

INSPECTION REPORT

BULLERS WOOD SCHOOL

Chislehurst

LEA area: Bromley

Unique reference number: 101666

Headteacher: Ms Kathleen Clarke

Lead inspector: Ms Sheila Browning

Dates of inspection: 8–11 November 2004

Inspection number: 268760

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:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Female (with a mixed sixth form)
Number on roll:	1440
School address:	St Nicolas Lane Logs Hill Chislehurst Kent
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Cliff Hardcastle OBE
Date of previous inspection:	26 April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bullers Wood is a larger than average comprehensive school, with 1099 girls up to Year 11 and a mixed sixth form of 341 students including 27 boys. This heavily oversubscribed, high-achieving school with specialist language college status is surrounded by some affluent housing but draws from a wider catchment than the relatively privileged area of Bromley. The proportion of girls eligible for free school meals is below the national average. About a fifth, of the total roll, are from an ethnic minority background and some 15 languages are spoken. Very few girls are learning English as an additional language, 20 are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The proportion of girls with special educational needs is below the national average as are the numbers of girls with a statement of educational needs. Most of these have moderate, social, emotional and behavioural and other learning needs. The students have a wide range of ability. Local grammar and independent schools tend to take the highest attainers in the area. The school is involved in a number of initiatives and currently holds various awards such as the Schools Achievement Award, Investors in People status, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Young Enterprise. In 2002, the school won Arts Mark Gold and Sports Mark Award and the Schools Curriculum Award and it was awarded Beacon School status in 2000.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1510	Sheila Browning	Lead inspector	Design and technology support
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33160	Dr Natalia Power	Team inspector	Religious education
6138	Keith Page	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (post 16)
23031	Ian Knight	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
5241	Dr Cynthia Millband	Team inspector	Biology (post 16) Chemistry (post 16)
33211	Graham Abel	Team inspector	
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	Special educational needs General studies English (post 16)
24142	Sylvia Argyle	Team inspector	Art and design English support
4605	Michael Lormor	Team inspector	Music
2183	Dr Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Design and technology Business education (post 16) Hospitality and catering (post 16)
33727	Dr Nick Vinall	Team inspector	Science Work related learning
10392	Donnaleen Ratcliff	Team inspector	Geography Geography (post 16)
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team inspector	Citizenship History
32903	Kate Green	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages support
17522	Nigel Stiles	Team inspector	French (post 16) Modern foreign languages support
1995	Dr Kate Seager	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Language College Status
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is very good with some outstanding aspects. This high-achieving school is a centre of excellence for language provision. It provides a very good education for all its students with excellent inclusion. Sixth form provision is very good. Enrichment opportunities are excellent. Standards are well above average and students are taught very well. They achieve highly and enjoy school. The school gives very good value for money. It is increasingly popular and heavily oversubscribed. Leadership and management by the headteacher are excellent.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is a specialist language college, and this aspect of its work is outstanding.
- Standards are above average at the end of Year 9. Results in the 2003 GCSE/GNVQ examinations are well above average as are the results in the AS and A level examinations.
- Achievement is very good because of the very good teaching and students are very well motivated.
- The curriculum is very good. Enrichment opportunities are excellent with high levels of student participation.
- Leadership by the headteacher is excellent and by other key staff very good.
- Support, advice and guidance for students are very good. Provision for students' moral, social and cultural development results in a racially harmonious school and very good relationships and behaviour.
- Assessment practices are inconsistent in some subject areas.

The school has made very good progress since it was last inspected in April 1999 and has won many educational awards. The two key issues identified in the last inspection are addressed. In Years 10 and 11, sufficient time is now given for those students who are not preparing for a GCSE in religious education to cover the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The provision in other subjects to develop students' information and communication technology skills is considerably improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	N/A	N/A	A	

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

The achievement of students overall is very good. In Year 9, current standards of work are above average in English, mathematics, science, and in most other subjects. In geography standards are well above average. In citizenship, design and technology and physical education standards are average. In Year 11, inspection evidence shows that students well exceed expected standards in most subjects and that students achieve highly. In science, music and in work related learning standards are above average and achievement is good. In Year 11 in citizenship, physical education and religious education, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory.

In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, standards were well above the national average and were in line with similar schools. 2003 is the latest year for which national comparisons are validated for GCSE. GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above the national average and for similar schools. Overall, realistic targets were set for 2003 and they were exceeded.

The school places great emphasis on providing for the personal development of its students, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance is very good. Punctuality is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good and it is socially inclusive.

Overall students learn very well in response to the very good teaching they receive. **There is a considerable amount of excellent, very good and good teaching.** This results in well-motivated and interested students who are eager to learn and have the capacity to work well independently. In a few subjects, assessment and marking practices are inconsistent. Provision for students with English as an additional language, those with special educational needs, and those gifted and talented is very good. The care and welfare of students are good. The very good curriculum is significantly enhanced by the excellent and innovative language college provision. Accommodation is much improved and resources are good. Links with parents are good, those with other schools and the local community excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good with outstanding leadership by the headteacher.

The headteacher has built on the well-established strengths since the last inspection and has clearly identified areas for future improvement. This large school is organised and managed most efficiently. The governing body is astute and fulfils its role successfully and holds the school to account for the quality of education provided but does not fulfil all statutory requirements. The school continues to build on its notable strengths.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The vast majority of parents and students take a very positive view of most aspects of the school's work. However, of those returning the parental questionnaire, a not insignificant minority does not consider it is kept well informed or that parental concerns are sufficiently taken into account. These issues were not found to be a major concern during the inspection. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and about the school's activities and concerns and complaints are dealt with very well. Students were generally very positive about curriculum provision, teaching and enrichment opportunities. A shared concern with parents and students was the lack of indoor facilities for students to use at lunchtime during inclement weather.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that assessment practices, including marking and the use of assessment information, are applied consistently in all subjects.
- Review as soon as possible vehicle and student access at the two main entrances.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of worship.

SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form offers its students a **very good education, particularly for those wishing to follow specialised AS and A level courses**. Standards are well above average. Students enjoy the sixth form and achieve highly. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Leadership and management are very good. The sixth form gives very good value for money. It has increased considerably in the last few years. The sixth form is a centre of excellence for languages. Students study at least one language, from a choice of seven, alongside their other subjects. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is a specialist language college, and this aspect of its work is outstanding.
- Standards are well above average and students achieve highly.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- There is an excellent climate for learning, and enrichment opportunities are excellent.
- The sixth form is very well led and managed.
- The principles of best value are applied well and as a result the sixth form is cost effective.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<p>Provision for English is very good. Standards are above average. Achievement is very good. Teachers know and love the subject and convey their enthusiasm very effectively.</p> <p>Provision for French is very good. Excellent teaching in Years 12 and 13 results in students reaching very high standards. Achievement is good for the vast majority of students.</p> <p>Provision for German is very good. Year 13 students reach very high standards because of excellent teaching. Standards in AS and A level examinations are consistently higher, and often much higher, than the national average.</p>
Mathematics	<p>Provision for mathematics is good. Very good leadership and management have resulted in an increase in the number of students on AS and A-level courses. Recent examination results show a substantial improvement at A and AS level.</p>
Science	<p>Provision for biology is very good. Standards are well above average. Effective planning and questioning clearly stem from teachers' expertise in biology. This is maintaining standards.</p> <p>Provision for chemistry is very good. Standards are well above average. Students achieve very well because of their teachers' strong subject expertise and high expectations of their capabilities.</p>

Humanities	Provision for geography is very good . Standards are well above average. Very good teaching builds confidence and leads to very good achievement. Provision for sociology is very good . Standards are consistently very high. Achievement is very good. Provision for religious education is very good . Religious education is very well taught by specialist teachers. Students are taught difficult ideas in an interesting and challenging way.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision for media studies is very good . Recent results in A-level examinations are above national averages. Consistently good teaching stimulates the students and challenges them to achieve well.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision for hospitality and catering is excellent . The examination results are very high compared with the national average. Students' achievement and attitudes are excellent.
Business	Provision for business education is good . The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Examination results are above the national average.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Overall, guidance, advice and support are very good. Students assign themselves to one of 39 personal tutors whom they normally meet once a week for a timetabled period. This system does, however, mean that students only have regular contact on one day per week and even less frequently if one-to-one sessions are taking place. The management team has set up very well planned tracking and monitoring schemes for student achievement and rigorous targets are set. Good use is made of support from the Connexions agency. A particular strength is the academic and encouraging support sixth formers give to younger students. Attendance in the sixth form is very high. The school consults students extensively and acts on their views.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are very good. The sixth form is a very popular centre for students and highly valued by the community. As in the main school, all tiers of leadership affecting the sixth form are very good. There are sharply focused systems in place to ensure clear and accurate communications on organisational matters between staff and students. Good communications are maintained with the management team from both teachers and tutors. The school provides a very good curriculum, which is significantly enhanced by the excellent language college provision and it meets the expectations of its students and parents. The sixth form is cost effective and one of the strengths of the school. The sixth form continues to expand and develop to meet the needs of its students from the very good base seen in the last inspection.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Most are happy with what the sixth form offers, and particularly in the quality of its teaching and the valuable enrichment opportunities. A few have concerns about the quality of accommodation and facilities. The inspection team found that sixth form accommodation and facilities were good overall with facilities improving. Despite this, with increasing numbers of students, some facilities are cramped and a few areas are shabby. A few students were critical of what they see as weakness in careers guidance; the inspection team found that careers provision was good.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students in Years 9 reach standards that are above average and their achievement is good. Students in Year 11 and in the sixth form reach well above average standards and they achieve highly. Students with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and those gifted and talented make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 to 13, and a significant minority achieve well above expected standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is a centre of excellence for languages.
- Achievement overall is very good because of the very good teaching; students are very well motivated.
- In Year 9, current standards of work are above average in English, mathematics, and science, and in most other subjects.
- In Year 11, students well exceed expected standards in most subjects and students achieve highly.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.7 (39.1)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	37.6 (38.0)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	37.8 (37.4)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 219 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Since the last inspection, the attainment of students is wider ranging, reflecting the changing nature of the catchment area and changes in the school's admissions policy. This is also reflected in the slightly lower proportion of students who reached the level expected for their age in English and mathematics in comparison with that noted in 1998, although science results have risen. The proportion of students who reached the higher levels is similarly reflected. The results of national tests by the end of Year 9 in 2003, (the latest validated results that are available) when compared with the average point score of all schools nationally, were well above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science overall. In comparison with schools taking students from similar social and economic backgrounds, results were similar. Over the last five years, results have improved at a rate below the nationally rising trend. This is because the results fell very slightly in the previous year and they have fluctuated somewhat in English and mathematics. Despite this fluctuation, performance is consistently well above national averages. Value-added indicators show that in Years 7 to 9 almost all students achieve highly compared with their prior attainment and ability, and, compared with students at similar schools, very highly. Comparative figures for 2004 were not available at the time of the inspection. The unvalidated data for 2004 indicates that results in English and mathematics continue to rise at both the expected level and, substantially so, at the higher levels. In science, results for 2004 indicate a very slight decline on the previous year.
2. The achievements of students with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and gifted and talented students are good in Years 7 to 9.

3. Inspection evidence shows that standards at the end of Year 9 are above average and that students achieve well overall. Standards in citizenship, design and technology and physical education are average and achievement good.
4. In Years 10 to 13 students make very good progress and a significant minority achieve well above average standards. In Year 11, all students with English as an additional language obtained at least seven GCSE subjects A* to G and most exceeded their predicted results.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	86 (84)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (98)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	42.2 (46.3)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 196 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. The latest year for which national comparisons are validated for GCSE results is 2003. In 2003, GCSE results were well above average for the proportion of students gaining 5+ A* to C and 5+ A* to G and 1 or more A* to G grades nationally. In comparison with similar schools, results were very high for the proportion of students gaining 5+ A* to C grades. They were well above average for the proportion of students gaining 5+ A* to G and for those gaining 1 or more A* to G grades. When compared with the same students' standards at the end of Year 9, results were well above average for the proportion of students gaining 5+ A* to C and 5+ A* to G grades. For those gaining 1 or more A* to G grades, results were average. These results represented high achievement in Years 10 and 11 and students do very well overall. There was little difference in the performance of students from different ethnic groups (the ethnic profile of some groups being too small for comparisons to be valid). Results have improved broadly in line with the nationally rising trend over the last five years. In 2003, the school exceeded their GCSE targets agreed with the local education authority. Since the last inspection GCSE results have improved. Unvalidated school results for 2004 indicate a slight decline in the percentage of students gaining 5+ A* to C grades and an increase in the percentage gaining 5+ A* to G and 1 or more A* to G grades. Unvalidated 2004 school data indicates that in the following subjects students achieved at least 20 per cent above the national average in both A*/A and A* to C grades: art and design, design and technology, drama, French, history, catering and information and communication technology. In German, more than three quarters achieved A* to C passes, considerably above the national-average. Students consistently achieve very highly or very well year on year. The average points score per student was well above the national average and very high when compared with similar schools.
6. Inspection evidence shows that standards well exceed expected standards and students achieve highly overall. Standards in citizenship, physical education and religious education are average and achievement satisfactory. The school continues to maintain the very high standards in languages reported in the last inspection.
7. Students undertaking vocational courses achieve well. In child development students achieved a pass rate of 75.6 per cent and in media 85 per cent. Both groups were restricted to lower ability students. Standards in work related learning are good because the careers guidance programme is effective and work experience is of high quality.

Sixth form

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	96.0 (96.2)	85.5 (92.1)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	43.5 (52.0)	27.6 (33.8)
Average point score per student	342.1 (341.2)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 112 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. In 2003, results at AS and A-level examinations were well above average. A-level results based on students' average point scores, placed the school in the top quarter of schools across the country. The standards achieved by students were very good. At A2, achievement was consistently high in art and design, geography, photography, Spanish and sociology. The following subjects achieved very highly in both 2002 and 2003 compared to all schools nationally; biology, chemistry, dance, English literature, geography, history, information technology and sociology. There were no significant differences in the results of boys and girls and the boys were a very small sample. Boys did perform less well than girls in 2002 and 2003 but in 2004 boys achieved a higher points score. There was little difference in the performance of students from different ethnic groups (the ethnic profile of some groups being too small for comparisons to be valid). Retention rates are very high and virtually all students complete their A-level courses. Inspection evidence reflects the examination performance overall.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is above average in the main school and very high in the sixth form. Punctuality is satisfactory. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also very good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance in the main school improved last year and is now good.
- The school promotes attendance very well. Parents are good at ensuring that students attend regularly.
- Lessons start on time, but many students are late at the start of the day.
- Students' moral, social and cultural development is very good and their spiritual development good. However, the school does not attempt to meet the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
- The school promotes very good relationships and looks after students very well.
- Attitudes and behaviour are very good throughout the school; exclusions are relatively high.

