

INSPECTION REPORT

Stormont House School

Downs Park Road, London

LEA area: Hackney

Unique reference number: 100307

Headteacher: Kevin McDonnell

Lead inspector: Peter Johnson

Dates of inspection: 5th to 7th July 2005

Inspection number: 271427

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 - 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 98

School address: Downs Park Road
London
Postcode: E5 8NP

Telephone number: 0208 985 4245
Fax number: 0208 985 6886

Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Bernard Hawes
governors:

Date of previous 27th September 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Stormont House provides education for boys and girls in the 11 to 16 age range who have a wide range of special educational needs, including specific learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, speech and communication disorders, visual impairment, autistic spectrum disorders and medical and physical difficulties. Many pupils have a combination of two or more of these special educational needs. There are 98 pupils on roll, of whom 76 are boys and 22 are girls. The school is much larger than the majority of special schools providing for pupils of secondary age. Pupils come from mainly disadvantaged home backgrounds in Hackney and eight neighbouring London boroughs. There is a wide ethnic mix among pupils attending the school but none is at the early stages of acquiring English. Four pupils are looked after by the local authority.

The school has Investors in People status and gained Department for Education and Skills 'School Achievement Awards' in 2002 and 2003. The school is part of the local Education Action Zone, Excellence in Cities and Creative Partnerships initiatives.

The nature of the school has changed since the last inspection. Reorganisation by the local authority in 2000 resulted in the school being designated to provide for pupils with complex special educational needs and to admit only pupils of secondary age.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2925	Peter Johnson	Lead inspector	Mathematics, personal, social and health education, citizenship, French
11575	Catherine Fish	Lay inspector	
29452	Christine Emerson	Team inspector	English, information and communication technology, design and technology, physical education, religious education
16038	Jill Bavin	Team inspector	Science, art and design, geography, history, music

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Stormont House is an **outstanding** school which provides a high quality education for its pupils. Many aspects of its work are excellent and all others are very good. Inspirational leadership, an innovative curriculum, very good teaching and the high quality work of all members of the school community combine to enable all pupils to achieve not only very well, but also at a level which exceeds their and their parents' previous expectations. The school provides excellent value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership which inspires innovation and creativity in all aspects of the school's work.
- The school expands very well pupils' horizons of what it is possible for them to achieve in both their learning and their personal development.
- Pupils' achievement in public examinations is very good.
- Pupils' achievement in information and communication technology and its use to support pupils' learning in many subjects are excellent.
- Pupils are helped to develop a keen awareness of, and respect for, the needs, opinions and values of others.
- The school provides a rich, varied and innovative curriculum.
- The excellent partnerships with the community and other schools are used very well to maximise the opportunities provided for pupils.
- The accommodation has deficits due to the age and condition of parts of the buildings.

The school has improved very well since the last inspection. Previous weaknesses have been overcome very successfully. Pupils' attendance has improved significantly, teaching, learning and assessment are now very good, governors now play a very active part in the development of the school, school improvement planning focuses closely on pupils' achievement and all statutory requirements are met. In addition all other aspects of the school's work show strong improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	Very Good	Very Good
Year 11	Very Good	Very Good

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

The achievement of pupils of all ages, abilities and backgrounds is **very good** in almost all subjects, the only exception being information and communication technology where achievement is **excellent**. Pupils make very good progress from one year to the next and in Year 11 they achieve very well in the General Certificate of Secondary Education and other public examinations. The school makes a strong contribution to pupils' emotional health and well-being and, as a result, pupils' attitudes to school and learning and their behaviour are **very good** and their personal development is **excellent**. Pupils successfully develop

confidence and self-awareness, respect for themselves and others, a strong desire to do well in all their work and the resilience to cope with disappointment when they do not.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **excellent**. Teaching and learning are consistently very good; teaching is often imaginative, stimulating and creative. All pupils respond very well to the high expectations set for their behaviour and achievement. Pupils' progress is assessed very well but in a few subjects pupils' work is not marked often enough for them to know what they need to do to improve. The curriculum, the enrichment of it and its organisation are excellent; the way subjects are linked helps pupils to learn more effectively and to achieve very well. Preparation for the next stage of education is very good and work-related learning is excellent. The accommodation is satisfactory but parts of the building are in need of considerable repair or replacement. The attention given to pupils' care, welfare, health and safety and the support and guidance given to them are very good and the extent to which each pupil has a trusting relationship with adults in the school is excellent. Links with parents and carers are very good and those with other schools and the community are excellent. The high quality of the links between the school and its partners is a significant contributor to the quality of education provided by the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership throughout the school is **excellent**. At all levels, leadership is dedicated to ensuring the highest possible standards and achievement in all areas of the school's work. Creativity and innovation flourish in the school and enable pupils to achieve so very well. The school has a deservedly high reputation and is influential throughout the educational and wider community. Governors conduct their business in an exemplary fashion; they have a detailed and astute understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide highly effective challenge to senior leaders in order to secure further improvement. It is an ambitious school that has set itself a challenging vision for even further improvement. The plans for the achievement of this vision are very good. Management of the school is very good; systems and procedures work extremely smoothly and support effectively the school's pursuit of excellence.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents express high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the school but in particular they believe that their children are taught well, are cared for very effectively and make good progress in their work and personal development. Parents consider that they have a genuine partnership with the school. Pupils consider that it is a good school where lessons are interesting and they are taught well; they believe that teachers expect only their very best and they particularly appreciate the fact that there is someone whom they trust and can talk to if they have a problem.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

There are no key areas for improvement.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils make very good progress in literacy, which helps them to achieve very well in all other subjects.
- In Year 11 pupils achieve very well in public examinations.
- The school sets demanding targets for pupils' achievement which are invariably met and often exceeded.
- Pupils' very good achievement in personal, social, health and citizenship education helps them to succeed in other academic subjects.

