

INSPECTION REPORT

**THE SIR JOHN CASS'S FOUNDATION AND REDCOAT
CHURCH OF ENGLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL**

London

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 100977

Headteacher: Mr H Evans

Lead inspector: Mr R Passant

Dates of inspection: 7 – 11 February 2005

Inspection number: 268912

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:	Voluntary aided
Age range of students:	11 to 19 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1141
School address:	Stepney Way London
Postcode:	E1 0RH
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	The Reverend Chris Burke
Date of previous inspection:	15 March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sir John Cass is a voluntary aided 11 to 19 Church of England school serving the local community in Stepney. There are 1137 students on roll including 291 students¹ in the sixth form. The school is about the same size as other secondary schools. There are more boys than there are girls. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The school is ethnically very diverse. The percentage of students' first language not believed not to be English (76.4 per cent) is very high. The school has 49 refugees. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) supports 1059 students. Thirty-two students are at an early stage of language acquisition. The most common first languages are Bengali, (Bangladeshi), Somali and Turkish. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs is below the national average. The percentage of students with statements of educational need is broadly in line with the national average. Over the past few years, there has been significant pupil mobility. The total mobility is well into the upper quartile figures, as are the joining and leaving percentages. The inward mobility shows that half of last year's Year 11 did not join the school in the first year. The school is now oversubscribed in some year groups. The school and the sixth form have increased significantly in size since the last inspection. From Year 11 last year, 90 per cent went onto further education (FE) and 85 per cent went onto higher education from the sixth form. The school is a specialist language college and it has also been accepted as a specialist business college and is seeking to interweave the two aspects. The school is a nationally accredited Investor in People. The school has won achievement awards four years running. The school was identified in the press as the school with the most improved GCSE or equivalent results for the last three years. Current attainment on entry is below average. The attainment on entry of older classes was low.

¹ Ofsted reports normally use the term 'pupil' to describe those attending the school from 11 to 16 and 'students' to describe those attending post 16. The school's preferred term is students and this is used throughout the report to describe all who attend Sir John Cass's school. The term pupils is retained in headings.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2728	Rod Passant	Lead inspector	Drama Personal, social and health education
11104	Michael Fleming	Lay inspector	
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (sixth form)
30545	David Castell	Team inspector	Geography
18261	Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design Art and design (sixth form)
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	Special educational needs
12890	Thomas Jardine	Team inspector	Science Biology (sixth form)
20527	Brian King	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)
31983	Debra Makin	Team inspector	Physical education Physical education (sixth form)
17732	David Martin	Team inspector	Citizenship History History (sixth form)
8696	Abul Maula	Team inspector	English as an additional language Bengali
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team inspector	Business education Business education (sixth form) Economics
18032	Isobel Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Information and communication technology (sixth form)
31503	Kevin Sadler	Team inspector	Music
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Design and technology Health and social care (sixth form)
4486	Michael Weller	Team inspector	English English (sixth form)

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Sir John Cass's Foundation and Redcoat School is a very good school with many excellent features. It is very effective because: it very successfully raises students' self-esteem and aspirations; provides a very secure environment in which to learn; identifies and responds to individuals' needs; develops students' attitudes to learning and personal motivation; and, through excellent tracking and assessment procedures, very strong pastoral support, astute judgements about the curriculum and consistent good teaching, ensures that students achieve very well. This is all achieved through the excellent leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team, who have ensured that there are consistent shared values across the school, clarity of purpose and a sustained and a tenacious determination to raise standards. The result is that all the school staff work very hard on behalf of the students and display a very strong commitment to their success. The school has justifiably developed a very good reputation in the community and the parents' and students' perception of it being part of their extended family, with all the involvement, trust and support that implies, is another important factor in the school's success. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Outstanding leadership by the headteacher
- Consistent good teaching which builds cumulatively, and, in association with a raft of measures which provide additional opportunity for study and support, ensures very good achievement overall
- The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school is a faith school and this is reflected in its sensitivity to the diversity of faiths within its community and the focus on, and valuing of, the individual pupil and in developing mutual respect
- The provision for English as an additional language and the language college specialism have been very important factors in raising standards; particularly in the valuing of community languages, bilingualism and raising awareness of language and the need for language support across the curriculum and indeed the linkage between this valuing of language and self-esteem
- The school has an excellent ethos and inclusivity
- Strategic planning and evaluation are excellent. The school is very clear about what it needs to do in order to improve further. In many cases this is further development of existing systems and achieving even greater consistency in approach rather than specific weaknesses

The improvement since the last inspection is excellent.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	B	B	A*
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E	D	E	

*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.*

Overall, students achieve very well. The percentage of students gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE or equivalent was well above average (A). The value that the school adds, that is the relative progress made by students in the school compared to nationally is very high – in the top five per cent of schools. In the last three years, the media have identified it as the school with the most improved GCSE or equivalent results. By the end of Year 9, standards in the National Curriculum

tests in English are average and they are below average in mathematics and science. Given the attainment on entry, overall achievement is good. The trend for improvement is above the national trend. There is acceleration in progress after Year 9. Increased motivation that stems from being able to make curriculum choices, a curriculum closely matched to students' need and development of language confidence, accounts for this spurt in progress and the reason that they achieve very well. Students with English as an additional language, the majority of students, make overall very good progress. This is because the provision for the development of literacy skills is very good across the school. Staff awareness of students' language needs is high because of the high profile and strategic work of the English as an additional language staff, the very effective implementation of the school's literacy policy and the school's sensitivity to language. That said, overall language skills are still below average by the end of Year 11 and account for the fact that the overall five A* to C grades which includes both mathematics and English is in line with the borough but below the national average. Students from all ethnic groups perform above the borough average. Overall, there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls over time. There is good provision for students with special educational needs and they make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress thereafter. The school identifies higher attaining students and staff awareness of the need to provide these students with additional challenge is good. Ten per cent of students gained three A*/A grades in 2004. Excellent tracking arrangements pick up early on any student who is underperforming. Overall provision in English and science is very good and it is good in mathematics. Provision in information technology is very good. The school sets demanding targets, which it exceeded in 2004. The trend at GCSE or equivalent is very significantly above the national trend.

Students **behave well and demonstrate very good attitudes to school and to their work. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.** Students value the diversity of the school, high respect for others is central to the atmosphere and ethos of the school. The school's ethos is excellent. Students' rate of attendance and punctuality are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is very good. Teaching is good. It is often very good. It is the consistency of good quality learning experiences in classrooms which builds over time to the students' overall very good achievement. The quality of learning seen in lessons only tells part of the story. The school has done much to develop students' independent learning skills, raise their motivation and provide them with a broad range of additional opportunities and personal support outside the normal classroom experience. Students respond very well as a result. The curriculum is overall very good and plays a significant part in raising attainment. The school also takes very good care of its students. The school's inclusiveness is excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management are excellent. Governance of the school is very good. Governors are very committed and supportive of the school and are well informed so that they are able to fulfil their role as critical friend very well and play a full role in strategic planning. The leadership by the headteacher is outstanding and he is supported by excellent leadership from the senior leadership team. Management is excellent. There is an excellent balance between accountability, developed through performance management and support, developed through the training programme. The jigsaw of initiatives provides a coherent pattern of support for the individual pupil. Strategic planning is excellent and leaders have a very clear idea of future needs and what needs to be done to ensure further improvement across the whole school including the sixth form. The day-to-day smooth running of the school is given high priority, which allows senior managers to anticipate any possible problems. There is a shared ethos and commitment by all staff to encouraging student success and raise achievement and all staff work very hard on their behalf.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school has developed a highly effective partnership with parents. Parents and students regard the school as being part of their extended family and enjoy their trust, involvement and support.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- The school has a very clear idea of what it should do to improve further. In the main, this is further development of existing systems and achieving even greater consistency in approach rather than addressing specific weaknesses. There are no key issues for improvement.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good sixth form with excellent features. It has improved markedly since the last inspection and expanded to 285 students in 2004, of which 40 per cent joined the school in Year 12. Reflecting local demographics, 98 per cent of students are of minority ethnic origin, and many speak two or more languages fluently. Over 20 per cent of students are at an early stage of learning English. The sixth form caters very well for its current students by offering a broad and flexible range of courses. It also provides an exceptionally positive environment for their personal and social development. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. Students are prepared to work hard and take responsibility for their own learning. Examination results are below the national average but students achieve very well in relation to their standards on entry. The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent.

The sixth form is cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The excellent leadership and organisation; sixth form leaders are held in justifiably high regard by the students and their families
- The outstanding quality of relationships; the sixth form successfully aspires to be a convivial *family* unit where the needs and values of all are recognised and respected
- The excellent levels of support and guidance that contribute very significantly to the academic progress and personal development of students
- The very positive attitudes of the students that enable them to achieve very well and make a very good contribution to the ethos of the whole school
- The broad range of academic and vocational courses that cater very well for the needs and aspirations of a diverse group of students and offer a clear path for progression
- The celebration of spiritual and cultural diversity in an exemplary multi-faith, multicultural and multiracial community

Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent.

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>English: Very Good. Very good teaching and learning result in very good achievement. Teachers have high expectations of students to research independently and read widely. Very positive student attitudes and a willingness to take responsibility for their own learning is a major contribution to achievement.</p> <p>French: Good. Good teaching is resulting in good student progress. Students receive very good support outside lessons but students are not always clear about their learning.</p> <p>Bengali: Good. Good teaching and learning result in a very good level of student progress. Students are highly motivated and find the course very interesting.</p>
Mathematics	<p>Very Good. Both standards and the number of students on the AS² and A-level courses have improved. Teaching and learning are very good.</p>

² Advanced level work is divided into two stages AS level –describing year one of the course and A2 describing the examination taken at the end of the second year of the course. In the report, the term A-level is used to describe advanced work encompassing both examinations.

Science	Biology: Satisfactory and improving. Teaching and learning in class are good but limited independent learning means that achievement is satisfactory.
Curriculum area	Evaluation
Information and communication technology	ICT: Very Good. Very good achievement is the result of very good teaching informed by excellent assessment of students' work.
Humanities	History: Good. Very good teaching is leading to very good learning. Students are very clear about what they need to do to succeed.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	This area was not inspected.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and Design: Good. Standards are in line with national expectations. Students have very positive attitudes and learn very well because of very good teaching.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Physical Education: Good. Standards are in line with national expectations and there is evidence of significant improvement occurring between Years 12 and 13. Teaching and learning are good, with good use of resources and ICT. Examples are drawn from a variety of sports, which engages the interest of all students.
Business	Business Education: Excellent. Standards are above average and achievement is excellent. Very good teaching develops the students' knowledge and skills very effectively. Excellent leadership and management have resulted in the successful development of business college status.
Health and social care	Very Good. Standards are above average and students achieve very well. Teachers prepare a very good range of resources to underpin learning and provide very good opportunities for students to consolidate their learning with a variety of interesting and challenging activities.
General Education	This subject was not inspected.

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

The sixth form leaders and the form tutors provide an excellent quality of support and guidance in Years 12 and 13. Excellent procedures introduce students, including those joining from other institutions, to the requirements and expectations of the sixth form. The quality of advice offered in preparation for university entry is very good. There are excellent monitoring and tracking procedures. A team of learning mentors are available to support individual students on request.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent. The sixth form leaders work very hard indeed and have a very clear vision for the development and improvement of the sixth form. They have managed the expansion of the sixth form very effectively and maintain a highly personalised approach to individual needs.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Discussion between inspectors and a significant number of sixth form students, both formally and informally, indicate that students have a genuine affection for the school. They are justifiably positive about the range of subjects offered, the quality of relationships and the exceptional level of support received from sixth form leaders.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

There has been an excellent improvement in standards since the last inspection. In 2004, 87 per cent of students gained the five A* to C grades in GCSE or equivalent courses. Students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The progress that students make relative to schools nationally is very high. The school is in the top five per cent of schools
- Students achieve well in the lower part of the school and very well in Years 10 and 11
- The school is rich in data and analysis of results is rigorous and leads to action

Commentary

1. Overall students achieve very well. In 2004, the value that the school added – that is, the relative progress students make compared to schools nationally – from Year 7 until Year 11 was very high, in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Similarly, the value added from Year 9 to Year 11 was also very high, again in the top five per cent of schools. Attainment on entry, of the current Year 7 is below average but for the current Year 11 it was very low. It would seem that attainment on entry has improved and steadied over the past three years. Overall, students achieve well during Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. This spurt in progress is perhaps associated with a curriculum that is tailored significantly to help them achieve, greater language confidence and increased motivation that stems from being more aware of their future needs. The trend for improvement is above the national trend, significantly so.
2. Overall, there is very little difference in the attainment of boys and girls when viewed over time. In 2003, girls did better, for example, than boys overall in English but this was reversed in 2004, although in 2004 a higher proportion of girls gained five A* to C grades which included English and mathematics. Any difference that there is, is not as marked as it is nationally. Boys perform above the national average in the percentage gaining five A* to C and five A* to G grades. Girls do start school with significantly less experience in physical education than boys.
3. The school monitors the attainment of ethnic groups carefully but is wary about identifying trends because of the very small numbers involved. There are differences from year to year. In 2004, all ethnic groups performed above the borough average. The school's value added analysis indicates that Caribbean and Black African students did well but given that many travel to the school they are not necessarily a representative cohort. Bengali boys achieve at a comparable level to those locally and nationally but are performing less well than African or Caribbean boys in the school. However, as the school points out, there is significantly more mobility among Bengali students and their baseline data is generally lower. The value added for white UK students is below the school's average.
4. A particular factor facing the school until very recently is the very high levels of mobility of students. A half of the 2004 examination cohort joined the school at a time other than Year 7, mainly Years 9, and 10.
5. Students with English as an additional language, the majority of students, make overall very good progress – evident in the school's examination results. The English as an additional language department underpin students' achievements. Through their work, both in supporting students at all levels of fluency through partnership teaching, and their strategic

interventions, such as the work in the sixth form with intermediate level students, they are also developing members of staff's awareness of the language needs of developing bilingual learners and the challenges these learners face in, for example using the formal language of examinations or writing against the clock. This high profile contribution, linked to the very effective implementation of the school's literacy policy, and the school's sensitivity to language, mean that staff members' awareness of students' language needs is high and are generally consistently addressed. That said, overall language skills are, unsurprisingly, still below average by the end of Year 11 and account for the fact that the overall five A* to C grades which includes both mathematics and English is in line with the borough but below the national average.

6. Although attainment in GCSE English and English literature examinations is below the national average, results have also improved considerably with half the students in 2004 attaining grades A* to C for English, an increase of 24 per cent in two years. Achievement in English is very good, as it is in science. In science, since 2002, students have taken GNVQ Intermediate Level rather than GCSE since 2002. The results show a steady improvement since then, and in 2004 they were above the national average for the course, which is the equivalent of two GCSE subjects. Hardly any candidates were ungraded. Over time, there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls and no ethnic minority group consistently outperforms others. In mathematics, GCSE results are well below national averages and students tend to do less well in mathematics than in many of their other subjects. However, given that many students enter the school with standards in mathematics well below national expectations achievement is good. Overall provision, that is, a summative judgement reflecting standards, achievement and the quality of education provided by the subject, including the quality of teaching, is very good in English and science and it is good in mathematics.
7. Higher attaining students are tracked carefully on the gifted and talented register and this aspect of work has a high profile and is seen as important strand in the school's thrust for overall improvement. In 2004, the numbers of A* and A grades increased. Ten per cent of students gained three A* to A grades, just below the borough average.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	87 (79)	53 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	40.1 (38.4)	35 (34.7)

There were 118 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. Standards in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 are average in English and well above average for schools with similar prior attainment. Mathematics is below national averages and below schools with similar prior attainment and in science attainment in the tests is below national average and above average for schools with similar prior attainment. All three subjects showed improvement over 2003 in the percentage of students gaining level 5+ and level 6+ with English exceeding the school's target. The trend for improvement was above the national trend. In 2004, boys did less well than girls in all three subjects but both boys and girls exceeded national averages in English.

