

INSPECTION REPORT

GEORGE MITCHELL COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Leyton, London

LEA area: Waltham Forest

Unique reference number: 103096

Headteacher: Mrs H Jeffery

Lead inspector: Mr D J Thompson

Dates of inspection: 28th February – 3rd March 2005

Inspection number: 273294

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 16 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	623
School address:	Farmer Road Leyton London
Postcode:	E10 5DN
Telephone number:	020 8539 6198
Fax number:	020 8532 8766
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Mumtaz Zafar
Date of previous inspection:	March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

George Mitchell Community School is a smaller-than-average, mixed comprehensive school with 623 students on roll. There are 333 girls and 290 boys; this difference in numbers is greater than normally seen. It is situated in the Leyton area of east London and serves a catchment area which contains a large number of contributory primary schools. Students enter the school with very low standards of attainment. The school has gained an Artsmark award and is working towards an Investor in People award. There is involvement in a wide range of initiatives, such as Excellence in Cities, the Children's Fund, Big Lottery (extended schools) and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. There are very good links with the community, including work with the local estate community centre and a breakfast club. The school's socio-economic characteristics are well below average. About one-third of students are Asian, mostly Pakistani, about one-third are black, Caribbean and African and about a quarter are white, with a few other groups. More than two-thirds of students have English as an additional language, although most are not at an early stage of acquisition. Approximately two-thirds of students have special educational needs, which is well above the national average, and about one in ten students has a statement of need, which is much higher than seen nationally. There is a variety of special needs, including social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate and severe learning difficulties, and visual and hearing impairment. The school meets the needs of these students well. There is greater mobility than in the national picture; 79 per cent of Year 11 students joined the school in Year 7 against 89 per cent nationally.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15640	Mr D J Thompson	Lead inspector	
	Mr T Page	Lay inspector	
8696	Mr A Maula	Team inspector	English as an additional language
8090	Mr F Turns	Team inspector	Art and design
32999	Mr M Phillips	Team inspector	Music
11830	Mr J Banks	Team inspector	French German
19858	Mr J Follett	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs
7202	Ms E Hale	Team inspector	Citizenship
11684	Ms F le Pla	Team inspector	Religious education
12957	Mr J Stout	Team inspector	Geography History
33169	Ms E Waddingham	Team inspector	Design and technology
32851	Ms C Davison	Team inspector	Mathematics
33097	Mr G Watt	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
33987	Mr S Sherman	Team inspector	Science
34062	Mrs D Sherman	Team inspector	English

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

George Mitchell School provides a good quality of education. Effective leadership is producing a very positive ethos in which students, teachers and members of the community work together in purposeful harmony. The school has high aspirations for its students and provides sound value for money. Good teaching enables students to achieve well.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the headteacher, senior leadership team and governors provide strong, yet sensitive and supportive leadership, which has substantially improved provision for students;
- the school provides a high level of care, which produces very positive attitudes, good behaviour and excellent racial harmony;
- extensive links with other organisations have been developed recently and there is a positive partnership with parents; students, parents and community members are very satisfied with the school;
- good teaching produces effective learning, but there is scope to make better use of assessment to plan the curriculum and let students know how they can improve;
- the leadership team has introduced better approaches to improvement planning, monitoring and evaluation, but these are not yet used with sufficient consistency by middle managers;
- teachers and support staff work hard to support students' use of English and to promote positive attendance, but slow acquisition of language and literacy skills and below average attendance are barriers to learning for many;
- students achieve very well in mathematics, science, geography, history and Urdu but do not achieve well enough in French, design and technology, religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum; and
- statutory requirements are not met in providing reports of students' progress and fully complying with the content of governors' reports to parents and the prospectus.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The quality of teaching is better, the curriculum has been broadened and standards in GCSE examinations are higher. There has been substantial improvement in the use of planning, monitoring and evaluation to raise achievement, and financial management is much better. Not enough progress has been made in meeting statutory requirements. There is scope for further improvement in developing students' literacy and ICT skills.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Students achieve well overall. They enter the school with very low standards and improve successfully to be much closer to, although still below, the national average by the time they leave. In national Year 9 tests in 2004, students achieved well in English and mathematics to attain below-average standards. Standards in science were very low, representing insufficient achievement. Recent GCSE results showed standards to be below average, but this represents good achievement when compared with similar schools. The local authority set very high targets for the school's test and examination results. The school met its Year 9 national test target in English and was very close to the mathematics target, but was well below its science target. The GCSE target for A*-C grades was exceeded but targets for A*-G grades and average points scores were not met.

Current Year 9 students, taking account of all subjects studied, are achieving well to attain below-average standards. Students also achieve well in Years 10 and 11 to reach below-average standards towards the end of Year 11. Students with special educational needs achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11. Girls achieve better than boys. Students of Asian and Caribbean heritage do best in examinations and white UK students do not do well enough. All students develop their competence in mathematics skills successfully, but improvement in ICT skills across the majority of subjects is too slow. Gifted and talented students make good progress, as do students for whom English is an additional language, although slow development of language and literacy skills prevents their progress being even better. Students currently following GCSE courses achieve well in most subjects but do not achieve well enough in design and technology and French. Achievement is also unsatisfactory in religious education in Years 7 to 9.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Attitudes and relationships are very good and behaviour is good, making a positive contribution to students' achievement. Students have strong respect for others and there is an excellent level of racial harmony. Attendance is below the national average, mainly because of religious requirements, but punctuality to school is good. Students' moral, social and cultural development is very good but the school does not plan sufficiently to promote spiritual growth.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good and leads to effective learning. Teachers know their subjects well and insist on high standards of behaviour so students are confident they can learn and work productively. Teachers plan lessons carefully to provide interesting activities and provide extensive encouragement for students. This creates a productive learning ethos where very positive attitudes and strong relationships contribute successfully to good progress. However, assessment is not used well enough to help students understand how to improve, and homework does not sufficiently reinforce or extend learning.

There is a high standard of care. Pastoral staff are very knowledgeable and there are effective arrangements to ensure students get the best from their education and are not excluded from the opportunities available. There is excellent involvement of students in monitoring the quality of what the school provides and suggesting improvement. However, the tracking of academic progress is too infrequent, and insufficiently detailed, to generate maximum achievement. The school has successfully broadened the curriculum to include more vocational courses, and there are good opportunities to extend learning beyond lessons in extra-curricular activities. Links with parents are satisfactory and partnership with other schools and colleges are good. Community links have been considerably improved and are now very successful.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is led well and managed successfully. The headteacher and senior leadership team's high aspirations for students' attitudes, personal development and achievement are implemented well. The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and works effectively with school representatives to improve provision, but has not ensured that all statutory requirements are met. New approaches to improvement planning and monitoring have strong potential to raise achievement further but their impact is not fully realised because of inconsistent implementation by middle managers.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents hold positive opinions about the school. They appreciate the school's high expectations and all that is done to help their children become mature learners. Students are highly appreciative of their strong role in improving the school and are confident that they are given a good chance of success.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- to provide more focused monitoring and support for teaching, with an emphasis on making better use of assessment to help students improve;
- to work more closely with middle managers in using improvement planning, analysis of data, and monitoring and evaluation strategies to raise achievement further;
- to improve support for English language acquisition, especially for younger students;
- to work further with local religious and community groups in order to raise attendance rates;
- to raise achievement in design and technology, French, ICT across the curriculum and religious education;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide clearer, more detailed information to parents, and implement fuller programmes of study for religious education, citizenship and careers education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students achieve well throughout their education at George Mitchell Community School. They enter the school with very low standards and improve successfully to be just below the national average by the time they leave.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 9 students achieved well in the national tests in English and mathematics but did not achieve well enough in science.
- Students' GCSE results represented good achievement, to reach below-average standards.
- Students with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and talented, achieve well.
- Although development of language and literacy skills is a barrier to learning for many students, they still achieve well.
- Students do not achieve well enough in French, design and technology, religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.2 (27.9)	33.5 (33.4)
mathematics	30.1 (30.5)	35.7 (35.4)
science	26.2 (28.5)	33.2 (33.6)

There were 118 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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	40 (33)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	85 (88)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	91 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	30.5 (30.9)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 119 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Students enter the school with very low standards. Standards in the national Year 9 tests in English and mathematics, in 2004, were below the national average. These represented good achievement in comparison with students' previous attainment at the end of their primary education. Standards in science national Year 9 tests were very low, representing too little progress since primary school and insufficient achievement. National Year 9 test results have improved in English and mathematics in recent years but not in science.