Commentary

1. Pupils' achievement has improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, including those looked after by the local authority, achieve very well; there is no difference between the achievement of boys and girls or of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. They now benefit from an innovative and highly effective curriculum and teaching which is consistently very good. The high standard of pupils' achievement is exemplified by the receipt of School Achievement Awards in 2002 and 2003 and by data which measures the progress pupils make from one key stage to the next. In the last two years the progress made by pupils has placed the school in the top 5 per cent of all schools in England.
2. Pupils arrive at the school with a complex mixture of special educational needs, often having experienced failure at their previous school. They are quickly and successfully helped to experience success. The school's comprehensive programme to develop their literacy skills enables them to make rapid progress in reading, writing and spelling so that they can take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the school's excellent curriculum. While only a small percentage of pupils reach the expected level 5 in National Curriculum tests at age 14, all achieve very well, making very good progress in English, mathematics and science from Year 7 to Year 9.
3. In Years 10 and 11, pupils build on this success. They are provided with teaching and a curriculum which raise the expectations set and the challenges provided for them. Pupils respond to these with enthusiasm and enjoyment and as a result their achievement in public examinations at the end of Year 11 quite frequently exceed their and their parents' previous expectations. The proportion of pupils entered for examinations has increased year on year and now almost all pupils take part in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), Entry Level examinations and ASDAN. The results achieved by pupils in GCSE examinations in English, mathematics, science, art and design and design and technology have also risen year on year and they compare very favourably with those achieved in all other special schools.

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

	School results	National results*
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	0	NA
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	24	NA
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95	NA
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	9.8	NA

There were 21 pupils in the year group.

** There is no valid comparative data for pupils educated in special schools of this type.*

4. The school has established a challenging vision of 'Achievement for all' and the creation of an innovative curriculum which breaks down the barriers between subjects, allowing pupils to apply knowledge and understanding gained from one subject to another and to meet, and often exceed, the challenging targets set for their academic and personal progress. The school is well on track to realise this vision and, as a result, the achievement of pupils of all ages, abilities and backgrounds is excellent in information and communication technology and very good in English, mathematics, science, religious education and art.
5. Pupils' achievement in personal, social, health and citizenship education is very good. In formal lessons in the subject and through the many opportunities provided throughout the school pupils are helped to develop the personal qualities that equip them for success in their academic work and in their life after school. They are tenacious in the pursuit of success and are helped to recognise that initial failure is merely part of the journey to achievement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are **very good**. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **excellent**. Attendance is **good** and punctuality is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils understand each other's differences and difficulties and they try hard to help one another.
- Excellent relationships across the whole school community ensure a purposeful and productive environment.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school life and a genuine enjoyment in their learning.
- Very good behaviour ensures that the pupils make the most of their learning opportunities.

Commentary

6. The close attention given to promoting pupils' personal development is a strength of the school and a significant reason why pupils achieve so well. At first, pupils' self-confidence is established and they learn to cope very well with the increased level of challenge placed on them as they progress through the school. By the time they reach Year 11 pupils are young adults, equipped well with the personal qualities that will help

them to succeed in the next stage of their education. They develop self-awareness and an understanding of their place in the school and wider community. Through the exceptional relationships they have with staff and the strong programme of personal and social education, pupils develop strong personal values and beliefs and respect for those of others. Pupils know about and celebrate major world faiths and develop mutual tolerance, understanding and respect for the cultural diversity of the school and wider community. Pupils recognise and understand the quality of their own work and offer honest and constructive criticism of the work of their peers. Pupils accept this criticism with maturity and use it to improve the quality of their work.

7. The pupils feel very safe and secure in a school where there are excellent relationships across all the different ethnic backgrounds present. Pupils are very tolerant and understanding of each other and this underpins the harmonious and friendly atmosphere. In lessons and during other activities pupils are able to work and play together, sharing tasks, games and ideas. Pupils support each other very well and seek help for others if they are too upset to do so. They enjoy spending time together both in structured activities and during their free time and this underpins their excellent social development.

8. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and are enthused by and interested in the wide range of opportunities provided for their learning. They talk especially enthusiastically about, and engage in fully, those provided through the school's work with Creative Partnerships, an organisation which promotes collaboration between schools and artists and designers. They participate whole-heartedly in whole-school activities such as assemblies and willingly involve themselves in those day-to-day activities which help the school to run smoothly. In lessons they listen attentively and show their very good attitudes through their well presented work. These very positive attitudes clearly contribute to pupils' very good progress academically and to their personal development as they are very well motivated and actively involved in their learning.

9. Pupils behave in a very polite, considerate and courteous way at all times. Their behaviour is very good in different situations and circumstances. Those pupils who have difficulty with their behaviour are helped to overcome these through the use of very effective behaviour management strategies, usually with home and school working closely together. Quick action is taken within lessons to minimise the effect of any misbehaviour on the learning of others. Bullying and other forms of harassment are not seen as major concerns because pupils and parents know they are handled quickly and effectively. Exclusions are relatively low given the nature of the pupils provided for by the school; there were no permanent exclusions in the last year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	42	14	
White – Irish	3		
White – any other White background	1	1	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	9	1	
Mixed – White and Asian		1	
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	3	

Asian or Asian British – Indian	2		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani		1	
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	5		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	8	4	
Black or Black British – African	10		
Chinese	2		

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

10. Attendance has improved greatly since the previous inspection and is now good. Pupils really enjoy school and parents comment that their children want to attend, even when they are unwell. Authorised absences remain relatively high due to the medical conditions of some pupils which necessitate absence from school. The school's greatest success has been in the large reduction of unauthorised absences; this has been achieved through rigorous follow-up of any absence by administrative staff as well as there now being no long term non-attenders on roll. Attendance data are used by the school to set targets for individual pupils and the importance of regular attendance is stressed to parents in the prospectus. Pupils, including independent travellers, arrive at school promptly and punctuality throughout the school day is very good, ensuring that teaching time is not lost.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003/4

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	11%	School data	0.36%

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **excellent**. Teaching and learning are **very good** and the curriculum is **excellent**. The attention given to pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. Links with parents and carers are **very good** and those with other schools and the community are **excellent**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching, learning and assessment are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Throughout the school and in all subjects teaching is stimulating and enthusiastic.
- The excellent teamwork between teachers and support staff helps pupils to make very good progress.
- Pupils respond extremely well to the very high expectations set for their academic achievement.
- In a few subjects the marking of pupils' work does not indicate what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