9. The school's analysis indicates that in 2004, all ethnic groups, except White Other, outperformed borough and national averages in English and Caribbean students did well in all three subjects. White UK students performed strongly in English and science but less well at mathematics.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004³

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.6 (30.8)	33.3 (33.3)
mathematics	33.3 (29.7)	35.5 (34.7)
science	32.1 (28.0)	33.1 (33.3)

There were 175 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

10. Year 9 teacher assessments in ICT 2004 were below average but in work seen, students already working on the first unit of the GNVQ course are above expected levels for their age. Their strengths throughout the course are mainly in presenting and communicating information in a variety of forms. They have learned to think about the purpose of their work and to make its presentation reflect its content.
11. Students achieve well in art, drama and music and standards are in line with expectations by the end of Year 9. Standards in physical education are on a par with national expectations by Year 9, although there is some variation between the standards of boys and girls, reflecting girls' lower attainment in physical education on entry to the school. In geography and history, standards are below expectations by Year 9, just below in the case of geography but achievement is good in both subjects. Achievement is satisfactory in design and technology. Students make good progress in Bengali and standards are in line with expectations, they make satisfactory progress in French and Spanish and standards are below average, achievement is good at GCSE.
12. Students with special educational needs make good progress overall in Years 7 to 9, and very good progress at in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. At Key Stages 3 and 4, whilst the overall attainment of students with special educational needs is generally below national expectations, students with statements achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment.
13. It is very clear from the school's analysis that the school is rich in data and rigorous in its analysis and in prioritising what needs to be done.

Sixth form

Standards achieved by students

14. In 2004, the average point score per student was 197, as opposed to 206.5 in 2003. A new scoring system has been introduced to cover all accreditations that students of this age may gain, with the result that the average point score appears larger than before. The school's results were below the national median for all sixth forms, as they have been every year since the sixth form's inception. However, this broad benchmark masks the fact that students entered the sixth form with much lower than average GCSE point scores and in terms of value added, achieved better grades than predicted on the basis of their prior attainment. In 2004, their results were well above the LEA average and in terms of value added the school performed better than any other in the borough. The performance of females was stronger than that of males. The strongest results at A-level and AVCE in individual subjects, in which

³ The average point score is derived by giving each National Curriculum level a numerical value and then dividing it by the numbers who took the test. It is a fairer way of representing students' attainment because it takes into consideration the attainment of all students and not simply those who attain a particular threshold.

five or more students were examined, were in VCE science where results were well above average; in ICT, VCE business and VCE health and social care where they were above average and in religious studies and art and design where they were broadly in line with national averages.

15. Although standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form are significantly below the national average, students respond well to teaching, and in the lessons observed and in the samples of work scrutinized, overall achievement was very good. In the majority of lessons observed, the standards reached by students were broadly in line with national averages. In 77 per cent of the sample of lessons seen, students made good or very good gains in learning.
16. There are nine students with special educational needs in the sixth form, including three with statements. Overall, these students make the same rate of progress as their peers. There are 58 students at an early stage of English language acquisition. They achieve very well, although some lack the proficiency to maximise their potential in examinations.
17. Students' standards in English literacy and communication skills are in line with national expectations. Many students speak at least two languages fluently and demonstrate a cognitive advantage in approaching further language learning. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory. Students make very effective use of the Internet for research and independent learning.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	77.9 (96.8)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	18.7 (27.4)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	197 (206.5)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 65 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students behave well and demonstrate very good attitudes to school and to their work. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Students' rate of attendance and punctuality are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are consistently strong among all members of the school community
- Awareness and respect for a wide range of cultures are very highly developed
- Students are committed to learning and to self-improvement
- Students work together very well
- Students enjoy debate; they sincerely respect and value the views of others
- There is a good response to the school's very effective strategies to promote attendance

Commentary

18. Relationships among students from the very wide range of ethnic, cultural and national backgrounds represented in the school are exceptionally good and reflect the broad outlook encouraged by the school's language college status. Students value this diversity highly and note that respect for others is central to the atmosphere and ethos of the school. Oppressive, bullying or racist behaviours are uncommon and exclusion for any reason is extremely rare. The school works very hard with the few students who display disaffection to keep them 'on-side'. With few exceptions, students are well behaved, polite and courteous in lessons and around the school. Breaks and lunchtimes, under the close supervision of senior staff, are orderly. Movement around the school site is generally incident-free, and although there are points where severe congestion can occur during the changeover between lessons, this is usually handled effectively and students' behaviour is sufficiently responsible to avoid chaos.

19. In the large majority of lessons, students are attentive, concentrate well and work productively. They respond well to good teaching. They are unaffectedly mutually supportive and co-operate very well when required. Students value the extensive help that is available to them from teachers and learning mentors. Their willingness to attend classes outside the school day demonstrates their commitment to educational success.
20. The quality of all aspects of students' personal development has improved very significantly since the last inspection. The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Students empathise well, and their interest in, and sensitivity to, faiths and cultures other than their own are very well developed. An ethos of respecting other people and valuing their views is evident in lessons and all around the school – it is a very coherent community. This ethos is strongly promoted by the explicitness of the school's aims as a faith school, by its language college status and by its systems for care and support which are effective in raising students' self-esteem by valuing their contributions and treating them as responsible members of an extended family. Students enjoy opportunities for discussion of topics with a moral component and they routinely note, for example, ethical issues in psychological investigations. They are not afraid to express themselves, but also readily accept discipline because they know the school is operating for their benefit. The level of students' self-motivation is good, both regarding learning and other types of activity; many participate enthusiastically in musical, sporting and other extra-curricular activities such as school trips and the school council.
21. The rate of attendance has improved further since the last inspection and is now consistently well above the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average and would be even lower if the school enforced the law and its policy less rigorously. Its refusal to do so is consistent with its firm but fair ethos and deserves high praise. The school encourages students to share with their parents an appreciation of the value of education within a caring atmosphere, so full attendance feels right and is considered the norm. After the time students need to move between parts of the site, lessons generally start promptly; there is no widespread unpunctuality.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.8	School data	1.0
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
76	0	0
2	0	0
58	0	0
16	0	1

Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	15	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	644	0	1
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	8	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	81	0	0
Black or Black British – African	126	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	51	0	0
Chinese	17	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	23	0	0

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

Sixth form

22. Students' attitudes to the school are extremely positive. In discussion, students identified very closely with the sixth form, many highlighting the outstanding character of relationships, which they described as an extension of family values. Students interviewed spoke of the outstanding quality of personal guidance offered by sixth form leaders.
23. Overall, the exceptional levels of support offered by sixth form managers and teachers play a significant part in helping students to enhance their personal learning skills. The school recognises the need to inculcate a strong work ethic and monitors the progress of each student very closely indeed. Students are encouraged to work conscientiously and are helped to assume responsibility for their own learning, where necessary through the provision of individual learning mentors. Learning mentors are available to students over the short and long term. Students may self-refer or are recommended by teachers. There are also specialised learning mentors for those at an early stage of English language acquisition. In order to assist students to acquire a disciplined approach, the school also takes the unusual step of supervising sixth form study periods and timetabling access to the recreational common room. Many external students entering the sixth form without well-developed study habits find particular benefit in these arrangements. Other students have heavy responsibilities as carers or wage earners in the home and find advantage in a tight framework that helps them to maximise their time in school.
24. The imminent reorganisation of the existing sixth form accommodation, to include an area for quiet study and a library, should provide the means for students to work more comfortably and productively during school hours. The school recognises that the present library is inadequate for sixth form purposes. The school makes very good provision for independent computer use by making 150 workstations accessible to sixth form students.
25. The sixth form is a very well organised area with a very caring ethos. Much is done to extend the boundaries of knowledge and understanding through links with institutions of higher education. Sixth form managers encourage students to participate at conferences and attend university summer schools. The international dimension of sixth form life is very explicit and is enhanced by regular exchanges with France and Spain. The school works hard to build

active partnerships, both locally and abroad. Much is done to capitalise on the proximity of global business organisations.

26. The personal development of students is very good. Students may choose to assume responsibilities and to contribute to activities in the school at large. As part of the community service programme, some sixth formers are involved in mentoring of younger students or are appointed as assistants with younger classes for literacy or numeracy. Others take part in paired reading programmes with younger students at the school and at local primary schools. Paid lunchtime and cleaning work is also offered to interested students. Students are actively encouraged to voice their opinions and to initiate ideas, either in discussion with sixth form managers or more formally through the school council and the sixth form committee. A sixth form surgery is held three times a week. Provision for moral, spiritual, social and cultural development through different subject areas, extra-curricular activities, assemblies, seminars, conferences and the tutorial programme is excellent.
27. Each year, sixth formers participate in a range of educational visits arranged by subject departments. The art and language departments regularly take students abroad. The school invites a variety of guest speakers to address the students and benefits from an *artist in residence*. Social events including an annual visit to the Essex coast are arranged by the sixth form leaders twice a year.
28. Sixth formers contribute to sports teams, concerts and other school events. They are also actively involved in raising money for charity both at home and abroad. Links with Asia and the Indian sub-continent are strong and during the inspection week, one student was actively engaged in running a Tsunami appeal whilst negotiating sponsorship to acquire computers for villagers in Bangladesh. Individual sixth form students have recently represented the region in athletics and basketball. Last year a student won the Woodrow Taylor National Art competition and has her painting on display on Tower Bridge.
29. Students relate exceptionally well to one another and work very co-operatively in a spirit of mutual trust and harmony. The highly supportive and familial aspect to the sixth form helps to nurture self-esteem and personal ambition. Students are excellent ambassadors for the school and provide very good role models for younger students in their support of the school ethos. They are courteous and friendly.
30. Students are immensely appreciative of their school and value their own involvement in the process of sixth form education. The vast majority of students are the first representatives of their families to enter a sixth form and to aim for higher education. In 2004, 85 per cent of students went on to higher education.
31. The school has developed a range of strategies for maintaining good levels of attendance, including wake-up calls directly from sixth form leaders.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is very good. Teaching is good. It is often very good. The curriculum is overall very good and plays a significant part in raising attainment. The school also takes very good care of its students. The school's inclusiveness is excellent. The school has developed a highly effective partnership with parents.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good. It is often very good. Good teaching was seen in all subjects across the school. Teaching in the sixth form is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' motivation stems from the very good relationships which exist with staff
- It is the consistency of good teaching which builds cumulatively to ensure students' overall very good achievement
- Staff have overall very good knowledge of students' language needs which stems from the high profile contribution of the English as an additional language department and the consistent implementation of the school's literacy policy
- A strength of the school is the focus on the individual student and how it seeks to meet that need

Commentary

32. There has been very significant improvement in the quality of learning since the last inspection. At that time, teaching did not have sufficient impact on learning over time in some subject areas. There were issues relating to poor literacy skills not being given sufficient attention, behaviour management and generally, there were insufficient opportunities for students to gain independent learning skills. Problems with attendance also caused learning to be, for some, very disjointed. It is very clear that in the intervening period the school has very effectively tackled the factors that cause discontinuity or barriers to learning over time. There has been a significant development and focus on developing students' literacy skills, attendance is very good and there is now a very secure working ethos in which students behave well. There would seem to have been a fundamental shift in students' attitudes too which stem from the fact that there is now a consistency of expectation.
33. There are seven key factors, which account for students' overall very good achievement.
34. Students want to learn. They are motivated and they value the learning experience and the view of others. This engagement with learning does not just happen but stems from the high quality of relationships that exist with staff. Members of staff know the students as individuals and are very able to challenge them appropriately through their enthusiasm, subject knowledge, detailed planning and skilled questioning which feeds students' self-motivation. A parent at the parents' meeting talked about the school 'unlocking the students' energies so that they want to learn' and this is a key feature in students' overall very good achievement. For example, the school has ensured that there are extensive opportunities for learning outside the school day – the library, for example, is open very early in the morning and late after school and on Saturdays – but the important fact is that it is well used at these times. There is an extensive range of homework clubs, summer schools, revision activities, all of which make a significant contribution to the development of learning over time. Learning mentors, working alongside individual students make a very significant contribution, in their quality of support, helping students to structure their time, in the way they gently cajole, exhort and provide yet another personal contact to help them complete or get on with their work. In addition, there is the very strong support that comes from students themselves. Students are supportive of one another and help each other and this too make a significant contribution.
35. A second key factor is that teachers have overall a very good understanding of students' language needs. The work of the English as an additional language department has been very instrumental in raising staff awareness in the difficulties faced by the developing bilingual learner at all stages of fluency and has made a major contribution to the improved standards. Under very strong leadership, the department has a very high profile in the school and is valued very highly for the strategic work that it carries out, as well as the specific support given to students. Specialist teaching seen was often very good and sometimes exemplary. Joint planning and preparation involving 'partnership teaching' with mainstream teachers, show a very good awareness of their students' language development needs. Students questioned about the help given to their language development, testified to the range, depth and quality of that support. This language awareness is also developed by the consistent implementation of the school's literacy policy that draws significantly on the English as an additional language work – indeed, it is a common policy. The result is that all subjects plan for students' literacy development and at least one lesson per week has a literacy focus. Teachers introduce the key vocabulary, provide opportunities for students to rehearse and use

technical language appropriately. Speaking is given high priority, both to rehearse and develop ideas and to give presentations. There are good opportunities for students to read aloud and become familiar with different types of texts. Teachers also provide very helpful models and frames to support students' writing, insisting on the appropriate use of language and correcting errors. A very effective, concerted approach is making a major contribution to raising standards.