2. Current Year 9 students, taking account of all subjects studied, are achieving well overall. They make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and science. They achieve very well in mathematics, history and geography to attain standards similar to the

national average. They do not achieve well enough in design and technology, French and religious education, where standards are too low, because of unsatisfactory teaching and inadequate subject management.

3. Students make very good progress in developing their mathematical competence in other subjects to demonstrate skills similar to those seen nationally. They are given too few opportunities to use their ICT skills and, consequently, do not develop these sufficiently.
4. The most recent GCSE results showed the proportion of students gaining A*-C grades to be below the national average, representing good progress when compared with students' previous standards at the end of Year 9. Students' attainment of five or more A*-G grades was also lower than that seen nationally but represented good achievement when compared with schools of a similar social and economic context. Overall GCSE standards, taking all students' results into account, were below average, representing good progress over Years 10 and 11, and very good achievement compared with similar schools. Students were particularly successful in science and Urdu, where they achieved very well to attain standards above the national average. Students did not do well enough in design and technology, French and geography.
5. The school was set ambitious targets, by the local education authority, for its Year 9 tests and Year 11 GCSE results. The school met its Year 9 target in English and almost met it in mathematics, but was well below its science target. The GCSE target for A*-C grades was exceeded, but targets for A*-G grades and average points were not met.
6. Students with special educational needs, across all years, make good progress and achieve well in relation to their specific learning and behavioural needs. This is due to the good level of support provided by the school, in one to one, small groups and in mainstream lessons. The Learning Centre is having a significant impact on the achievement of identified students. Some of these are at risk of exclusion from school, some in need of respite from aspects of the mainstream curriculum and others have lost long periods of schooling. For some students in Years 10 and 11 the Learning Centre includes provision of an alternative curriculum through the Compact Club. This opportunity has been instrumental in ensuring these students' continued involvement in school and has prepared them well for future education, training and the world of work.
7. The large numbers of students for whom English is an additional language achieve well, so that by the time they leave the school their standards are at least as high as those of other students. Specialist support, funded by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant and further supplemented by the school, is effective in generating good progress. However, there are students who do not receive sufficient support, and difficulty with English remains a barrier to their learning.
8. Gifted and talented students achieve well throughout the school because they are identified carefully and all teachers know that appropriate challenge must be provided. This has produced improvement in the proportion of higher levels gained in Year 9 national tests, and resulted in the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades being higher in the last two years than it was in 2002..
9. Students of Asian and Caribbean heritage have attained the highest standards in examinations and this is reflected in their current performance where they are producing the best work. The performance of African students is improving but there is a downward trend in the results of those with a Turkish background. White students do not gain sufficiently high

standards when compared with other groups and boys do not achieve as well as girls. The school's leadership team is aware of the differences and has recently organised staff training on strategies for raising the achievement of under-performing boys.

10. Overall, the leadership team's vision of generating a very positive ethos and supporting it with strategies for raising achievement has been successful in producing very positive attitudes and good achievement.
11. Standards have improved since the previous inspection. The proportion of students gaining A*-C grades at GCSE has increased from 22 per cent to 43 per cent. Achievement in Year 9 tests has been maintained at above average in English, improved from below to above average in mathematics, but declined from average to well below average in science. However, achievement of current students in science is good. Overall achievement in mathematics, history and geography, which was not good enough in 1999, is now very good. There is still too little achievement in French, design and technology, religious education and ICT across the curriculum.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes are very good, their behaviour is good, but attendance is below the national average. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are happy, feel safe and secure, and subscribe to the school's positive and caring ethos.
- Students behave well within and beyond lessons.
- There are very good attitudes to learning, and a strong desire to become involved in the life of the school.
- There are excellent relationships between students and staff, and between all of the wide range of ethnic groups present at the school.
- Students take responsibility willingly.
- Attendance compares unfavourably with national figures, although there are mitigating factors.

Commentary

12. Students subscribe to the school's caring ethos and high expectations by behaving well in and out of school, and by demonstrating very good attitudes to learning, especially when teaching is good. The school applies clear and consistent behaviour management strategies which the students understand. There was only one permanent exclusion made in the year preceding the inspection, and this is well below the national average.
13. Very good relationships effectively promote a caring and trusting community, mutual respect, confidence and raised self-esteem, racial harmony, and very little bullying or harassment. Conversations with students confirm that they are happy, loyal, and proud of their school, and enthusiastic in participating in all that the school has to offer. Ownership of the school, through a strong student voice, was a strong feature of the students' pre-inspection survey.
14. Students take a keen interest in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and represent the school in debates, sport, and the arts. They are willing to take responsibilities that contribute to the smooth running of the school. The self-regulating prefect system has widespread respect and makes a significant contribution to maintaining an orderly school. Individual initiatives such as two Year 7 students, of Algerian and Mauritian heritage, teaching a young Somali pupil to count in French up to five in a lunch-time French club illustrate the caring, inclusive ethos which is at the heart of the school.

15. The school stimulates students to think about others. The assembly theme during inspection week was the United Nations rights of the child, which involved students in voting for children nominated for the World Children's Prize. Students have raised over a thousand pounds for victims of the Tsunami disaster. They are also involved in supporting the elderly in a local care home as part of citizenship activities.
16. Students with special educational needs are well motivated and keen to improve. They generally have good relationships with their support staff, subject teachers and with other students. All staff providing curriculum and behaviour support work hard to provide a secure, supportive and welcoming environment which encourages students to learn. The learning mentor and behaviour support manager provide good academic and emotional support to students and they work hard to raise students' self esteem. The head of inclusion and her team of teaching assistants provide effective support. Subject teachers receive good information about their students, and the head of inclusion works hard to ensure that this is used well to meet needs. The positive attitudes and good standards of behaviour demonstrated by students for whom English is an additional language enable them to integrate well into the school community and contribute effectively to their good achievement. Gifted and talented students are supported effectively by the school's co-ordinator so that they develop positive attitudes and personal qualities, enabling them to make good progress.
17. Students' personal development is good. Their moral, social and cultural development is very good and the school promotes these aspects well. Students who take on responsibilities, such as assisting at reception, hosting visitors, being prefects and helping younger students with reading, carry out their duties well and are respected by others in the school. The wide range of extra-curricular activities available enables students of all ages and backgrounds to work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The school council provides valuable opportunities for democratic involvement whilst initiatives such as MLB (making learning better) give students a strong opportunity to have their voice heard and influence improvements in teaching and learning. Students demonstrate a clear understanding of what is right and wrong. They show a moral concern for the needs of others by raising money for charities, such as the recent Tsunami appeal. They willingly help others, both inside and outside school, by taking part in activities, such as FAB (fight against bullying) and Generation Mix. Staff set good role models and their words and actions promote the moral principles of the school's aims. The school is very effective in preparing students for life in a culturally diverse society and numerous activities, such as the Cultures Club and the Ladders group (local community multicultural groups), enable students to celebrate their own heritage as well as experience the cultures and faiths of other traditions. The spiritual development of students is satisfactory. Assemblies contribute soundly to spiritual development through reflection on themes such as 'the plight of children less fortunate than us'. Further opportunities for reflection are provided during tutor time and students respond well to these. In religious education, topics such as 'What is God like?' provide a stimulus for further consideration of the deeper meanings of life, but in other subjects there is not enough planning for this aspect of personal development.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.2	School data	3.9
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.