11. Teaching has improved very significantly since the last inspection. The high quality of teaching is consistent for pupils of all ages and in all subjects; it enables pupils to make very good progress and to achieve very well. Lessons are planned very well to meet the wide range of special educational need and ability present in each class. Teachers know their subjects well and they have a comprehensive understanding of the particular needs of their pupils. As a result the methods used are appropriate and the level of challenge for each pupil is realistically high. The effective planning enables both staff and pupils to know the part they will play during the lesson. Pupils know what they are expected to do and to learn and teachers and support staff work in harmony so that lessons proceed at an appropriate pace, sometimes brisk, challenging and energetic and sometimes slower enabling moments of quiet reflection and consolidation. Thus little time is lost and the optimum amount of learning is gained from each lesson.
12. Teaching and learning are of a consistently high quality across the school; it is quite often excellent. The best teaching has flair, invention and innovation. In ICT, careers, religious education and science there are examples of excellent teaching which captivate pupils' interest and enable them to understand difficult ideas and concepts. For example, in religious education in Year 7, pupils worked enthusiastically on the tasks set and showed considerable understanding of the religious practices of Islam and, in science in Year 10, the highly effective use of ICT enabled pupils to expand their knowledge of human biology and to demonstrate their understanding to each other and to their teacher.
13. The innovative use of 'teaching partners' has a strong impact on pupils' learning. This partnership exists between teachers of the same subject working together in the same classroom and between teachers of different subjects, who collaborate to promote pupils' learning in both subjects through their individual lessons. There are many examples of this approach and they are extremely effective. The links between art and science, ICT and science, mathematics and citizenship, for example, help pupils to consolidate their understanding in each subject and to apply their knowledge across the curriculum.
14. Pupils respond extremely well to teaching that is highly challenging. Their behaviour in lessons is most often very good because they are usually engrossed in what they are doing and far too busy to misbehave. Pupils are expected to work hard in all lessons and they do. They apply themselves very well to the tasks they are given and their levels of concentration are extremely high. Pupils complete a great deal of work and their books, folders and work held in electronic storage, in all subjects, is completed with care and obvious pride in its presentation. Relationships between pupils are excellent enabling them to work very effectively together and to help each other to improve their work.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 21 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
6	8	6	1	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lesson.

15. Procedures to check pupils' achievement have improved very well since the last inspection and are now very good. In English and mathematics and science assessment is used very well to track pupils' progress against the levels of the National Curriculum and the requirements of accredited courses. In these and all other subjects teachers use the information gained from assessment effectively to ensure that pupils make progress

in their learning. However, in a few subjects, pupils' work is not marked often enough for them to understand how they can improve the standard of their work.

16. The school has ambitious plans to create a computer-based system to collate and interrogate assessment information which it will use to determine whether each pupil is making sufficient progress and to inform evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **outstanding** with **excellent** opportunities for enrichment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum covers a very good range of subjects and courses and its organisation and management by the headteacher is exemplary.
- The curriculum is highly innovative and is continually being developed and improved.
- Excellent links between different subject areas maximise pupils' learning opportunities.
- There is an excellent balance between creative activities and lessons to promote pupils' key skills such as literacy.
- A variety of extremely well planned and highly stimulating activities add to the work covered in lessons.
- Pupils benefit from teaching by specialist teachers and very effective and well deployed teaching assistants.

Commentary

17. The school provides an extremely rich and effective curriculum which is very carefully adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils. Consequently, all pupils are given outstanding learning opportunities and achieve very well. The strength of the curriculum is in its oversight and development by the headteacher. He has a very clear and exciting vision of an exemplary curriculum in which creativity is central to learning, the barriers between subjects are broken down and all pupils achieve very well. This philosophy has resulted in a highly successful collaboration with 'Creative Partnerships', an organisation which enables the school to work with outside professionals such as artists and designers to enrich and develop the curriculum. An example of the huge benefit this has brought to pupils is an excellent project in which Year 10 pupils were stimulated by a visit to the Eden Project to design and plant their own biodome and courtyard garden. As part of this initiative, the pupils worked with a professional designer and gardener to make a real impact on the quality of the school environment. Pupils are very proud of their achievements and enjoy maintaining the garden and using the seating area.

18. There is a very clear focus in curriculum planning on preparing pupils to be successful in adult life. For example, the school offers a very good range of accreditation which includes the opportunity to gain five GCSE passes. There is an excellent programme of work-related learning and very good links with colleges of further education. There are extremely good links between the different subjects of the curriculum which are very carefully planned and monitored. For example, in an English lesson, pupils in Year 9 built very well on a previous visit to a French café which they had made as part of their modern foreign languages curriculum. The pupils discussed a piece of writing by the owner of the café, were prompted to extend their use of adjectives when describing the café and wrote about the visit. Because the links between subjects are so strong,

teaching time is used very effectively and opportunities to learn and consolidate skills are maximised. The balance of lessons in the curriculum ensures that there is a very strong emphasis on developing the key skill of literacy as well as giving pupils rich creative experiences. The use of ICT across the curriculum is outstanding. Tutorial sessions are used very effectively to promote personal, social, health and citizenship education.

19. Because the school is so effective in adapting lessons and activities to meet the needs of individual pupils, provision for pupils with additional special needs is excellent. The school receives very good support from outside specialists, particularly from the speech and language therapist who works alongside teaching staff in lessons. Pupils who have English as an additional language are provided for extremely well and make as good progress as other pupils. This is supported by the very strong ethos of valuing diversity and celebrating the achievements of figures such as Nelson Mandela.
20. There is an excellent programme of lunchtime and after school clubs. These are very carefully planned and organised with clear targets for pupils. Pupils benefit from a wide variety of high quality visits to museums and galleries. For example, this year, pupils in Year 7 have visited the National Portrait Gallery, the Hayward Gallery, the Design Museum and Craft Council. They have also made several visits to the Hackney Empire theatre. There is a rich range of opportunities to engage in sport which are often supported by specialist staff. For example, a tennis coach visits school each week to run a girls' tennis club. The school makes very good use of facilities in the local community such as the library and Hackney Downs. There are very good opportunities to visit places of worship of different world faiths. The pupils benefit from excellent residential trips such as that made by Year 10 pupils to the Eden project and the Barbara Hepworth Gallery.
21. The school benefits from specialist teaching staff in all areas of the curriculum. Learning support staff are very skilled and very well deployed. Classrooms are of a good size and there is specialist accommodation for subjects such as art, science and design and technology. There is a hall for physical education but it is small. The school makes the very best use of the accommodation and keeps it very clean and tidy with high quality displays of pupils' work. However, the building is shabby and there are some significant weaknesses in it. Some classrooms have been condemned and are being rebuilt this summer. There is currently no wheelchair access to the first floor where the science and art rooms are sited. The toilet and shower areas need improving and there is no library. There is a good range of resources, particularly for ICT, with Smart boards in most classrooms.

Care, guidance and support.

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. Pupils are provided with **very good** support, advice and guidance. The way in which the school seeks values and acts on pupils' views is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Concerns for pupils' happiness, well-being and safety are paramount and central to the work of the school.
- Pupils have access to very clear support, advice and guidance.
- The support given to pupils when they join the school is excellent.
- Pupils flourish in the sure and certain knowledge that their views will be heard and respected.