Commentary

9. Attendance in the main school during the year 2002/3 was broadly in line with the national median, though unauthorised absence was below. However in 2003/4 absence was reduced and attendance is now above the national median. Attendance in the sixth form is very high. The measures in force to promote high attendance are very good and most parents are assiduous in ensuring that their children attend regularly. However, over one third of students were late five or more times during the last year.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (per cent)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.7	School data	0.4
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

10. The friendly and purposeful atmosphere encourages in students a real enthusiasm to learn and to take part in the very wide range of activities provided. They take their responsibilities very seriously. Behaviour in the classroom and round the school is very good, only slightly marred by occasional loudness, mostly in Year 9, and by too much litter. Staff know their students exceptionally well and their expectations for conduct are very high. Students see teachers as fair and able to maintain a high level of discipline.
11. The school has satisfactory measures for preventing exclusion. However they are not always successful, as last year nearly 100 students (6.8 per cent of students) were excluded for a short fixed period, mostly for fighting. The measures for reintegrating those who have been excluded are, however, particularly effective, as there were no re-offenders and only one permanent exclusion.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1064	69	1
White – Irish	9	0	0
White – any other White background	24	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	19	5	0
Mixed – White and Black African	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	20	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	25	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	18	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	7	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	16	1	0
Black or Black British – African	15	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	1	0
Chinese	21	0	0
Any Other ethnic group	14	0	0
Parent / student preferred not to say	25	1	0
Information not obtained	140	13	0
Total	1441	94	1

12. During the inspection no bullying, racism or other harassment was seen and younger students consider that the school deals immediately with any such untoward occurrences, once reported. However, older students were not as confident on this point. Nevertheless, the

school is exceptionally successful in ensuring all races and creeds work and mix well together, which leads to very good relationships all round. Students are given plenty of encouragement and responsibility and the chance to take part in outside activities, and so their self-esteem is high. Those selected for interview were articulate and confident and were positive about their lives at school. In the sixth form, the student body is given the real opportunity to elect its own leaders in the form of School, deputy and games captains, and students are expected to be active in helping to organise their enrichment programme and in establishing their own work experience between Years 12 and 13.

13. The school makes good provision for students' spiritual development: assemblies are carefully planned and contain moments of spiritual uplift, resulting in a reasonable level of self-knowledge and spiritual awareness. However, the school makes no attempt to meet statutory requirements for a daily act of worship or opportunities for reflection. Moral teaching is firmly in place and the school's expectations are continually stressed. Students are clear about the difference between right and wrong and about the importance of respecting other people's feelings, values and beliefs. The school succeeds in its notable effort to include all students from a wide mix of backgrounds and nurtures their social development very effectively. Students engage very well together, not least because of the examples set by staff. Cultural and multi-cultural development is very strong, with a huge list of visits abroad and to places of interest in this country. The school supports the needs of its students to explore their own and other cultures, as demonstrated by the superb dancing display during the assembly on Diwali. It makes very good provision in this area and particularly in the variety of displays and little word puzzles put up round the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The curriculum is very good. Enrichment opportunities are excellent with high levels of student participation. Accommodation and resources are good overall. The quality of care is good and links with parents and the community enhance provision.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall. Students learn very well in response to the very good teaching they receive.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a considerable amount of excellent, very good and good teaching.
- Students respond very positively to the high expectations set.
- There is an excellent climate for learning.
- Learning in foreign languages lessons contributes significantly to learning in other subjects.
- Assessment practices are inconsistent in a few subject areas.

Commentary

14. The table below highlights the fact that nearly one in every ten lessons observed during the inspection was excellent, over four out of ten were very good or better, and over eight out of ten were good or better. There were no significant differences between the proportions of very good and good teaching in Years 7 to 13. There were very few unsatisfactory lessons. No subject is unsatisfactorily taught or learned, although there are some differences between subjects. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 217 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
19 (9%)	75 (34%)	91 (42%)	30 (14%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

15. Particular strengths of teaching are: teachers' knowledge of the subjects taught, their high expectations, which extend most students' learning, careful lesson planning that includes a good range of teaching and learning methods that interest and motivate students, and the use of skilful questioning techniques. Teachers make very good use of new technologies.
16. The best teaching produces some excellent learning, develops student research and discussion and enables them to apply their knowledge very effectively. Very good recapitulation keeps the students working to their full potential so that new ideas and concepts are learned and understood at a good pace. Teaching successfully focuses on developing students' independent learning skills. Lesson planning, and the use of time and resources, particularly the innovative use of new technologies (interactive white boards) in many subjects and the development of students' key skills are all very good. Students benefit from their teachers' expertise and proficiency in using the specialist software and electronic equipment. Students respond eagerly to challenging activities. They are attentive, concentrate very hard, listen well and are eager to learn and their productivity is also very good. In modern foreign languages, students are motivated by interactive learning facilities and access to up-to-date material easily accessible through satellite dishes or the Internet. In music and physical education, objectives are sometimes not well matched to the needs of students. Higher-attaining students are not always challenged sufficiently and, as a result, they do not always achieve as well as they might. The very rare unsatisfactory teaching was characterised by inappropriate expectations and match of activity to the specific needs of some students, and lack of clarity when explaining key concepts.
17. Students with special educational needs achieve so well because teaching meets their individual needs and because almost all are highly motivated. They work particularly hard for those teachers whom they like and trust. In those lessons that were observed specifically focusing on the requirements of students with special educational needs, almost all the teaching was good or better. In the best lessons, for example in Year 10 German and Year 11 English, students' attainment was well above expectations. In mathematics, there are insufficient opportunities, particularly for the least able students, to use information and communication technology. Students receive effective support in lessons from either individual or general teaching assistants.
18. Most teachers are sensitive to the needs of students' with English as an additional language and provide appropriate tasks for them. Consequently, students achieve well and are well integrated. Those who are gifted and talented build well on their skills and knowledge because of the extensive enrichment programme and level of challenge provided.
19. Homework tasks are set regularly and successfully consolidate and extend learning.
20. Where assessment is used well, it informs students about how to improve the quality of their work and provides the opportunity for them to set their own targets for improvement. The best marking is thorough, effective and informative. However, the use of assessment is inconsistent in a few subjects in identifying what students can and cannot do or how they can improve. Students' knowledge of how well they are getting on is inconsistent. Work is generally carefully marked, although comments on how to improve further are not always evident. Regular assessments and the setting of achievable targets help students to make good progress. The wealth of assessment data is not always used for the setting of student

targets. The scrutiny of the work of students with statements of special educational needs reveals few comments on how to improve.

21. The tracking of all sixth formers as they progress through their curriculum are real strengths. Underachievement is monitored well to ensure high achievement and the best grades for each student. This results in well motivated and interested students who are eager to learn and have the capacity to work well independently.

The curriculum

The school provides a very good curriculum with excellent opportunities for enrichment. The school is well staffed, has a very good number of support staff and is well resourced. The accommodation is good overall for the delivery of the National Curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students across the age range benefit significantly from the school's rich languages curriculum.
- The school provides an exceptionally broad and balanced curriculum in the sixth form.
- Courses are well matched to students' needs. The Year 10 curriculum now includes a good range of vocational courses so uptake by students is high.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is very good.
- Enrichment opportunities are excellent with high levels of student participation.
- The school is well staffed, especially in languages.

Commentary

22. The school has carefully considered the needs of its students in its context as a language college and it fully fulfils the aims of a specialist language college. It provides an excellent range of opportunities in languages to students including primary children and to adults through its evening classes.
23. It is particularly successful in ensuring that each pupil studies at least two foreign languages up to the age of 14; over a quarter study three languages. Two thirds of students aged 14 to 16, a much higher proportion than average, retain at least two languages at the age of 16.
24. The school plays a valuable and innovative role in diversifying language provision through promoting Spanish alongside German and French from Year 7 and adding optional Italian from Year 9.
25. This level of provision involves some compromises elsewhere, but the school has planned carefully so that, for example, all students study a technology based short GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 to complement their other studies. All students study at least single science, with the most capable studying double science in Years 10 and 11. This means that the highest-attaining students receive a very good curriculum. Lower-attaining students have a range of options including vocational courses. At the time of the last inspection, it was unclear whether all students received their entitlement to information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 unless they attended a GCSE course and an audit was completed shortly after the inspection. All subjects now contribute to a wide range of provision for students in Years 10 and 11, but a more recent audit has not yet been completed to ensure that all required content is taught and that all students actually study all areas of information and communication technology. Plans are well advanced for such an audit to take place.
26. There is a good range of GCSE courses with a specific work related content (WRL). The increased range this year resulted in very good uptake with more than four fifths of Year 10 students now studying one or more courses. An 'Artist in Residence' enables all art students to benefit from contact with a practising professional. Science students enjoy links with a local pharmaceutical company and the Education Business Partnership. Modern foreign language

students study a work related topic where they learn to write job application letters and curriculum vitae. They also learn about working conditions in the European Union and the problems of migrant workers. Effective vocational GCSE courses include child development, expressive arts, health and social care.

27. The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 is also very good, with excellent language provision. Satisfactory provision for personal, social and health education is made throughout the school through the use of tutor time, occasional short timetable suspensions for specific topics, and the integration of some aspects into subject teaching.
28. Students whose special educational needs are difficulties in reading and writing receive effective support in very small groups from the local education authority (LEA) language support service. Assessment is thorough and results in some students receiving support that focuses well on their particular needs.

Sixth form

29. The school provides a very good curriculum that reflects the expectations of its students and parents. The school provides an exceptionally broad and balanced curriculum including 7 languages. Four fifths of students choose from the 24 AS/A2 courses the school offers. Sixth form students study at least one language, from a choice of seven, alongside their other subjects. Students may choose to begin Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish or Russian, as well as to continue with languages
30. From GCSE catering there is very good progression to the sixth form BTEC course. Information and communication technology coursework requires research into business applications and design and technology teachers use their extensive industrial contacts to enhance learning. The school actively encourages students to take up vocational education courses. A one-year level 2 course is provided in personal assistant and accounts training for approximately 3 per cent of Year 12, and other students join the course to improve their information and communication technology skills.
31. All the courses and subjects are thoughtfully and effectively extended with resources, visits, fieldwork and speakers to enrich the students' learning experience. The use of foreign visits and exchanges is a strength of the A-level language courses.
32. Students in the sixth form who do not study religious education as an examined subject are provided with timetabled half-day courses in religious awareness, which cover the statutory requirements to provide religious education for all students in the sixth form. Personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught during the personal tutor time and extended through lesson planning in all subjects.

Enrichment

33. Enrichment opportunities are excellent with high levels of student participation. Opportunities are available to take part in an extensive range of academic, creative, aesthetic and performance opportunities and activities. The school offers over 42 different extra-curricular clubs and activities. Additionally there are regular educational visits and visitors to the school that further enrich the diversity of the curriculum. The international dimension of the school ensures that there are extensive trips abroad. Geography contributes significantly by organising foreign trips with a cross-curricular focus. For example, virtually all in Year 8 go on a week's study visit to France or Germany each year and students in Years 9 and 10 can participate in exchange visits to Germany and Spain or a day's visit to Belgian battlefields. Sixth form students may join an annual cultural visit to Barcelona or Berlin, a day trip to Le Touquet or Bruges and are offered work experience in France, Germany, Spain and Japan. The sixth form provides a very wide range of enrichment activities. The 23 different activities cover sport, creative arts and other interests such as community service, first aid, pre-drivers

and debating. The school believes this enrichment is highly valued and crucial to the recruitment and retention of sixth formers, and students confirmed this.

Staffing

34. There is, overall, a good match of number, qualifications and experience of teachers to the needs of the curriculum. The quality of staffing provision is excellent for modern foreign languages where, in addition, foreign language assistants make an exceptional and valuable contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. Although provision is good in art, a significant number of part-time teachers inhibit effective delegation of responsibilities within the team. There is a good balance of youth and experience and most teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects. The quality of students' experiences is, however, affected in religious education though being taught by non-specialists.

Accommodation

35. The accommodation is mixed but significantly improved since the last inspection and it is good overall. The school provides an attractive environment for students' learning with pleasant listed buildings and well-landscaped and wooded grounds. The site team, senior leadership team and governors are constantly seeking ways to improve accommodation by making modifications and additions to existing buildings. Since the last inspection, a specialist music suite has been built. Three good art studios have been completed with a further studio for sixth form students and two dark rooms for sixth form photography. The teaching area for modern foreign languages is excellent. Facilities for physical education with a sports hall, gym and weight training area are very good although the playing fields are some distance away. Sixth form accommodation is good. There is insufficient specialist drama provision given the increasingly large number of students studying drama. Many rooms around the school have been refurbished recently but, with increasing numbers of students, space is cramped and some areas look shabby. The library is located in two very attractive rooms in the original house, but space for books and other resources is very limited. Corridors are often narrow and it is to the credit of the students that behaviour around the bottlenecks is good. Although most subject rooms are grouped together, other subjects, for example, geography and religious education, are dispersed and this creates some difficulties for communication and sharing resources.

Resources

36. Overall, resources to support learning are good. Classroom resources in the main school and in the sixth form are good and excellent in modern foreign languages, where students benefit from their teachers' expertise and proficiency in using the specialist software and electronic equipment. These very good information and communication technologies are of benefit to teaching and learning. The school has sixty-four interactive white boards and is increasing its provision. Students have good access to computers and the Internet for study and research. The school's information and communication technology suites are popular with students and used effectively to enhance learning. The school has made some improvements to the library since the previous inspection and this is well managed by a specialist librarian. However, space remains limited and the library is also used as a teaching resource area. The school's policy to establish satellite libraries in subject areas is not consistently implemented. Consequently, students' access to library resources is limited.