18. Attendance is below the national average. There are a number of contributory factors, including relatively high pupil mobility and religious holidays, which reflect the school's ethnic

diversity. The school, supported by the educational welfare service, does all that is reasonable to promote good attendance including the prosecution of parents. An attendance officer monitors attendance on a daily basis and makes first-day absence enquiries. An attendance board promotes good attendance, but a rewards system, which is at an early stage of trial, has not yet been effective in engaging poor attenders. A broader curriculum has been introduced recently to reduce disaffection. There is no significant difference in attendance between year groups. Punctuality is good. However, the school needs to work further to improve attendance rates.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	64	3	0
White – any other White background	85	3	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	2	1
Mixed – White and Black African	1	8	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	13	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	17	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	147	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	28	1	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	13	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	70	29	0
Black or Black British – African	47	4	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	123	6	0
Chinese	8	0	0
Any other ethnic group	27	3	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	2	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good enabling students to achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subjects well enabling them to inspire confidence and enthusiasm in students.
- Teachers provide effective encouragement and support so students have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour so students get on with their work productively.
- Lessons are planned carefully to include interesting resources and activities.
- Students are not always clear what is expected of them, inhibiting progress.
- Not enough is done to help students understand how to improve their work.
- There is insufficient setting of homework to reinforce or extend work done in lessons.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 108 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	19 (18%)	50 (46%)	28 (26%)	7 (6%)	3 (3%)	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.

19. An important strength in many areas of the school is the subject knowledge of teachers. They teach with authority, inspiring confidence and enthusiasm and, as a result, students learn well, acquiring new knowledge, improved skills and better understanding. This was obvious, for example, in an English lesson where students were analysing the opening scene of a play entitled 'The Caretaker'. The teacher questioned the students expertly to extend their understanding. When students misunderstood the text, the teacher helped them by relating this work to their previous knowledge. Similarly, in an Urdu lesson, the teacher demonstrated pronunciation and formation of letters effectively, so students learned how to recognise the alphabet in both sound and shape.
20. The school places a great deal of importance on encouraging and supporting students. This is highly valued by them and makes a major contribution to their very positive attitudes. In a science lesson, for example, the teacher had built up a friendly but firm relationship with students. This enabled them to make very good progress in learning about the properties of metals and non-metals. In a history lesson the teacher helped students stage a short drama activity. He supported them effectively by taking part himself. This enabled all students to learn about the Civil Rights movement in America. Teachers also provide high quality support for students with special educational needs. In a geography lesson, for example, the teacher ensured a learning mentor had clear guidance to help a girl with her work on the environment.
21. In most lessons teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and effort. This results in high levels of attention and students concentrating well throughout lessons. In an art lesson, for example, the teacher made expectations clear from the start, so students were attentive during a demonstration. The teacher supported students individually by going over new techniques, enabling them to make good progress in their understanding of how to enlarge and transfer an image. In some lessons, however, the behaviour of students is not managed as effectively. In a mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher began to give instructions while some students were still talking. This meant some did not get on with their work and carried on chatting. A simple task took too long, and time was wasted.
22. Many lessons are planned very effectively. Teachers take great care to choose a wide range of different resources and activities, which engage students' interest and provide a good opportunity to promote learning objectives. In a history lesson for example, the teacher made the aims of a lesson on the French Revolution very clear. All students therefore knew exactly what was expected of them. He set interesting activities for students to find out about the

storming of the Bastille. He showed different pictures of the event and encouraged students to talk about what might have happened. All students took part enthusiastically. They all learned about the way historical sources may be interpreted in different ways. Some lessons are not planned as carefully. Teachers do not plan sufficiently to include ICT in their lessons and this results in too few opportunities for students to develop their skills. When use of ICT is included there are occasions when planning is not thorough enough to ensure that students improve. In a design and technology lesson, for example, students were asked to use the Internet to research the work of William Morris, then design a box structure. The teacher did not give sufficient guidance, so students were unclear what was expected of them. They struggled with the wrong computer software, and made little progress in developing their design skills.

23. In some subjects, teachers make effective use of homework. In a science lesson, for example, the teacher set work to help students reinforce and extend their understanding of water pollution. In many lessons no homework is set, or homework is not used effectively. In a religious education lesson, for example, optional homework was set as part of the work on Christianity. Students could write their own parable. They were not given sufficient guidance to help them do this properly.
24. An important weakness in teaching is the use of assessment to let students know how well they are achieving or how they can improve. Too many teachers do not use their knowledge of students' learning sufficiently to set work at the appropriate level. In a French lesson, for example, the students were set low level work which did not motivate them to want to learn. Consequently they made little effort and gained very little from the lesson. Similarly, in a religious education lesson on Islam, learning objectives were not made clear, and all students were set the same work. This meant some students were not stretched. Assessment feedback to students, including marking, is often insufficiently specific so that students are unclear as to what they have learnt or what they should do next to reach higher levels.
25. Students with special educational needs learn well in all subject areas where they have in-class support, work in small withdrawal groups, or benefit from the provision of the Learning Centre. Teachers' awareness of individual students' needs is improving and many are able to cater for them alongside those of the rest of the class. For students with statements of special educational needs, and those with more significant learning or behavioural needs, teaching assistants provide very good support and adapt work or intervene well to support these students and ensure they make progress. There are, however, still some instances where teaching assistant support is not available, for example in French, and, as a result, students' progress is impaired. The school's assessment procedures for students with special educational needs are good. There are good systems for identifying and assessing students. These start with good liaison between the school and its contributory primary schools. After students transfer further diagnostic tests are undertaken and results used effectively to review individual education plans, set future targets and identify any further support required. The quality of teaching provided by specialist teachers funded under the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant is good. Their joint planning, and preparation with mainstream teachers, reflects a good awareness of the language development needs of students for whom English is an additional language, though opportunities for them to consolidate their learning are sometimes limited. Students also benefit from classroom strategies such as the focus on key vocabulary employed by their mainstream teachers. All this impacts on learning which reflects high levels of co-operation and collaboration on the part of the majority of these students throughout school.
26. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. The standard of teaching has improved. The proportion of good or better lessons has increased and the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons has decreased. The quality of teaching has been maintained or improved in most subjects, but teaching of design and technology remains unsatisfactory and, in French, teaching has deteriorated to become unsatisfactory.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory in all years. There is a good range of extra clubs and enrichment activities. Resource provision is satisfactory but accommodation is inadequate.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The senior leadership team has a clear vision for the future development of the curriculum in order to meet the needs of all students.
- There are good extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities which widen students' experiences and provide effective support for learning.
- The Learning Centre raises students' achievement and self-esteem.
- Support for students with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language enables them to achieve well.
- The embedding of ICT within the curriculum is underdeveloped, and provision in design and technology, French and some aspects of citizenship and religious education are unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation is good in the newer areas of the school, but inadequate in most other areas.