Commentary

22. This is a school where everyone wants the best for their pupils. Under the headteacher's inspirational leadership all staff are very clear that pupils who feel valued and secure learn best. The school provides a very safe and secure environment where all pupils, including the most vulnerable, blossom. Pupils thrive because of the extremely supportive, trusting and beneficial relationships that they share with members of staff. This means that they are very ready to learn. Pupils and their families acknowledge this strong feature of school life and understandably value it highly.
23. Teaching and support staff know pupils extremely well and so steer their personal development skilfully, adroitly meeting their needs. The strong teaching in the school provides pupils with impeccable guidance by encouraging them to think deeply and apply prior knowledge to help them mature and grow in confidence. In the most successful lessons teaching strategies provide outstanding support for pupils as the lesson progresses. The academic guidance given to pupils is very good and it helps them to meet the demanding targets set for them to achieve. In a few subjects, however, pupils' work is not marked sufficiently often, which prevents pupils from understanding what they need to do to make even better progress.
24. Pupils joining the school settle in very smoothly. From the time pupils start at the school, staff are very sensitive to their needs and work hard to develop highly supportive relationships with them. Nearly all pupils say there is someone they can take their problems to and be confident that they will be taken seriously. Very effective counselling is provided for pupils when it is deemed necessary. Induction arrangements are excellent because they are flexible and tailored to meet individual pupil needs and circumstances.
25. Pupils' views are canvassed, valued and listened to very well. As a result of countless opportunities to voice their ideas and offer their opinions they have very high expectations of adult responses. This almost inevitably contributes to a sense of frustration when major concerns, such as the state of the building, are not immediately addressed. The school has successfully maintained and developed the high standards of care reported at the time of the last inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and carers are **very good**. Links with other schools and the community are **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes a strong contribution to provision for pupils with special educational needs within the local area.
- The curriculum and teaching are enhanced by the links with other schools and the community.
- The local business community provides the school with valued support.
- Parents have very high levels of confidence in the school.

Commentary

26. The school has successfully built on the strong partnerships with parents, schools and the community reported at the time of the last inspection. It is an outward-looking school that is highly influential in local provision for pupils with special educational needs. It is very well regarded by its own local education authority (LEA) as well as neighbouring ones from which pupils are drawn. One LEA commented that 'our expectations (for our pupils) are invariably exceeded'. Places are highly sought after. The headteacher and staff are held in similarly high regard by other schools and they are frequently called upon to provide advice about how best to meet the needs of individuals or groups of pupils with special educational needs. Consequently the excellent relationships that the school has with its partner schools are mutually beneficial and specific links with individual schools are used well to enhance the opportunities provided for pupils.
27. The school has highly productive links with local business partners, especially through the structured mentoring programme for pupils in Years 10 and 11. It has a substantial impact on these pupils' achievements and is seen as being of mutual benefit. The local community is used extremely effectively to support the pupils' learning and experiences with trips and visits made to, for example, galleries and museums which bring learning alive for the pupils. Trips further afield, including residential experiences, promote the pupils' personal development as well giving them insights into specific areas. The school's participation, through a highly successful bid, in the Creative Partnership Project has had a tremendous impact on the curriculum provided for pupils and on the development of innovative teaching strategies. Visits to the school from musicians and creative artists have all resulted in very positive feedback about the high levels of pupil engagement.
28. Parents believe this is a school where their children achieve exceptionally well because the standards of teaching and care are very high and the school is led and managed very effectively. They feel engaged in a genuine partnership which benefits their children greatly. Inspection findings fully endorse these very positive comments. Parents also say their children are happy in school, well taught and well cared for. They affirm that their children are treated fairly, with close attention paid to the needs of the individual, and are given the opportunities to experience as wide a curriculum as possible, together with extra-curricular activities and trips. Parents themselves feel they can be fully involved in the life of the school and speak of good quality information covering general matters as well as anything specific to their own child, such as behaviour monitoring sheets and home school diaries for effective communication. Again inspectors agree. Regular consultation with parents about the work of the school gives it the opportunity to identify very specific concerns, such as language difficulties, and to tackle them actively to ensure that everyone who wants to be is fully involved. The school knows that not all parents engage readily with it and is seeking ways to improve this position.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance and leadership of the school are **excellent**. Management is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body is fully involved in the life of the school and contributes strongly to its success.
- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership; he is supported exceptionally well by the excellent leadership of the deputy headteacher and all staff who share leadership responsibility.
- Leadership and management of the curriculum are exemplary.

- The school has a comprehensive understanding of its own strengths and weaknesses and it plans very effectively for improvement.

Commentary

29. The work of the governing body has improved significantly since the last inspection and it now makes a major contribution to the leadership of the school. Governors are energetic, creative and committed totally to achieving the school's vision for excellence. They give freely of their time and know the school well. There is an effective committee structure through which the strengths and weaknesses of the school can be assessed accurately and reported to the full governing body for further scrutiny. Partnership with the school's senior leaders is very strong and together they form a highly effective team. Governors are involved fully in planning for the school's further improvement and have a comprehensive understanding of the school's priorities for improvement. The governing body is ambitious for the school and has helped forge beneficial links with the local community, which have contributed well to the education provided by the school. The governing body provides strong support and perceptive challenge in equal measure ensuring that all members of the school community work in harmony so that pupils are provided with the best possible education.
30. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. His vision for the development of the school is innovative, creative and demanding. This vision is shared and understood by all members of the school community because they were closely involved in its formulation. The targets set for its realisation are extremely challenging but there is an overwhelming confidence among staff, governors, parents and pupils that achievement of this vision is a certainty. This confidence is not misplaced because the school's plans are clear and are based on an accurate and critical analysis of performance. The support needed from outside the school is readily available because the headteacher, in particular, and the school, in general, are highly influential in, and highly regarded by, the local educational and wider communities.
31. Leadership has improved since the last inspection. Even though the school's achievements in recent years have been exceptional, there is, throughout the school, a relentless determination to improve still further. Senior and subject leaders are highly motivated and are open and self-critical in the analysis of their work. The teamwork among staff is a strength of the school and a source of the excellent role models provided for pupils. The commitment to inclusion is excellent. All pupils, regardless of ability or background are helped to achieve and develop as well as possible. Pupils' achievements often exceed those which they and their parents thought possible.
32. Management of the school is calm and considered. At all levels there is a very strong commitment to the achievement of the school's ambitious targets for improvement. The appointment of staff and the effective programme of professional development reflect the school's desire to raise even further the achievement of pupils and to improve the quality of education provided for them. Management is subtle and unobtrusive. It has comprehensive procedures that enable the school to run very smoothly and not interfere with the important business of teaching and learning. But it is also flexible and purposeful during times of difficulty and well able to respond to the urgent or unexpected.
33. Procedures for self-review are very good and provide the school and governing body with a clear analysis of what needs to be done to improve the education provided by the school. The arrangements to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum are very good. The school routinely collects data on its own performance and is in the process of developing an assessment data-base that will allow more effective analysis of pupil progress. The school has well-considered plans in place to improve self-review even further by increasing the involvement of all staff in the process. Performance management is very good. Management of the budget and oversight of it by the governing body are excellent. Pupils benefit from spending which is carefully focused on the school's priorities. Although the school has accrued a large budget surplus it consists mainly of specific funding to refurbish the accommodation and to make the accommodation more accessible to people with disabilities. The principles of best value are