36. The third factor, which also stems from the very good English as an additional language practice modelled in the school, the Key Stage 3 strategy⁴ and the spill over from the practical approaches demanded in the GNVQ courses, is the systematic approach to teaching. Objectives are shared, students know how this lesson fits into a pattern and know what it is about; at the end of the lesson teachers recap over what is learnt and gained from the lesson. Lessons build, teachers are thinking in terms of units – chunks of work – rather than subjects. There are good opportunities within lessons for recapping over the steps, for repetition of key words, giving students time to discuss. The extensive use of interactive whiteboards is helping to develop this planned systematic approach; as are the influences from the GNVQ courses, which require a slightly different methodology of approach to teaching and course organisation.
37. The fourth factor is the consistency in the quality of teaching. Students move from one good classroom experience to another. Values, expectations and indeed the school's work ethic are built on the drip feed of good experience. The expectations of teacher 'x' are reinforced by teacher 'y'. Students do not lurch from a good experience to a poor one that subverts all that they have gained in the previous lesson. The quality of teaching builds cumulatively. In the very few examples of unsatisfactory teaching seen in the sample, generally, there was an element of professional misjudgement or the lesson planning did not ensure that all groups were making the progress that they should.
38. The quality of homework, the priority placed on it and students' attention to it as part of their commitment to learning, is very good and is the fifth factor. In the students' response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a remarkable 92 per cent of students thought that worthwhile homework was set regularly. In the sixth form that increased to 94 per cent. Homework, then, is used effectively to develop students' independent learning skills and self-motivation.
39. A sixth factor is linked to assessment. The school is very rich in data about students and their progress. Tracking systems are excellent and members of staff make effective use of this data. There are examples of excellent use of assessment in the school. In some courses, for example GNVQ science, assessment is an integral part of the approach and an individualised response to students' work. These very good examples of assessment being integrated into the learning process are being shared and developed across the school; the use of assessment in this way, ensuring that individual students are clear what it is that they have to do in order to improve their work is also contributing to developing students' very positive attitudes. Overall, the use of assessment as an aid to learning is very good.
40. A final point is linked to the good quality of support for students with special educational needs. Overall, in subject lessons the teaching of students with special educational needs is good. In lessons seen, students generally made good gains in knowledge and understanding. Withdrawal groups for literacy in Years 7 and 8 are effective because the students are given clear guidance on the steps required to achieve specific learning objectives. Individual education plans provide clear overall targets for students. The range of information relating to strategies and approaches is good. Overall, teachers are well aware of the needs of students with special educational needs. Most teachers modify their teaching strategies and the resources used in lessons to accommodate them. The special educational needs co-ordinator intends to review the use of differentiation across the departments with a view to improving

⁴ The Key Stage 3 Strategy (Years 7 to 9) aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning, developing cross-curricular skills such as literacy and numeracy and helping students who come into Year 7 below Level 4 to make faster progress. The strategy is based on four key principles: raising expectations, improving progression from primary school, promoting teaching and learning styles that engage and motivate students and demand their active participation, and providing professional development and support to teachers.

practice. There is good liaison and good planning between subject teachers and teaching assistants. The teaching assistants understand the needs of the students they are supporting, know students very well and relationships are warm and secure. This is a caring department. They provide the help and challenge required to enable students with special educational needs to become more independent in their learning. There is a good level of planning for lessons between subject teachers and learning support staff. Members of the support staff are allocated to specific departments or year groups with all the advantages of familiarity with staff and students that result from this. Teaching assistants provide input to pupil reviews and end of year reports.

41. A very significant strength of the school is its focus on the needs of the individual student and in the way it seeks to meet those needs both in the classroom and in the general academic and personal support it provides across the school. A significant amount of this work is informal. It is characterised by the brief encounter in the corridor, the acknowledged smile, the brief word of praise, the stern eye that reminds the student about the coursework deadline. Assessment is a clear and obvious way that the school is working to individualise its expectations, to personalise the learning experience but it is also happening because of the high quality relationships and a properly professional, but nevertheless, real commitment to the students and their success.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 158 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (3%)	40 (29%)	63 (38%)	42 (25%)	7 (4%)	1 (1%)	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.

Sixth form

42. The overall standard of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. In 82 per cent of the lessons observed, teaching and learning were good or better and were very good in 51 per cent of lessons seen in the sample.
43. Teaching and learning in the sixth form reflect all the strengths seen in Years 7 to 11. Lessons are very well planned and provide a good level of challenge. Teachers' subject expertise and enthusiasm show through in many lessons and these effectively engage students in the work and promote interest in learning. A wide range of teaching strategies was observed which took account of the different ways in which students learn. Students' attitudes to learning, and the support they receive from the school to enable them to work productively, lead them to achieve very well. Teaching in Year 12 is effective in responding to the wide range of experience that students bring from their previous schools. During lessons, teachers recognise how well students understand new work and they are ready to give support, advice and encouragement as and when they are needed. This very good practice supports students' learning and achievement very well. Homework is set regularly and is planned to extend and consolidate classroom learning. Particular strengths in teaching were observed in the A-level business education and sociology courses where overall provision is outstanding. Of the subjects inspected in depth, in English, mathematics, ICT, history, art and design, and health and social care teaching and learning are very good. In Bengali, biology, French and physical education, teaching and learning are good.
44. Whole-school assessment procedures remain strong in the sixth form. The monitoring of progress is rigorous. Regular target setting ensures that students are clear about the level at which they are working, and guidance about how to improve is given fully. Marking of students' work and relating this to potential examination grades is very good.

The curriculum

Overall, the curriculum provision is very good and contributes significantly to the very improved standards and very good achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The contribution of the language college status
- The introduction of GNVQ courses in ICT and science and the development of the 14 to 19 pathways
- The very good opportunities for enrichment
- The school's excellent commitment to providing equality of access and opportunity for all students

Commentary

45. The school achieved languages college status four years ago. Since then the school's results have improved dramatically. The percentage of students achieving five A*-C grades has risen from 36 per cent in 1999 to 87 per cent in 2004. The school attributes this improvement in performance partly to the fact that it has succeeded in raising the self-esteem and aspirations of students from ethnic minorities, and particularly of Bangladeshi students who form the major ethnic group. In this respect, the achievement of languages college status has made a major contribution because it has helped to establish an ethos that values all cultures and languages equally. Students in the school have the opportunity to study eight European and Asian languages, either as one of the main school languages (Bengali, French and Spanish) or in twilight lessons. Bengali is now the joint first language. Results in GCSE examinations are among the best in the school and are well above national averages. Students have the opportunity to study a variety of languages in the sixth form.
46. In addition, specialist college status has led to increasing international contacts. There are developing links with partner schools abroad. There are internet and video-conferencing links with Paris, Saragossa and schools in Bangladesh. The recent visit from a lycée technique in Paris has resulted in a joint project to produce stained glass artwork.
47. Other areas of the school and the community have benefited from specialist status. The high status of languages has led to an increase in the number of students studying a modern foreign language. Most students in Years 7 to 9 study two languages. In Years 10 and 11, everyone takes a GCSE examination in one language and students have the opportunity to study two. There is an increasing provision in the sixth form where GNVQ modules supplement traditional A-level courses.
48. Other subjects in the school benefit from increased resources, particularly for ICT. Some departments are beginning to establish international links. There is increasing support for other secondary schools and for the teaching of modern foreign languages in primary schools. There are a number of courses for adults.
49. The introduction of GNVQ courses in ICT and science has been an astute curriculum judgement. The equivalent of two GCSE grades, the nature of the GNVQ course has a practical approach and relevant content and is accessible to students, based mainly on coursework rather than examinations that require students to write under pressure. The result is that students are enabled to achieve very well. In addition, the school is developing a range of vocationally oriented courses within the 14 to 19 pathway. In essence, the school is skilfully tailoring the curriculum to the students to allow them to succeed. The nature of these courses is also influencing the more conventional curriculum. They require a different methodology, the integration of assessment into the learning process and a systematic approach and these influences are beginning to spill over into other subjects.
50. In addition to the planned curriculum, there is extensive curriculum enrichment that plays an important part in raising achievement. The significant investment in learning mentors and the quality of support they provide, the range of additional activities detailed in the teaching section, and the after school extension and support opportunities play a very important part in the whole school provision. There is a strong commitment to work related learning and this

too is being skilfully used to raise aspirations and achievement, not only through the curriculum business simulations but also through the range of adults from business and commerce who mentor or contribute to the language programme. The opportunity for students to make some curriculum choice and thus the opportunity to tailor the curriculum to their specific needs, capabilities or interests also plays a significant factor in their motivation.

51. The school's commitment to providing equality of opportunity and meeting individual needs is excellent. The work of the English as an additional language department has made a profound contribution to raising achievement and the progress of individual students is tracked carefully. Higher attaining students, on the gifted and talented register, are known and challenged appropriately and there is good provision for students with special educational needs. Students with additional needs, for example students in public care or refugees are tracked carefully.

Sixth form

52. The curriculum provision in the sixth form is very good. The selection of 17 AS-level, 15 A-level, five AVCE and four GNVQ courses is well matched to the aspirations and needs of current students. In addition, GCSE maths and English are available in the sixth form. Approximately, 70 per cent of students stay on into the sixth form and a growing proportion of external students apply to join the school in Year 12. The flexibility of choice is very good and well supported by the guidance received from sixth form managers in Year 11. There are very good opportunities for progression from foundation to advanced courses: a high proportion of students take this route, completing their studies when they are 19 or more years old. As a result, they do not appear on the performance tables. The number of students progressing from Year 12 into Year 13 has increased to 90 per cent.
53. All students in Year 12 follow a tutorial programme incorporating personal, social and health education, which adds breadth to their sixth form experience. In addition, all students are offered two lessons each week in physical education. A general religious education or general studies course is obligatory for all.
54. Good provision is made for the development of key skills. All vocational courses, whether at foundation, intermediate or advanced level include lessons in key skills of numeracy, communication and ICT. The school ensures that the development of literacy is integral to every course. AS and A-level students have the opportunity to refine their communication and use of number skills through their subject courses. The use of ICT is good in most subjects. Students' independent work demonstrates that they are competent, autonomous users of ICT.
55. Students have individual careers counselling advice from Connexions when requested and are supported by the sixth form managers in their completion of personal statements. Encouraged by the school, many take the opportunity to visit universities, to experience the lifestyle and identify courses that may interest them in their future learning. Some students choose to take a further work experience placement, sometimes abroad, to improve their understanding of the world at work.
56. The opportunities for enrichment offered in the sixth form are very good. Students can take part in a range of sporting and cultural activities, including Royal Navy personal development courses. Language competence can be boosted by participation in twilight sessions, which are also open to parents and the local community. This year the school is offering courses in Urdu, Arabic, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian and Turkish. All sixth form students may also participate in language taster classes. Opportunities to take part in community service are varied and meet the needs of the individual. Students are currently being sponsored by the Daneford Trust and have taken part in the Fulcrum Challenge. A recent visit to Ladakh was an excellent example of a community service.
57. Staffing arrangements are good. Overall, the number of teachers is in good proportion to the number of sixth form students. Teachers and support staff are very well matched to the

curriculum. Technicians in the ICT department offer particularly good support. Resources overall in the sixth form provide good support for the students' learning. The accommodation for the sixth form is just satisfactory. However, these areas were designed for smaller numbers than currently use them and will be replaced by a purpose built sixth form centre next year.

58. Overall, improvement since the last inspection, when the sixth form had just opened, has been excellent. The curriculum has been developed most successfully to incorporate a broad range of academic courses. The introduction of further vocational courses has added greatly to enterprise and work related learning.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of students. It provides very good support based on very thorough monitoring of students' progress. Very good account is taken of students' views. Systems for ensuring students' welfare are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's very effective support and guidance is based on a reliable foundation of comprehensive and thorough tracking
- Learning mentors provide very good support for a large number of students
- Students are highly satisfied with the support they receive
- Students play a significant part in developing their school

Commentary

59. The school has very extensive and effective systems for gathering information about students' academic and personal progress. This leads to a profound understanding of the needs of each individual pupil and, crucially, to the provision of appropriate teaching and support for that person. As students come from so many different schools and countries, their extremely diverse origins complicate the gathering of comprehensive baseline information, but the school supplements data from national tests by carrying out its own assessments. From that point, students' progress is closely monitored and this information is shared very effectively with staff, parents and the students themselves so that everyone understands what stage the pupil has reached and what needs to be done in order to maximise improvement. Thorough and helpful marking is just one strategy that often makes a significant contribution to this process.
60. Form tutors and heads of year develop a full and clear view of students' progress. The very good relationships students have with them and with subject teachers mean that students are confident to ask for help or advice. A large proportion of students receive further support from a very widely available system of learning mentors who give very effective support targeted to match students' particular academic or personal needs. The system's flexibility allows it to respond to their changing needs. Some students receive further support from staff with no formally specified support role; this exemplifies the commitment of staff to the achievement of students.
61. Students are enabled to play a significant role in the school by the effectiveness of its councils. Elected representatives gather the views of their year group and present them to the headteacher. Students are very confident that their opinions are taken seriously and that the school adopts their suggestions whenever possible. These suggestions mainly relate to the school environment; students are delighted to have brought about improvements to food provision and toilets, but they are also confident that if they had any concerns about teaching

or support, their comments would be taken equally seriously and would receive an equally satisfactory response.

62. Good guidance is provided in PSHE/citizenship lessons and by Connexions advisers to enable students to select the most appropriate academic and career courses to pursue. There is a great variety on offer and students' encounters with a wide range of visitors such as from businesses and a specialist theatre group help them to make good decisions.
63. The school is successful in its efforts to make sure that students learn in a secure and healthy environment; for example, procedures for ensuring child protection are up to date, comprehensive and very effective. In guiding, supporting and caring for students, the school's overall provision is very effective, like a recipe where high quality ingredients are skilfully combined to produce an exceptionally nutritious and satisfying dish.

Sixth form

64. The school provides an excellent level of support and guidance for its students. The outstanding relationships within the sixth form are a significant factor in the support the students receive. The advice given by sixth form managers and tutors is based on substantial personal knowledge of each student. Students are kept very well informed of their progress and find that the sixth form managers, their teachers and tutors are very accessible.
65. The information and guidance received about higher education are good. Students take part in range of higher education activities including visits to a local universities and Oxbridge. Particularly good links exist with the London School of Economics (LSE), Queen Mary College (QMC), Greenwich and the University of East London. Individual students are supported through the Sir John Cass fund to attend university open days. Each year students participate in summer and winter schools at the LSE and a Saturday school at QMC. The school has a well-stocked library of higher education prospectuses.
66. A number of students have taken part in work experience as part of their vocational course or in response to their request. The school has particularly good links with local hospitals, including Guys and St Thomas. It maintains very good levels of contact with past students.
67. Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety are good. There are very good procedures in place for monitoring their attendance and punctuality. The level of individual support and guidance provided to students is a key strength of the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed a highly effective partnership with parents. Students benefit from the school's relationships with other schools and colleges and enjoy significant advantages from the school's very good partnerships with the wider community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are highly appreciative and supportive of the school's work
- Parents are very well informed about their children's progress
- The home-school liaison arrangements are very effective
- A large and varied range of businesses and agencies provides significant practical support

Commentary

68. The pre-inspection meeting and questionnaire show that an overwhelming majority of parents are highly satisfied with the standards of care and education provided in the school and virtually all parents report that their children are happy to be there. Parents believe the teaching to be very good and that students receive very good support when they need it.

They have great confidence in the management of the school and its effectiveness in taking the school forward. They feel that their children and their circumstances are well known by staff and that staff have students' best interests at heart. This encourages parents to trust the school as if it were an extension of their own family, and to describe it as a 'keystone of the community'. It has led to very effective co-operation between home and school, for example in issues of attendance, mediated very effectively by the home-school liaison officer. Parents are confident that the school provides the right levels of challenge and support, which help their children to mature and to do their best. Inspection evidence justifies parents' very positive views.

69. Reports on students' progress are issued termly to parents as part of the very well organised academic review cycle. The extent and quality of the information they receive are excellent. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend academic review days in order to discuss the interim reports with teachers and to help formulate suitable targets for the next stage. They are also invited to attend evening sessions that help them to help their children, for example with options choices or with devising revision schedules. Parents are very satisfied by the school's provision of information and with its openness and responsiveness to their views. Both the school and parents feel they share a common purpose in valuing education and communicating this vision to students.
70. While few subject departments have developed extensive links with other local schools, there are many examples in the school of very beneficial co-operation, such as the use of the school swimming pool by local primary school students, and a range of other activities to do with music and ICT; some primary students even join school visits to the continent. Language college status has enabled links to be established with schools in several other countries. Numerous agencies and businesses provide help, which supplements the curriculum; examples include helping with science projects and providing practice interviews, as well as agreeing to visits that help students to gain understanding and experience of the world of work, such as by visiting a hospital or editing an edition of the Westferry Press.
71. The school contributes actively to a significant number of wider partnerships. Links with local business are well developed. Each year the Vintners Company provides a university scholarship to a deserving candidate. A recent initiative has been participation in the American *Career Academy* for selected students. This incorporates six months paid work experience.