Commentary

27. The curricular provision in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Students follow a broad and balanced curriculum including all National Curriculum subjects. Media studies has been introduced recently and Urdu is studied by all students in Year 7. Students experience a daily act of collective worship, either through a Year assembly or in tutor groups through the provision of a 'Thought for the Day'. Provision in some aspects of careers, citizenship and religious education is unsatisfactory because the relevant curriculum content is not covered thoroughly. In this respect the school does not meet statutory requirements.
28. In Years 10 and 11, provision is also satisfactory. Recent improvements have been made and the curriculum is now more relevant through the introduction of a small number of vocational courses. Higher-achieving students also have the opportunity to study Urdu and media studies at AS level. The senior leadership team has worked hard to broaden the curriculum and has plans for further improvement.
29. The curriculum for students with special educational needs is good. Better opportunities for students to follow an alternative curriculum, including some work placement, have been introduced recently. This has had a positive impact in providing a more appropriate curriculum as well as preparing students successfully for future education, training and employment.
30. The school's provision of activities to support learning and enrich the curriculum is good. A wide range of opportunities exists for students to extend their learning outside lessons. Art and music enable students to take part in a good range of activities which complement and extend the work covered in timetabled lessons. Physical education has established a number of successful teams and clubs. Good use is made of community links to further enrich the curriculum. There is good extra-curricular provision for gifted and talented students, including a Year 10 'Express' Group, enabling students to move ahead quickly with their GCSE courses and a Year 11 'Aspire' group, enabling AS courses to be followed.
31. Accommodation is inadequate, despite the school's best efforts to brighten up the environment with displays of pupil's work and other artefacts. These include a display of the Victoria Cross and other medals awarded to George Mitchell, a former pupil, after whom the school is named. The staircases are very narrow with low ceilings and, because of the age of the building, access for the disabled is poor. The school is considering suggestions for improvement with the local Fire Officer. Toilet facilities are inadequate and in a poor state of decoration. In physical education, there is a shortage of indoor accommodation because the nearby local-authority-run leisure centre is often not available to the school during the day. This restricts the range of activities taught and is a barrier to learning. The school is on three sites which makes security a problem and also leads to loss of curriculum time as students move from class to class. Accommodation in the newer built and newly refurbished areas of the school, for example the ICT room and rooms for the teaching of small groups of students who need curriculum or behaviour support, is good. The area used by the learning mentor,

however, is cramped and lacks suitable resources. The Learning Resource Centre (LRC) is currently providing an inadequate range of resources. There is, however, a newly appointed LRC manager in post and there are plans for imminent improvement.

32. Resources are satisfactory. Whilst ICT resources, with a good number of interactive whiteboards in use, are good there is a lack of provision of any individualised ICT programmes to support and improve students' literacy and numeracy skills. Lack of resources restricts the delivery of computer-aided design activities in design technology and data-logging work in science. Most subjects are adequately resourced but there are shortages in geography, history, religious education and French.
33. Staffing is satisfactory. Although the school is fully staffed it has had difficulty in recruiting specialist staff for religious education which has had an adverse effect on standards. The provision of support staff, to meet the individual learning needs of students and to support subject teaching, is good. Other support staff, including administrative, technical and site staff, work hard to support the school. There are good induction procedures in place for staff new to the school, and satisfactory opportunities for staff to undertake continued professional development.
34. The school makes good use of support assistants and a wide range of resources, which celebrate cultural diversity to provide full access to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities for students for whom English is an additional language.
35. There has been good progress in improving the curriculum since the previous inspection. The school has maintained the good features identified in 1999, broadened the range of opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11 and improved the balance of time between subjects. ICT resources are now better, as is staffing.

Care, guidance and support

Support, advice and guidance are good. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to ensure the health and safety of students, overall. Induction procedures are very good and the involvement of students in the school's work and development is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is excellent involvement of students in the running of the school.
- Pastoral support is very effective, based on careful monitoring and expert provision.
- Assessment information is not used sufficiently consistently across subjects to support and guide students in improving their performance.
- There are very good induction arrangements for students new to the school.

Commentary

36. The school has sound procedures and policies for ensuring students' health and safety including fire safety awareness, which was identified as a weakness at the time of the last inspection. Staff are well informed about child protection procedures and good links have been maintained with external agencies.
37. Students' involvement in the development of the school is excellent. School and year group councils discuss issues and put forward suggestions. The radical 'Make Learning Better', (MLB), initiative provides students with a potent voice in improving learning activities by involving them in observing lessons and providing formal feedback on the quality of teaching. This has been effective in raising students' self esteem, establishing co-ownership of lessons, and improving teaching strategies such as including more explicit plenary sessions to confirm understanding.

38. Students are also fully involved in peer support and management through a 'buddy' system to help new entrants by supporting paired reading and through their involvement in a school prefect system that works effectively because it is respected by all students. Year 8 students provide a useful role by acting as receptionists, on a rota basis, and students of all ages help run extra-curricular activities and act as translators for students whose first language is not English.
39. The tracking of students' personal development is very good. A range of data is available to inform staff and identify emerging problems at an early stage. A variety of strategies are effectively employed to counter disaffection on a pupil-specific basis, and a broader curriculum has been introduced, which better meets the needs of Year 10 students. Learning leaders have replaced heads of year and now co-ordinate all-round support rather than focus on behaviour management. Very good links have been established with an array of external agencies so that the needs of all students are met well.
40. Support and guidance, based on academic monitoring, is unsatisfactory because it is too variable in quality across subject areas. Teachers have access to broad indicators, such as national test results, and cognitive ability tests, but assessment systems are not fully in place. The monitoring of students' progress is too infrequent, in most subjects, to ensure that they are on track to achieve their targets. Staff do not consistently support and guide students academically to let them know how to improve their performance across the curriculum. There is no consistent school policy for the assessment of individual subjects but where subject assessment is used effectively, in science for example, students' achievement is very good.
41. The provision of impartial careers advice is satisfactory. All students have the opportunity to consult a 'Connexions' adviser to help them make future choices about their education and careers.
42. Gifted and talented students are identified and provided with challenging activities, including 'aim higher' sessions for those who have the potential to benefit from university education but who come from backgrounds that might not value higher education. Students with special educational needs have well-planned individual education plans and good one-to-one and small group learning support is provided by the learning mentor. Students with emotional and behaviour difficulties are supported very well with agreed behaviour management strategies and a dedicated learning support centre which is effective in promoting inclusion without classroom disruption. Although the achievement of white UK boys is lower than for other groups of students there is no discrimination in the provision of support.
43. Induction procedures are very good. Learning leaders, the head of inclusion and language support staff visit the six main feeder primary schools to talk with teachers and students, work samples are reviewed, and assessment data is collected. Initial assessments are made in a student's home language, where required. Further testing is undertaken early in Year 7 to confirm attainment levels. Taster sessions are provided prior to students joining the school, and a special activities day takes place on the day before the start of the Autumn term. Students joining the school at other times are supported by a buddy who often acts as a translator, and special English classes are arranged if necessary. This wide range of strategies is very effective in making all students feel fully included in what George Mitchell School has to offer and making a significant contribution to students' well-being, attitudes and progress.
44. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The high standard of care recognised in 1999 has been maintained. There has been substantial improvement in procedures for seeking students' views, and health and safety measures are better. There has been insufficient improvement in the use of assessment to provide academic guidance.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory. Its links with the community are very good. Partnerships with other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents and students hold positive opinions about the school.
- Not all written communications meet statutory requirements.
- Community links have improved significantly and are having a positive impact on the success, popularity and reputation of the school.
- The school has productive links with other schools and colleges which are helpful in supporting primary transfer, post-16 education and staff professional development.