Care, guidance and support

The lack of separation between pedestrians and vehicles is a shared concern. Otherwise the school cares for its students very well, and its high quality procedures ensure their health and safety. The school provides very good levels of support, advice and guidance, which are firmly based on the monitoring of personal progress. The school consults students extensively and acts on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's child protection measures are appropriate and the school has close and effective relations with outside agencies.
- Proper health and safety procedures are firmly in place.
- Staff provide very high quality care and well-informed support, advice and guidance to all students from many diverse backgrounds.
- The induction arrangements for students in both the main school and the sixth form are very good.
- The careers guidance programme is very well planned and promotes independent research by students.
- The school is very good at consulting students through the year councils and acts on their suggestions.

Commentary

37. The narrowness of the two main school entrances and the general layout of the school site are such that at present it is not possible, especially at the beginning and end of the school day, to ensure that vehicles and pedestrians are safely separated. Extensive staff supervision at the busiest times has ensured there have been no accidents. Proper child protection procedures are in place and records are well kept. New staff are trained on arrival and the current child protection governor has been trained. Proper arrangements for the care of vulnerable students are in place and the school maintains close relationships with outside agencies. The systems for maintaining and reviewing health and safety practices are very strong and the governing body is actively involved. Risks have been appropriately assessed. Medical arrangements are very good. All equipment is regularly tested. Litter is picked up quickly and no graffiti were seen. Access to the Internet is strictly controlled. The school is taking action on one or two minor health and safety deficiencies noted during the inspection.
38. Students are highly valued, whatever their background. Students and parents are pleased with the induction arrangements, which include informative visits and helpful documentation. Parents of students with special educational needs are supportive; they attend and contribute to Annual Reviews and also to individual education plans (IEPs) if they wish. The school promotes students' personal development in many ways. The use of sixth form students to support younger students in the 'Listening Ear' project and through peer mentoring is innovative. Students know they have first class access to support and guidance, based on close monitoring of their progress. At least two members of staff know each student well and students feel they can develop a thoroughly trusting relationship with at least one. This results in happy students, who consider that most teachers treat them fairly. The school's personal assessment measures are very good and are of great help to the vulnerable, under-performers and those who have difficulty in conforming.
39. All students, especially the older ones, take their responsibilities seriously. Strong support and consultation systems are in place, such as 'Listening Ear' and the year councils. Students greatly enjoy taking part in all the visits and extra-curricular activities, and enthusiastically raise substantial sums for charity. The school actively promotes healthy eating and provides healthy and tasty meals in the canteen.

40. The main school careers guidance programme is effective because it is very well planned. Delivery is mainly via pastoral staff supported by the specialist careers teacher. Information and communication technology classes are used to introduce the very good range of careers guidance and pathways programs. The school web site has an excellent reference bank for careers education. It includes links to the Connexions careers service and software for careers and higher education routes. An annual two-day conference gives all Year 9 contact with business speakers and decision-making exercises. A new 'Project Business' day has been planned for Year 10 in 2005. GCSE students use Connexions to learn about the changing nature of work, the need for transferable skills and other aspects of employment. Year 11 students develop personal action plans after researching their various possible paths for progression. For students considering employment or further education college specialist guidance with a Connexions adviser is available.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are good; those with other schools and the local community excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The contribution of parents to promote students' learning is good.
- The vast majority of parental replies to the questionnaire were positive and most of those attending the meeting reacted similarly.
- Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and about the school's activities and concerns and complaints are dealt with very well.
- The school is good at seeking and acting on parents views.
- Links with the local community are extensive, varied and very valuable to students.
- Links with other schools are first rate.

Commentary

41. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are very comprehensive, well-produced and meet statutory requirements. A newsletter is produced for the sixth form; all parents receive curriculum information, the school calendar, and a helpful interim report on their child. Other news may be found on the website, but not all parents have direct access to this. The annual reports on students meet statutory requirements with the exception of recording progress in citizenship. They generally are of satisfactory quality, but there is not always enough detail on what students know, can do and understand, especially in Year 11. The induction documentation for new students is good. The school monitors turnout at parents' meetings, which is usually very high, and parents are rightly involved in target setting. The school's Internet website is well developed and the school uses the Internet to make extensive contact with schools in the UK and elsewhere in the world. The school formally consults parents of Year 7 and Year 10 students, and it is flexible in accepting suggestions arising from other sources. Staff are available for consultation each day and parents are happy that the school deals very effectively with concerns and complaints.
42. The vast majority of parents take a very positive view of most aspects of the school, though a not insignificant minority does not consider it is kept well informed or that parental concerns are sufficiently taken into account. A smaller minority does not always feel comfortable about approaching school. Most parents contribute very well to their children's learning at school and at home and keep a close eye on progress through the contact book. A thriving Friends' Association runs social and fund-raising events, which, together with gift aid covenants, provide substantial sums for students' benefit. A number of parents work voluntarily in the school, and their attendance at its social events is high. Parents and students praise the range of languages offered, the quality of the teaching and the extra-curricular opportunities for study visits or work experience in countries where languages studied are spoken.

43. Links with the community are exceptionally strong. The school works closely with professionals in the local education authority in many areas, including the local pupil referral unit. Some senior members of staff have been trained as mentors to support teachers in education across London. Every subject area has focused and direct interaction with the community. Students gain substantially from the school's notably wide range of cultural, artistic and sporting connections, which include trips abroad and taking part in local sporting competitions, festivals and events. Visits to local religious institutions help promote students' spiritual and moral development. Extensive charity work and links with local senior citizens, especially in the sixth form, help students to develop compassion and to give of themselves. Contact with the press promotes frequent coverage of school celebrations, and links with industry and commerce are especially well developed.
44. The school has exceptionally cordial relations with its four most important associated primary schools. It sends staff there to improve literacy and to initiate the learning of foreign languages and sends students to give drama performances. Transfer arrangements for students moving from the 50 or so primaries are as effective as can be hoped for, but inevitably it is difficult to maintain close links with such a large number. However, the school works hard to make sure all parents understand the implications of transfer. It maintains important links with other local schools and colleges through the borough-wide 'Bromley Collaborative'. These include curricular links through video conferencing in modern languages. All students transferring to colleges of further education or to university are given extensive help in completing their applications and in interviewing techniques.
45. The school plays a very important role in training new teachers and organising the professional development of newly qualified teachers within the borough, and additionally in neighbouring education authorities in modern languages. It also provides work experience for the girls, those on its own personal assistants' training course. Its travel and tourism students have the chance of learning to organise some of the school's own travel requirements.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership by the headteacher is exceptionally strong. Overall leadership of the school is very good and highly effective. The school fully fulfils the aims of a specialist language college. The school's expectations of high academic success and personal development underpin its work. The headteacher, staff and governors have a shared vision and are successful in achieving improvements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good with outstanding leadership by the headteacher.
- The school continues to build on its notable strengths.
- Governance is very good but has not ensured that all statutory requirements are met.
- This large school is organised and managed most efficiently.
- The school gives very good value for money.

Commentary

46. The governing body is astute, well informed and fulfils its role successfully. It holds the school to account for the quality of education provided but has not ensured that the statutory requirement for a daily act of worship is met. Governors are otherwise extremely effective and dynamic and influence the work of the school and its policies. Governors have successfully capitalised on links with the local community. They are committed to the school and are actively involved, for example, in advising planning and building developments, they provide work experience opportunities, and visits to offices abroad and regularly meet with architects and contractors to pursue the school's building expansion. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

47. The excellent leadership by the headteacher has resulted in an improved school with outstanding features since the last inspection. It is a centre of excellence for languages and has won many educational awards. The governing body, staff, students and parents, share the strong vision for the development of the school. The headteacher and staff have a high commitment to achievement and inclusion and provide an excellent work ethos. Examination results are often excellent and students achieve highly. Teaching and learning are very good. Change for school improvement has been managed very effectively through the gaining of many educational awards and through the work of the many initiatives regularly piloted, adopted and evaluated. Evaluation is embedded, reflective and self-critical. The school improvement plan is rigorously implemented and involves all via the faculty plans. Performance management is informed by these plans. The senior leadership is active in securing external funding for initiatives that can be used to build further on the work of the school. The headteacher and deputy headteachers work closely together and are well supported by the wider leadership group. This group has a strategic role that informs policy and practice and considers the impact of developments effectively. Middle managers are very effective and there are excellent opportunities for professional development.
48. The school operates most effectively and efficiently. The headteacher has built on the well-established strengths since the last inspection and has clearly identified areas for future improvement. Educational priorities are well articulated and have the full commitment of staff. Assessment has yet to be implemented consistently throughout the school. High priority is given to appointing well-qualified staff and developing their skills. Management is open to change and provides a very good role model for the development of others. Workforce reforms are embedded in practice and in this respect the school is innovative. Performance management is well established and the school has Investor in People status. There is a very well targeted programme of tailored professional development. This has contributed to improved teaching. Throughout the school, good training has led to effective use of information and communication technology. The school invests considerable time and energy in training and a significant amount takes place in school. The school has a very good induction programme that benefits from a successful, longstanding association with school-based initial teacher training. Non-teaching staff are supported well and included in training opportunities. They make an important contribution to the life of the school: all staff feel valued and this certainly contributes to their commitment to the school.
49. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good. Records are in good order and currently all statements of special educational needs are filled despite teaching assistant vacancies. The good and very good progress of the students noted in the last inspection report has been maintained and better liaison with subject teachers and faculties established.
50. Management of provision for students with English as an additional language is good. A few students are at the early stages of language acquisition; they are supported within school and by visiting teachers from the local education authority. Very good assessment schemes are in place to track regularly the progress made by students speaking English as an additional language.
51. Leadership and management of work related learning are good. There is a clear vision for development and the emphasis on a multi-agency approach supports learning well. There is good support from senior management and resources are very good. A new main school award for work experience demonstrates the high level of the school's commitment.

Value for money

52. The school gives very good value for money. It is in a financially secure position and has earmarked funding for planned expansion. Best value is sought for all purchases and the school evaluates spending in order to establish the impact of this on standards. In the sixth form, the number of students and courses maximises income and the end of year excess of income over expenditure demonstrates good financial management whilst providing the

necessary resources and facilities and provision of teachers. A very few subjects are below viable numbers but maintained to give the breadth of curriculum on offer. This financial health, coupled with the very good achievement of students at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form, demonstrates that the school provides very good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	£4,898,320	Balance from previous year	£134,734
Total expenditure	£4,766,745	Balance carried forward to the next	£266,309
Expenditure per student	£3,568		

Sixth form

53. Leadership and management are very good. The director has clear roles and responsibilities. The sixth form is a very popular centre for students and highly valued by the community. It has increased considerably in the last few years to 341 students, with 38 being recruited into Year 12 in September 2004 from other schools. The management team has been very successful in achieving a sixth form that is highly prized by the students. There are sharply focused systems in place to ensure clear and accurate communication on organisational matters between staff and students. There is not the daily tutor and registration period common to most sixth forms. The students assign themselves to one of 39 personal tutors whom they normally meet once a week for a timetabled period. This system means that students only have regular contact on one day per week and even less frequently if one-to-one sessions are taking place.

54. The management team has set up very well planned tracking and monitoring schemes for student achievement and rigorous targets are set. The director takes personal responsibility for identifying gifted and talented students and in preparing detailed additional help for potential 'Oxbridge' candidates. Five reports are provided for parents over the two-year period and consultation evenings are supported by an extremely high parent attendance. Good communications are maintained with the management team by both teachers and tutors through the cause for concern forms, which are very quickly acted on for both academic and behavioural difficulties.

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 with some very good** features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in National Curriculum tests are above those nationally and GCSE examinations are well above national averages.
- Highly skilled teachers provide students with rich resources of literature to explore.
- Students' learning is firmly embedded in good understanding of their texts.
- Students' fluent speaking skills enhance their learning across the curriculum.
- Detailed marking of written work is not consistent across all year groups.

Commentary

55. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are above those obtained nationally and are better than those obtained by students at similar schools. Results in GCSE examinations are well above schools nationally and also well above similar schools. The very high standards reached in both English language and English literature in the GCSE examinations reflect the very good quality of work observed in lessons. As a result of carefully structured teaching programmes students make steady progress and most attain above national averages at the end of Year 9 and several achieve the highest levels. Students are encouraged by skilful teaching to explore rich resources of literature and to discover many different ways of using language. Students respond well to committed teaching and this is the main reason they achieve well above average in the GCSE examinations, which represents good improvement since the last inspection. Students speak confidently on a variety of topics and express their ideas eloquently through discussion and debate. Most students read fluently from a selected range of texts although wider reading is limited by the constraints of examination requirements. All students write competently in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes. Some outstanding original writing is celebrated through lively displays of the work of students of all abilities. They make very good use of the range of extra-curricular opportunities that are on offer to enrich their learning. Students with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Lower-ability students are supported through a variety of methods for learning and as a result they achieve well.
56. All students learn well in response to the high quality teaching they receive. A particular strength is the skilful questioning technique that teachers use to encourage students to search out the meanings from the texts they study. As a result they understand the author's message and discuss this confidently, which provides a rich resource for their own original writing. Coursework is marked regularly and proficient assessment schemes are in place to monitor students' progress over time. However day-to-day checks are limited because draft-writing books are left uncorrected. Resources are satisfactory overall and the newly installed interactive whiteboards are used most skilfully to enhance the good quality teaching. The inconvenience of the rather cramped accommodation is outweighed by the clever use made of every available space. The highly skilled subject leader is supported by a dedicated team of teachers committed to the successful achievements of all students. As a result, standards have risen substantially since the last inspection and improvement is good overall. To improve further, experienced staff need to share their expertise and good practice with less experienced teachers.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Overall, students' skills in speaking, reading and writing are good. However, the high standards achieved by students in public examinations for all subjects suggests that students could raise the levels of their literacy skills even further if they were given a structured programme for learning. There are some formal strategies and systems in place for comprehensive promotion of literacy skills across the curriculum, and the school recognises that more needs to be developed. In most subjects students speak fluently, explain their ideas confidently and discuss issues within their subject areas. They make oral presentations to their class and develop well-reasoned arguments on a range of topics. Most students read adequately for their own purposes but the development of skills for wider reading varies across departments. In written work there are significant discrepancies. The standard of students' writing reflects the quality of teaching they receive for literacy skills. Good examples are seen in English, modern foreign languages, art and design, and religious education. All students are given considerable support to refine and improve their writing. In these subjects teachers emphasise the use of specific terminology and the importance of presenting written work, which excites the interest of the reader. A wealth of extra-curricular activities provides an excellent resource for developing literacy skills in a range of areas. For example, confident students in Year 11 led activities in the gymnastics club and students from Year 9 shared their good knowledge of books in preparation for a national competition. The well-supported drama activities provide many opportunities for students to enhance their presentation skills.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching results in high students' standards that are well above national averages in Year 9 and at GCSE.
- The take-up of languages learning and the retention of at least two languages are very high.
- The school provides a very good enrichment programme of European study visits and work experience.
- Excellent monitoring, assessment and recording systems enable staff to track each student's progress with up-to-date records.
- Students' learning benefits from the teachers' proficient use of modern technologies.