Sixth form

72. Sixth form managers are held in high esteem by parents, who appreciate the extra support, and the individual care and attention that their children receive. Individual meetings are held in response to requests and parents receive a good level of information about sixth form events, including a termly sixth form newsletter. An interpreter is available when required and students are very willing to offer their services to ease communications at parents' meetings. The school is seen as being at the heart of the local community, and relationships are strong and mutually protective. The splendid reputation of the sixth form and of the sixth form leaders is widely known in the local area.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance is very good. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. He is supported by excellent leadership by the senior leadership team. Management is excellent. Financial planning is excellent. Staff development is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a shared common purpose; students, their support and ensuring their achievement and success lie at the heart of the school
- The school has taken every opportunity to use the range of initiatives and current flexibility afforded to schools yet has melded them together very effectively to provide a coherent package of support with the sustained and determined focus to raise standards and personal achievement

Commentary

73. The governing body provides the school with very good support but is also the source of appropriate challenge. Governors keep in close touch with the workings of the school through their links with departments, departmental presentations and reports from the senior leadership team. They are enabled to play a full part in strategic planning and have a keen oversight of the school's strengths and aspects they wish to develop. They have a very understanding of governance and monitor the working of the school very effectively. Members of the governing body bring to it a range of personal and professional expertise. They are fully involved in strategic and improvement planning.
74. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. It is reflective, analytical, creative and strategic and is coupled with a tenacious determination to raise standards. Strategic planning is excellent, as exemplified in the excellent improvement since the last inspection and the detailed school improvement plan. His leadership is also principled and highly supportive of school staff. He is supported by the excellent leadership of the leadership team and other key players in the school such as the head of English and the head of the English as an additional language department. Between them, they have melded the flexibility afforded to schools and a wide variety of initiatives into a coherent package of support. Members of staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and line management arrangements are very strong. There is, as a consequence, clear vision and a common shared commitment, ethos and unity of purpose focused on supporting individual students and increasing their chances of success. The school is rich in data and evaluates itself very carefully. Management is also excellent, as exemplified by the student tracking systems and use of data. A high priority is given to monitoring the smooth day-to-day running of the school in order to anticipate problems.
75. The school is totally committed to the induction of new staff and their continuing professional development, both of which are excellent. A measure of the success of professional development is the staff's continuing loyalty to the school and consequently the school's ability to retain staff. Two thirds of the current teaching staff were originally trained in the school and some are now heads of department. Professional development and support extend to every adult working in the school including supply teachers, support assistants, cleaning and catering staff. They are all included in the school development plan and share the school's vision statement. They are all given excellent guidance on career routes. Every member of staff negotiates targets for improvement and professional development needs; there is a very good balance between individual and institutional development needs. All receive professional development diplomas. Time is made available, where appropriate, for staff to shadow other staff and to observe good practice within the school and in other schools. The excellent provision for induction and continuing development contributes to building a genuine sense of community and mutual support.
76. Financial planning and control are excellent. There are very clear links between strategic planning, the annual plan and the budget. Resources are targeted to support the school's priorities, for example, in the most recent annual plan, to improve standards in mathematics and English in Years 10 and 11. Through prudent financial planning, the school has been able to fund the building of its sixth form centre when its bid for central funding was turned down. Financial control is rigorous. The recommendations of the last audit report have been implemented.
77. The school has been very successful in raising attainment because it constantly challenges its own performance. Evaluation of subject performance is rigorous. Senior managers work hard

to ensure that they get good value for money from service providers. This is particularly evident in its building projects. Not only does it ensure that it has the most cost-effective tenders for new building work but it also ensures that work is completed on time and within budget. It consults very effectively with students and parents.

78. Although income per pupil is relatively high, the school provides very good value for money given the standards attained and students' overall very good achievement.

Sixth form

79. The quality of leadership in the sixth form is excellent. The deputy head and the head of year both responsible for the sixth form, share a clear vision for the development and improvement of the sixth form. They are well organised, resourceful and energetic in their approach. Being forward looking and efficient, they do much to generate confidence in students, and are ardently committed to understanding and meeting their varying needs. As the sixth form has grown, they have sacrificed none of the personal investment in student welfare, happily working long hours in the interest of the individual. Their overarching objective of developing a lively and vigorous community where the values and views of others are respected and encouraged has been admirably realised.
80. Sixth form leaders do much to endorse the unique ethos of the school and this, together with the determination to raise standards, creates an aspirant culture in which students grow and flourish academically and personally. Secure and very trusting relationships stem from the celebration of diversity and the will to listen and understand. Daily interactions between staff and students are enriched by warmth and respect.
81. The sixth form is a very important part of the school as a whole. Students are known well and benefit from excellent levels of personal support. Sixth form leaders balance their professionalism with a deep interest in their students, which continues well after the students' time at the school. Strong ties are manifest in the well above average number of teachers in the school who are ex-students, and in the number of visits that the school receives from their alumni.
82. The sixth form management team made up of the deputy head, head of sixth and the sixth form tutors ensure that daily administrative arrangements, systems and procedures work very well. The school's strategies for monitoring and evaluating sixth form performance are excellent, and constantly under review. A priority for the future is to make better use of value added data to inform planning. Overall, planning for change and improvement and evaluation of outcomes has been exceedingly effective in ensuring the development of the sixth form.
83. Funding is used in a cost-effective way to give students a very good quality of teaching and educational experience.
84. The last report was produced when the sixth form was in a very early stage of development. Improvement has been excellent since that time.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,892,738	Balance from previous year	344,865
Total expenditure	5,327,459	Balance carried forward to the next	565,279
Expenditure per pupil	5059		

WORK RELATED LEARNING

What is the effectiveness of work related learning?

Provision in work related learning is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management have ensured that an imaginative and stimulating work related curriculum has been developed
- There are planned opportunities for work related opportunities from Year 7 to Year 13
- There is very good support from the local business community enabling students to engage effectively with the world of work

Commentary

85. The school's commitment to work related learning is expressed in its policy and it clearly sees it as yet another tool to raise aspiration, achievement and attainment as well as developing understanding about work and industry and effective links with key partners.
86. There are planned curriculum opportunities within the personal, social and health education and ICT programme in Years 7 to 9 to carry out mini-enterprise activities including a Morgan Stanley business simulation in Year 9. All students in science and ICT in Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity to carry out project work within an industrial and commercial setting. Currently there is an optional work experience programme, which the school is planning to make compulsory in the near future. In addition, there are business simulations supported by Westferry Printers and Credit Suisse. In addition to the planned curriculum 'events' there are also the European work experiences developed in Years 12 and 13, and the extensive range of adults from industry who adopt a variety of mentoring or teaching roles.
87. It is very clear that this range of activities, coupled with the valuing of vocational pathways within the 14 to 19 curriculum provision and ensuring very clear progression opportunities, is helping make education concrete and relevant for many students. For these students, the experience with meeting the successful manager acting as mentor fuels aspirations and motivation. The provision of work related learning has been skilfully and successfully integrated into the school's thrust of raising achievement. This integration has been achieved through very good leadership and the maintenance of an overview of the various elements. Management, which again is very effective, is often devolved to a range of staff key to the aspects development.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen considerably in the last two years, particularly in Years 7 to 9
- Students' very positive attitudes and teachers' high expectations and preparation for independent learning result in very good pupil achievement
- Excellent curriculum leadership has brought significant improvements

Commentary

88. Standards in English are average by the end of Year 9 and below average in Years 10 and 11. There has been a considerable improvement in standards over the last two years. Until 2003, results in national tests for Year 9 students were well below the average for all schools. They were still well below the national average in 2003, but well above the average for similar schools. Results again rose considerably in 2004 and, although national data has not yet been validated, are likely to be above the national average. Standards seen are not quite as high. Although attainment in GCSE English and English literature examinations is below the national average, results have also improved considerably with half the students in 2004 attaining grades A* to C for English, an increase of 24 per cent in two years.
89. Considering that over 70 per cent of students are learning English as an additional language, and measured against their prior attainment, students' achievement in every year is very good. This is a result both of teachers' high expectations and students' very positive attitudes to learning. There are no marked gender differences. Students with special educational needs or at the early stages of learning English are very well supported and make very good progress. Throughout the school, students show increasing understanding of a range of fiction and non-fiction so that even those with initial difficulties become independent readers. They also become increasingly fluent, ambitious and accurate in speaking and writing.
90. Teaching and learning are very good across the school with some excellent features. Although some teaching and learning in individual lessons are not quite as good, they are always satisfactory and the cumulative effect on students' learning over time is very good. Teachers have a very good rapport with students. They have very good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses based on accurate assessment and consequently give students very good guidance on how to improve through discussion, detailed marking and clear targets. There is excellent support for students' language development. Teachers ensure that students understand key vocabulary and demonstrate appropriate language use, for example by modelling an introductory paragraph on the interactive whiteboard, or providing helpful writing frames. There are high expectations of students' capacity for independent learning and for working collaboratively and creatively. Homework is used very well. It is often integral to lessons and teachers use it to build on and extend learning. For example, one teacher took the notes Year 7 students had gathered for homework and demonstrated how to select and organise the information. Another very important contribution to students' learning comes from the flexible use of groupings, and the very effective use of support teachers and teaching assistants. In Year 10, for example, students with literacy and language needs who joined the school the previous year benefit from being placed in classes that are jointly taught by an English teacher and a special educational needs or English as an additional language teacher.

91. In the instances where teaching is still satisfactory, but not quite as effective, it is because some groups or individuals within the whole class are not achieving as well as they might. Some would benefit from different activities, for example higher attaining students being set reading that is more challenging. Occasionally students that are more reticent are not fully involved because the teacher does not question them directly and frequently enough.
92. The curriculum leadership and management of English are excellent. The head of English has been in post for two years and standards have risen markedly in that time. She is an excellent classroom practitioner and leads by example. She has brought improvements in planning which have led to greater consistency in teaching and learning. Marking and assessment have improved and teachers' expectations have been raised. Teachers have been both challenged and supported during this period of change. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

93. Although students' language and literacy skills are below average, standards are rapidly improving and teachers have a very good understanding of students' language needs. Very good co-ordination and planning of a whole-school approach lead to very good provision so that students progress very well. All subjects plan for students' literacy development and at least one lesson per week has a literacy focus. Teachers introduce the key vocabulary of their subject very well and provide opportunities for students to rehearse and use technical language appropriately. Students are encouraged to present their ideas to the rest of the class, which they do with growing confidence. Opportunities are provided for students to read aloud and become familiar with different types of texts. Teachers also provide very helpful models and writing frames⁵ to support students' writing, insisting on the appropriate use of language and correcting errors. Improvements since the previous inspection are very good. An effective, concerted approach is making a major contribution to raising standards.

Example of outstanding practice

In a Year 10 GCSE English lesson there was excellent provision for students recently arrived at the school and who were at the early stages of learning English.

The teaching was shared by an English teacher and an EAL support teacher. Through highly expressive mime and gesture, very well prepared illustrations and word lists the teachers were helping the students to appreciate the atmosphere in an Edgar Allan Poe ghost story. Further guidance was given through lively demonstrations and analogies, for example of the draught coming through the classroom window. Where appropriate, the support teacher gave explanations in Bengali and students were encouraged to use bilingual dictionaries. As a result, every pupil was intrigued by the story and was able to explain what made the last part of the story the most frightening.

Modern foreign and community languages

Provision in modern foreign and community languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Through the languages college, students have the opportunity for a wide range of languages experiences and subjects like Bengali have a high profile
- The very positive attitude of students in lessons ensures that they make the best of opportunities presented to them
- Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good and this leads to good achievement for most students

⁵ Writing frames are essentially a technique to prompt and help students organise their ideas into a structured essay.

- However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. In Years 7 to 9, in French and Spanish, there is often a lack of challenge and support and limited opportunities for independent learning. This also applies to some Bengali lessons
- There are very good resources to support learning though there is little use of ICT in Bengali lessons
- Students in French and Spanish, particularly in Years 7 to 9, are often not clear about their learning

Commentary

94. GCSE results in French were below average in 2003 and below, but closer to, average in 2004. The improved performance in 2004 was due to an improvement in boys' results. There has been a trend of continuous improvement since the last inspection. No students were entered for examinations in Spanish. GCSE results in Bengali in 2003 and 2004 were among the best in the school, comparing favourably with national and local trends.
95. In the work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9, standards are below average in both French and Spanish. Some students in French demonstrate a secure grasp of the main tenses but this is not the case in the majority of lessons seen. In Spanish, which students begin to learn in Year 8 as the second language, there is little evidence that students can write or talk about events in the past and the future tense. Students are confident orally but rarely have the opportunity to produce extended speech.
96. Standards in French in Years 10 and 11 are average, with examples of work representing the full range of ability. High attaining students produce accurate work using varied structure and vocabulary. Low attainers respond positively in oral work though they lack confidence. Standards in Spanish are below average. High attaining students use the main tenses with confidence but do not have the breadth of vocabulary and the confidence to use language independently.
97. Students make satisfactory progress overall by the end of Year 9. There are examples of good progress. Some high attaining students in Year 7, for example, learn to use complex sentences and structures. However, achievement is inconsistent. High attaining students sometimes make unsatisfactory progress because they are not sufficiently challenged in lessons. Achievement is also inconsistent for students with special educational needs and students for whom English is not their home language. In a minority of lessons, they are well supported by teachers and their assistants; in most, however, teachers do not plan effectively to meet their needs.
98. Achievement in French in Years 10 and 11 is good. High attaining students develop a high level of oral confidence and can take part in conversations in which they have to understand and react to, complex questions. Students in Spanish also achieve well. They had limited time in Years 8 and 9 but still achieve standards that are close to average. Students are able to access revision material at all times on the school's website. Students benefit from the extra help provided by the foreign language assistants and, in French, from the revision classes provided by representatives of local industry.
99. Standards in Bengali are broadly average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. This represents good progress overall, particularly in Years 10 and 11, identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection. Students in Years 7 and 8 find it difficult to read with fluency and understanding. By Year 9, however, there is clear improvement because most students have a better recognition of familiar vocabulary and basic sentence structure relating to day-to-day experiences. By the end of Year 11, many read authentic Bengali texts with a good level of accuracy while a minority of high attainers read with greater understanding. Standards of listening are above average. They listen well to the teacher and to each other. They respond well to recorded conversations in Bengali, demonstrating a high level of understanding. Oral responses are, however, often limited. Standards of writing are