Commentary

45. A large majority of parents agrees that their children like school, that settling in arrangements are good, expectations and teaching are good, there is encouragement for students to become mature and independent, and that the school is approachable. All these important strengths are confirmed by the inspection. Inspectors agree with those parents who have concerns about work undertaken at home and being informed about progress, but have found little evidence to back the views of a minority of parents who disagree that students' behaviour is good. Good relationships are effective in counteracting bullying and harassment, and this is confirmed in conversations with students. In their own survey, students commented favourably on teaching, expectations, relationships and the ethos of the school
46. Students' annual reports do not include sufficient information about students' progress in any subject, and for some year groups there is no reporting of religious education or citizenship. The school prospectus and governors' annual report have a number of omissions including clear information on catering for students with disabilities, special educational needs and the right of parents to withdraw their children from acts of collective worship. Other communications, such as the George Mitchell Times (GMT), are well written, provide good information about what is going on in school and celebrate students' achievements.
47. Links with the community have improved significantly over recent years, and are now very good, due to the school actively seeking the support of its neighbours. Students have benefited from the provision of a breakfast club, enterprise and work related learning activities, sports coaching, and shared use of community facilities. Students work with the elderly and an Asian Women's Association, and the school provides community languages courses for local residents, and a Saturday school.
48. The establishment of greatly improved links with community leaders and parents of all ethnic groups has created a much better understanding between the school and the community it serves. Meetings with a wide range of community leaders, during the inspection, confirmed that the community has a high level of confidence in the school.
49. Effective transfer arrangements have been established with the feeder primary schools. There is extensive pastoral provision for ensuring that students transfer easily and settle in quickly. Curricular links are developing but there are currently too few subjects where students begin a project at primary school and continue it in Year 7. Links with the Connaught School, with which George Mitchell is federated, enable a wider perspective on improvement planning and a shared approach to staff training, which has improved approaches to teaching and learning, such as for gifted and talented students. Links with Leyton Sixth Form College are effective in helping students make the right choice for their next phase of education. The provision of work experience placements, for teaching students from the University of East London, brings new ideas to the school and makes an effective contribution to the school's recruitment of staff.

50. The head of inclusion has worked hard to improve the involvement of parents in their children's learning. Information about individual students' progress is provided regularly and parents are actively encouraged to attend annual review meetings and support their children's educational and emotional development. There is good liaison between the school and its contributory primary schools. This has created good transfer of information between them to ensure effective support is provided. The head of inclusion and her staff have worked hard to re-establish links with outside support agencies and their involvement in the work of the school has recently improved significantly.
51. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. Links with other schools and colleges, and links with the community have improved substantially, but the quality of information to parents, especially students' annual reports, has not improved sufficiently.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is led well and managed effectively. There is a very clear vision, supported by successful strategies, which produces a very positive ethos and good achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very good leadership and the senior leadership team has a strong, shared vision which is understood very well throughout the school.
- The governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are actively involved in fostering improvement, but they have not yet ensured that all statutory requirements are met.
- There is a strong belief that all students are entitled to experience success; effective strategies are pursued to bring this about.
- The senior leadership team has introduced much more effective approaches to improvement planning and monitoring, but these have not yet been adopted sufficiently throughout the school.
- There is too much inconsistency in the effectiveness of middle management, from very good to unsatisfactory.

Commentary

52. The school is led well. The headteacher's leadership is very good; she is highly respected by students, parents, teachers, governors and educationalists linked to the school. In the eighteen months since her appointment she has demonstrated enthusiastic, energetic dedication to moving the school forward, such as in forging new partnerships with the community and the local education authority. The newly formed senior leadership team is a very effective blend of experienced staff who know the school well, and new appointments, who bring complementary expertise from their previous posts. Members of the team share a very clear vision, founded on ensuring that every student, regardless of ability, gender or background, achieves their best. Promotion of the vision has been very effective so that everyone understands that the school provides an opportunity for students to have a love of learning, feel good about themselves and 'shine' in at least one area. Members of the senior leadership team are constantly reinforcing the vision, such as at lesson changeovers, breaks and lunchtimes when they speak individually to many students whilst encouraging punctuality to lessons. The hard work and dedication of the senior leadership team has produced a very positive ethos, characterised by strong mutual respect, very positive attitudes to learning and very good relationships. The race equality policy is implemented very effectively, resulting in a very high level of racial harmony. Perseverance in pursuing strategies for raising achievement, such as improving teaching and learning and broadening the curriculum, are ensuring that students achieve well. The school makes good use of most national strategies for raising achievement, but there is too little use of assessment to improve learning.
53. The governors provide good quality service to the school. Their involvement in training and regular meetings, including high quality presentations from teachers, has enabled governors

to develop a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have used their knowledge well to shape improvement and have not been afraid to challenge the school's leadership when they believe provision can be improved. They have made sure that many statutory requirements are met but have not ensured that reports on students' progress, the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents have the required content, or that religious education, citizenship and careers education cover the agreed syllabus.

54. The leadership team has made good use of nationally recommended approaches to introduce new monitoring and evaluation procedures. Members of the team have also been very successful role models in carrying out the procedures. They have, for example, implemented a very rigorous approach to lesson observations so that all teachers receive detailed feedback on what they do well, how they can improve and the quality of teaching seen. An outstanding feature is the school's 'Making Learning better' (MLB) approach where students are involved in observing lessons and scrutinising work as well as appointing staff. Highly effective training has resulted in students being able to articulate factors associated with positive learning, such as the features of a high quality lesson, very clearly. Management of teachers' performance is at an early stage. Targets have been set for senior leaders but most members of staff do not have their own targets. Professional development opportunities have been matched very well to whole-school priorities, but the lack of personal targets has resulted in there being too little involvement in staff training linked to personal and subject-specific needs. The leadership team goes to considerable lengths to help weaker teachers improve and takes action to remove persistently weak teachers when they are adversely affecting students' learning. The school is involved very successfully in initial teacher training and is a popular place for established teachers to work. This has enabled the school to recruit and retain teachers.
55. The leadership and management of the special educational needs provision in the school is very good. The head of inclusion has worked hard to put procedures in place to improve provision and involve colleagues in developing support for these students. She is well supported by her team of teaching assistants, the head of Behaviour Support, the learning mentor and language support staff. She provides good leadership, advice and guidance to all colleagues on developing strategies to meet the needs of pupil in their classes. Funding for students with special educational needs is used appropriately and effectively and is heavily supplemented by funds from other school budgets. This results in students with special educational needs achieving well. Leadership and management of the provision for students for whom English is an additional language are satisfactory. The recent reorganisation, following the retirement of the head of department, has led to responsibilities being shared with the head of inclusion temporarily overseeing provision and this is generating good achievement.
56. The provision for gifted and talented students is led well and managed in a satisfactory manner. There is a clear vision for improving the provision. Students have been identified appropriately and, although support is at an early stage of development, links with the local education authority are being used well to inform plans for improvement.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,939,953	Balance from previous year	326,013
Total expenditure	3,005,215	Balance carried forward to the next	260,751
Expenditure per pupil	4,876		

57. The finances of the school are run in a satisfactory manner. The bursar has a rigorous system for matching spending to purpose, and there is a detailed three-year plan to reduce the school's spending so that it is in line with its income. There is a system of encouraging bids for funding to meet department's needs but these are insufficiently linked to improvement plans for raising achievement. Several providers of service, such as office refurbishment, repairs and maintenance have been considered in order to gain the best quality at the most competitive cost.
58. There is too much inconsistency in the quality of middle managers. Management is successful in many areas, such as Learning Leaders, who provide very good care and support for students within a year-team structure. Many subject leaders are working successfully with their teams to maintain high achievement or raise it, but subject co-ordination is having too little impact on students' success in French, religious education, ICT and design and technology. The schools' Raising Attainment Plan (RAP) identifies highly appropriate priorities for improvement, such as teaching and learning, academic monitoring and curriculum, but there is too little emphasis on targeting specific outcomes for students. Most middle managers are making too little use of assessment data to compare the performance of different groups of students or measure the effect of strategies for improvement. The senior leadership team is strongly committed to improving middle managers, such as supporting their participation in 'Leadership from the Middle' professional development.
59. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. Above average achievement has been maintained. The curriculum has been broadened and statutory requirements for a daily act of worship are now met. There has been substantial improvement in improvement planning, monitoring and evaluation, financial management and application of policies. There has been too little progress in providing effective information to parents and in generating achievement in French, religious education, ICT and design and technology.
60. Overall, good leadership is producing a very positive ethos and an effective school. The school uses its above average expenditure per student effectively to produce good achievement and provide satisfactory value for money.