Commentary

58. Students attain high, and many attain very high, standards, well above the national averages in French, German, Spanish and Italian at GCSE, AS and A-level examinations. Performance in all four languages ranks highly compared with other subjects in the school. In Year 9, the proportion of students reaching National Curriculum Levels 5 to 7 is well above the national average. Work seen during the inspection confirms these above average standards. Improvement in resources, better tracking of students' progress and improvement in standards have contributed to good improvement since the last inspection.
59. In Year 9 students achieve well. Their understanding of the foreign language is good because most teachers use the language consistently in lessons. Students develop their speaking skills through interaction with the teacher and group or pair work. They increase their range of vocabulary through a carefully planned programme of topic coverage. They develop competence in a range of tenses and higher attainers manipulate with success complex grammatical structures. Students progress from structured to more open and free writing. The shorter than average teaching time for each language does not impede the highest attainers but some lower attainers do not reach the expected level. Achievement of students with

English as an additional language and the gifted and talented is good. Overall achievement is good.

60. Students make very good progress in Years 10 and 11 and attain very high standards at GCSE. The proportion of students achieving very high grades continues to increase. Higher attainers write accurately in the foreign language about their exchange visit; they describe people's characters effectively and they convey their opinions about a range of issues with clarity and conviction. Lower attainers make effective use of the conditional tense. They are more confident in using transactional language than in developing unstructured work. Achievement of students with English as an additional language and the gifted and talented is very good. Overall achievement is very good across all four languages.
61. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. It ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Teachers' knowledge of the languages taught is at least good and often excellent. In the large majority of lessons they have high expectations, which extend most students' learning. The extensive use of the foreign language in many lessons supports listening and speaking skills well. Careful lesson planning includes a good range of teaching and learning strategies, which provide enjoyment and motivation. Teachers make excellent use of new technologies, which provide good opportunities for independent learning. The use of consolidation time at the end of lessons, for example playing a musical chairs game, is sometimes imaginative. Lessons that are otherwise satisfactory do not challenge students of all abilities appropriately. The marking of students' work does not often include clear guidance for improvement.
62. The teaching supports literacy strongly and the number aspect of numeracy is also well supported and included where appropriate in what is taught. Information and communication technology supports learning very strongly indeed and its contribution is a major strength of the department.
63. The excellent leadership and very good management of the department have resulted in very high levels of student attainment. Assessment procedures are exemplary: students contribute to their own targets and the department tracks student progress very closely. The accommodation and provision of resources, including those for information and communication technology, are excellent. The curriculum is very much enhanced by the opportunities arranged for European contacts, for study visits and for work experience in Europe. The department should now consider ensuring that teaching in all lessons matches best practice.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management ensured standards of attainment were maintained during considerable staff turbulence.
- Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are well above the national averages for all schools.
- Teaching and learning are good and significantly improve attainment and achievement.
- Very good learning support for students with special educational needs raises their attainment and level of confidence.
- Students' very good response considerably increases their rate of progress and level of achievement.
- Assessment and feedback does not consistently tell students how to reach the next National Curriculum level.
- The absence of a 'catch-up' programme for lower ability students in Years 7 to 9 slows their rate of progress.

Commentary

64. GCSE examination results in 2003 and since the last inspection in 1999 were significantly above the national average. Gifted and talented students, many of whom have English as an additional language, do well. The proportion of students achieving the highest GCSE grades is well above national averages. The very good support provided for students with special educational needs that have specific targets in mathematics results in the vast majority of them attaining an appropriate GCSE grade. There has been a good trend of improvement in GCSE results since the last inspection.
65. End of Year 9 test results have been constant since the last inspection and in 2003 were again well above the national average compared with all schools but for the first time fell below the national average for similar schools.
66. Throughout Years 9 to 11 good value is added to prior attainment and achievement for average and above average students and those with special educational needs. Since 2001, the attainment of students on entering the school has been falling until, in 2004, the attainment of students commencing Year 7 was exactly in line with national averages. However, the most recent results in national tests and the inspection evidence show that standards have improved significantly since 2003 with a very high proportion of students in Years 7 to 11 achieving well above the national average for their age and prior attainment. The progress and achievement of the lower-ability students are similar to other students in Years 10 and 11 but slower in Years 7 to 9: the absence of a 'catch-up' programme that targets place value and an ability to solve word problems limits their mathematical understanding.
67. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 11. The proportion of good or better teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Standards and achievement, particularly in algebra and shape and space, rise because teachers use their very good subject expertise effectively to demonstrate and explain new mathematics with the aid of visually stimulating information and communication technology and practical resources. Students respond enthusiastically to challenging activities and counter examples by independently talking and recording mathematics at appropriate times throughout the lesson. Teachers and students use time well and lessons proceed at a good pace. Students produce high quality work and willingly share what they understand with other students. However, there are insufficient opportunities, particularly for the least able students, to use information and communication technology and develop mental numeracy skills. Furthermore, assessment is inconsistent in identifying what students can and cannot do and seldom informs them how to reach the next national curriculum level. A characteristic of satisfactory and the extremely rare unsatisfactory teaching and learning is that assessment is not used to meet the specific needs of some students.
68. Leadership and management are very good and have led to a sustained improvement in teaching and learning during a period of significant staff turbulence. The head of department is very supportive of colleagues and provides an excellent role model for teaching and learning. Induction strategies and the development of inexperienced staff are effective in building a cohesive team. Performance management, departmental review and monitoring are all used effectively to identify department strengths and weaknesses and strategically match teachers to the demands of the curriculum. A combination of regular meetings, good timetabling and the efficient use of accommodation provides opportunities for sharing best practice. Data is used well to monitor the progress of all students and specifically identify students in Years 9 and 11 whose standards are just below the national average: effective revision classes during and after school then ensure that many of them make the necessary progress.
69. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The development of the curriculum to incorporate elements of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy and the improved use of learning resources, such as interactive whiteboards, have led to a provision more closely matched to

the needs of a changing school population. The concentration on literacy has improved the progress of students who have English as an additional language.

Mathematics across the curriculum

70. The development of mathematics as part of the teaching and learning in other subjects has commenced with the publication of a satisfactory whole-school numeracy policy. A numeracy co-ordinator has recently been appointed and the number of subjects where the use of mathematics has an impact on what is taught and learned has increased since the last inspection. However, leadership and management have not ensured that there is a consistent approach, across the school, to the development of calculation skills. As a result, samples of work show that the methods used in some classes, by missing opportunities to concentrate on the language of place value, undermine those previously learned by students.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and the strong subject knowledge of teachers enable students to achieve well and to reach well above average standards.
- Very good use of information and communication technology makes lessons more interesting and helps students to learn.
- Good teaching resources and very good laboratories help to make lessons effective.
- High expectations and very good teaching result in very good progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 make less progress than in their other subjects.
- Very good marking and assessment help students to improve but target-setting is under-developed.

Commentary

71. In 2003, test results at the end of Year 9 were well above average and they were similar in 2004. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average for both double and single science but were a little below results in students' other subjects. In 2004, double science grades fell slightly in line with GCSE results across the school. The fall for single science candidates was significantly greater. During the inspection, analysis of students' work and lesson observations for Years 10 and 11 showed standards for double science to be well above average and for single science to be above average. For single science students, these standards represent an improvement on the 2004 results.
72. Year 7 students enter the school with standards close to the national average and make very rapid progress. They respond very well to the high expectations made of them and the brisk pace. 'It's much more interesting than in primary school' agreed two students. All are keen to be involved in practical work and they co-operate very well. The working atmosphere is orderly and safe. By the end of Year 7, most plan and successfully carry out a scientific investigation and higher-attaining students start to evaluate their work. The curriculum builds on the flying start of Year 7 with progressively greater intellectual challenge. Higher-attaining students use chemical word equations with confidence in Year 8 and balanced chemical equations in Year 9. Literacy standards are predominantly above average or better. There is a good emphasis on using correct scientific terminology that promotes confidence when speaking in class. Numeracy skills develop progressively so that double science students show good competence in the analysis and manipulation of data and algebraic equations. Students' written work is very well presented and logically sequenced, which aids later revision for examinations. The few students with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language achieve equally with others.

73. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are very good in Years 7 to 9 because students have a sense of discovery and intellectual adventure. Over four fifths of lessons were good or better. In their specialist subject, teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good and they are good in their other sciences. Teachers plan lessons well, provide clear explanations and support individuals well. In Years 10 and 11, opportunities to challenge students and bring out the discovery element of science are sometimes missed, for example in a lesson on radioactivity. There is an over-emphasis on clear teacher exposition and the acquisition of a high quality file of student notes. In lessons, teachers make good use of starter activities and they also consolidate learning gains at the end. With lower-attaining GCSE groups achievement would be improved by a wider range of learning activities. A notable strength is the very good use of the high quality ICT resources, with all teachers having a high level of skill and confidence. Classroom relationships are very good. Homework is used well to promote independent learning. Marking and assessment are very thorough but the wealth of assessment data is under-deployed for the setting of student target grades. Enrichment activities support the learning of gifted and talented students and others.
74. Leadership and management are good. Planning is based on analysis and review but the analysis of GCSE results is too superficial. Performance management of staff is well developed and informs training needs. Staff are well supported and there is a common identity of purpose. Mentoring of the trainee science teacher is excellent. Schemes of work are very well planned and detailed. There are very good website links but insufficient reference to citizenship or to spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of science.
75. Teaching resources are good. The laboratories are of a very high standard. The well-qualified laboratory technicians provide a good and safe service. Since the last inspection, the preparation room and storage space have been improved and there has been a big improvement in the provision and use of information and communication technology.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The teaching by permanent specialist staff is consistently very good.
- Staff bring to lessons rigorous expectations of what students will achieve, especially the most capable, and this accelerates learning.
- Students show very good attitudes to their work and behave very well, promoting their learning.
- The department is led and managed well.

Commentary

76. The teacher assessments in 2004 for students in Year 9 showed an apparent marked decline over the high standards in 2003. However, the head of department explains that this was the result of a new testing regime, and that standards were similar to those previously. These students are now in Year 10, and the standards seen in their completed work and in lessons is not consistent with the weak standards reported in the teacher assessments. Students in Year 9 are also attaining standards above what would be expected in their work and in lessons. The findings of this inspection are that standards are above expectations for students in Year 9. About 25 per cent of students take the subject to GCSE level. The examination results for 2003 are not significantly different from the national picture overall, but the numbers gaining the highest grades are higher. This picture is repeated in 2004, and inspection findings are that standards in Year 11 among those doing the full or short GCSE course are well above expectations.

77. At the time of the last inspection, opportunities in ICT for students in Years 10 and 11 were inconsistent and not monitored, and this was the basis of a key issue that the school was obliged to address. Provision in other subjects to develop students' ICT skills are considerably improved, and high standards of confidence and ability were seen during the inspection. However, the new head of department has not yet completed a full audit of provision in Years 10 and 11 to ensure that all strands are adequately covered and that each student, regardless of her option choices, experiences all she should. Nevertheless, plans are well advanced for this to take place before March 2005.
78. Students arrive in Year 7 with skills that are about average. Following good teaching, they attain standards beyond what would normally be expected in Year 9. They experience rigorous levels of challenge in lessons and make good progress. These factors together indicate good achievement. Progress steps up a notch in Years 10 and 11 because of very good teaching and very high expectations in the examination courses. Students here achieve very well.
79. The principal reason for these levels of achievement is the quality of teaching. In Years 10 and 11, specialists undertake examination teaching. The teaching seen was consistently very good, showing very good levels of subject knowledge, rigorous expectations, very good relationships and behaviour management. These all combine harmoniously to ensure that students, especially the most capable, work productively in lessons, and produce high quality work. In Years 7 to 9, the teaching by permanent specialists is consistently very good, but it is, supplemented by other staff. Whilst their teaching is invariably satisfactory or better, it lacks the sparkle of that by the subject specialists. Consequently, teaching in Years 7 to 9 overall is good. Students in Years 7 to 9 are scheduled to receive one lesson per week dedicated to ICT.
80. The head of department is a relatively recent appointment. Since then he has made, in consultation with staff, changes to the Year 9 schemes to alleviate the problems that led to the weak teacher assessments in 2004. He has built an effective team of teachers and technicians, and provided some training for other staff in new technology. Non-specialist teachers of the subject are given clear guidance and advice about their work. However, as noted above, a really rigorous audit of provision in Years 10 and 11 has still to be completed, and formal monitoring of planning, teaching and outcomes is not fully in place.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

81. The school makes good provision for students to develop and enhance their skills in all subjects of the curriculum. Teachers make effective use of, for example, computer-linked whiteboards, to enhance their teaching, and this was particularly evident in mathematics, science, languages and religious education. Students' use is slightly patchier, with good use seen in the humanities, science and art and design. Excellent use was seen in the languages department, where ICT is built into lesson planning, and an eighth of lessons take place in a computer suite. In most subjects, coursework in Years 10 and 11 is prepared using a variety of ICT skills and subject-specific software as appropriate.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography, history and religious education, which were inspected in full.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership maintains high standards and very good achievement.
- Very good planning ensures the effective consolidation and extension of learning.
- Very good planning focuses on students' personal development raising awareness of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of the subject.
- Most assessments allow students to show what they know and can do in imaginative and creative ways, so accurately identifying their level of attainment.
- Comments in marking do not sufficiently inform students about ways to improve.