- above average. Students, generally, write accurately. They produce extended writing that demonstrates a wide range of vocabulary and a good command of standard Bengali structure.
100. Students in all years and all languages have very positive attitudes to their work. They often respond with enthusiasm. They support each other very well regardless of racial background, and, in lessons where there is limited challenge and guidance, they often motivate themselves. In one class, for example, when they received unclear instructions from the teacher, groups of students decided among themselves how to respond to the task and, as a result, improved their vocabulary and developed their reading skills.
 101. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in French and Spanish. Some unsatisfactory teaching was seen. However teaching is good, sometimes very good, in Years 10 and 11. Students learn well because teachers establish good relationships with their students in most lessons. This is particularly apparent in some Year 11 lessons in French where low attaining students remain positive and contribute well even though they lack confidence. Lessons are generally well planned. Lessons have a clear focus and give equal emphasis to all four language skills – reading and writing, speaking and listening. Teachers use the target language effectively in lessons so listening skills develop in line with reading, speaking and writing. Teachers plan to use technology well to support learning. The interactive whiteboard is, for example, well used in presenting new vocabulary. However, in lessons in Years 7 to 9, teachers do not plan effectively to meet the needs of all students. As a result, high attaining students are not challenged and low attaining students are not effectively supported so progress for these students is sometimes unsatisfactory. Overall students in Years 7 to 9 are not being encouraged to use language independently. Students' progress is regularly assessed and carefully monitored. Teachers mark students' work conscientiously and use comments to encourage them. However, students are often not clear about their learning, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Teachers often do not make lesson targets clear nor review learning at the end of lessons so that students are often unclear what they have achieved. National Curriculum levels are not always explained carefully enough to students and, when they mark students' work do not usually show them what to do to improve. In Years 10 and 11, however, some teachers set explicit targets for students so that they know what to do to achieve their target grade at GCSE.
 102. Teaching in Bengali is good overall. Good relationships in lessons ensure that students are well motivated. Teachers are careful to ensure that students are exposed to Bengali culture. This raises their self-esteem and contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students learn well because lessons are generally well planned. Teachers use their good knowledge of the requirements of the National Curriculum to ensure that there is effective coverage of the programmes of study and equal emphasis on all four language skills in lessons. However, there is not enough emphasis on developing students as independent learners and planning does not always take account of individual learning needs so tasks are not always matched to the full ability range. Learning is enhanced because teachers have high expectations. There is a strong emphasis on standard Bengali pronunciation and grammar and homework is used effectively to reinforce learning. Assessment is thorough and students' progress is effectively monitored.
 103. Leadership is good, with very good support from senior managers. There are good systems for evaluating the performance of the department. This results in good planning and clear vision. Management is satisfactory. There are good systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching but these have not yet made a difference to the quality of teaching which remains inconsistent in French and Spanish.
 104. Students have very good opportunities for enrichment. Through the languages college students have the opportunity to visit partner schools in Paris, to take part in internet and video-conferencing links with schools abroad and enrichment activities organised in conjunction with local schools. There is very good provision for the study of community languages. In addition to Bengali, which, with French is the main language in the school, students can study a variety of European and Asian languages in twilight sessions. Students' learning is enhanced by very good resources. The department has a dedicated multimedia

suite. All students have their own textbooks, which they can take home each evening. All classrooms have interactive whiteboards. However, students, in Bengali, would benefit from a wider range of authentic texts. Teachers are well supported by foreign language assistants in French and Spanish and students from the graduate training programme. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, with well-planned lessons and high expectations of pupil performance
- Assessment and progress data are comprehensive and well used in promoting learning
- Interactive whiteboards are widely used for teaching, but pupil use of ICT in mathematics is underdeveloped and is inconsistent across classes
- Marking of work contains constructive comment, and students are given both target grades and suggestions on how to improve their standards

Commentary

105. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 have risen substantially since the last inspection when performance was very low. From under 20 per cent reaching national expectations, over 60 per cent did so in 2004. More students now attain the higher levels. Boys tend to do marginally better than girls do.
106. GCSE results are well below national averages. Boys outperform girls. A small number of students do obtain A/A* grades, but both in 2003 and 2004 there is a preponderance of D/E/F grades. Students tend to do less well in mathematics than in many of their other subjects. A few lower attaining students also take tests for a Certificate of Achievement. No subject analysis by ethnicity is yet undertaken by the school.
107. Many students enter the school with standards in mathematics well below national expectations. By the end of Year 9, many have improved by around two levels or more. Achievement is good. Likewise, by the end of Year 11, in spite of overall results remaining well below average, reflected in work seen, achievement is good.
108. The school has been actively striving to raise standards. Work seen in Years 7 to 9 confirms improvement, and the impact of booster classes and other forms of support should further raise standards. Hopes for a higher A* to C percentage at GCSE are realisable, particularly because of the motivation of many students. A key factor is students focusing on improving the standards of coursework assignments.
109. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the best lessons, planning is detailed, well structured and purposeful. There is a variety of activity to maintain interest, with ideas for challenging higher attaining students and for provision of assistance for slower learners. Clear exemplars are given and noted down by the students to be used as a basis for development, and for later revision work. Focused question and answer sessions promote learning and understanding, as evidenced in very good lessons for Year 11 on factorisation and Year 7 on percentages. A few lessons, though satisfactory, produced less effective learning because of excessive teacher input, an imbalance in activity, inadequate notes or checking of work, leading in some cases to students becoming restless or disengaged. Interactive whiteboards are increasingly being used as teachers gain skills in the use of this powerful teaching medium.
110. Students readily settle to work and are generally productive. For some, inadequate language comprehension slows progress but there are very good attempts at raising literacy skills

through, for example, students being asked to read questions aloud, to explain their answers to the class, and in reinforcement of important mathematical terms through frequent oral and written repetition. Where support is provided for students with special educational needs or whose command of English is at an early stage, such students' progress is equivalent to others in the class. On occasions, some students can become distracting, the teacher's class management strategies become important. Overall, though, pupil attitudes are good and very good relationships prevail.

111. Homework is regularly set and checked, there are support booster classes after school, opportunity for attending revision sessions via Birkbeck College, and a lunchtime numeracy club supported by local industrialists, all assisting in enhancing learning.
112. Leadership and management are good. Performance management is in place, mutual observations occur enabling sharing of good practice and links with senior management are strong. Recording of pupil performance is extremely good, target levels or grades are provided and outcomes are monitored. Consequently, students know the level at which they are working and, through guided self-assessment, have specific targets at which to aim to improve standards. Schemes of work are in the process of being updated - an ongoing area for improvement. Marking of exercises often includes constructive comment, which is good, but marking policy and practice are inconsistent across the department. Some classes receive occasional ICT tuition in their mathematics lessons, this again is inconsistent and practice needs reviewing, particularly for use in coursework assignments. Overall, the department is well resourced and in the library there are numerous mathematical texts but, sadly, little if any more general interest books in the subject.
113. Overall progress since the last inspection has been good, notably the rising standards up to Year 9. There is still some way to go, especially at GCSE, but the input made to the department in recent years is beginning to pay dividends.

Mathematics across the curriculum

114. Awareness of weak arithmetical skills underpins Year 7 work in mathematics. Much concentration is on number properties, such as place value in decimals, thorough understanding of addition and multiplication, basic money, and percentages. Lower attaining students access specific catch up material, and there are facilities through websites that students can practise at. Work on sequences, angle calculations, handling data and probability further develops numeracy and helps in raising overall standards. A small number of students, often later arrivals at the school and often from abroad, continue to need basic help even in later years. Higher attaining students by Year 9 are competent with algebraic processing, Pythagoras and basic trigonometry, and can deal with cumulative frequency graphs and analysis.
115. The cross-curricular numeracy policy is reflected in departmental schemes of work, but no advice booklet is provided to co-ordinate approaches to arithmetic calculation or graph construction across subjects. Opportunities for numeracy development beyond the basics are therefore often missed in areas such as physical education, music or modern foreign languages. In design technology students cope with measuring and calculations, though use of surveys and handling data are underdeveloped. Formulae and graphs are better used and understood in science, and accompanied by good explanation. In IT, teachers explain and question the mathematical concepts underpinning spreadsheets and databases, consolidating numeracy understanding. There was good use of numeric data and graphing in a history lesson on the life expectancy of slaves on the Middle Passage. Analysis of population issues in China in a Year 9 geography lesson led to effective use of a variety of graphical techniques, and there is good use of climate graphs.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good
- Achievement during Years 10 and 11 is very good
- Assessment and marking are very good
- Strong emphasis on developing students' literacy and numeracy
- Students are not using ICT enough to learn science

Commentary

116. Results in the national tests for Year 9 in 2004 were below the national average but above the average for similar schools. Results have improved far faster than nationally due to the thorough implementation of the national strategy for science. Year 10 and 11 students have taken GNVQ Intermediate Level in science rather than GCSE since 2002. The results show a steady improvement since then, and in 2004 they were above the national average for the course, which is the equivalent of two GCSE subjects. Hardly any candidates were ungraded. Over time, there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls and no ethnic minority group consistently outperforms others.
117. Current standards in Year 9 are below national expectations and in Year 11, they are above them, in line with the most recent examination results. As these students entered the school with well below average attainment this represents good achievement during Years 7 to 9 and very good achievement during Years 10 to 11. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve likewise. Very good assessment and marking in all years help to improve achievement. Most teachers mark students' work in detail and include helpful comments and science-specific targets that make it clear to students what they need to do to improve. In addition, there is often extensive debate with the individual students about their work. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities designed to improve students' achievement, such as booster classes for the national tests and extra tuition for those students taking separate sciences at GCSE. Students appreciate the extensive help given by teachers both in and out of class. The better achievement in Years 10 and 11 is due to the nature of the GNVQ course whose practical approach and relevant content are accessible to students and which is based mainly on coursework rather than examinations that require students to write under pressure.
118. The standard of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 to 11. The higher standard in Years 10 to 11 is due to the motivational effect of the GNVQ course. The most successful teaching is very well planned, helps develop literacy and numeracy, wastes no time, sets challenging tasks and expects students to behave very well. A Year 11, middle set studying GNVQ improved their knowledge and understanding very well in a lesson on the fractional distillation of oil that proceeded at a fast pace, developed literacy and numeracy, required students to predict the outcomes of a laboratory demonstration, and to apply their knowledge and understanding to explain the industrial process. A Year 7, top set learned very well in a lesson on density that covered a great deal of ground, required students to think from the start, involved them in writing, talking and handling materials and explained the topic in terms of the scientific idea that materials are made of particles. Some less successful teaching was seen where teachers failed to engage students well and learning was impaired.
119. Leadership and management are very good and there has been excellent improvement since the last inspection. The departmental development plan rightly focuses on improving students' achievement. Members of staff work well together, sharing expertise and ideas and all have all contributed to the success of the department

120. Students' horizons are broadened through links with industry and the community. Learning resources are very good, although those for ICT have been out of action for some time and students are not using ICT enough to learn science. The top set in Year 10 are now taking GCSE triple science in addition to GNVQ in an attempt to address the concern, confirmed by AS students, that GNVQ does not prepare them well for A-level study. Such students are coping well at present but the department will need to make sure they are not overburdened with coursework as the examination approaches in Year 11.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good improvement in Year 11 results with the introduction of the GNVQ intermediate double award course, making a strong contribution to the school's ethos for achievement overall
- Standard of work seen during the week of the inspection shows good understanding of the application of ICT
- Excellent assessment practices help teachers to plan for the progress of individual students
- The very good level of resources allows students to use ICT to help their learning in other subjects
- The very good teaching in many lessons needs to be spread by example throughout the department

Commentary

121. Standards in the Year 11 GNVQ intermediate examination in 2004 were above average, with all students entered for the examination gaining at least a pass, and an above average proportion of merit grades. This was confirmed in work seen from the Year 11 GNVQ students whose work is above expected levels for their year group. Students following a GCSE course are below expectation, but their work is in line with the targets set for them. GNVQ students' coursework meets the requirement that they record and explain their decisions and their actions. GCSE students seen during the week carry out basic procedures well but struggle with the mathematical principles underpinning the design of queries in database.
122. Year 9 teacher assessments in 2004 were below average but in work seen, students already working on the first unit of the GNVQ course are above expected levels for their age. Their strengths throughout the course are mainly in presenting and communicating information in a variety of forms. They have learned to think about the purpose of their work and to make its presentation reflect its content. When using spreadsheets for modelling, they understand the principles underpinning the procedures, and so middle and higher attaining students apply their skills to different contexts. Girls work more carefully than boys and so their performance is more consistent, but boys who take risks develop very good understanding of the potential of ICT. Students with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English make very good progress because of the way that teachers plan for their support. Achievement is very good throughout the main school as students enter the school with standards well below those expected in Year 7, but by Year 9 their work in most aspects of ICT exceeds expected levels, and again have made very good progress by Year 11.
123. This very good achievement is the result of good teaching and excellent assessment, which allow teachers to meet students' individual needs, challenging them to meet and to exceed targets while giving them clear guidance on how to do so. It is coupled with the commitment to students that makes teachers provide regular extension sessions outside school hours to help groups or individuals to learn.

124. The pace of lessons is very good. Teachers ensure that students understand the language of ICT and use it accurately. Very good planning revisits points to be learned from different directions during lessons, so that students learn to recognise and use features in different ways. Teachers question students very well, challenging them to move their thinking on another stage. Where teaching is less good, questioning is less directed at the development of thinking and more at the acquisition of facts. Students enjoy such lessons less, and so their concentration is less good than in the more challenging lessons. Although the less experienced teachers have been well supported in the development of their teaching strategies, the good practice in terms of teaching of ICT seen in many lessons needs to be shared.
125. The very good leadership of the department by the head of department and senior leadership of the school have resulted in rapid improvement in learning ICT and its use across the school. The head of department is a very good role model for other teachers. Along with school leaders, he gives thorough consideration to the development of ICT for the benefit of the whole school. The department is well managed, with good communications to provide common experiences and objectives, and effective use of support staff.
126. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good in terms of standards, achievement and opportunities to learn and use ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

127. ICT across the curriculum is good. New equipment installed during the last term has made ICT more accessible to subjects and so their planning for its use is improving. Subjects are now using the students' good and improving IT capability to help their learning, although the extent of that use is variable. Members of staff have been well trained, and most have been provided with laptops. They have also been taught to use interactive whiteboards well, so that they are widely used for whole-class teaching throughout the school, although not yet to full advantage in all subjects. ICT is very well used in music for composing and for performance. In modern foreign languages, students benefit from the very good equipment and website that have been developed. Its use in science contributes to the coverage of the IT curriculum. The use of ICT in English, mathematics, history, art and physical education does not fully exploit its potential to help learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are below the national average
- Teachers use assessment very well in order to provide for students' individual needs
- The subject makes a strong contribution to developing students' literacy
- Although the number of students taking geography in Year 10 increased in 2004-5 very few girls choose to study it

Commentary

128. The level of students' geographical understanding and skills is low on entry to the school. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and the standard of work of students at present in Years 8 and 9 is overall only just below national expectations. Overall achievement is good. There is no apparent difference in the achievement of different groups of students, including girls and boys and those with special educational needs.