applied very well in the management of the budget, the recruitment of staff and in the major spending decisions of the governing body.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,365,008	Balance from previous year	144,307
Total expenditure	1,307,626	Balance carried forward to the next	201,689
Expenditure per pupil	13,343		

Work-related learning

Provision for work-related learning is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent work experience programme prepares pupils for employment after leaving school.
- There are good links with the Connexions Service and very good links with colleges of further education.
- There is an excellent programme of careers education.

Commentary

34. All Year 10 pupils follow an ‘internal work experience’ programme which prepares them extremely well for work experience outside school in Year 11. During the programme they are supported through all the stages of applying for a job. This includes completing a formal application form, seeking references and attending a formal interview with the school’s Business Partners. This is very challenging for the pupils and leads to them making very good progress in developing skills in applying for work. The pupils are appointed to a variety of posts such as ‘lunchtime assistant’ and ‘gardening assistant’. Because the school places a high status on these positions, pupils value them and the programme is highly effective in developing pupils’ confidence and self-esteem as well as giving them job-related skills. In Year 11, all pupils undertake a two week external work experience placement. The school tries very hard to take pupils’ interests and preferences into account and the placements are checked carefully to ensure that they comply with health and safety requirements. This year placements included catering, office work, working in garages and a placement with the school’s business partners. There are examples of pupils who have subsequently been given permanent employment at their work experience placements. Pupils record their work experience and submit it as part of the ASDAN award. The local authority’s work experience record book provides a very good framework to plan, record and evaluate placements and is used effectively by the school.

35. The Connexions adviser begins to work with pupils in Year 9. There is an annual careers evening for parents of pupils in Years 10 and 11 which is attended by representatives from the work force, college and Connexions. There are strong links with a number of colleges of further education. All pupils who left school from Year 11 last year moved on to further education, training or employment, with the majority attending vocational courses at college.

36. The careers programme for pupils in Years 9 to 11 is enriched by an annual performance by a theatre company which focuses on work-related issues. Careers education is taught as a discrete subject for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and aspects of careers-related education form part of the curriculum in PSHCE for pupils in Years 7 and 8. Teaching in careers education is excellent and really challenges pupils to think about what they can do after school and how to prepare for it. Consequently, pupils achieve extremely well in understanding about further education options, funding for training and study, and what accreditation is needed to enter further education. The pupils respond extremely well in lessons and the teacher encourages them to have high aspirations about what they can achieve in the future.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

No lessons were seen in French so there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on provision in this subject.

37. All lessons are taught by a teacher and a teaching assistant who are native French speakers, so pupils benefit from very good examples of how French should be spoken. Work on display and in pupils' books indicates that they become increasingly confident in speaking in French and in writing simple sentences using appropriate grammar and vocabulary. Pupils in Year 7 know basic French vocabulary such as the words for numbers and colours. Pupils in Year 9 can translate short sentences from English to French. The curriculum is enriched by practical activities such as the recent visit by Year 9 pupils to a French café. This helps to develop the pupils' understanding of French culture. All pupils' work is marked and there are evaluative comments to show pupils how well they have done and how they can improve.

English

Four lessons were seen in English. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, observation of a range of activities and discussion with staff.

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent curriculum challenges pupils very well and has a very strong focus on developing literacy skills.
- Creative and extended writing is promoted very well with particularly good use of ICT for recording.
- The two subject leaders work very effectively together to raise standards.
- Work set is very well matched to the needs of individual pupils.
- Marking of pupils' work does not always show the pupils how well they have done or how they can improve.
- Teachers and learning support staff are very skilled at developing pupils' skills in speaking and listening.

Commentary

38. There is a very strong emphasis on developing pupils' skills in the key skills of reading, writing and spelling. Consequently, as well as timetabled English lessons, each class has a forty minute literacy session each day which is planned by the literacy leader. This is a highly effective strategy in raising pupils' achievement. The standardised reading and spelling tests which are administered with all pupils each year show that overall the pupils make very good progress in reading and spelling and that some pupils make excellent progress. For example, a small number of pupils have moved very quickly from being virtual non-readers to having functional reading skills. Very detailed reading

records are kept to show what books pupils have read and what words they need to practise. In a literacy session for Year 8 pupils, where the focus was on developing reading skills, the reading material was very well matched to the wide range of reading ability in the class. Because there was a very good emphasis on thinking about the content of the books, pupils made very good progress in developing skills such as extracting information and predicting what might happen next.