WORK RELATED LEARNING

Provision in work related learning is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a clear policy and strategy to meet the new statutory requirements.
- Good progress has been made in providing elements of work related contexts for learning.
- There is a comprehensive work experience programme.
- An audit of work-related learning against the national framework has been carried out, but no monitoring has been done to ensure effective provision for all students.
- There are no records of students' progress.

Commentary

61. A good start has been made to developing work-related learning for all students through an audit of experiences across the curriculum and through additional experiences. These include the opening of the school bank, work with a range of business partners and through the support of the local Education Business Partnership. All students are offered the opportunity to do work experience at age 15, and the well-organised programme ensures that as many as possible gain experience in suitable places of work. The students gain an insight into the world of work and develop the skills and attitudes needed for successful employment. The curriculum has recently been extended to include a limited number of vocationally orientated courses for some students in Year 10. These provide opportunities for learning within a particular vocational context. This is not sufficiently developed in all areas but there are some

good examples such as the visit of a local business person to the business studies group to talk about the issues faced by a sole proprietor as part of their coursework. Valuable additional experiences are also available such as undertaking customer services for the newly opened school bank.

62. There is effective leadership in this area, with a clear focus on developing experiences which will support students to develop the skills and abilities needed for employment. Raising student aspirations and providing them with more choice when they leave the school is also an important focus. There is good collaboration across schools in the area to support developments. However there is insufficient monitoring of the provision to ensure that all students receive their entitlement to work related learning. With the exception of work experience, students do not keep a record of their work-related learning either to support their progress or to exemplify their achievements.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables students to achieve well throughout the school.
- Students' achievement from Years 7 to 11 is good.
- Clear expectations of pupil behaviour and good relationships support students' learning very well.
- The department is moving forwards and recent initiatives have good potential to raise standards.
- Marking of students' work is inconsistent and lacks focused guidance.
- Students are given too few opportunities to develop their ICT skills.

Commentary

63. Standards in the national test results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well below the national average but in line with those of students from similar socio-economic backgrounds, representing good progress compared to students' prior attainment at the end of Year 6. Girls' attainment was higher than boys'. Students of Pakistani, Caribbean and Bangladeshi heritage performed better than those from other ethnic groups. Students made satisfactory progress to produce GCSE results in English in 2004 which were well below the national average but in line with those of students from similar socio-economic backgrounds. Boys' results were well below the national average, particularly in English, and well below the girls' results in both English and English literature. There was a substantial improvement in results in English in 2003, but a decline in 2004. Results in English literature have improved greatly in recent years.
64. Standards attained by current students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are well below average; however, students' achieve well, making good progress from their very low standards when entering the school. At the beginning of Year 7, students' reading is weak and writing is underdeveloped and technically inaccurate. Literacy difficulties hinder students' progress throughout their time in school. However, teachers work hard to overcome literacy problems and, by the end of Year 9, students are able to respond to a Shakespeare text with some confidence and understanding and their writing is more developed. Students' achievement is aided by an appropriate range of texts and resources in both English and media lessons which students find relevant and engaging. In Years 10 and 11, standards of work seen are well below average. However, all students make good progress from the end of Year 9 and achieve well, developing their abilities to write and speak fluently. More able students analyse texts using technical and, sometimes, sophisticated language.
65. Teaching is good and students learn well, including those from different ethnic groups or with special educational needs. Support staff play a vital role in the achievement of all students and teachers have good subject knowledge. The curriculum is interesting and engaging. Where teaching is successful, the teacher's expectations are high and learning is broken down into manageable steps. Learning criteria are shared with students to ensure they know how to succeed and students are given opportunities to assess their own and others' learning against them. In a Year 11 poetry lesson, students used GCSE grade criteria to assess their own role plays and to identify how to improve them. Teachers manage students' behaviour well and relationships are positive. Where learning is no more than satisfactory, the level of challenge is too low, lessons are too teacher-led and talk is underdeveloped as a tool for

clarifying and extending students' learning. Marking of students' work does not always ensure students know how to improve and there are too few opportunities for planning and redrafting writing. There is too little use of ICT to enhance learning.

66. Leadership is good. There is a developing vision for the department and colleagues work well as a team. Recent curriculum developments have the potential to raise standards significantly. Management of the department is good. There is an increasing use of data analysis to identify target groups of students. Students' progress is monitored through the use of key assessments in Years 7, 8 and 9, and students' weaknesses are addressed in regular meetings between individual students and their teacher.
67. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The quality of teaching has improved and is now good. Progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 was satisfactory in 1999; currently students' achievement is good throughout the school. Curriculum developments are having a positive impact on students' engagement. There are improved systems for monitoring students' progress.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

68. Although all staff work hard to minimise the effect of poor literacy skills, students' weakness in literacy is a key factor in restricting their attainment, often because English is not their first language. Students, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, have difficulties in reading the range of texts they encounter. Although there is occasional evidence of the impact of the National Literacy Strategy on developing literacy skills, this is underdeveloped and is not sufficiently embedded across the school. There is often too little support for written work to enable students to develop the skills necessary to raise attainment. Current good practice includes the use of key words in most subjects, the use of different note-taking techniques in science and opportunities for extended writing in subjects other than English, such as geography. Where pupil talk is used well, this has a positive impact on literacy; however, there are missed opportunities to develop students' understanding and their ability to express themselves through talk. The LRC is currently underused as a resource for improving literacy but there are plans to develop this further.

French

Provision in French is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is well below average.
- There is significant underachievement, reflecting weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- Leadership and management are not strong enough to make necessary improvements.
- There are examples of good and very good teaching, leading to students making good progress in some lessons.

Commentary

69. Teacher assessments of French in Year 9 were well below average in 2004, continuing the trend of recent years. Less than 20 per cent of students achieved expected levels. Taking into account the students' low literacy levels when they enter the school, most are still not achieving as well as expected. GCSE results remain well below average. 2004 results were five per cent down on recent years. Only 24 per cent of students gained a C grade or above in French, with students achieving less well than in their other subjects. Boys did less well than girls, in line with national trends. Numbers are too low to judge whether students from different ethnic heritages achieved significantly better or worse than others.
70. The low literacy skills of most students in Years 7 to 9 are reflected in the well below average standards and low achievement observed in French lessons. While many students pronounce

French well, their written accuracy is a barrier to reaching high levels. By the end of Year 9, most students understand basic spoken French but they often need the phrases to be repeated several times. They use a limited range of words, mainly in set phrases. A few high attainers speak confidently and write reasonably accurately without help and are at about average levels. Some students show encouraging signs of developing their language skills to average levels; for example Year 9 students talk confidently about why they like school subjects. However, too many are underachieving. In Year 11, most students demonstrate well below average levels of attainment and their progress is much too uneven. Students can produce short statements but too few develop the skills to be able to speak or write at length without making considerable mistakes. A few high attainers, as in a Year 11 lesson, are able to speak intelligently about pollution and can use a range of tenses, but their written accuracy is relatively weak. A significant number of boys and girls have lost motivation and are underachieving. There are very few white UK students and too few from each ethnic heritage to judge any differences in achievement.