Commentary

82. Standards are well above average at GCSE and girls continue to do better than girls nationally. The most recent GCSE results confirm continued high standards but also show a drop towards the national trend. Achievement is very good over time and at GCSE, with significant numbers obtaining at the highest grades.
83. By year 9 standards are satisfactory overall and achievement is good. The work of most students shows a depth understanding and breadth of knowledge about physical processes and human activities and also of the moral and social implications involved. Imagination, creativity and good application of skills result in assessments, which accurately reflect higher levels of attainment. Most students confidently rise to the challenge of assessment tests. Older students build effectively on their prior knowledge and their oral answers and written work reflects broader thinking about issues such as rural development and migration and some understanding of the political influences involved. Field research and good use of information and communication technology result in high quality coursework. Standards rise considerably and achievement is very good.
84. Teaching is good; it is very good in years 10 and 11. Well-planned lessons ensure a range of activities that consolidate and extend learning and focus on both academic and personal development. Teachers' expression about the 'treasures' of the rainforests and slums of 'hope and despair' encourages students to speak in the same spiritual way and raises awareness of moral responsibilities. Students are well motivated. Group work encourages positive social interaction; the language college status is well supported by detailed learning about relevant countries. Skilled and probing questioning challenges students and promotes thinking and observational skills. Pace in lessons is good and productivity is high. Comments in marking are supportive but not all teachers provide sufficient information as to ways students can improve, nor do all teachers insist that missed work is done and all work is finished. Attention is paid to developing relevant numerical skills and the acquisition of subject vocabulary. Teachers are skilled in the use of information and communication technology for teaching and learning.
85. Leadership and management are very good. Leadership is the driving force behind the high standards. Curriculum plans include the citizenship element and are user friendly. Management is very efficient and all teachers and students have access to good resources including information and communication technology. A stimulating learning environment is provided. However, monitoring of teaching and work sampling is infrequent. Monitoring of pupil progress through good tracking systems is effective. Fieldwork for all years is well organised and used well for assessment purposes. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships support very positive attitudes towards the study of history.
- There is very good learning in Years 10 and 11 as a result of very good teaching.
- Well above average standards are regularly achieved in Year 11.
- The department is very well led.
- The quality of the teaching is variable in Years 7 to 9 and this has an impact on how effectively the students learn.
- There are very high expectations of the students in the large majority of the classes and these students receive very challenging work.

Commentary

86. Standards are above average in Year 9 and achievement overall is good. All student groups in the lower years achieve well. The results of teacher's assessments in 2004 were above the national average. By Year 11 standards are well above average and this represents very good achievement. Students have a very good understanding of the interpretation and evaluation of source material. Students write very fluently and at length and their listening and oral skills are also very well developed. Students are prepared very thoroughly for their tests and examinations. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were well above the national expectation with 82 per cent securing A* to C passes. This represents excellent achievement. In 2004 this excellent result was exceeded by a further 10 per cent.
87. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good, with very good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11. It is more variable in the earlier years with some excellent teaching and also a small number of lessons where it is less than good. Where teaching is very good, teachers plan and organise their lessons very well to provide a very effective and structured learning environment. In these lessons very good student attitudes support a very fast pace and a very strong focus for learning, particularly when students are working in pairs.

Example of outstanding practice

Part of Year 8 lesson where story telling at the beginning of the lesson, introducing Hindu and Muslim cultures in India, was inspirational and set the tone for the whole lesson.

The teacher told the story of a young bride's struggle to save her husband's life from an evil spirit. Her ability to tell this story was exceptional and she held the girls spell bound for ten minutes, during which time their focus on the story was absolute and there was complete silence in the class. It was an excellent and powerful way to introduce new ideas from different cultures and to highlight the significant impact of the role of women in Indian history.

88. In almost all lessons there are very high expectations of what progress students should make and they are constantly encouraged with very challenging work. Assessment is good with many very strong features, especially the opportunity for the students to set their own targets for improvement. Marking is mostly thorough and effective although there are a small number of unmarked books in some classes. The on-going recording of student data and its use is good.
89. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a very clear view about the subject's direction and as a result the wide-ranging curriculum is regularly reviewed and improved and curriculum plans are very comprehensive and provide very effective support for the teaching team. The head of department is an exemplary role model for her commitment and because of her excellent teaching skills. This is a very good and highly successful department. The very high standards achieved at the time of the last inspection

have not only been maintained but in many aspects they are stronger. Improvement is therefore good.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The reliance on large numbers of non-specialist teachers of religious education leads to variable results at GCSE.
- Lesson plans provide students with a coherent curriculum throughout their time at school.
- Computers and interactive whiteboards are excellently used to make lessons interesting and memorable for students.
- Students benefit from an exciting programme of trips and visits to places relevant to their study of religious education.

Commentary

90. Results in the GCSE examinations have for some years been variable, not always reflecting the amount of time allocated to the study of the subject. Overall results in 2003 were higher than the national average for girls, though only slightly higher in 2004. Students' results in 2004 were in line with the schools own average for all GCSE subjects. Since the time of the last inspection far more students take GCSE with only a slight fall in overall attainment.
91. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are good. Students have a relatively generous allocation of two lessons per week in Years 7 and 9, though only one in Year 8. By the end of Year 9 they have gained a coherent understanding of religious and moral topics through very good lesson plans, drawn up the head of department, which exceed the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and also enable non-specialist teachers to cover the requirements of the course. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are variable. In the best lessons seen students accomplish as much in only one lesson per week as others with a far more generous allocation of time.
92. The achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is good overall, even where two teachers teach classes, because lessons are tightly planned. The achievement of students in lower-attaining sets is as good as for those in higher-attaining sets, because teachers use imaginative strategies to cover the same ground. The achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is variable, because some teachers use more memorable and interesting strategies to cover the same topics than others. Achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is less high overall than in Years 7 to 9 because most of the ten non-specialist teachers who share the teaching of religious education are involved in delivering the GCSE course.
93. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. In Years 7 to 9, teachers mark students' work accurately and provide helpful advice. In Years 10 and 11, students are seldom clear about how well they are progressing and what steps they need to take to improve, because teachers do not link their marks and comments to the specific requirements of examination boards. Computers and interactive whiteboards are excellently used to make lessons interesting and memorable for students. Teachers extend students' appreciation of the subject through an exciting programme of trips and visits.
94. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department manages a large team of non-specialist teachers very effectively by providing them with detailed lesson plans and by supporting them with regular meetings. She maintains religious education as an academic subject in the face of staffing difficulties and of timetabling difficulties, where classrooms are scattered over the site. She is a powerful role model, leading by example, and has a clear vision for improving standards in the future.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

The quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good.
- Relationships and students' attitudes are very good.
- Greater continued use of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is needed in Years 7 and 8.
- Leadership and management are good.

Commentary

95. Standards on entry to Year 7 vary but are below the national average overall. The application of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy in Year 9 has improved standards. As a result, standards at the end of Year 9 are now broadly in line with the national average, with eight out of ten students reaching the expected standard. Standards in the lessons seen were broadly satisfactory. Students with English as an additional language are well integrated in lessons and make the same progress as other students. Students with special educational needs make good progress with extra help from teachers.
96. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good overall. All teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and give very effective help and guidance to students in lessons. All topics are introduced well and students are involved by asking them questions as lessons progress effectively. Relationships are always very good and sometimes excellent. As a result, students are well motivated and have very positive attitudes. In the few less successful lessons teaching methods are weak and the pace too slow. Greater continued use of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is needed in Years 7 and 8 to improve learning further. Whilst students' work is assessed and monitored well, more use of National Curriculum levels of attainment is needed in Years 7 and 8 to better inform students of their progress.
97. Nearly nine out of ten students take the subject in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, the results of the GCSE examinations were well above the national average with over eight out of ten students obtaining A* to C grades and all A* to E grades. In 2004, the unconfirmed results were lower. Students consistently do best in graphics. Standards in the lessons seen were good. Overall achievement is good.
98. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is good and sometimes very good. Students learn graphics and to design and make using resistant and textile materials. Teachers introduce topics and demonstrate work well. Some of the teaching methods are innovative. There is good use of information and communication technology to analyse results but more use could be made of it to improve the presentation of coursework. Students are given good guidance on how to improve their work. Teachers track students progress well and students are prepared for examinations well.
99. Leadership and management are both good. The head of the curriculum area is an experienced advanced skills teacher and is well supported by the other specialist teachers. Newly qualified teachers receive good introductions to the school. More needs to be done to help newly qualified teachers to maintain an appropriate pace in lessons and with their teaching methods. Changes since the last inspection are satisfactory. The quality of teaching and standards are maintained and facilities are improved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus was on art and design and music and these subjects were inspected in full; drama was sampled.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well and GCSE results are very high.
- Teachers give generously of their time and share their expertise and enthusiasm with students.
- Students are encouraged to be independent and use their initiative.
- Regular reference is made to artists and art movements which students link to their own work.
- Studios offer good workspace but the lack of adequate storage restricts what can be done.
- Very good leadership is central to the success and popularity of the subject.

Commentary

100. Students enter the school with average standards and there is a wide variation in previous experience. By the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments place students' attainment as above average with many students reaching much higher levels. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results are consistently very high compared with girls' nationally. In 2003, every student gained a grade A* to C with more than two thirds awarded A* or A. Results in 2004 were similarly very high. Although the examination criteria have changed, the very high results noted in the last inspection have been maintained.

101. By Year 9, standards seen are above average with many students working at higher levels. By Year 11, standards are very high. Students learn to use a wide range of materials. They have a secure knowledge of techniques, particularly in painting, drawing and collage and, to a lesser extent, in three-dimensional work. They build on previous learning very well experimenting with the effects they can create in different media. Students are encouraged to be independent and self-critical which gives them the confidence to take the occasional risk. From the start of Year 7, students make a close study of artists and art movements, both western and non-western, contemporary and from the past. This broadens their knowledge, helps them gain ideas to try in their own work and becomes an important factor in their rapid achievement.

Example of outstanding practice

Part of a Year 11 lesson where students gave mini presentations to the class on the theme of 'Kitsch'.

For homework, students had independently researched the work of different well-known Western artists such as Lichtenstein, Koons, Ensor and other artists. They had used the Internet to create facsimiles and linked these to their own work.

Students gave presentations to the class. They had prepared copies in their journals and explored various media on the theme of 'Kitsch'. 'I thought the shape more dramatic in charcoal' 'I'm doing a detail in acrylic next'. They demonstrated thoughtful analysis of work of their chosen artist. One student put the artist in the context of pop art and the sixties and proceeded to give a demonstration on commercialism. The lesson provided excellent opportunities for students to develop their analytical and critical skills. The students confidently answered the probing questions by the teacher.

102. With very limited library resources and space for art books, students rely mainly on the Internet for research. They learn to use the correct terms for art styles, media and techniques and these are re-inforced as they progress through the school. By Year 11, most can talk and write about their work well and higher-attaining students do so eloquently. Students rise very well to the difficult challenges presented by the teachers. They feel valued and respect the extra

effort the teachers make on their behalf. As a result, they achieve highly, enjoy their work and gain in confidence and self-esteem.

103. Teaching and learning are very good overall and particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers make their expectations clear and students behave very well, following regular routines at the start and end of each lesson. Lessons are well planned to include stimulating visual images and interesting Power Point presentations. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and extensive practical skills, which they use to good effect in designing tasks to meet the wide ability range in each class. Techniques are taught well so that students learn to develop and refine their skills. The very good exploration of issues of spirituality and morality gives students a sensitive and responsible awareness of their surroundings and themselves. Teachers monitor students' progress thoroughly, giving constructive and helpful feedback in class so that students know how well they are doing and what they should do to improve. Teachers are aware of students' circumstances and their sensitive guidance is based on knowledge of students' individual needs. The recently introduced 'work-in-progress sheets' are a good initiative to record progress and one to one discussions with teachers. However, there is still the opportunity to develop this further and for students' to be more involved in assessing their own work, using their journals to keep records of marks, comments and National Curriculum levels.
104. Very good leadership is central to the success of this area. Clear vision, enthusiasm and a dedication to achieving the highest possible standards characterise the department. Courses are well managed and the difficulties of part time staffing, which result in shared classes and an uneven workload, are overcome with considerable effort.
105. Artists' visits and trips to museums, galleries and places of interest, occasionally linked with other school subjects, enrich the curriculum. Accommodation, criticised at the last inspection, is now much improved with three good-sized studios, in addition to an independent working area for the sixth form and two darkrooms for photography. There is still a lack of adequate storage and this limits large and three-dimensional work. Nevertheless, since the last inspection, provision has improved and very high standards have been maintained. Art makes a significant impact on the creative and cultural life of the school.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning.
- Students enjoy music and have very positive attitudes that contribute to the progress they make.
- Very good accommodation and good resources.
- Curriculum planning is not sufficiently detailed and does not identify how students of different abilities are to achieve their full potential.
- Monitoring and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in standards and identifying key priorities for improvement are under-developed.

Commentary

106. Most students enter school with attainment that is at least in line with national expectations. Many already play musical instruments well. The schools' own assessments of the standards reached by students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above the national averages. Results in 2004 have not yet been validated but although the school's assessments were lower than in 2003, they are still above the national averages for that year. In lessons, most students in Year 9 achieve well and are reaching standards that are above the national expectation. They have good understanding of music from different times and places and can compose in different styles. In 2003, two thirds of students taking the GCSE exam achieved A* to C

grades, although only one pupil gained grade A. Results in 2004 have not yet been validated but represent an improvement on the previous year. Almost all students gained A* to C grades with half of these at grade A. The number of students taking GCSE music was too small to make reliable comparisons with national averages. Only two students have gained an A* grade since its introduction. Currently, most students in Years 10 and 11 are reaching good standards in composing and listening. They are good performers and some are very good. When account is taken of their starting point in Year 10, their achievement is satisfactory. The most able students throughout the school do not always reach the standards of which they are capable when the planned activities do not sufficiently extend them.