129. The number of students attaining grades A* to C at GCSE has increased since the previous inspection, but in all recent years it has still been below the national average. There has been a large variation in results from year to year due to differences in the ability profile of the groups and the relatively small numbers taking the subject. Results in 2004 were well below average because the overall results were affected by half a dozen students who did not complete coursework satisfactorily. Students at present in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well. Standards in Year 10 are higher than in previous years and are at least in line with national expectations. The few girls who have taken GCSE in the last two years performed less well than in their other subjects. However, the achievement of the small number of girls now in Years 10 and 11 is good; teachers ensure that they play a full part in the lessons.
130. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are thoroughly planned, use a variety of resources and are broken into stages to help learning. The lessons seen included examples of very effective starter activities and whole-class reflective opportunities towards the end of lessons that reinforced learning. Learning objectives are clear to students. Students settle to work quickly. Very good relationships between students, and with their teachers, mean that girls and boys are confident in oral work. Students are well supported. Marking is very helpful and the teachers' thorough knowledge of individual students allows them to set appropriate differentiated tasks, distinguishing, for example, between students with specific learning difficulties and those at an early stage of learning English.
131. The department use a range of strategies, including writing frames tailored to specific groups, to help to develop students' literacy so that they are able to work with subject-specific vocabulary and communicate effectively. The subject makes a very good contribution to citizenship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. For example, in lessons seen during the inspection students considered issues arising from the pattern of world trade and from China's One Child Policy. The subject makes good use of students' numeracy and ICT skills in each unit of work. There is a good programme of field visits. However, opportunities for students to collect and analyse first-hand data through fieldwork or by using ICT in Years 7 to 9 are limited.
132. Leadership and management are good, and together with close teamwork have brought about a good improvement since the previous inspection. Students' progress is monitored rigorously. The geography teachers are extending the range of learning styles; for example, a greater emphasis on enquiry and thinking skills and decision-making exercises. The need to increase the appeal of the subject for girls is recognised. More opportunities for creative work, enrichment activities and more imaginative use of display space would add to its attraction.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2004, students' GCSE results were just above the national average. Achievement is very good
- There is good teaching in Years 7 to 9 and very good teaching with GCSE classes with a very strong emphasis upon improving literacy skills
- Assessment is a great strength
- Leadership and management are very good

Commentary

133. In 2004, students' GCSE results were just above the national average with 63 per cent at grades A* to C and 24 per cent gaining the very highest A*/A grades. This is part of a trend of improving results, although the numbers opting for history are falling. This represents very good achievement for all students. Standards seen in the current Year 11 are just as high and

in Year 10 even higher. Students have a very good knowledge and understanding of the course content and the examination requirements. For example, Year 10 students were able to explain the steps a historian goes through in order to decide how useful a source is, including using their own knowledge. This understanding underpins their good responses to teacher questioning in lessons. Their enquiry skills are equally strong as shown by their coursework with its excellent local focus. All students are compiling very good note sets that will be invaluable for revision purposes. Students work very hard and enjoy history lessons.

134. Standards in the current Year 9 are below national expectations. This represents good achievement for the vast majority of students from their standards at the start of Year 7. On the whole, students with English as an additional language make equally good progress but in some lessons they would have benefited from additional support in the classroom beyond that provided by the teacher. All students demonstrate increasing knowledge and understanding of the causes of events, such as the Year 9 students who compared the contributions of individuals to the advancement of Civil Rights in the United States of America. Students' weak written communication skills are being developed well because of teachers' very strong emphasis upon improving literacy skills and extending key subject vocabulary.
135. The quality of teaching overall is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good at GCSE. Relationships between students and teachers are excellent. In lessons, students are engaged by the very wide variety of activities. At GCSE, teaching prepares them very well for the demands of the examination whilst at the same time providing an interesting course. In an excellent Year 11 lesson on Martin Luther King, the teacher had planned a range of tasks so well that students moved from taking information from sources, through categorising it, to reaching a judgement and then comparing their conclusions to the examination requirements. All this was done at a fast pace to which the students responded superbly. Teacher assessment is a great strength; it is very thorough and gives all students very good guidance on how to improve.
136. The leadership and management of history are very good. The teachers of history make a strong team and are very committed. Their work is highly focused upon teaching and learning in the classroom. Some of the more recently updated schemes of work provide very good support for the non-specialists who teach a third of all lessons in Years 7 to 9. Very good improvements have been made since the last inspection. There is now far greater emphasis upon developing students' historical skills and on challenging their thinking. Whilst teachers now make excellent use of the improved IT for whole class teaching there remains a need for its greater use by students to support their history studies.

Religious education

137. Religious education was inspected by the diocese and was not part of the current inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Design and technology in Years 10 and 11 is non-statutory although students should have entitlement to the subject. On advice, the school has provided an art and design course to fulfil the design entitlement whilst they resolve current staffing difficulties in order to develop the subject in the future.

Provision in design and technology in Years 7 to 9 is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students show good attitudes to their work in all the lessons seen during the inspection
- Limited curriculum time for students in Year 9 does not enable students to cover the full design process and as a result, their planning and design skills are weaker
- There is currently no design and technology GCSE option
- There are no opportunities for students to develop skills in computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM)
- Limited strategies are used to develop students' skills in designing

Commentary

138. Standards in Year 9 are below average. Teachers' own assessment of students' work is slightly higher than the standards seen during the inspection. Achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory.
139. Students in Year 7 enter the school with below average standards in design and technology and their below average standards by the end of Year 9 mean that they achieve satisfactorily in the first three years. They work in a range of materials, although there are insufficient opportunities for them to apply the full design process and to develop their design skills to a higher level because Year 9 students only have one hour of design and technology each week. There are fewer opportunities to develop their own design ideas nor do they develop a specification for design. Students have to rush through the designing stage in order to leave enough time to make the products they design. Drawing and freehand sketching skills are weak and students do not show how their products have been developed and improved. Lower attaining students find this aspect of the work particularly difficult. In the Year 11 food and nutrition course, standards are below average. Students cover the basic knowledge related to nutrition as well as safe and hygienic skills in food preparation. They prepare a range of foods, which show the development of recipes to meet various dietary requirements. However, they find the retention of nutritional knowledge more difficult and most underachieve in class tests. This course does not provide the full entitlement for design and technology.
140. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers enhance learning by preparing a good range of prepared resources and activities, which enable students to use both hand and machine tools. However, there is less time in lessons for teachers to concentrate on teaching the more developed design skills and as a result, this aspect of learning is barely satisfactory resulting in lower standards. Computers are underused to upgrade the quality of design work. Work in computer-aided design and manufacture is not covered due to lack of resources. Teachers provide good individual support for students and foster good relationships in lessons and this creates a good climate for learning. In the Year 11 food and nutrition course, sample papers are used to support students in answering examination questions. Teachers provide helpful comments when marking work and as a result, students know how to improve. However, in Year 7 to 9 the use of the National Curriculum levels to enable students to become more involved with setting their own improvement targets is underdeveloped.
141. Leadership is satisfactory though the management of the department on a daily basis is good. The head of department has established good working procedures particularly through a period of staffing difficulties. The department is focused on raising standards although hampered by the limited curriculum time in Year 9, when students are also assessed for a National Curriculum level. Other limiting factors are lack of computer-aided resources and a small specialist resistant materials classroom with no clean areas to facilitate both practical and clean design work at the same time. Good technician support contributes well to the efficient management of resources in the department. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the department is very good, enabling the department to raise standards through a difficult and challenging period
- Teaching is good overall, leading to good learning and good achievement in lessons
- The very good curriculum is enriched through a range of visits and workshops arranged through local studios and galleries

Commentary

142. Standards are appropriately high and students achieve well in all years. Students enter the school with standards below the national expectation for their age. By the end of Year 9, attainment is broadly in line with national expectation and by the end of Year 11, they have maintained this standard. GCSE examination results in 2004 were in line with national averages, above those in other local authority schools and high against other subjects in the school. These were a significant improvement on GCSE examination results for the previous year. Teacher assessments indicate a rising trend in performance by the end of Year 9 over the past few years, allowing the department to predict further improvements in the GCSE examination in 2005.
143. Teaching is generally good. It is often very good and sometimes no more than satisfactory when challenging behaviour is not effectively managed. Teachers have a very good command of their subject and teach with enthusiasm and commitment. They assess students' work thoroughly and offer helpful comments to individual students. Students generally respond well with good behaviour and positive attitudes to work, enabling them to build their art skills and knowledge effectively. Fine art is taught very well and opportunities are available for students to work with professional community artists, thereby adding to the learning experience. The annual arts week for Year 10, which focuses on Carnival costume, is particularly successful. In lessons where the challenging behaviour of boys is not dealt with effectively, the pace of lessons is slowed down and too many students make less than satisfactory progress with their work.
144. The head of department gives very good leadership to this top performing subject area. Under his leadership, the department has made a good improvement since the previous inspection. The department has been through a very unsettled period and staff members have been working outside of their specialist areas to support the design work. Through several staff changes, the head of department has worked hard to maintain the relatively high performance of his department. He has not had sufficient time to monitor and manage the department to full effect but overall management is good.
145. There is a rich curriculum that offers a range of opportunities to support learning. These include exchange visits to a local community arts studio, an annual Easter holiday visit to a local university and a working link with a French school that specialises in stained glass work. Students from both schools will be working together to produce a stained glass window for the school hall. The large numbers of students taught in lower years create lesson management pressures on the modest accommodation.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in relation to similar schools although standards at A* to C are below average
- The work is characterised by its rigour
- The assessment structure provides a clear framework for the subject

Commentary

146. For the last two years standards in drama have been below the national average in the percentage of students gaining A* to C grades but all students taking the course gained a grade in the A to G range. The department is aware of the need to focus on improving the results, particularly in the A* to A range. The standard of work seen in examination groups was good and students achieve well. The work in Years 7 to 9 was in line with expectations. Given the fact that few students have any drama experience prior to starting at the school, they achieve well.
147. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and the ethos is very inclusive. The work is characterised by rigour and working in a disciplined way. Students work together very well. The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. The way that a Year 11 group worked showed the impact of high quality consistent teaching, and high expectations over time. Teachers are skilled drama practitioners and clearly share common values and approaches – not always easy when some colleagues teach only a few classes.
148. The work that the head of department has undertaken in developing an assessment structure and identifying the criteria for levels provides a very clear structure for the work.
149. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a very clear idea of future developments for the subject. She is a very experienced drama teacher who through the improvements made to the curriculum and assessment has ensured good improvement since the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is staffed by enthusiastic, talented and committed teachers
- Relationships at all levels are very positive, creating an open and supportive learning environment where students can develop their composing and performing skills with confidence
- The provision and use of ICT are very good and help to facilitate a curriculum that is matched to the interests, and cultural backgrounds of students
- An impressive range of residencies, visits, performances and extra-curricular activities enhances learning and enriches the cultural and aesthetic life of the school
- Both the lack of accommodation and the capacity of staff restrict the growth in extra-curricular activities

Commentary

150. The GCSE results for music in 2004 are above the national average with 65 per cent of students achieving a pass. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that students are performing below expectations. However, the accuracy of these assessments has been questioned and observations during the inspection would indicate that attainment is higher and close to expectations.
151. Standards of work at Key Stage 3 seen are in line with expectations and students' achievement are good. In Year 7, students are given visual images such as a seascape or group of Roman soldiers and work in groups to represent these images in sound. They develop their understanding of composing processes through the careful manipulation of musical elements such as dynamics, pitch and timbre. In Year 9, they confidently use computers to layer rhythms and musical samples to create 'Drum and Bass' riffs and structures.
152. At Key Stage 4, students achieve well and overall standards are at least in line with expectations. In Year 11, students develop their technical and performing skills in ensembles such as the Steel Band where they often perform their own compositions. These compositions demonstrate a mature understanding of style; a broad harmonic palette and a firm grasp of the medium.
153. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Where teaching is most effective, relationships are positive and create an environment where success is celebrated and students provide encouragement and support to their peers. Teachers are accomplished musicians acting as effective role models, demonstrating performing skills and musical excellence.
154. Assessment across the department is satisfactory. In lessons, questioning is used effectively to measure students' understanding and each module is concluded with a formal assessment. At Key Stage 4, students are aware of their predicted grade and what they need to do to achieve their potential grade.
155. The scheme of work at Key Stage 3 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum with a clear focus on developing skills, knowledge and understanding through practical music making. The use of ICT in both key stages is very good, capturing students' enthusiasm and broadening the appeal and relevance of music at Key Stage 4.
156. The management and leadership of the department are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for the future and his passion for teaching has captured the enthusiasm, trust and commitment of all students. The department offers a range of extra-curricular activities for students including a steel band and choir. The head of department is keen to broaden the provision for extra-curricular activities and to provide A-level music, but is currently unable to do so due to limited staffing and accommodation. The capacity of the instrumental staff to rehearse ensembles is currently underutilised.
157. Currently, 75 students receive instrumental tuition in school. Although the demand for instrumental tuition is greater, access is limited by the funding available. The department has indicated that an increase in this number is a key priority. There has been very good progress since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall good achievement, particularly of boys and GCSE students
- Very good use of resources and limited on-site facilities to provide curriculum depth and variety
- Variable standards, achievement and opportunity for girls
- Students make good progress because teachers have enthusiasm and high aspirations for their students

Commentary

158. Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are on a par with national expectations overall. There is little difference in the standards achieved by different ethnic groups but there is some variation between standards achieved in different activities and between the performances of boys and girls. GCSE results are slightly above national averages with strengths in practical performance.
159. In Year 9, achievement is generally good with practical games skills and understanding developing appropriately. Many boys enter the school with considerable experience of games play and in a Year 7 basketball lesson demonstrated good handling skills. Many girls enter the school with below average standards especially in swimming and gymnastics. They lack experience and confidence in these activities, and although they work hard, as demonstrated in Year 7 gymnastics and Year 9 swimming lessons, progress is very slow.
160. In the Year 11 core programme, boys have developed and extended their skills very effectively and the school has provided varied activities, including ice skating, to engage the interests of girls. Very few girls take the GCSE course. Boys taking the examination course do so with enthusiasm and commitment. Their practical skills and game tactics are well developed and, the most able individuals take on coaching and organisational roles to very good effect. Overall, students' achievement, including the achievement of students with special needs or for those for whom English is not their first language, is good.
161. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Students make good progress because teachers have enthusiasm and high aspirations for their students. They plan lessons effectively, use assessment information to vary work to meet the needs of individuals and question students skilfully to ensure understanding. ICT resources are very well used to support learning. Students respond positively, they arrive promptly, dress appropriately and participate regularly. Behaviour is very good. Where learning and progress are less secure there is an overemphasis on technical information, which is not always presented using language students understand. Support teachers such as the swimming instructor are well briefed and used effectively to support learning.
162. Leadership and management are good. The department has focus and shared vision, with teachers working as a very effective team. Day-to-day management is rigorous. Teachers and students cope well with limited on-site facilities and changing areas, which are cramped, and in need of refurbishment. Meeting the needs and interests of girls remains a departmental priority.
163. Extra-curricular activities, particularly the lunchtime recreational sessions in boys' basketball are very well attended. Good use is made of the GCSE students to coach and support these sessions allowing the teachers to manage the large numbers of students very effectively. Provision for girls and for school teams tends to be after school. Standards are generally high, particularly standards of boys, with some very talented individuals in a wide range of sports.
164. Progress since the last inspection is good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

165. It was only possible to sample **personal, social and health education**. Provision for students' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good, although there is some confusion among some students regarding the distinction between PSHE and citizenship because they share a slot in the timetable and address some similar topics. PSHE is mostly taught well, sometimes very well, but as the teachers are not specialists in this subject, not all lessons are equally successful and the school recognises that they need to be monitored more closely. The curriculum covers an appropriate range of topics including drugs, health and sex education, global issues, careers and options, supported by numerous and valuable visitors whose expertise assists the delivery of particular topics. PSHE supports students' personal development well by providing opportunities for them to discuss matters of importance and interest, which they value.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The well planned coverage of citizenship in timetabled lessons and the strong contribution from religious education, English and geography
- Students by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 have a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities

Commentary

166. By the end of Year 11, students have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of some of the key citizenship concepts such as their rights and responsibilities. They are able to reflect back upon the responsibilities and difficulties facing political leaders that they experienced during their Citizenship Challenge Day simulation of being Chancellor of the Exchequer. Other students had considered the different ways of voting and could rehearse some of their advantages and disadvantages. By the end of Year 9 students demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding of citizenship, such as those students in a Year 7 lesson who discussed, in a positive way, how racism can be combated. Much of the students' work is similarly discussion-based but there is a small amount of written work in folders and this is of a comparable standard to the students' work in other subjects. Students in all years display some confusion between their work in PSHE and their work in citizenship
167. Students in all years demonstrate an increasing sense of personal and group responsibility in their attitudes to themselves and to others in school. All have the opportunity to reflect upon their participation in such activities as music and physical education and many have taken advantage of the extra opportunities to take part in activities provided by the school as well as to take responsibility in school, for example as playground buddies and prefects. All students are actively involved in the democratic systems of electing year councils and school council and through their representatives in influencing their lives in school.
168. Teaching overall is satisfactory. In a very good lesson, the learning was supported by very good Amnesty International resources. The teacher's skilful questioning and awareness of the need to encourage students to engage with the materials, rather than just try to complete them, led to very good learning. Where teaching is less successful, teachers are less well prepared and unsure of the expected learning objectives.
169. The leadership of citizenship is good and the management is satisfactory. There is a well-planned programme for the fortnightly tutorial lesson, plus clearly identified contributions from some of the other subjects of the curriculum, particularly religious education, English and geography. Year heads carry out some limited monitoring of teaching and learning. Tutors have received some training in teaching citizenship and in assessing students' standards. These are reported to parents along with details of the citizenship activities covered. There is

a planned system of folders for recording and assessing students' achievement in citizenship, including using their planners to record their achievements out of school, but this is not yet fully implemented.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. 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 2004.