71. Teaching is unsatisfactory. There are many good and very good features but there are significant weaknesses which slow the learning in too many lessons. In the best lessons teaching is very good. There is a sense of purpose, order and high expectations from the outset, as in a Year 8 lesson. The teacher made the learning process clear, so students understood what they were learning and why. They consolidated well their grasp of how verbs work, speaking confidently about leisure activities in the present and past tenses. The teacher's expert behaviour management and the students' very positive attitudes also contributed greatly to the good learning and progress. The teacher made effective use of literacy strategies, such as reinforcing key words. All were included in an atmosphere where respect for each other was highly valued. In lessons where weaknesses in teaching adversely affect the learning, too many students show how negative they feel about learning French. The teacher does not deal effectively with low level chat and disruptive behaviour, so students are distracted and learning slows. Students are not helped enough to know how well they are achieving or how to improve, in both written and spoken feedback. Learning objectives are too broad and not aimed at steadily building up language skills. In many lessons, tasks are not sufficiently active and interesting to engage students' interest. There are insufficient strategies and additional support to meet the wide-ranging needs in the mixed-ability classes. Teachers lead most of the activities, giving too few opportunities for students to work independently and practise speaking themselves.
72. The department is not led well enough. There is neither a sufficiently clear vision nor a strong enough role model to secure improvement. The department is not managed effectively. There is insufficient use of data to set targets, to track students' progress and identify underachievement. There is some communication within the department but it has not led to the effective sharing of good practice. Senior leadership has provided considerable support; a draft improvement plan is in place and some monitoring of lessons has taken place, but these measures have not led to overcoming the underachievement and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Lunchtime clubs, every day of the week, are popular and provide beneficial additional opportunities to improve French.
73. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards remain very low; teaching was good and is now unsatisfactory and too little has been done to address significant underachievement.

Urdu

Provision in Urdu is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement are high.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- There is a high level of student motivation.
- There is insufficient matching of tasks to the full ability range.
- There are too few opportunities for students to develop speaking, independent learning and ICT skills.

Commentary

74. GCSE results in Urdu, at the end of Year 11, are well above average and among the best in the school, representing high achievement. They compare favourably with national and local trends. At the end of Year 9, standards are in line with the national average. This represents good progress in view of students' low level of attainment on entry, and good achievement as those with learning difficulties or limited English do not receive any additional support in Urdu lessons. There is no significant gender difference in students' progress or attainment in the subject.
75. Students currently in the school achieve well to attain average standards in Years 7 to 9 and they achieve very well to attain above average standards in Years 10 and 11. The majority of students throughout the school are at ease with listening to others, but their response is often limited to single Urdu words and phrases. They respond well to the opportunity of listening to a tape and answering questions. Higher attainers, particularly older students, are articulate in expressing and justifying their personal views. In reading, by the end of Year 9, most students show a developing recognition of familiar vocabulary and basic Urdu sentence structures relating to day to day activities. By the end of Year 11, many, particularly higher attainers, read authentic Urdu texts with accuracy, appropriate expression and greater understanding. Some younger students in Years 7 and 8 have difficulty with reading. Writing is generally concerned with copying, but work seen, particularly at the end of Year 11, is good in quantity, range and quality. By the end of Year 9, many students describe people and objects while written work of eleven year olds relates to topics like the environment and reflects the use of appropriate vocabulary, grammar and tenses. Handwriting, spelling and presentation are of good quality.
76. Teaching is consistently good and has some very good features. For example, the emphasis on standard Urdu pronunciation and use of grammar results in good learning. The teacher intervenes effectively to draw attention to some of the conventions governing written Urdu, improving students' performance. This facilitates students' recognition of Urdu alphabets, both in shape and sound, in addition to consolidating their understanding of the way Urdu letters change their shape when combined in writing. Most students respond with high levels of enthusiasm, demonstrating good standards of behaviour and well-established relationships. Activities reflect a good understanding of the programmes of study and enhance students' awareness of Urdu cultural traditions whilst making a good contribution to their spiritual, moral and social development. Homework is used well and contributes effectively to progress and achievement.
77. The subject's good leadership is reflected in its high profile. It is also well managed, as evident in the well-developed scheme of work, teaching material, and assessment procedures, though there is insufficient use of assessment to plan students' next steps in learning.

78. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have been raised and there has been successful introduction of Urdu for the community and AS/A2 level courses.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good and students make very good progress.
- Teachers use effective questioning skills to challenge students and to develop their mathematical thinking.
- There are good relationships between teachers and students, and students are well motivated.
- High expectations are set for students but support and extension materials are not used sufficiently in mixed-ability teaching groups.
- Students are aware of the level they are working at but need more advice on how to improve and achieve their target grades.
- There is too little use of problem-solving and investigative work.

Commentary

79. Although results in Year 9 national tests were well below average, this represents good achievement when compared with students' prior attainment in Year 6. There has been substantial improvement in GCSE results over the last three years, although boys' results dipped in 2004. Girls performed better than boys, with white UK and Turkish boys attaining less well. Year 11 GCSE results were in line with the national average and this represented very good achievement. Girls performed better than boys, although a significant number of girls did less well in mathematics than in their other subjects.
80. Students currently enter the school with very low standards. They achieve very well to attain average standards by the end of Year 9. They also achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 to attain average standards by the end of Year 11. Students in mixed-ability Year 7 groups have a good understanding of square and triangular numbers and are able to generate sequences. Middle-ability students in Year 8 expand brackets involving powers, and lower attainers in Year 9 understand π and can find the circumference of circles. Middle attainers in Year 10 are confident in using Pythagoras's theorem to solve problems, and higher attainers solve simultaneous equations involving quadratics.
81. Teaching is good and students learn well. Lessons are clearly structured, with a starter, a main activity and a plenary. A good range of interactive starters immediately engages the interest of students. Students are aware of the learning outcomes of each lesson and the plenary is used very well to assess their learning and assist planning for the next lesson. All lessons for Years 7 to 9 are planned using national strategy guidelines and this produces very good achievement. There are high expectations of the grades students will achieve in Year 11 following on from their Year 9 test level. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are planned well to ensure clear progression. In a Year 8 algebra lesson, for instance, the starter involved number calculations which developed into the use of letters in the main part using the same mathematical concepts. Questioning by teachers is very good and, because of good relationships, the majority of students, regardless of their first language, are able to explain their working-out to others using correct mathematical vocabulary. Key words are identified throughout lessons and their meaning clearly discussed so that all students are confident with their use. There is very good use of support staff; weekly planning meetings occur to ensure all students can access the learning objectives. However, in some mixed-ability classes work is not matched well enough to students' needs and there is too little experience of problem-solving and investigational work.

82. Leadership is good. The head of mathematics is a good role model and has high expectations of himself, the team and students. Additional support for students out of lessons is always available, contributing to the very good achievement. Management is good. There is good use of assessment to set aspirational targets for students. However, there is not enough analysis of the performance of different gender and ethnic groups and students receive too little advice on how to achieve their target grade. Schemes of work lack timelines or information on the inclusion of ICT and problem-solving topics. Liaison with primary schools is improving and there is increasing use of National Transition Units so that students can begin some mathematics work in Year 6 and complete it in Year 7.
83. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. Results were below the national average and are now in line. Students' attitudes to mathematics have improved and are now good. Students were not developing well enough as independent learners in 1999 and this is now better, although there are still too few opportunities for investigation and problem-solving.