107. Teaching and learning are good overall, with some examples of very good teaching. In Years 7 to 11, teaching is enthusiastic, with clear purpose and most lessons are conducted at a good pace ensuring that most students succeed in achieving the stated objectives. However, sometimes objectives are not well matched to the needs of students, particularly the most able, and they do not always do as well as they could. Students have very good attitudes to music and this contributes to the good progress they make. They enjoy lessons and, in most lessons, are very well behaved. They co-operate in-group work and are confident in rehearsing and directing performances. Occasionally, in Years 7 to 9, the behaviour of a small number of students causes some disruption and this inhibits the progress they make. Teachers make effective use of the very good accommodation and good resources. Opportunities to enhance standards in literacy are clearly identified. However, in Years 7 to 11, students notate much of their composition work by hand and are not yet benefiting from the use of the improved numbers of computers that would enable them to refine and enhance their work. Homework is used appropriately and effectively. Assessment criteria are clearly presented in students' books but systems that enable students to evaluate their own work and the work of others are not yet an integral part of the learning process.
108. The leadership and management of music are satisfactory. The head of department has a good vision for the future development of music and for the most part, the school's aims and policies are reflected in the departments' work. Day-to-day management is good and the modest budget for music is used to good effect. However, curriculum plans are not yet completed in sufficient detail to ensure that the learning needs of all abilities and particularly the most able are met. The department contributes to the school's development plan but the departmental review is insufficiently focussed on improving standards and teaching and learning. As a result, the department does not identify and prioritise the issues that are most important to improving provision. The detailed evaluation of procedures that would enable the department to identify strengths and weaknesses in its provision, particularly in relation to the progress made by the most able, is not fully in place.
109. A broad and balanced curriculum is further enhanced by workshops from artists and animateurs in African drumming, Japanese Koto and Gamelan. There are opportunities for concert visits and a good range of extra-curricular activities but these are not as well attended as they were during the last inspection. Almost 200 students receive instrumental and vocal lessons from 17 visiting teachers from the local authority music service. Links with other schools are good. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Drama

110. Standards in GCSE examinations are well above average and some outstanding results are achieved. Drama was sampled, lessons were observed in Years 8 and 10 where very high standards of performance were observed in practical explorations of drama techniques and conventions. Students complement their very good practical experiences with thoughtful analysis of the purpose of the drama and the techniques needed to communicate their messages effectively.
111. Teaching programmes are well planned because they provide opportunities for students to explore themes, interpret material from a range of sources and devise drama to convey

meaning to a variety of audiences. Students learn very well and explained their work enthusiastically. An extensive programme of extra-curricular activities enriches students' learning. This evidence suggests that drama is a strength of the school because students' personal and emotional development is enhanced by their drama experiences.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Extra-curricular provision is very good.
- Teaching is good and students learn well as a result.
- Students are not clear what they must do to improve.
- The majority of students are committed and enthusiastic.
- Changing facilities adjacent to the gymnasium are very poor.

Commentary

112. The most recent teacher assessment indicates that the attainment of students by the end of Year 9 was broadly in line with the national average. In 2003 the percentage of students who gained A* to C grades in the GCSE examination was also broadly average. Results were very similar in 2004 but from a larger entry. Standards in the present Year 9 are average overall, as they are in Year 11. Standards among GCSE students in Year 11 are below average. Individual students attain above average standards in athletics, cross-country, gymnastics, netball and trampolining.
113. Students' prior experiences of physical education vary significantly. By the end of Year 9 most have made good progress. Achievement is satisfactory in Year 11. A minority of students in Year 11, including several who are taking the GCSE examination, lack the commitment and motivation normally associated with students at this level. This negative attitude is having a detrimental effect on standards. It is also in sharp contrast to the positive attitudes shown by the majority, who work hard and enthusiastically in all lessons. Students identified as having special educational needs achieve as well as others.
114. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are good. Lessons are well organised and almost all students respond very positively to the teaching that they receive. Opportunities are provided in some lessons for students to take on additional responsibilities, including leading warm-up activities and coaching and evaluating the work of others. These opportunities could be extended to more lessons. Higher-attaining students are not always challenged sufficiently in lessons and consequently do not always achieve as well as they might. Teachers offer a very good range of extra-curricular activities. These are well attended by students. During the inspection the gymnastic and basketball clubs, where older students were supporting the work of teachers, proved to be particularly popular.
115. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department runs smoothly even though three teachers are currently part-time. At present there is no overall strategic plan to raise standards. Lesson planning does not take sufficient account of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 and students do not always know what they have to do in order to improve.
116. Since the last inspection, extra-curricular provision has been extended. Sixth form students help to run basketball and badminton clubs. The curriculum has been broadened for older students, who now use facilities off-site for swimming and squash. Floodlights have recently been installed around the tennis/netball courts. This represents good improvement. The department has also achieved the Sports Mark award. Changing facilities in the gymnasium area are poor. There is no permanent base for teaching the theoretical elements of the examination course, making delivery of this part of the syllabus more difficult. Such a facility

would also allow teachers to contribute more effectively to the development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Vocational and non-vocational courses were sampled. Overall the quality of provision is **good**.

Catering

117. One in six students take the GCSE in catering in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, the results of the examinations were high compared with the national average with nine out of ten students obtaining A* to C grades and all A* to G grades. The unconfirmed results in 2004 were similar. One lesson was observed. Students in Year 11 were seen evaluating the content of foods and costing different recipes very effectively. The achievement of students is very good.

Child development

118. A quarter of students take the GCSE in child development in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, the results of the examinations were above the national average with two-thirds of students obtaining A* to C grades and all A* to G grades. Two lessons were observed. Students in Year 10 were seen observing the reactions of babies and their parents to a toy they had made very well. Students in Year 11 were seen preparing for an individual task well; some were preparing to observe a child's behaviour in a group. Students enjoyed both these lessons.

Health and social care

119. One in five students take the new Applied GCSE in health and social care in Year 10. The course has not yet been examined. Students' folders and notebooks were examined. They showed that the quality of work done in the unit promoting health and well being was very good. Students had developed a questionnaire on health and lifestyle to be answered by students in the sixth form. Good progress had been made. The use of information and communication technology is a particularly strong feature of this course.

Home economics

120. All students take home economics in Years 7 and 8 and three-quarters of them in Year 9. In 2003, all students passed the internally set practical test and written paper at the end of Year 9 excellently. Two lessons were observed. In Year 8, students were seen learning about the large-scale production of biscuits, packaging and advertising very effectively. Students in Year 9 were seen learning to make bread and about the effects of yeast in bread very well. The students enjoyed both lessons and made very good progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught as part of a combined course in Years 7 to 11. Planning and documentation were sampled; no discrete lessons were observed but citizenship was observed within geography, history and religious education lessons.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An innovative and devolved curriculum structure offers some good opportunities for effectively developing students' understanding and skills.

- The model of discrete sessions and suspended time for citizenship enables students to study topics in greater depth.
- The leadership and management of the subject are insufficient to draw together the different strands of delivery in order to provide a comprehensive view of the student's progress.
- Assessment is insufficient to identify students' strengths and areas for development in citizenship.

Commentary

121. A very limited amount of work was available for scrutiny particularly from Years 10 and 11. From the evidence available, standards are average in both Year 9 and Year 11. Examples of good numerical analysis of different voting systems are evident in mathematics, also imaginative writing on the impact of curfews in English and media and an investigation of human rights in religious education. Other evidence indicates that modern foreign languages make an effective contribution to the study of the European Union and geography makes a positive contribution to environmental issues. Although much of the course is through discussion, there is no systematic recording of students' contributions. Achievement overall is satisfactory.
122. No lessons were seen during the inspection; however, based on the work scrutiny, teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are some examples of satisfactory assessments within departments and they are reported in the individual subject reports such as geography, history, and religious education. However, not all subjects record or report students' progress. The assessment of work that is delivered through the departments is not collated, nor comprehensive records of students' progress built up from year to year. The co-ordinator does not have a clear view about students' strengths or areas for development throughout the subject therefore the overall assessment strategy is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is partly delivered through discrete sessions, in tutorial time and partly through five days of suspended time. These occasions allow for topics to be studied at depth although their effectiveness is not monitored closely enough. The school has identified improved monitoring as a development area.
123. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because there is insufficient planning, co-ordination and monitoring of the devolved curriculum model. This leads to a lack of clarity about how students are learning and developing their citizenship skills. There is no overall curriculum plan that identifies the citizenship curriculum. Individual departments are expected to include evidence of citizenship modules in their subject plans but there are many inconsistencies and omissions and it is very difficult to develop a clear picture of the whole curriculum. Neither the financial provision for the subject nor the resources are sufficiently identified. Citizenship strengths and areas for development are not reported in all years.

WORK RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work related learning (WRL) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The careers guidance programme is very well planned and promotes independent research by students.
- Year 11 students enjoy successful work experience placements because they are managed very well.
- The Year 10 curriculum now includes a good range of vocational courses so uptake by students is high.

Commentary

124. Standards in WRL are good because the careers guidance programme is effective and work experience is of high quality. The timing of work experience placements after Year 11 GCSE examinations is appropriate for the students. All who returned to the sixth form had at least a one-week placement, with three quarters having two weeks. Half find their placements independently. The emphasis is on a safe, high quality experience. It is very well managed with detailed assessment. In 2004 the average rating was nine out of ten showing the high quality and value of the experience for students.
125. There is a good range of GCSE courses with a specific WRL content. The increased range this year resulted in very good uptake with more than four fifths of Year 10 students now studying one or more courses. Effective vocational GCSE courses include child development, expressive arts, health and social care. From GCSE catering there is very good progression to the sixth form BTEC course reported separately. Information and communication technology coursework requires research into business applications and design and technology teachers use their extensive industrial contacts to enhance learning. An 'Artist in Residence' enables all art students to benefit from contact with a practising professional. Science students enjoy links with a local pharmaceutical company and the Education Business Partnership. Modern foreign language students study a WRL topic where they learn to write job application letters and a CV. They also learn about working conditions in the European Union and the problems of migrant workers.
126. The main school careers guidance programme is effective because it is very well planned. Delivery is mainly via pastoral staff supported by the specialist careers teacher. Two Year 11 sessions were sampled with students giving presentations about possible careers. Information and communication technology classes are used to introduce the very good range of careers guidance and pathways programs. The school web site has an excellent reference bank for careers education. It includes links to the Connexions careers service and software for careers and higher education routes. An annual two-day conference gives all Year 9 contact with business speakers and decision-making exercises. A new 'Project Business' day has been planned for Year 10 in 2005. GCSE students use Connexions to learn about the changing nature of work, the need for transferable skills and other aspects of employment. Year 11 students develop personal action plans after researching their various possible paths for progression. In 2004, three quarters returned for sixth form studies. For students considering employment or further education college specialist guidance with a Connexions adviser is available.
127. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for development and the emphasis on a multi-agency approach supports learning well. There is good support from senior management and resources are very good. A new main school award for work experience demonstrates the high level of the school's commitment.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

This inspection focused mainly on 12 subjects, and these were inspected and are reported on in detail here. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	7	85.7	80.1	42.9	23.7	40.0	29.9
Biology	1	100.0	65.2	0.0	11.1	40.0	20.6
Business Studies	3	100.0	76.4	33.3	16.3	43.3	26.2
Chemistry	6	83.3	72.7	0.0	13.9	18.3	24.1
Communication Studies	2	100.0	86.4	100.0	23.8	55.0	32.0
Drama	2	100.0	86.5	100.0	19.6	50.0	30.6
English Literature	6	100.0	85.9	16.7	19.1	35.0	30.2
French	8	100.0	78.2	12.5	18.9	31.3	27.6
Design and Technology	1	0.0	74.9	0.0	15.1	0.0	25.3
Geography	7	100.0	74.3	71.4	19.8	51.4	26.5
German	1	100.0	81.5	0.0	19.3	40.0	28.9
History	3	100.0	80.7	33.3	19.5	43.3	28.6
Information Technology	5	100.0	67.0	20.0	10.9	40.0	21.4
Mathematics	10	50.0	61.9	0.0	17.1	15.0	22.1
Other Languages	3	100.0	82.6	0.0	42.9	26.7	36.2
Social Studies	2	50.0	69.7	0.0	16.7	15.0	24.1
Physics	4	100.0	68.6	25.0	14.4	37.5	22.7
Religious Studies	5	80.0	80.2	40.0	22.6	32.0	29.8
Sociology	6	66.7	71.8	16.7	18.4	23.3	25.4
Spanish	2	100.0	78.5	0.0	17.7	35.0	27.3
Sports/PE Studies	2	100.0	73.2	0.0	11.4	25.0	23.1
Leisure and Recreation	14	100.0	62.9	0.0	10.2	45.7	57.9
Travel and Tourism	14	100.0	71.8	14.3	14.5	64.3	62.2

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	27	100.0	98.6	74.1	50.2	99.3	87.5
Biology	29	100.0	96.4	51.7	39.2	89.7	78.6
Business Studies	16	100.0	98.7	31.3	36.8	83.8	80.1
Chemistry	23	100.0	97.6	73.9	49.0	99.1	84.9
Communication Studies	34	100.0	99.4	50.0	37.8	88.2	82.1
Dance	5	100.0	98.5	100.0	44.9	108.0	83.9
Drama	6	100.0	99.5	50.0	40.1	93.3	83.6
English Literature	24	100.0	99.5	58.3	46.5	95.8	86.5
French	9	100.0	98.8	55.6	51.5	95.6	87.6
Design and Technology	4	100.0	97.8	0.0	35.0	65.0	77.9
General Studies	94	91.5	94.7	28.7	31.0	70.9	73.1
Geography	22	100.0	98.7	77.3	44.5	103.6	84.0
German	8	100.0	98.4	62.5	47.9	97.5	84.8
History	7	100.0	99.0	57.1	44.6	94.3	84.6
Information Technology	6	100.0	95.6	33.3	24.6	86.7	69.5
Mathematics	16	100.0	96.7	50.0	55.6	88.8	88.8
Other Languages	3	100.0	96.9	66.7	64.5	100.0	93.8
Social Studies	9	100.0	97.4	55.6	42.7	91.1	81.8
Physics	9	100.0	96.7	33.3	44.6	84.4	81.7
Religious Studies	9	100.0	98.8	44.4	46.7	91.1	85.6
Sociology	10	100.0	98.2	80.0	44.3	98.0	83.6
Spanish	4	100.0	98.3	75.0	50.2	95.0	86.9
Sports/PE Studies	8	100.0	98.0	50.0	30.9	87.5	75.2

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	Entry	% gaining A-E qualification		% gaining A-B qualification		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Personal Assistants	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students of all abilities achieve very well.
- Teachers know and love the subject and convey their enthusiasm very effectively.
- Students respond to this, enjoy the subject and work very hard.