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	2	100.0	98.3	50	21.6	40.0	28.5
Biology	5	60.0	63.5	0	10.4	12.0	19.8
Chemistry	5	40.0	70.3	0	13.2	12.0	23.0
Communication studies	1	0	87.2	0	24.9	0	32.8
English	1	100.0	85.3	0	16.1	30	29.0
General studies	5	40.0	73.6	0	16.9	8.0	25.5
History	4	75.0	82.2	50	20.8	37.5	29.2
Information Technology	6	66.7	66.6	0	8.8	16.7	20.6
Other languages	2	100.0	82.5	100	47.7	60.0	37.8
Other social studies	3	66.7	67.8	33.3	15.1	26.7	23.2
Physics	3	66.7	64.4	0	14.8	20.0	22.4
Religious studies	3	100.0	82.2	33.3	26.1	33.3	31.2
Sociology	6	66.7	72.1	16.7	19.6	25.0	25.9
Sports /physical education studies	3	66.7	72.2	33.3	11.8	26.7	22.8
Vocational studies	5	40	56.7	0	8.9	16.0	18.0

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	6	100.0	98.3	33.3	50.2	80.0	87.1
Biology	1	100.0	96.6	0.0	40.0	80.0	79.3
Chemistry	4	100.0	97.7	50.0	50	80.0	85.7
English Literature	4	100.0	99.4	0.0	44.9	70.0	85.5
French	4	100.0	99.0	25.0	53.1	75.0	88.9
History	4	100.0	99.0	0.0	45.6	60.0	85.1
Information Technology	15	100.0	96.3	20.0	25.7	74.7	71.1
Mathematics	2	100.0	96.8	100.0	56.6	100.0	89.5
Other Languages	5	100.0	97.3	60.0	66.7	92.0	95.6
Other social Studies	15	100.0	97.4	6.7	42.5	64.0	81.6
Physics	1	100.0	96.7	0.0	45.3	60.0	82.6
Religious Studies	8	100.0	99.1	25.0	49.5	82.5	87.4

Sociology	8	100.0	98.5	0.0	45.3	70.0	84.6
Sports Studies	1	100.0	97.8	0.0	30.9	40.0	75.4
Vocational Studies	2	0.0	91.3	0.0	24.2	0.0	67.1
VCE							
Business	14	88.9	91.6	51.9	24.1	77.0	67.9
Health and social Care	25	95.9	93.5	20.4	24.9	74.3	70.0
Science	5	100.0	89.9	0.0	10.2	76.0	58.9
Travel and Tourism	24	0.0	90.1	0.0	19.6	0.0	64.9

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	19	100	78.7	84	31.1	5	4.6
Health and Social Care	13	85	71.1	15	20.2	0	1.6
Leisure and Tourism	14	86	79.3	36	24.7	7	1.4

At the time of the previous report, the sixth form was very small and the report did not report on individual subjects. Overall progress in the sixth form since the last report is excellent but it is not possible to detail progress in subjects.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning result in very good achievement
- Because of very good guidance and support and high expectations of their independence, students genuinely take responsibility for their own learning
- Timetable difficulties have discouraged some higher attaining students from taking advanced level English

Commentary

170. Standards in A2 and AS level English literature are average. Although few students have recently attained the highest grades in AS and A2 examinations, all students completing the course have attained an A to E grade. Achievement measured against prior attainment is very good. There are no marked differences in achievement according to gender. Only one student following the AS course in Year 12 had attained the highest grades in English at GCSE and students' previous knowledge and understanding of English literature are comparatively limited. All students make very good progress over time in reading critically and widely, organising their ideas coherently in written essays and using the appropriate critical and literary terminology.

171. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very high expectations of students to research independently and to read widely. They give very good support and encouragement, recommending books and websites and providing background reading from articles and critical commentaries. Students respond very well so that Year 13 students were able to

present their findings on Chaucer and religion to the whole group to help establish the context of the *Canterbury Tales*. They are also encouraged not to copy ideas uncritically, so that Year 12 students were challenged to select ideas from an article by Arthur Miller on modern tragedy and relate it to their reading of Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The marking of students' work is very thorough: comments are detailed and there are clear targets for improvement. Tasks are clearly related to the examination assessment objectives, which are frequently reinforced.

172. Leadership and management of English are excellent. It is taught by an experienced team of English specialists with complementary strengths. Very good professional development has ensured that teachers have kept abreast of syllabus requirements. The post 16 provision for the subject was not reported on at the time of the previous report.

Other English Courses

173. Over 40 students follow alternative GCSE English courses in Years 12 and 13. Some are entered for GCSE English for mature students and some for a pilot course in the International GCSE in English as a second language. These provide very well for students who are still developing their skills in an additional language. Standards are high and student achievement is very good. In 2004 over 90% students who retook GCSE English attained A* to C grades. Teaching and learning are very good. Although some students cannot attend every lesson because of timetable clashes with other subjects, they are highly motivated and teachers ensure that they receive additional individual support when appropriate.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

174. The school continues to provide very well for students' language development in the sixth form.
175. Overall standards are average with high attaining students above average. All students achieve very well in their use of what for many is an additional language. Particularly impressive are students' oral presentation skills. In a range of subjects, they are able to give clear, extended explanations or demonstrations using the appropriate terminology. Also impressive are students' independent research skills: reading, selecting and organising information from websites, reference books and other sources.

Modern foreign and community languages

176. Within community languages, the focus was Bengali. Arabic was sampled. In the **Arabic** lesson, a high level of student motivation combined with good teaching, based on very good subject knowledge, led to good learning.

Bengali

Provision in Bengali is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are above the national average and students achieve very well
- Students display a high level of motivation
- The range of authentic texts requires improvement

Commentary

177. Standards of attainment are above the national average with most students in Years 12 and 13 achieving very well over time. The A to E pass rate was high in 2004. The current cohort

represents an improvement on last year in the take up of the course. There is no significant gender difference in learning or attainment.

178. Students' listening skills are well developed and they respond well to classroom interaction as was observed in their discussion on the contributions of science to civilisation. Many can justify their personal views, paying appropriate attention to verb tenses. They are relatively more confident readers and can extract main points from an unfamiliar text with some encouragement, though the range of available authentic Bengali texts leaves room for improvement. Their written work reflects appropriate use of vocabulary and a good command of structure. Spelling of familiar vocabulary is generally accurate and their careful presentation of work reflects the pride that they take in learning Bengali.
179. The emphasis on Bengali culture and society makes a good contribution to students' cultural development. All of this, together with a particular focus on standard Bengali pronunciation and grammar, reflect good subject knowledge and effective teaching strategies such as the use of a wide range of teacher-produced resources. Overall, teaching is good. Students demonstrate high levels of motivation and good standards of behaviour. Relationships are well established. Students' progress and achievement reflect good use of assessment and homework, and the overall good leadership and management of the subject. The subject was not reported at the time of the previous inspection.

European languages

180. The main focus was French but a Spanish lesson was sampled. Students study a module of **Spanish** as part of a Leisure and Tourism GNVQ course. In the lesson seen, students made good progress because the teacher had planned the lesson well and had established a positive working atmosphere in the lesson.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement by students in Year 12
- Students receive very good support in and out of the classroom
- Students are not clear about their learning

Commentary

181. Entries for A-level French over the past few years have been too low to be statistically significant. However, results have been average overall. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 13 are at an average level. Students were able to respond readily to basic factual questions but were unable to develop their oral responses. They find it difficult to express detailed opinions. Oral standards are below average. In writing students develop a secure grasp of structure and idiom and learn to apply grammar rules so that writing is always coherent. Students make satisfactory progress and achievement is sound.
182. Standards in Year 12 are above average. Students are very confident orally. They give pre-prepared presentations in the target language with good pronunciation and intonation. The best students can talk at length only occasionally referring to notes. They have a good understanding of grammar, which they apply effectively to help them deal with complex reading texts. Progress and achievement are good. They improve their knowledge of vocabulary and structure. They are already using a wider range of tenses and are confident using the subjunctive. As a result, they are learning to present ideas coherently and to write for different audiences. All students use ICT well to research information.

183. Teaching is good overall with examples of very good teaching. Students learn well because teachers have high expectations. Teachers use the target language exclusively in lessons to challenge students' understanding. Activities in lessons are always demanding using authentic texts and listening exercises using language at normal speed. Planning is good. There is an equal emphasis on the four language skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing. In the best lessons, teachers use their knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses in their planning to set different tasks for individual students. Teachers often use technology well in their planning. In one lesson, for example, the interactive whiteboard was effectively used to demonstrate the use of the imperfect tense. Students are effectively supported by teachers who know them well. In addition, they receive very effective support in and out of lessons from the foreign language assistant, from their teachers who give up their free time to give extra support and from sixth form learning mentors.
184. Assessment is thorough and regular and students' progress is effectively monitored by teachers and tutors. However, students are not clear about their learning. Teachers are not sharing lesson objectives with students and are not effectively reviewing progress. When they mark students' work, teachers do not make enough reference to A-level criteria and do not set targets that will help students improve their grades. As a result, students know what grade they are expected to achieve but have little idea about the level of skill and knowledge they need to achieve it.
185. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for the development of French in the sixth form through the language college development plan that includes plans to develop work experience abroad. Students have good opportunities to take part in enrichment activities, for example, through regular exchanges between the school and their partner lycée in Paris. Each student has individual oral practice with the foreign languages assistant once a week. Students have access to very good resources, including the multimedia centre. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

186. The main focus was on AS and A2 courses in mathematics. GCSE retake and key skills numeracy were sampled.
187. The success rate in **GCSE retake** mathematics in the past has been low; however, steps have been taken this year to improve the situation. Some students show good motivation, though others are more reluctant to make progress.
188. In **key skills numeracy**; timetabled lessons, leading to certification in application of number, are provided for students taking courses in health and social care, travel and tourism and business. Attendance in lessons is generally good, though clashes with other events, such as visits, restrict continuity.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Increased numbers of students are taking up advanced studies in mathematics
- Teachers are specialists, thorough in instruction, and lessons have pace

Commentary

189. Few students have taken advanced mathematics courses in recent years, but the two B grades in 2004 were encouraging and represented good achievement. Five girls are currently studying for A2 entry in 2005, whilst in Year 12 ten boys and six girls have commenced AS courses. Standards for entry to the courses have been raised, all entrants having to have achieved at least a B at GCSE. Standards of work seen are good, as is achievement.

190. The quality and thoroughness of teaching seen are providing these students with very good opportunity. Teaching is very good in all modules – pure, mechanics and statistics – and specialist knowledge is transmitted very positively to the students. There are very good relationships, and high expectations. Motivation is good, and assignments beyond class develop independent learning skills.
191. Year 13 students enthusiastically solved force-acceleration problems involving connected particles, in statistics showed good understanding of the calculus of both probability distribution functions and cumulative distribution functions, and in pure gained very good insight into two-stage integration by parts. Presentations to the class and differentiated work contributed to the very good progress being made.
192. Year 12 students applied coordinate geometry techniques to obtaining the midpoint and the length of a line, solving follow-up questions well. Animated discussion about discrete random variables and associated cumulative distribution functions took place in a statistics lesson, both boys and girls contributing, and led to both effective understanding and problem solving.
193. Leadership and management of the course are very good. Although the subject was not reported on in detail in the last inspection, standards were low. This is no longer the case, standards are good and there has been good improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

194. For many sixth form students timetabled provision is made for support studies in mathematics. Any student who realistically seeks to raise a GCSE grade to at least C can attend retake classes. Whilst results over recent years have been poor, a restructuring of provision has been undertaken. Prospects for successful entry this year are higher, though dependent upon regular attendance and willingness to put in the required effort.
195. Students following the various GNVQ courses have special provision to undertake the key skills application of number course. All are given the chance to gain a basic level, many to reach a higher level. Timetable clashes and other events restrict regular attendance, making continuity difficult.
196. Overall provision is good since students have clear opportunity to raise their standard of mathematics in order to cope more readily with numeracy aspects of their wider courses. Statistical data is suitably used in health and social care; in travel and tourism, students can use formulae and graphs to determine break-even points of businesses and the effects of changes in fixed or variable costs. In advanced courses, students adequately deal with cardiac cycle calculations in biology, with economic data about wartime Germany in history, and with flow chart analysis in information technology.