39. In English lessons pupils learn to write for different purposes such as writing a review of an exhibition or a drama script. The approach to developing writing skills is very creative and very effective in challenging all pupils including high attainers. Consequently, pupils really enjoy writing and produce high quality pieces of extended writing. An example of this was during a very good lesson for pupils in Year 7 where the pupils worked in groups to read play scripts which they had written. The scripts were very well written with lively story lines, imaginative vocabulary and correct use of punctuation marks such as colons. It was clear from the scripts that the pupils had a good understanding of how to write for an audience, for example using a 'narrator' to tell the story. The school is very effective in stimulating reluctant writers through a variety of enriching activities. For example, Year 9 pupils were taken to the Royal Courts of Justice and took part in a drama playing the roles of Judge and witness. This supported pupils very well to write about crime and punishment. There is an exemplary use of ICT for recording pupils' work so that final pieces of writing are very well presented. Year 7 pupils have produced 'The Daily Torch' which is a high quality newspaper with a variety of topical articles. By the time pupils reach Year 9 they are using applications such as *PowerPoint* to write and illustrate their very good 'desert island' journals. However, although there are examples of good marking of written work, not all work is marked thoroughly with clear guidance to pupils as to how well they have done and what needs improving.
40. Teachers and learning support staff develop pupils' speaking and listening skills very well through very good questioning and through encouraging pupils to extend their vocabularies. An example of this was in a lesson for Year 9 pupils where they were helped to generate adjectives to describe a café they had visited. When one pupil said he felt it was 'luxury' the teacher was quick to extend this to 'luxurious'. Consequently, the pupils made very clear progress in using descriptive words and by the end of the lesson were using vocabulary such as 'exquisite'. The literacy leader carefully assesses, plans work and monitors the progress of pupils who have English as an additional language. There is comprehensive provision for pupils with additional special needs. The speech and language therapist works alongside teachers in lessons to support pupils with speech and language difficulties, print size is enhanced where necessary and there is a handwriting club. One pupil currently benefits from sessions at a centre for pupils with specific learning difficulties and the literacy leader is planning to develop her own skills in this area.
41. Assessment in English is good with assessment against the targets of the National Curriculum as well as standardised tests in reading and spelling. Assessment is collated to show the progress which pupils make over time. At the present time there are no collections of work, assessed against the levels of the National Curriculum, to help ensure that assessment is consistent. There is a good range of accreditation including GCSE in English language, AQA literacy and ASDAN and the school is considering extending accreditation from September 2006 through the introduction of GCSE in English literature. In the 2004 GCSE English language course, there was one pass at each of grades C and D, three passes at grade E, six at grade F and four at grade G. Resources in English are good with a good collection of fiction and non-fiction books

including multi-cultural books. However, the school needs to develop its collection of dual language books. There is currently no library.

42. Leadership and management of English are very good. English is led by two subject leaders, with one leader taking responsibility for the literacy component. Both leaders are subject specialists and between them teach all English lessons. They are enthusiastic and committed and work very well together. They have ensured there has been good improvement overall in the delivery of the subject since the previous inspection with very good improvement in writing

Language and literacy across the curriculum

43. Language and literacy is promoted very well in all subjects of the curriculum. Teachers work closely with the member of staff responsible for literacy. An example of this was when the Year 8 teacher asked for strategies to help pupils to learn to spell particular scientific words in preparation for their science test. The literacy leader has provided training for staff and developed resources to promote literacy.

MATHEMATICS

Three lessons were observed. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and held discussions with pupils about their work and with the joint leaders of the subject.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are highly motivated by the very good teaching they receive.
- Pupils achieve very well in public examinations at the end of Year 11.
- Pupils' work is not marked sufficiently often to help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve.
- There are very good links between mathematics and other subjects which help pupils to use their mathematics skills in different contexts.

Commentary

44. The achievement of pupils and the provision for mathematics has improved well since the last inspection. Pupils work hard in their mathematics lessons and the achievement of pupils of all ages, abilities and backgrounds is very good. Since 2001 an increasing proportion of pupils have been entered for public examinations and achievement in these examinations has risen. In 2004, 13 pupils from a cohort of 19 were entered for GCSE and 12 achieved a graded result. In the current Year 11, 17 pupils were entered out of a cohort of 20 and their predicted grades indicate that overall results will be better than in 2004.
45. School records indicate that pupils aged 11 to 14 make very good progress and achieve very well. Pupils' work confirms this. In Year 7, for example, pupils have a clear understanding of number processes, they identify and describe the properties of simple two-dimensional shapes and are beginning to understand reflective symmetry and tessellations. By Year 9, pupils recognise and can construct three-dimensional shapes, they understand rotational symmetry and can apply their knowledge of mathematics to simple investigations. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make strong progress and in their final year in the school they demonstrate understanding of probability, ratio, fractions, decimals and simple algebra, including the plotting of graphs from algebraic equations.

46. Pupils achieve very well because the teaching they receive is very good. The methodical sequencing of activities provided for pupils during lessons motivates them to overcome the difficulties many have experienced previously in mathematics. Pupils enjoy the challenge of mathematics. They are conscientious in lessons and apply themselves very well to the challenges presented. Mathematics lessons are characterised by the endeavour of pupils and the high expectations set for their behaviour and achievement. Lessons are planned very well so that pupils are set tasks that are realistically challenging and matched well to their individual abilities. Pupils' attitudes in lessons to their work, their teachers and each other are very good.
47. The subject is led and managed well. The joint subject leaders have put in place methods to assess and record pupils' progress that are very good but are not sufficiently well informed by the consistent marking of pupils' work. Planning and the curriculum for the subject are good and ensure that all pupils can achieve success. The subject leaders have developed innovative approaches to the curriculum that involve other subjects such as ICT and citizenship and, in line with the whole-school priority, are seeking to increase the rigour of self-evaluation at subject level in order to improve provision still further. Resources for the subject are good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

48. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is very good. Teachers of other subjects provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills. For example, in ICT pupils use their knowledge of bar charts and pie charts to represent the findings of a survey. In science pupils are encouraged to calculate and work out measurements and lengths when carrying out investigations and in food technology pupils are taught to weigh ingredients accurately. The school's curriculum encourages cross-curricular work and has established many successful innovations, which include the study of mathematics through a citizenship topic about 'Children in other countries'. This approach to mathematics is very successful in helping pupils to understand the relevance of mathematics to their everyday life.

SCIENCE

Three lessons were observed. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and held discussions with pupils about their work and with the subject leader.

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils throughout the school enjoy science and work hard to match the high expectations set for their achievement.
- Teaching is expert, enthusiastic and innovative.
- Exceptional use is made of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning.
- The science curriculum is linked very well to other subjects so that pupils learn most effectively.

Commentary

49. Pupils make very good progress in this subject because teaching and learning are of a consistently high standard. Pupils clearly benefit enormously from a very confident subject specialist who has high expectations of pupils and the skills to translate these into tangible success. Boys and girls of all abilities enjoy the subject and take justifiable pride in their ever increasing skills, knowledge and understanding. This was exemplified

when Year 10 pupils studying the digestive system enthusiastically made several spontaneous and relevant comments, including a pupil with language difficulties who said, 'oesophagus, oesophagus, I love that word!'