Commentary

128. Standards are above average. Achievement is very good. On entry, most students have A*/A or B GCSE grades and they maintain similar standards. For the past three years, all students have gained at least a D grade in the A2 examination. In two of the last three years, the proportion of A/B grades has been above or well above average. The work and lessons seen during the inspection confirmed this level of attainment.

129. Students learn their texts thoroughly, which enables them to acquire a detailed understanding of theme, structure and style. Students enter Year 12 with good writing skills. They have a wide vocabulary, including technical terms, and they organise their ideas logically. Their grasp of the effect of language in conveying meaning about characters, themes and structure in different ways is unusual and they explain the effects well. The ablest students analyse in some depth and most offer some analysis as well as description. Orally students are articulate and able to explain their ideas fully and convincingly.

130. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers enjoy literature and this sparks an enthusiastic response from most students. One result of this is that students as well as teachers prepare for lessons thoroughly, thus increasing the pace. The style of teaching, based on teacher exposition is successful; in the best lessons, students work in groups very effectively. Their discussions stimulate the further development of ideas that they explore together. Students undertake research into background and criticism, using both the Internet and libraries. Teachers mark work carefully, indicating clearly how it could be improved.

131. Leadership and management are very good. The strong, clear direction has resulted in a curriculum that is varied and demanding. A range of extra-curricular activities such as theatre visits and workshops further enriches it. The analysis of data is thorough and necessary action taken. Students benefit very much from a professional and dedicated team of teachers. The number choosing to study English literature is increasing year by year. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because high standards of examination results, teaching and learning have been maintained.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

132. Students are articulate and are able to explain themselves convincingly. Comprehension skills are good and this enables them to cope with a demanding range of texts in AS and A2 subjects. Writing skills have been well developed in Year 11. Their vocabulary, including technical terms is good and in general their written English is accurate.

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent teaching in Years 12 and 13 results in students reaching very high standards.
- Students' motivation leads to high commitment and very hard work.
- Excellent leadership and very good management.
- Excellent accommodation and resources.
- Standards in AS and A-level examinations are consistently higher, and often much higher, than the national average and compare well with those for selective schools.

Commentary

133. In 2003 students attained above average results. Current standards in Year 13 are very high. Students understand spoken and written language in a wide range of topics. Many speak fluently and they write confidently with a good degree of accuracy on such themes as nuclear energy, justice and slavery in the world. They use a very good range of topic-specific vocabulary and structures. Excellent teaching and very good motivation on the part of the students result in high achievement.
134. Current standards in Year 12 are also very high. Achievement is good for the vast majority of students. Their excellent motivation results in hard work and they are bridging the gap from GCSE very well. Higher-attaining students extend their range of language very well and are adventurous in its use; lower-attaining students tend to use a safe, secure style. They talk and write with increasing confidence on themes such as the attitude of the French towards work and about how the French take their holidays. They do research on French documentation to consider arguments for and against smoking.
135. The quality of teaching and learning across the two years is very good. Teachers' high expectations, the excellent use of French as the unique means of communication in the classroom, the outstanding relationships, the imaginative use of a very good range of resources, including information and communication technology, result in learning which is never less than good and is often excellent. Teachers enthuse students by their excellent command of French and this results in an equal level of enthusiasm and commitment on the part of the students. Students appreciate strongly the high-quality involvement of the language assistants the positive nature of the teaching and the excellent opportunities for visits abroad.

Example of outstanding practice

Part of a Year 13 lesson where the teacher uses contemporary history to extend students' vocabulary and their understanding of war and its effects on civilians.

The lesson took place entirely in French. The excellent lesson planning and the use of appropriately selected images of war led to high quality discussions in which students willingly volunteered their opinions in accurate, and sometimes, complex French. They displayed a good knowledge of current events in Israel. They tackled a challenging reading passage extremely well, extending their range of structures and vocabulary. A practical activity in which students re-ordered a jumbled set of printed sentences to match the order in which they had appeared in the text provided an excellent opportunity for students to work in pairs and put in order a difficult set of sentences summarising the earlier reading. Further speaking and writing practice followed. The lesson ended with an excellent session where two students were 'experts on the day' and answered challenging questions carefully devised by the rest of the class.

136. The excellent leadership and very good management lead to a very clear vision for the development of French. Assessment and the tracking of students' progress result in teachers' outstanding understanding of individual students' strengths and weaknesses. The vast range

of resources, including a multi-media room, are well managed and used. The subject continues to be very successful and is well placed to build even further on the high standards.

German

Provision in German is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 13 students reach very high standards because of excellent teaching.
- Learning benefits from very good lesson planning and varied resources.
- Students' benefit from cultural and study visits and work experience.

Commentary

137. Standards in AS and A-level examinations are consistently higher, and often much higher, than the national average and compare well with those of selective schools.
138. Current standards in Year 13 are very high. Students understand a breadth of written and spoken language. They speak and write confidently and fluently about topics such as politics or history with a good degree of accuracy, using a very good range of language structures and vocabulary. The very high levels of achievement are the result of a very strong commitment to learning and the excellent teaching.
139. In Year 12, standards are broadly average for this early stage of the course and achievement is satisfactory for most, but good for about a third of students. Several still find the big jump from GCSE difficult and a few are hesitant speakers. Carefully planned, regular small group sessions with the language assistant, the motivation of video-conferencing sessions with students in a local selective school and the teachers' strenuous efforts to sustain conversation in German and increase the students' range of vocabulary and accuracy in using advanced structures are improving oral and written confidence.
140. The overall quality of the teaching and learning across the two years is good. The teachers' high expectations, the extensive use of German in class, the imaginative and exciting use of a wide range of resources and excellent relationships result in good and often excellent learning. Time is used to the full. Occasionally the most able students in Year 12 are not stretched to capacity. Most students take the initiative and strive to expand their own learning. They use multi-media facilities for seeking meanings of texts and new vocabulary competently. Two prepare material and run a German club for younger students.

Example of outstanding practice

Part of a Year 13 lesson where the teacher uses modern technologies effectively to improve historical and general knowledge while teaching difficult grammatical phrases.

All took place almost entirely in German. The teacher had prepared meticulously to combine topical material relevant to an A-level historical theme of war with demanding language materials. The lesson was on the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall. Film clips of its fall were already loaded and shown. The teacher probed students' understanding of what was happening, extended their vocabulary and ensured that they practised its use. Difficult grammatical sentences had been prepared and were flashed up, practised and used as speaking points. Good relationships made students comfortable to ask questions. The sentences were well rehearsed. Students made very good progress in knowledge and understanding and reached high spoken standards. An excellent lesson starter. All the material is ready for future reinforcement and as speaking prompts in this or other classes.

141. Leadership, the tracking of students' progress and the development and use of resources are excellent. Management is very good. Students benefit greatly from study visits to, and work

experience in, Germany. Already a successful subject at the time of the last inspection, improved resources have widened teaching strategies.

Italian

142. Italian was sampled. One Year 12 and one Year 13 lesson were observed and students' work was analysed. Students have opportunities to continue their studies to AS and A-levels or to undertake a beginners' course in Year 12. The excellent use of Italian in lessons, very high teacher expectation, very good relationships and very good student motivation result in high standards and very good achievement.

Portuguese and Japanese

143. Portuguese and Japanese courses for beginners were sampled. Standards of attainment and achievement were good. Even though students were in the early stages of learning the language they communicated effectively using simple language. The quality of teaching observed was good and was characterised by effective use of the target language to support and motivate, imaginative use of resources, including information and communication technology, and high expectations.

MATHEMATICS

The inspection focused on AS-level and A-level examination courses offered by the school. Provision for students re-sitting GCSE mathematics was sampled.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management have resulted in an increase in the number of students on AS and A-level courses.
- A well-designed curriculum improves the achievement of the average ability AS students in Year 12.
- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to ensure that all students can access new learning.
- Retention rates are high
- The infrequent setting of individual targets results in some average ability students not knowing what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

144. GCE A-level mathematics examination results in 2003 were in line with national averages but below those achieved in 2002. GCE AS-level examination results in 2003 were below national averages but showed an improvement on 2002. The number of students who retake GCSE are too small to compare against national averages and the school's previous performance. Taken as a whole, the results over time at post-16 show that the performance of students with English as an additional language is at least commensurate with that of other students.

145. Recent examination results show a substantial improvement at A and AS-level: the standards attained at both levels are above the 2003 national averages. Standards in lessons are above the national average and show that the vast majority of Year 12 and Year 13 students make good progress and add good value to their previous attainment at GCSE. A significant proportion of Year 13 students, including the gifted and talented, expect to go to university and study courses with a high level of mathematical content. Throughout Years 12 and 13 students of all abilities, including those re-taking GCSE make very progress in algebra.

146. On all courses, the overall quality of teaching and learning is good. No teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Teachers have high expectations and use their very good subject knowledge and planning to ensure that all students can access new learning. The excellent relationships and dynamics within the classroom generate purposeful discussion that enables those students who struggled to meet the standards necessary to join the AS course make very good progress. In particular, students quickly learn to cope with the increased range of vocabulary and notation that is required to understand the way examination questions are expressed. Good or better teaching uses information and communication technology resources efficiently to develop complex mathematics at a good pace without missing out the small steps that enable students to network new concepts with the old. The good use of record keeping and resources to develop and extend understanding often improves the progress and achievement of all Year 13 students. Students have good decision-making skills and the confidence to check answers. However, the infrequent setting of targets to improve individual performance results in some students not knowing what they need to do to improve.
147. Leadership and management are very good. The induction sessions held in Year 11 and the reputation of the department to meet the needs of higher education have led to increased numbers commencing the courses and excellent rates of retention. The head of department provides an excellent role model for teaching and learning and is very supportive of teachers new to teaching AS and A-level classes.
148. Improvement since the last inspection, particularly in Year 12, has been good. The department's thorough analysis of attainment and participation in external training has been used to construct a well-designed curriculum and efficiently match staff to its demands. As a result the achievement of Year 12 students has been enhanced.

Mathematics across the curriculum

149. The department makes a small contribution to the whole post-16 curriculum by providing the curriculum for students in receipt of individual tuition in Year 12 and the distribution of its numeracy policy. Since the last inspection, senior leadership and management have, for economic reasons, withdrawn from Further Mathematics and the department, because of staffing turbulence, has not been able to develop its input to GNVQ courses. However, the development of mathematics as part of the teaching and learning in other subjects has had a positive impact on achievement in biology, chemistry, business education and geography: the analysis of data required to determine the fate of production sites, balancing chemical equations and complex 'mole' theory all demand higher-level numeric and algebraic skills.

SCIENCE

The focus was on biology and chemistry.

Biology

Provision in biology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average. Effective planning and questioning clearly stems from teachers' expertise in biology. This is helping to maintain standards.
- Students have a strong drive to learn. Very good relationships between teachers and students create a happy atmosphere for learning. Learning is at its best when students are imaginatively involved throughout lessons.

Commentary

150. A-level results in 2003 were well above average. They were well above average at grade A and all students passed the examination. All students passed their AS examination and results were above average. There was notable improvement in 2004. A-level results were well above average; all students met their targets and passed the examination. Compared with previous results, overall achievement was good; for some students it was very good. Standards achieved at AS-level in 2004 were well above average. Over two thirds of the entry gained within the A to B grade range. Achievement since GCSE was, overall, good.
151. Standards in current Year 13 are well above average. Assessments, so far, indicate that achievement is already good in relation to AS grades and that all students are likely to pass the examination. The actual rate of progress is noticeably linked, in no small measure, to their strong drive to learn. Year 13 made very good progress in deepening knowledge about genetics as they cheerfully disentangled problems about the nature of offspring. In addition, highly effective teaching, well-practised in exploring the work of Mendel, speedily led them through a variety of well-planned activities that sharply involved most of the class, in grappling with tricky tasks. The very highest attainers soon overcame theirs. Sometimes, students have difficulty in recalling and applying knowledge well from lengthy notes. Standards in Year 12 are well above average and achievement is already good at this early stage of advanced level work. Work is usually organised well, reflecting a high degree of commitment and diligence from students that helps their reflection.
152. Teaching is very good overall and students learn very well as a result. Their very good attitudes towards tackling complex work also enrich their learning. Learning is further helped through teachers' regular, constructive comments on work. PowerPoint presentations are used effectively to demonstrate ideas that are difficult to visualise, such as protein structures of cell membranes. Strong subject expertise is used well in widening students' knowledge of biochemistry through interesting explanations. Teachers well know the next steps students need to take to advance their learning. To improve its quality even more, they now need to be increasingly, imaginatively involved throughout more lessons so that they even more effectively handle new ideas.
153. Teachers work hard using their skills and talents to support each other; together they create a very good team. Monitoring of this experienced team is informal; leadership is good and management is strong and very good. Students' performance is analysed carefully, underachievement quickly spotted and helpful strategies devised. There has been good improvement since the last inspection; both teaching and learning have improved and standards have risen.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average. Students achieve very well because of their teachers' strong subject expertise and high expectations of their capabilities.
- Students' very good attitudes towards tackling work enrich their learning; more practice in summarising key concepts is needed to further improve its quality.

Commentary

154. A-level results in 2003 were well above average in a large group of students. All achieved within the A to C range. AS results were average with noticeable underachievement. In 2004, at A-level, almost all students achieved or improved their target grade. Twelve out of a group

of 18 achieved within the A-B grade range and all passed the examination. Although only three achieved grade A, this represents very good achievement compared with AS results. In 2004, all passed the AS examination with a spread of grades but most at grade B.

