terms when sharing their ideas. By Year 11, many students show confidence as performers. They use music technology well to devise and refine their compositions and produce some effective waltzes. However, students' listening skills are not so well developed.
83. Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good teaching. Teachers make effective use of their own high levels of musical knowledge to promote learning. Lessons are well planned and ensure that all students are involved in a range of appropriate musical experiences. As a result, students make a good response in lessons and behave well. There is satisfactory provision for developing students' literacy and numeracy skills. Provision for music technology is satisfactory and has been improved since the last inspection.
84. Leadership and management are good. There has been some instability in staffing since the last inspection, which has occasionally resulted in lower standards. The teacher in charge of music has made a significant contribution to developing the work of the department during the time that he has been in post. Assessment procedures are good and are used well to give a clear overview of students' progress. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Although standards have declined, this reflects a wider range of learning needs among the students, and the overall quality of teaching has been sustained. Provision has been made for students to use music technology in Years 7 to 9, and the number of students receiving instrumental lessons has been increased.
85. Extensive provision for extra-curricular activities enables students to develop performing skills in and out of school. Students have taken part in a performance of The Ballad of Bethnal Green in conjunction with the BBC singers. They have been involved in an education project at the Barbican. The school's Showcase talent show is very popular amongst students. Over 150 students receive lessons from peripatetic instrumental teachers. Many students achieve

success in external music examinations. Accommodation is satisfactory, and there is a very good range of resources.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good, and lessons have high levels of pace and purpose.
- Supportive leadership promotes the high level of commitment from teachers.
- Very good care and guidance from teachers promote very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Teaching time is below average for students not taking GCSE in Years 10 and 11
- There are too few opportunities for students to assess their own work in some lessons.
- Teachers give generously of their time in supporting activities outside the school day.

Commentary

86. Standards among students joining Year 7 are below average. By Year 9, standards are average, and achievement is good. By Year 11, in the National Curriculum course taken by all students standards are broadly average. In GCSE coursework, standards are above average for both boys and girls representing good achievement. Overall, achievement is good, but is held back in Year 11 by very limited teaching time for students not taking the GCSE course.
87. Teaching and learning are very good. All teachers show a high level of commitment to the care, guidance and support of students. This promotes very good relationships, and very positive attitudes and behaviour. Teachers' good coaching skills enable them to analyse the performance of a skill and to present challenge at an achievable level. Students of all abilities therefore work at an appropriate pace, and students with special educational needs and the especially talented achieve well. Teaching and learning show energy, vigour and pace, and students are fully exercised. Teachers provide good opportunities for students to improve their speaking and listening skills through question and answer sessions, and by the expectation that students should lead warm-up exercises. However opportunities for students to assess their own performance are not offered in some lessons, and students do not always have a clear idea of how to improve their work.
88. Leadership is very good and the department is managed well. A strong sense of direction and vision, and a commitment to improvement sustains very good teamwork among teachers. Management ensures a good structure to all lessons, aided by sound long-term planning and opportunities to share good practice. Good performance management and good arrangements for professional development maintain the high quality of teaching. Accommodation and resources are very good. The school makes very good use of local sports facilities to enhance the curriculum. Extra curricular opportunities are very good, and include a wide range of activities in competitive and recreational sports. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. GCSE results are now broadly average, and there has been improvement in teaching, leadership and management.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

89. Provision was sampled. Teaching and learning seen in the applied GCSE course in business, and in the course in business and communication systems, were good. Teaching and learning in the entry-level language course in business French were satisfactory. There is a high pass rate in the applied GCSE course, and two-fifths of students achieved grade C or above in 2004. The remaining courses are new, and do not yet have examination results.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

90. Personal, social and health education was sampled by observing lessons in each year group, and citizenship was fully inspected. Teaching and learning seen in personal, social and health education were good overall. They were very good in some lessons, though in some others the central planning needed to be more closely adapted to the actual learning needs of the students in the class. The programme is, however, well designed, with good leadership and management.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Specific teaching of citizenship is of good quality and is giving the subject a good profile in the school.
- Students have good opportunities to be active citizens outside of the formal curriculum.
- Arrangements to audit provision and assess students' progress need further development.
- Not all contributing subjects have clear objectives for citizenship.
- The assistant head teacher in charge of the subject has good vision for future development.

Commentary

91. Standards are broadly average in Years 9 and 11, and achievement is satisfactory. A small number of students studied for the GCSE course in 2004 and reached above average standards. The standard of GCSE work seen during the inspection was below average and achievement was satisfactory.
92. The new Year 8 citizenship course is well planned and taught by a specialist team of teachers. The success of this approach has given the subject a higher profile within the school, and students achieve well. Across the other school years, the citizenship strand in personal, social and health education lessons is much less effective, and achievement is too dependent on the skills of individual teachers and subjects, and their ability to make citizenship explicit within the themes and topics they teach. The school has conducted a detailed audit of the contributions made through subjects, but the impact on achievement is limited because of the absence of a uniform teaching approach. All Year 11 students will take the GCSE short course next year.
93. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and good in lessons taught by specialist teachers. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and encourage students to work independently and collaboratively. Students are motivated because teachers employ a wide range of stimulating teaching methods and provide helpful advice as to how they can make further progress. Full account of the literacy and language difficulties of a large proportion of the school's students is taken into consideration when lessons are planned. Where teaching is less effective, assignments lack real challenge and work is insufficiently adapted to the learning needs of individuals.
94. Many opportunities are provided for students to be active citizens by contributing to the community, and by participating in the life of the school, such as through the school council. The school offers good examples of citizenship activity through strong partnerships and business links that reinforce learning and motivate students to achieve well.
95. Leadership of citizenship is good, and its present management satisfactory. The subject leader has established clear priorities and appropriate targets for the future development of the subject. Work is in process to improve the reporting and assessment systems, and plans for increased specialist delivery of citizenship as a separately taught subject are well advanced. Citizenship was not inspected at the last inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