SCIENCE

197. The focus was on biology. AVCE science, chemistry and physics were sampled. In addition, psychology, part of the science department, was also sampled.
198. In the **AVCE science** lesson seen, student presentations, based on independent research, supplemented by the teacher's input, led to good achievement. In **chemistry**, very good subject knowledge and challenging content that required students to think for themselves led to very good achievement.
199. In the **physics** lesson sampled, very good challenge, support, advice and instruction based on expert subject knowledge led to very good achievement. In **psychology**, students make significant progress because teaching was of a high quality, and students are well supported and are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory** and improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good
- Good teaching leads to good learning in class
- Assessment is very good
- AS enrolments are healthy but few students progress to A2
- Results in 2004 were below the national average and several students underachieved

Commentary

200. Results in the AS examinations in 2004 were below the national average and several students underachieved due to poor attendance and an inadequate grounding in science in general and biology in particular on joining the course. Only two students took the A2 examination in 2004, one of whom passed, too few to be compared with national figures. Results in 2003 were similar. The course leadership and management responded well to this unsatisfactory picture. A course leader was appointed, and as a result of good leadership and management a number of important steps have been taken to improve the overall provision. These include the production of a well-devised scheme of work, imposition of higher entry requirements and the strengthening of the library provision. Students are now better able to cope with the demands of the course: a much higher proportion of AS students intend to progress to A2 than in previous years and some A2 students have applied for biological courses in higher education. Retention rates are now high and attendance is good. Current standards are in line with national expectations at both AS and A2 and achievement is satisfactory. Barriers to higher achievement include weaknesses in literacy that restrict students' ability to write essays and the reluctance of students to read widely or to draw on references beyond their textbooks.
201. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it to challenge students to think about the subject, for example, to explain the cause of pressure changes in the cardiac cycle. Lessons are planned well to involve students actively and interactive whiteboards used to enliven presentations. Students are required to give presentations to develop their knowledge and understanding and to develop literacy and oracy. Extensive individual help is given both in and out of class. Work is very well marked with detailed comments that reveal teachers' high expectations and uses science specific targets to point the way forward. Teachers offer students good guidance on how to carry out independent learning but it is not always followed, a study guide is in preparation to help encourage them to do so.
202. Leadership and management are good. The course leader is highly conscientious and monitors students' progress closely. The course team are all biology specialists with complementary expertise who work well together to monitor standards and exchange ideas. The subject was not inspected at the time of the previous report.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

203. The focus was on AS and A2 examinations. In addition, the key skills course and the BTEC IT course were sampled. The **key skills course** is used well by some Year 13 students who find it relevant to their learning in their main subjects, but Year 12 students do not respond well to it because of its unsatisfactory match to their main studies. There is not enough collaboration between departments to provide useful contexts for the skills and to ensure that these are needed by the students. **BTEC** students enjoyed the lesson seen in which the

teacher worked very well in collaboration with the IT technician. Because of their clear

explanations and a well planned practical task students gained knowledge and confidence in dealing with computer systems.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good achievement at AS and A2 in 2004 is the result of very good teaching
- Very good attainment in work seen shows consistency over time
- Very good relationships between teachers and students provide a very good working atmosphere
- Excellent assessment is helping teachers to deal very well with individual needs
- Very good curriculum experiences contribute very well to work related learning

Commentary

204. Standards in the A-level examination in 2004 were well above average with every student gaining a pass, although the minority of candidates attained grades A or B. This is very good improvement over the results in the previous year.
205. Standards in the work seen during the inspection are similar to those in the 2004 examination, with strengths in the units involving communication and presentation. Students struggle more with the units concerned with computer systems and data handling but they have identified these difficulties and are working hard to improve their results. Year 13 students respond to teacher challenge by working independently to solve problems. Year 12 students seen in class were able to identify problems in the systems devised by their peers and to begin to think of solutions to their own issues. They use technical language clearly and are encouraged to do so accurately.
206. Their achievement is very good in that they respond very well to the challenge presented to them by their teachers with the result that their performance in Year 13 is well above that of their grades in Year 11. Achievement is equally good for students of all ethnic groups but very few girls elect to study the subject.
207. This very good achievement is the result of very good teaching. Some teaching is excellent. Assessment procedures are always excellent so that teachers know exactly where the students' strengths and weaknesses lie, and work with them as individuals to challenge and support them so that their learning and their performance are both very good. They give excellent feedback on coursework, so that students know where they have to improve and how to find the means of doing so. They encourage students to respect the achievement and contribution of others and to learn by exchanging ideas.
208. The subject is very well led and well managed. There is very good co-operation between the teachers to create a common approach to learning and attitude to work. As a result, the teachers contribute their areas of strength to the course. The department is well equipped and provides very good opportunities for students to use local business links in their project work, as well as providing in-school examples that help some students to learn by working in familiar contexts. They use performance data well to plan for future developments so that they can meet the needs of all students.
209. The IT department makes a good contribution to the general education and to choices on offer to the sixth form, with a key skills course available to all Year 12 and 13 students to improve their IT capability, and the recent introduction of a vocational BTEC course. Two lessons of key skills IT and one of BTEC were seen during the inspection.
210. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Results have improved in the A-level course and there are much wider opportunities for students to study IT in a well-resourced department.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

211. Students have good opportunities to use ICT in their other subjects, with especially good use in the vocational courses. They are encouraged to use ICT appropriately for research, analysis and presentation of their work, although its use is not formally planned into all courses.

HUMANITIES

212. The focus was on history. **Sociology** was sampled. In the lesson seen, excellent organisation and planning combined with exemplary teaching led to very good learning. Students engaged in discussion of complex and sensitive issues showing commendable levels of intelligence and maturity. The teacher had an excellent understanding of the curriculum and how students learn. Activities and demands were very well matched to students' capabilities.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching that is leading to very good learning
- Excellent teacher assessment

Commentary

213. In the last two years of this A-level course all students have passed, seven in 2003 and four in 2004. This represents satisfactory achievement for these students. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work in the current Year 13 confirms that the standards these students are attaining are good and for them that represents good achievement. At AS level in 2004 all eight students passed with three achieving the highest A or B grades. This represented good achievement for these students. In the current Year 12, standards are higher still. Students in both years can handle with confidence difficult sources such as Churchill's Iron Curtain speech and complex ideas such as the differing interpretations of the causes of the Cold War.
214. The very good teaching of history is based on a strong command of both the subject and of the assessment demands of the syllabus. Strong features of this are very good planning and questioning. For example, in a very good Year 12 lesson, the teacher broke a source work task down into sections that students could easily tackle. As a result students were able to select and summarise features of the lives of German workers and then to categorise and order them. The teacher's carefully structured tasks then helped the students to come a balanced conclusion on the question of whether Nazi economic policies improved German workers' lives. Throughout the lesson, the teacher's questioning encourages students to support their arguments with evidence and helps to clarify their understanding. Teaching is very thorough and as a result, students, especially those in Year 12, are compiling well-organised sets of notes. Teacher marking gives students excellent guidance on their strengths and weaknesses and students know exactly what they need to do to improve. Relationships between students and teachers are very good, characterised by good humour and mutual respect. Teachers create an atmosphere where students are willing to challenge and try out their own ideas.

215. The leadership and management of history are very good. The courses are well planned and resourced and the teachers work together very well as a team. A very positive feature is the opportunities provided for students to attend lectures by academic historians that raise the level of challenge. The subject was not inspected at the time of the previous inspection

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership of the department has enabled standards to be maintained through a difficult period
- Teaching is very good and students achieve well as a result
- The positive attitudes and very good behaviour of those students who attend classes regularly, support a very good environment for learning and enable high achievement in lessons
- There is no separate sixth form studio area and this makes it difficult for students to manage their work in progress and to feel valued as young adults

Commentary

216. Standards of work seen are high, reflecting the high expectations of teachers and the positive attitudes of students to their work. The numbers taking the GCSE A2 examination in 2004 were too small to compare fairly with other schools or subjects. The number of students gaining the higher grades A or B in the 2004 AS level examinations was in line with national averages and data shows that the department added higher value to students' performance over time than any other subject in the school. Students' achievement is good. The number of art students is rising year on year.
217. Teaching is very good and enables students to learn very effectively and to pursue topics very independently. Teachers have a very good command of their subject, challenging and engaging students very effectively and enabling them to achieve very well across a wide range of media. Individual students show a very high standard of drawing and painting and contextualise their work very effectively. Lessons are planned very effectively and resources are used particularly well for research and investigation of work. Relationships are very positive and effective in encouraging students to become mature and independent learners. Students value these relationships, listening carefully to advice and working hard to produce their best work. The poor attendance of one or two students has a negative impact on their learning and their examination prospects.
218. The department benefits from very good leadership. It has been through a very difficult period of change, during which members of staff have left and there has been considerable instability. Through this period, the head of department has not only maintained, but improved standards, keeping to his rising target for student performance. He has ensured that the department made a good improvement since the previous inspection. The management and monitoring of the department, although good, have not been given sufficient time, because of the time needed to carry out day-to-day tasks.
219. The lack of any separate sixth form studio space means that all work must be packed away after each lesson and students are not able to use their free study time to work on their projects whilst other lessons are in progress. Student numbers are increasing year on year and this problem is set to worsen. The lack of storage space affects the storage of students' work, especially important towards examination time. Although the department has secured a very good suite of computers, it is not yet able to put them to use for students to explore digital imaging and animation.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

220. **VCE travel and tourism** was sampled. Teaching was very good and underpinned by excellent knowledge and assessment practice. This ensured that students' learning was good and achievement was very good. Standards were in line with national expectations.
221. In addition, the **Intermediate leisure and tourism** was sampled. Teaching was very good. Close liaison between the class teacher and the support teacher ensured that students made very good progress. Students are well motivated and are achieving well. Standards are in line with national expectations.

Physical education

222. Recreational sports take place on a regular basis and, although optional, are well supported by students.
223. The provision in AS and A2 sports studies was inspected.

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching which ensures significant progress particularly from AS to A2
- Good use of resources to support learning and widen students' understanding

Commentary

224. Overall, standards are in line with national expectations although are higher in Year 13 than in Year 12. Achievement is good. Results indicate that many students make appropriate progress, meeting the examination targets but few have achieved the higher grades.
225. Variations in standards occur because many Year 12 students are new arrivals into the sixth form. Their experiences vary substantially and although written work indicates some subject knowledge there are key areas where the understanding of subject terminology is very limited. Many lack confidence in discussion with only the most able contributing regularly. In Year 13, students have a generally sound understanding, indicating the good progress made as they move through the AS and A2 courses. Students talk knowledgeably about the subject of sporting ethics using recent examples to underpin and reinforce their points. Written work is good because extended answers to examination questions are well structured with clear progression of thought indicating breadth and depth of understanding.
226. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers work hard to engage students in discussion, to broaden their understanding and provide substantial feedback on the progress they are making. Very well-prepared teaching materials and good use of ICT resources allow teachers to illustrate their points using a number of relevant examples drawn from a wide range of sources. Students respond with interest and enthusiasm. Good use of technical and non-technical terminology aids students' understanding and is encouraging wider use of the subject vocabulary.
227. Leadership and management are good. Recent developments in the teaching and resourcing of the subject have improved progress and are beginning to attract a wider range of abilities onto the courses. For the first time in 2005, a girl will be entered for the A2 examination. The subject was not reported in the previous inspection.

BUSINESS

228. The focus of the inspection was business; however, accounting, leisure and tourism and travel and tourism were also sampled. Two lessons were seen in **accountancy** and **finance**. In the Year 13 A2 class, the students examined the implications of the role of independent accountants and after effective questioning they answered an examination question. They worked speedily and effectively. The planning and delivery of the lesson were good and very good relationships underpinned the effective learning. A demanding homework research task extended the students' independent learning skills. Achievement was good. The Year 12 AS class examined a wide range of ratio analyses and the students worked effectively to identify the appropriate ratios for a case study, comparing the effectiveness of two companies. The lesson planning was very good. Relationships in the class were excellent and very good support was given to individual students; as a result, students' achievement was good.

Business education

Provision in business education is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is excellent
- Teaching and learning are very good
- There are very positive, co-operative and constructive relationships between students and teachers
- Excellent assessment structures support students in their work
- Excellent leadership provides a very clear vision of how to improve still further

Commentary

229. The department delivers both the intermediate GNVQ and the AVCE business courses. The 2004 GNVQ examination results were well above average with 90 per cent of students securing merit or distinction grades. There has been an impressive improvement in standards in the GNVQ course, as four years ago students secured only pass grades and since then the percentage of merit grades has improved year on year. Achievement was excellent. The 2004 AVCE examination results were above average in terms of A or B grades, with double the national average and with all students achieving an A to E grade. The boys outperformed the girls as their results were well above national expectations. Achievement was excellent. The curriculum progression routes from the GNVQ course to AVCE and then onto higher education are very strong. The business curriculum provides exceptional opportunities for students, initially with modest academic results, to meet their full potential. A large number of students complete the GNVQ course and continue with their studies into higher level courses. Retention overall is excellent.
230. Standards in Year 13 are above average and this represents excellent achievement. Students show a very strong aptitude for work and their interest and enthusiasm for business are very clear. Students work very effectively together, willingly sharing their ideas and knowledge. They can systematically explore health and safety issues and present their findings effectively. In Year 12 students can identify relevant markets for particular products and they work very effectively in small groups.
231. Teaching is very good and this underpins the highly effective learning in lessons. There is also very good learning strongly supported by very good teaching over time. Lessons are very well planned with a very extensive range of sources used to develop understanding and skills. Students are very actively encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and they respond very well to this approach and they are confident independent learners. Students are very positive about business and the detailed and skilled support that they receive. Teachers have very high expectations of their students and they develop a sense of 'can do', 'will do', in

the students and as a result the students work very hard, with considerable focus and make excellent progress over time. The high quality of the relationships observed is a strength. The expectation of relevant and challenging homework is a strong feature. Every aspect of the learning is carefully monitored and evaluated and students receive very clear and tailored guidance for further improvement. These excellent procedures underpin the excellent achievement of the students.

232. The leadership and management of the department are outstanding. Strategic planning is excellent and as a result the department is improving on its previous best. Teamwork is very effective. There are major curriculum initiatives are planned for 2005. Teaching and learning are rigorously evaluated and the curriculum is updated very regularly to match the particular needs of the next cohort of students. The head of department is an exemplary role model for her depth of curriculum knowledge, for the strong emphasis on achievement and for her passion for further improvement of standards. She is used extensively within the school to provide in-service training to other staff. A very extensive range of industrial and commercial visits takes place and company representatives regularly visit the school. This programme provides a very rich and diverse business experience in which the students develop their business skills very effectively. Resources are very good and are used very effectively. The present accommodation, soon to be changed, is unsatisfactory although the best use is made of it. This is an excellent department that has greatly improved the students' achievement in recent years and as a result business is a very popular and successful subject. The subject was not inspected at the time of the previous inspection.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to very good learning and achievement
- Very good relationships between teachers and students create very good conditions for learning
- Teachers provide a very good range of teaching resources to underpin learning
- Marking, assessment and targets are used very well to support students to improve their work

Commentary

233. Results of the advanced GNVQ health and social care course are above average. Results of the GNVQ intermediate and foundation courses are broadly average. There is very good achievement overall compared to the well below average knowledge of the subject students have prior to starting the courses.
234. Students enter the health and social care courses offered in the sixth form with well below average levels and very limited knowledge of the subject. The majority of students reach average standards in the foundation and intermediate courses and above average standards in the advanced course. This means that students achieve very well. In the work seen during the inspection, students cover knowledge of maintaining good health, consider various aspects of personal development, relationships and they consider the work of a wide range of support agencies within the community. They show good research skills, use a wide range of sources both provided by teachers as well as finding other sources of information on their own before preparing their coursework assignments. Students follow the guidance provided by the teachers very well and structure their work closely to match the examination requirements. This enables them to gain marks for each section of the work. All students show very good attitudes to their work and teachers foster very good relationships, which are supportive and motivating to students. There are good links with support agencies and students visit a range of care facilities for example, hospitals and care centres for the elderly.

235. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection is very good. Lessons are very well structured and planned. Good study skills are enhanced by teachers' consistently high expectations and individualised support for all students on the courses. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and therefore guide students very well to focus on the relevant and most important aspects of learning. Teachers set very clear objectives for lessons and this helps students to pace themselves and structure their coursework. In lessons, teachers cover the basic knowledge to very good depth and explain the information very well. They use a variety of interesting methods to secure and underpin the knowledge, which leads to very good learning. In a Year 12 lesson on physical fitness, students used the data they gathered on their own personal fitness to draw conclusions about the importance of high levels of fitness. This practical approach in personal involvement of the students helps to make the work relevant to their own experiences. Class discussions are motivating and students are challenged. Skills in literacy and numeracy are developed very well within the teaching which enable students to use and interpret national data. Teachers emphasise key terms and words, which increase levels of understanding. The use of ICT is increasing, and teachers use this very well to prepare resource materials, which enable students to use the same techniques when they make presentations of their own. Teachers are very sensitive to students' personal development and supportive of their learning needs.
236. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The GCSE health and social care courses are well established and students achieve very well. There is a very effective teaching team and very good relationships are a strong feature of the department's learning ethos. Very good marking and monitoring of work provide very good opportunities for students to improve. The subject was not inspected at the time of the previous inspection.

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	1	1
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 (ethos)		1
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	1	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		1
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well students learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	2	2
How well the curriculum meets students needs	2	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	5	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	1	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		1
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		1
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	1	1

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