50. Another key factor in the successful teaching of science is the excellent use that is made of information and communication technology. In lessons, the teacher makes extremely effective use of attractive and stimulating computer-generated illustrations to provide new information or to reinforce previous learning. These techniques fascinate pupils whether they are considering the effects of 'acid rain' on plants or studying the digestive system. The co-ordinator rightly acknowledges that pupils' difficulties with writing and their anxieties about this are the greatest barrier to their achievement in science and has introduced innovative and extremely effective strategies to overcome these difficulties. These include the use of ICT by pupils in lessons to demonstrate their scientific knowledge, for example by selecting text and moving it to label diagrams of the respiratory and digestive systems in human biology. This means that, while they are making very good use of their reading skills, writing difficulties do not stand in the way of learning in science. Additionally, the co-ordinator has computerised assessment systems with 'voice over' questions. This system enhances pupils' independence and their self-esteem while providing a reliable indication of their scientific understanding.

51. Leadership and management of the subject are outstanding and have successfully promoted very good development since the previous inspection. Whereas pupils were making satisfactory progress they now make very good strides in their learning and what was a good curriculum is now excellent. This curriculum makes a huge contribution to pupils' learning in other subjects and to their personal and social development. For example, the entire school is justifiably proud of a recent environmental project which harnessed pupils' skills in planning, team work and co-operation while raising their awareness of their responsibilities for the environment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Three lessons were observed and pupils' work was analysed.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make exceptional use of ICT in their learning and use complex software with a high degree of skill.
- Teaching of ICT has flair, innovation and a high level of expertise.
- The use of ICT has enhanced the provision for many subjects.

Commentary

52. Provision for information and communication technology has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now a strength of the school. The achievement of pupils of all ages, abilities and backgrounds is excellent. Pupils display remarkable levels of confidence and competence in the use of a range of software and hardware. Pupils aged 11 to 14 can obtain information relevant to their work by choosing appropriate sources and then organise and present the information in a variety of formats. They make excellent use of commercial software, for example the use of a presentation package to produce sophisticated animations involving the use of pictures, dialogue and music.

Pupils use word-processing and spreadsheet applications very well. In Years 10 and 11 they build on their achievement and begin to use more complex commercial software. In Year 10, for example, they use a film editing package with astonishing levels of competence; they have a comprehensive understanding of the software and are able to use it to manipulate and edit their own video films by adding transition, sound and other special effects.

53. The teaching of ICT is excellent. The expectations set for pupils are very high and the tasks they are required to complete are extremely challenging. Lessons are planned very carefully so that all pupils will make the optimum progress. Pupils' response to this teaching is exceptional; they enjoy ICT and the subject contributes very significantly to their personal development. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils honestly and constructively criticised the work of their peers and offered suggestions as to how it might be improved. Although the criticism was quite sharp at times, all pupils accepted it in a mature way and used it to improve the quality of their work. Pupils concentrate extremely well in lessons and try hard to produce work of a very high quality. They are often very successful in this endeavour.

54. Leadership and management of the subject are outstanding. The development of the subject has provided a springboard for the development of the school's curriculum as a whole. This has been a corporate development which has been ably led by the ICT subject leader. The curriculum is innovative and creative; it enables all pupils to enjoy enormous success and to use ICT very well in many other subjects of the curriculum. The resources for the subject are very good; the school has a range of computers that provide pupils with access to high quality commercial software. The quality of the resources contributes significantly to the achievement of pupils.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

55. The use of ICT across the curriculum is excellent. Almost all subjects make use of ICT to enhance the opportunities available to pupils. In science, for example, pupils have produced animations showing the process of fertilisation and the expansion of gases, liquids and solids. ICT is also used well in science to assess pupils' progress in the subject. In mathematics pupils use spreadsheets to prepare and present graphs in a variety of formats. In English pupils have produced news reports incorporating images and text imported from other sources and in some they have even added their own voices as news readers.

HUMANITIES

History and geography

During the inspection it was not possible to observe any geography or history lessons and no overall judgement has been made about provision in these subjects.

56. Evidence from pupils' books indicates that as in other subjects in the school pupils benefit from high expectations, a very well structured curriculum designed to meet their needs very well and from links between these subjects and others. For example, older pupils make very good use of geographical skills that enhance their independence when they plan routes as part of their Youth Award Scheme. Similarly pupils make very good use of their knowledge of history when it is linked with art and they compare contemporary and Tudor portraits.

57. The school's high emphasis upon nurturing pupils' sense of responsibility and encouraging them to formulate their own views and opinions throughout the curriculum is evident in geographical work about the environment and how people affect it for good or ill. The sample of work seen indicates that the subject successfully increases pupils' awareness of the world around them, of local environmental issues such as 'traffic' and global issues such as climate change. Pupils' work is not marked with sufficient frequency or in a way which best helps them to understand how to improve it.

Religious education

Three lessons were seen in religious education. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, observation of a range of activities and discussion with staff.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Religious education makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Assemblies are used very effectively to promote religious education.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Systems to assess the progress which pupils make need developing.
- Teachers are skilled at using resources to make lessons interesting.

Commentary

58. Pupils of all ages and abilities achieve very well in religious education. Assemblies are very effective in developing pupils' knowledge of religion and understanding of religious issues. Each year group leads an assembly every term which has a religious theme relating to a world faith or a religious festival. All pupils are very keen to participate in the presentations and are very respectful of each other's efforts. There is a very strong emphasis in religious education lessons and assemblies on developing tolerance and respect for other people's religions and cultures and on promoting pupils' spiritual and moral development. For example, in a very good session to prepare Year 7 pupils for leading an assembly, strong guidance from the teacher enabled pupils to understand the link between the spirituality of Islam and the moral and social responsibility that one generation has for the generations that follow. In Years 10 and 11 pupils work on the 'Beliefs and Values' module as part of their ASDAN programme. This challenges them to consider moral issues and they produce thoughtful work.

59. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are based on the Hackney Agreed Syllabus which is adapted very well to meet the particular needs of the pupils. Pupils achieve very well in understanding the beliefs of major world faiths because lessons are stimulating and teachers use resources very effectively. Teamwork between teachers and support staff is very effective; it ensures that methods and resources are matched well to pupils of different ability and that they are able to make very good progress. For example, in an excellent lesson in Year 7 pupils were placed in three groups which were carefully planned so that they worked with others at a similar level of understanding on tasks which were matched well to their prior knowledge of the subject. Consequently, all pupils including low-attainers and pupils with additional special educational needs were fully involved.

60. Assessment in lessons is very effective; teachers frequently check how much pupils know and how well they have understood new topics. This information is used very well to shape the lesson content. The school is currently working with an adviser from the local education authority to develop procedures to assess more accurately pupils' progress over time. Pupils' work is always marked with positive comments celebrating their efforts. However, marking does not give pupils sufficient guidance as to how they can improve their work. The subject is very well led and managed. The leader has a clear vision for the improvement of the subject and is supported very well in this by the deputy headteacher who was the previous subject leader. The school's policy statement is used by the LEA religious education adviser as an exemplar of good practice for other schools. There has been good improvement in provision since the previous inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

One lesson was seen in resistant materials and an analysis was made of some of the work completed by the pupils. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement in this subject.