155. Current standards in Year 12 are well above average. Achievement is also already good as students swiftly move on from their GCSE work into more advanced tasks, for instance when interrogating the periodic table of elements more deeply. How well students increase their knowledge and understanding is substantially linked to their interest in helping each other and very good attitudes to learning. These qualities were clearly demonstrated in a skilfully planned lesson that opened up good opportunities for them to develop new practical skills and practice calculation. Standards of current Year 13 students are well above average. Assessments, so far, show that all are likely to pass the examination and, overall, are already making good progress in advancing ideas met at AS level. There is scope for a much more challenging set of experiences for the highest attainers in penetrating ideas at more complex levels.
156. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. A striking feature is the teachers' strong subject expertise. Teachers and students get on well together and this close rapport substantially helps them to understand difficult work. They enthusiastically respond to tasks with commitment, because of their teachers' high expectations and reassurances of what they are capable of understanding. Marking is constructive, consistent and a strength of teaching. There are numerous opportunities for students to practise complex calculations although not enough to concisely summarise key ideas and link them together to help the learning process.
157. Leadership and management are very good. The director of studies in charge of co-ordinating chemistry has a clear vision and high expectations for future developments in raising standards. Performance is carefully analysed and assessment information used well in identifying targets for students and the subject. There has been good improvement since the last inspection through tracking individual student's progress from which teaching and learning are monitored. More students have chosen to study the subject and standards have improved.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography, religious education and sociology.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching builds confidence and leads to very good achievement.
- Information and communication technology enhances learning.
- Students use the meticulous guidance provided and bring together the facets of their learning to produce outstanding coursework.
- There is some inconsistency in informing students about ways to improve in weekly tasks.

Commentary

158. Standards are well above average at both A-level and AS-level. Achievement remains high. Girls do better than the boys but both do better than their peers nationally. The most recent results show a drop towards the national trend at A-level but steady improvement at AS-level. Group size is good considering the number of other courses on offer and all students continue to A-level.
159. Standards at AS-level in Year 12 are average and achievement is good. Students have made the transition from GCSE very well and most begin to think and express themselves at higher

levels. Students, most of who entered the course with good results, recognise the relevance of prior learning to new work and apply it well. Most begin to use new subject vocabulary with increasing confidence but not all students are careful in the application of their literacy skills.

160. Information and communication technology is used for directed and undirected research and students work together well to prepare PowerPoint presentations. Students acquire self-knowledge through opportunities for peer and self-evaluation.
161. Standards at A-level in Year 13 are above average and achievement overall is very good. Students have made the jump to higher level learning well. The selective use of maps, diagrams, statistical data and photographs indicates extensive research. Students' aspirations are high; they employ a range of skills, apply their knowledge and understanding well, take great care and produce outstanding coursework and very well written and interesting extended essays. Students' attitudes and behaviour are exemplary.
162. Teaching is very good overall and effectively supports students' aspirations. Planning reflects very good subject knowledge as activities, including on going assessments, consolidate and progressively extend understanding and skills. The use of past papers provides good examination practice. Good pace in lessons allows students time to assimilate and evaluate information. Questioning probes understanding and extends thinking. Teachers ensure that peer evaluation is given and received in the spirit of constructive criticism. Clear explanations and precise instructions build student's confidence. Guidance for students is meticulous as regards examination coursework and extended essay writing but vague on ways to improve weekly tasks. The emphasis on Internet research leaves the skills of using books undeveloped. Teachers are good role models for their students.
163. Leadership and management are very good with a clear focus on maintaining standards at A-level and sustaining the rise at AS-level. Lesson plans are sufficiently detailed. Responsibilities for teaching are shared. Resources other than the satellite library are good. Information and communication technology is an integral part of teaching and learning. Residential fieldwork is well planned and effective as seen in excellent coursework produced. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is taught very well by specialist teachers.
- Students are taught difficult ideas in an interesting and challenging way.
- The department is very well led and managed.

Commentary

164. Since the time of the previous inspection more students are taking religious education in the sixth form and results are showing an upward trend. In the past three years, results in the examinations taken at the end of Year 12 have been rising and in 2004 were above those of girls nationally, especially in the highest grades. In the past three years, results in the examinations taken at the end of Year 13 have been consistently above the average for girls nationally and again this tendency has been especially marked in the highest grades.
165. Standards of work seen in Years 12 and 13 are consistently very good. There is evidence of thorough research and note taking by students, and their written and oral responses show that they are achieving well above their national counterparts in subject knowledge and in their ability to form independent concepts and argue critically.

166. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. The two subject specialists have an excellent command of the subject and a very good ability to challenge and engage the interest of students. Teachers assess students' work very well according to examination requirements and provide clear guidance on how students can improve. Both specialist teachers are skilled in delivering a high quality curriculum, which exceeds the requirements of the examination syllabus and develops in students a very good awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural values, in addition to providing them with a very good understanding of citizenship. Students in the sixth form who do not study religious education as an examined subject are provided with timetabled half-day courses in religious awareness, which cover the statutory requirements to provide religious education for all students in the sixth form.
167. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Both teachers have had management experience, which they put to good use in delivering the curriculum and monitoring students' progress very effectively.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are consistently very high.
- Achievement is very good.
- Teaching is very good and has a significant impact on learning.
- Students show a genuine interest in sociology.
- The subject is very well managed.

Commentary

168. In 2003, A-level results were well above the national average with 8 of the 10 students gaining A* to B grades. In 2004, where the number of entries had more than trebled, the results were equally impressive, with 76 per cent of students achieving the higher grades. It was a very similar picture at AS-level where, in 2004, 24 out of 36 students achieved A to B grades and all obtained A* to E grades.
169. In the present Year 13 these standards are being maintained. Students are very familiar with their earlier work. Their written work is detailed and well presented. Students in Year 12 have made a very good start to their AS course. They can identify different theoretical perspectives and they are beginning to relate these to topics such as education and feminism.
170. Students' achievement is very good. Teachers recognise that there are some students who lack the self-confidence to answer questions unless asked to do so directly and that others need to extend their general reading. Many students are articulate and confident in making contributions to class discussions. Overall, the quality of the students' work in lessons and in their folders reflects the very good results that have been achieved consistently in recent years.
171. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Thoughtful planning is evident in all lessons. Objectives are shared and understood. Teachers adopt a variety of different styles and questions are used perceptively to challenge students to think in greater depth about aspects of their work. Sociological terms are used well and are consistently reinforced. Relationships are relaxed but purposeful. A strong feature of teaching is the level of support given to students, who spoke very appreciatively about the help and guidance that they receive from their teachers. This has a very significant impact on their learning. Their enthusiasm for the subject is impressive.

172. Leadership and management are very good. The course is structured efficiently and effectively. The two sociology teachers work extremely well together. Assessment procedures are rigorous and systematic. Students are very clear about what they need to do in order to improve. Sociology is a very popular subject attracting increasing numbers of students.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

173. Design and technology was sampled. A number of students take product design in Years 12 and 13. A third of the students each learn to design graphic, resistant materials and textiles products. In 2003, the results of the GCE examinations were below the national average; no student obtained A to B grades but all obtained A to E grades. The unconfirmed results in 2004 were better. One lesson was observed. Students in Year 13 were seen learning to evaluate and analyse design concept pages for inclusion in the coursework well. The attitudes of the students were very good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Media studies

The quality of provision in media studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent results in AS examinations are above national averages.
- Students demonstrate very good understanding of media concepts and ideologies.
- Consistently good teaching stimulates the students and challenges them to achieve well.
- Students share their ideas in discussion and work collaboratively on practical projects.
- The only constraints identified were the limitations of space and resources.

Commentary

174. Results in AS examinations show consistent improvement. Students have raised their levels of performance largely because of the opportunities to re sit their AS-level examinations. Students on AS-level courses demonstrate secure knowledge of key concepts and ideologies that they discuss using media terminology with increasing confidence. Students on A2 courses use their prior learning positively. They focus on media representations and ideologies and analyse competently the impact of these on media audiences. Higher-attaining students develop maturity in their writing. Students develop key skills in critical thinking and analysis.

175. Teaching is very good with some excellent teaching because students are consistently challenged. The quality of interdependent learning is very high because students share ideas and work collaboratively on practical projects involving the use of complex technological equipment.

176. The curriculum is broadly based to provide opportunities for students to explore the clash between dominant ideologies and its connotations for racial issues and the wide diversities of our present day society. All work is assessed carefully and considerable extra help given to students to improve their achievements overall. The best possible use is made of the resources available although the accommodation is very cramped. The subject is well managed by the head of department and they are ably supported by an enthusiastic and skilful staff dedicated to improving the achievements of students of all abilities.

Art and design

177. Art and design was sampled. One lesson of Year 13 fine art was observed in which students showed maturity and confidence in making quick charcoal sketches whilst gradually unwrapping an object. Excellent teaching gave very clear guidance and encouraged experimentation. One lesson of photography was observed in Year 12. Good teaching enabled students to use some of their early black-and-white prints to learn more about non-figurative and abstract images.

Music

178. Music was sampled. A small group of three students is now studying the A-level music course. This is the first group for five years. Students are reaching standards in line with the expectations for the course. They have a good understanding of music terminology, cadences and harmony. No examples of composing or performing were seen during the inspection. Overall achievement is satisfactory. Teaching is good, enabling students to make good progress in the analysis of set works and understanding the key features of music from different periods and cultures. Students have positive attitudes and this also contributes to the good progress they make.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Hospitality and catering

The quality of provision in hospitality and catering is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The examination results are very high compared with the national average.
- Students' achievement and attitudes are excellent.
- The quality of teaching is very good and often excellent.

Commentary

179. Standards on entry to Year 12 are broadly in line with the national average. In 2004, the first time the new course was examined, the results of the BTEC Diploma in hospitality and supervision were high compared with the national average. Each student received three A-level equivalent awards – two-thirds at distinction level and one-third at merit level. Standards in the lessons seen were high compared with the national average. Achievement is excellent.

180. The quality of teaching and learning is always very good and often excellent. All teachers have excellent knowledge of the subject and are extremely enthusiastic. They use a good range of teaching methods and plan lessons extremely well. Teachers have high expectations. As a result, students are highly motivated and extremely keen to succeed. Attitudes and relationships are excellent. All work is very well assessed and recorded and students always know what they have to do to improve. Students make very effective use of information and communication technology to present their work.

181. The school is well supported by hoteliers in the London area and specialists from outside the school take part in lessons.

Example of outstanding practice

Receptionists' work and dress - an individual presentation which challenged students of all abilities very effectively.

Students were asked as a part of their work on the BTEC National Diploma course to design suitable attire for male and female receptionists and to learn about the impact the work of receptionists has on the smooth running of a hotel. Students did this as part of their work on the unit 'Front of House Operations'. In the lesson observed, students were seen giving formal presentations of their ideas and what they had learnt to a panel consisting of teachers and a manager from a London five-star hotel. The manager was a graduate and former student from the school. Students illustrated their presentations with excellent sketches and computerised text and graphics. The assignment covered a wide range of skills – designing, learning about hotel practices, use of ICT, presentation skills and interview techniques. In addition, the lesson gave the students experience of dealing with formal occasions in an extremely effective way. Standards were high and the lesson challenged students of all abilities equally.

182. Students undertake well-planned work experience during one day each week. In Year 12, they work in three different hotels and in three different areas. In Year 13 the work experience is more specialised.

183. Leadership and management are very good. The head of the curriculum area is well qualified and extremely well supported by other specialist teachers. All are committed to their students and work. Changes since the last inspection have been good. High standards and achievement have been maintained and a new course successfully introduced.

Travel and tourism

184. Travel and tourism was sampled. The curriculum benefits from the availability of both single and double award AVCE travel and tourism. Much learning is via individually researched case studies, compiled into very well structured folders of work. One very good lesson was sampled in which students made effective and high quality PowerPoint presentations of their research topic. Learning was enhanced by very good classroom relationships and very effective inputs and questions from the teacher using her detailed knowledge of the subject.

BUSINESS

Business education

Provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.
- Examination results are above the national average.
- Preparation for examinations is very good and students know how to improve.

Commentary

185. Standards on entry to Year 12 fluctuate but are currently above the national average. In 2003, the results of the GCE examinations in business studies were above the national average with just under a third of students obtaining A* to B grades and all obtaining A* to E grades. Girls performed better than the boys. In 2004, the unconfirmed results, obtained by students with higher GCSE grades on entry, were better indicating good value added. Standards in the lessons seen were generally good. Achievement is satisfactory.

186. The quality of teaching and learning varies but is good overall. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and give good introductions to topics. The technical content of

lessons is always satisfactory and sometimes good. Work is related to industrial and commercial situations well.

187. Students are involved in parts of lessons effectively by asking them questions but there are too many periods in lessons during which teachers talk at length and students are passive. More variety in teaching methods is needed to help motivate students more effectively. Activities in lessons are timed well and the pace of lessons is generally good. Students are given good help and advice in practical activities and are prepared for examination very well. Students' work is marked appropriately and students know how to improve their work.
188. Leadership and management are good. The head of the curriculum area is an experienced teacher and well supported by her new colleague. A member of staff has been away on long-term sick leave and the department has done well to maintain standards during this period. Accommodation is adequate. The subject was not included in the last inspection report.
189. This one-year foundation RSA course develops the practical and personal skills required for employment as a personal assistant. One very good lesson was sampled where students showed good application and independent learning skills at their individual information and communication technology tasks. Facilities are good and students benefit from a good variety of work experience activities within the school. Assessment is thorough and results are expected to be very good again.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

General studies

190. It was not possible to observe any general studies sessions or to see anything other than brief notes in student folders. This was because the well-planned course begins at the end of Year 12 when students spend a morning discussing current topics. During Year 13, the programme continues with topics discussed in assemblies and special sessions. The director gives over one or often two assemblies per week to active teaching with 'skills assemblies' supporting general studies. All students have copies of past papers and are encouraged to attempt these. This approach to the course utilises the good writing skills of many students. It avoids the problems of a timetabled course that then clashes with individual timetables so that a group of students may always miss a session. Personal tutors provide help and advice on all aspects of students' work, including general studies.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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