61. Both food technology and resistant materials are taught in specialist accommodation by teachers who are subject specialists. Resources are good and equipment in food technology is currently being updated. The school provides a GCSE course in design and technology for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The quality of design and the finish of pieces of work produced by the Year 11 pupils as part of their GCSE submission are high.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Two lessons were observed. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and held discussions with pupils about their work and with the leader of the subject.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress in the subject.
- Teaching is very good because of highly confident subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils.
- The subject is led extremely well and makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning in other subjects.

Commentary

62. Pupils achieve very well in art because of very good teaching and learning. They respond enthusiastically and with impressive maturity to the high expectations made of them. As in other subjects pupils benefit hugely from being taught by a subject specialist. Younger pupils make very good progress in working with clay. The teacher's expert guidance enables them to increase their skills and techniques very effectively, for example their use of relief to emphasise the perspective of the landscape depicted in ceramic tiles.

Older pupils compare the sculptures of various artists with increasing insight and maturity, while developing their own preferences for different styles.

63. Teaching is very good; it is expert and enthusiastic. Lessons are planned very well and resources are used effectively to enable pupils to make the best possible progress. Pupils have opportunities to explore the work of a wide range of artists; they respond well to the stimuli provided and concentrate for long periods of time, persevering with their work so that they are pleased with the results. The school learning environment, both inside and outside, is enhanced by very well presented displays of pupils' two and three-dimensional art work. This does much to mask the shabbiness of the building, to value pupils' work and to provide a learning environment that communicates a message to pupils and staff that only the best will do. There are countless examples of work using a variety of media contributing significantly to pupils' learning in and enjoyment of other subjects. For example, younger pupils position objects and materials creatively to represent different moods inspired by the story 'Beauty and the Beast'. Older pupils demonstrate impressive achievement in expressing themselves on paper when they write notes in sketchbooks recording their emerging ideas and preferences.
64. The subject is led and managed with exceptional energy, expertise, enthusiasm and impact. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good with rising standards and a dynamic, innovative curriculum. Pupils' progress is closely monitored and evaluated against demanding criteria. The subject is well resourced and benefits from a dedicated specialist room.

Music

The organisation of the curriculum during the week of the inspection provided little opportunity to observe direct teaching in this subject and no overall judgement has been made about provision.

65. In the only lesson seen teaching and learning were very good. Enthusiastic and very knowledgeable teaching motivated pupils successfully to achieve very well with tasks they found difficult, such as holding a correct note with their voices or a regular beat with a drum. In an assembly seen boys and girls of all ages and abilities participated very well in the singing. Pupils clearly benefit from this subject being led by a specialist who is passionate about music. The curriculum is organised extremely thoughtfully to help pupils develop key skills in music. For example, they all have considerable experience of singing and all have opportunities to compose and play a variety of instruments.
66. The subject makes a considerable contribution to pupils' personal development because of the excellent range of activities that enrich the curriculum. For example, in addition to the school tradition of musical performance, pupils have wonderful opportunities to work with other musicians. Recent projects have included all the pupils from Year 7 singing with the BBC singers at the Hackney Empire in front of a very large audience and last summer pupils from Year 11 attended harp workshops and performed with the London Symphony Orchestra.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

No lessons were seen in physical education so there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on provision in this subject.

67. All lessons are taught by a subject specialist. An effective small step assessment system is in place which enables the setting of realistic group and individual targets. There is a very good curriculum which enables all pupils to participate in games, gymnastics, dance and athletics. Pupils also benefit from activities such as canoeing and cycling which take place at a local outward bound centre. In Years 7 and 8 pupils go swimming at the local leisure centre. The curriculum is enriched by lunchtime clubs such as the football, basketball and girls' tennis clubs. Specialist sports coaches such as the London Community Cricket Association coach visit the school to lead activities. Last year the school won a cricket tournament where pupils competed against other London special schools. The physical education teacher is working hard to develop links with the neighbouring academy and a friendly football match is scheduled. There is a hall for physical education but it is not big enough to provide a good base for learning. The school makes very good use of Hackney Downs and the tennis courts next to the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

One lesson was observed. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and held discussions with pupils about their work and with the leader of the subject.

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress in accepting responsibility, working independently and understanding the responsibilities of adult life.
- There is a very well planned curriculum ensuring that all pupils deepen their understanding of this area of learning.
- The co-ordinator is developing the subject very well with an astute understanding of how to enhance provision even more.

Commentary

68. Pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is central to the school's curriculum and every aspect of school life. Every adult in the school contributes positively to this high quality provision. Teaching and learning in this area of pupils' development is very good. Members of staff exploit their excellent relationships with pupils to use every opportunity to encourage them to take responsibility. As a result pupils make very good progress towards their individual personal targets. Exchanges between adults and pupils typically use a sensitive questioning approach that avoids conflict but encourages pupils to consider their behaviour and its consequences, and so increasingly improve their own behaviour. Because the staff team share a common purpose and a shared understanding of pupils' needs and how to best meet them, pupils receive consistent guidance regarding how to behave and how to learn. Messages about how to communicate and how to behave are woven seamlessly through every exchange and interaction.

69. Teaching and learning in lessons that focus specifically on personal, social, emotional and health education and citizenship (PSHCE) are very good. Staff have high expectations of pupils and use very well chosen materials. Consequently pupils make very good progress in understanding their own emotions and empathising with others. Similarly, challenging work helps pupils to make very good gains in distinguishing between fact and opinion. Teaching is consistently well planned to use very well-chosen

resources that interest students and meet their needs very well. Valuable topics relating to preparation for employment and job interviews that contribute to a nationally recognised Youth Award Scheme are implemented rigorously and are much appreciated by pupils.

70. The subject is led and managed very effectively with considerable knowledge, expertise and passion. The senior member of staff who co-ordinates this vast area of work is constantly reflecting on and evaluating the provision. Consequently, the ever developing curriculum is very well organised and highly relevant to pupils. Very good use is made of professional expertise from outside the school to enrich pupils' learning, for example by using a drama specialist to work with younger pupils on relationships. Overall assessment procedures to monitor pupils' progress are very good. However, the co-ordinator is far from complacent. The strengths identified during the previous inspection have been sustained and extended and chosen areas for further developments in assessment are sensible.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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