Mathematics across the curriculum

84. Competence in mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory, although some students are still not proficient at transferring skills taught in mathematics into other curriculum areas. This is because the school's Numeracy across the Curriculum training day has still to occur and, although each curriculum area has a mathematics teacher attached to it for support, there has not been enough whole-school co-ordination of the development of numeracy skills. There is some good practice, such as in the physical education handbook which makes reference to developing pupil's numeracy skills in timing, measuring and estimating. Students demonstrate mathematical competence in a variety of subjects. For instance, Year 7 music students compose using pentatonic scales. In ICT, students interpret and analyse data and in geography they draw graphs. Lower-ability students are given out-of-class support on targeted topics such as fractions, percentages, area and perimeter which increases their competence.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, including high expectations, produces effective learning.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students produce very positive attitudes to work.
- Students' learning needs are supported well, including thorough preparation for GCSE examinations.
- Results in Year 9 national tests were too low.
- There is too little use of assessment to monitor the quality of work of different groups of students or to let individuals know how they can improve.

Commentary

85. Standards in Year 9 national tests in 2004 were very low when compared to all schools nationally and achievement was very poor when based on students' prior attainment at the end of Year 6. This marked a downward trend from previous years. Students attained lower standards in science than in English and mathematics.
86. Attainment at GCSE in 2004 was well above the national average when compared to all schools nationally, this represented excellent achievement based on students' prior attainment at the end of Year 9. Results showed a significant upward trend with very substantial improvement over the last three years. Students attained significantly better

results in science at GCSE than in other subjects. Girls performed better than boys. Students

of African and Turkish heritage performed worse than students from other ethnic backgrounds.

87. Current standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average but, in comparison with students' very low attainment on entry to the school, this represents good progress; students achieve well. There is systematic development of the understanding of key ideas and essential science enquiry skills. Many students in Year 9 perform simple calculations using formulae but have difficulty plotting line graphs. Current standards in Years 10 and 11 are above national averages, and students make very good progress from the end of Year 9, achieving very well. Students are prepared well for their GCSE assessment. Many students in Years 10 and 11 plot lines of best fit on graphs, carry out a variety of calculations using formulae and write balanced symbol equations. Students with special educational needs or English as an additional language are identified and are supported well so that they make good progress, although low literacy levels prevents progress being better.
88. Teaching and learning are good. A major factor is the very positive attitudes of all students to their work. This is due to the very good relationships built up between teachers and students. Teachers have a good command of their subject and lesson objectives are consistently shared with students so that they have a clear purpose and use lesson time very well. In a lesson on forces and motion, for example, high expectations, effective questioning, constant referrals to learning objectives and examination requirements consistently challenged students who achieved very well as a result. However, there are too many occasions when teachers explain their own ideas for too long with too few opportunities for students to participate, inhibiting the development of independent and collaborative work. Teachers mark work regularly using the department policy but written feedback does not provide enough advice for improvement. Teaching assistants often play a significant role in managing behaviour and enabling students to learn well. Technicians provide effective support which has a positive impact on learning. ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance teaching and learning.
89. Leadership of the department is good. The head of department has a clear vision, provides a very good role model and has created an effective team. Management is satisfactory. The department runs smoothly. The department plan identifies areas to develop and has a clear focus. Assessment information is analysed and action is taken to secure improvement. Although a comprehensive system of assessment forms a basis for tracking pupils' progress towards their ambitious target grades, assessment is not used well enough to let students know how they can improve. Some monitoring of the work of teachers and students occurs, but there is too little teacher training linked to subject development.
90. Progress since the previous inspection is good. In 1999, teaching was satisfactory and is now good. Progress in Year 10 and 11 was satisfactory and achievement is now very good. Progress in Years 7 to 9 was unsatisfactory, whereas achievement is now good. Issues raised in 1999, such as a lack of textbooks and the safe storage of chemicals, have been resolved successfully.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between teachers and students are good, with a positive effect on learning.
- The adoption of the National ICT Strategy is beginning to raise standards in Year 7.
- There has been significant recent improvement in resources, particularly interactive whiteboards.
- Students' achievement is satisfactory, although standards are well below average.
- There is too little co-ordinated use of ICT in other subjects, across the curriculum.

- Students do not know enough about how well they are doing or how they can improve.

Commentary

91. Standards of students aged 14, in the 2004 teacher assessments of ICT, were well below the national average; this represents satisfactory achievement, as students enter the school with very low standards, and is a marked improvement on the previous year. Last year's GCSE examination results were also well below average representing satisfactory achievement.
92. When students join the school in Year 7 they bring with them a wide range of experiences of ICT, and many are producing work that is of a very low standard. Students' achievement is satisfactory through Years 7 to 9 so that towards the end of Year 9 standards are well below average. This year has seen the full implementation of the National ICT Strategy in Years 7 to 9. This is already having a positive impact as seen, for instance, in a Year 7 lesson where students were making good progress on cell referencing and inserting formulae into a spreadsheet on football results. Standards of the current Year 11 students are below average and this represents satisfactory achievement. Students in Year 10 who have chosen the newly offered Applied GCSE ICT course are given good guidance on how to present their work for different audiences and this is helping to raise standards.
93. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and this produces satisfactory learning. Characteristics of the best lessons are rapid pace, clear expectations, good relationships and interesting activities. For example, in a good Year 11 lesson on the creation of a vet's website, the pace was brisk. The teacher made his expectations of the students' work clear from the start. He gave very good one-to-one support which maintained student interest and motivation. Good relationships with the students also assisted their learning, and one boy felt secure enough to explain the construction of his website on the whiteboard as part of the plenary. In some lessons students with specific needs receive high quality support which improves their achievement. This was seen in a Year 8 lesson on handling data, where four students for whom English was not their first language were assisted by a very active support teacher who ensured they understood the tasks fully and, as a result, they made good progress. The assistant also used his mathematics knowledge to demonstrate to the whole class how to turn data from the spreadsheet into a graph with an appropriate title and correctly labelled axes. Where teaching was less effective, some students were controlling the pace of the lesson through their disruptions and therefore learning was not as good. Marking in many cases is patchy and often lacks any meaningful comments. Assessment information is not used enough to inform students of their progress, highlight their strengths and inform them as to how they can improve.
94. Leadership is inadequate. A clear vision or strategy for the necessary ongoing improvement of ICT has not been fully established. Management is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient knowledge of the achievement of specific groups of students, for example boys and girls or different ethnic groups, as there is a lack of analysis of performance data to measure success or inform strategies for improvement. Schemes of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are heavily based on national materials and require customising to meet the school's needs. Schemes of work for pupils in Years 10 and 11 contain insufficient detail to support teachers' planning.
95. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Most students are still enthusiastic about their use of ICT. Attainment at the ends of Year 9 and 11 is still well below the national average. Recently there has been a significant investment in interactive whiteboards combined with LEA organised training sessions.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

96. Use of ICT use across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient co-ordination, although it is an area that the school is seeking to address. There is no effective monitoring or evaluation of the contribution made by individual subjects. As a result, the use of ICT is much too varied across the curriculum and there are too many occasions when it is not used, restricting the students' learning opportunities. Some subjects make good use of ICT to enhance students' subject knowledge, skills and understanding, whilst others do little. Increasingly, interactive whiteboards and multi-media projectors are being used to motivate and focus the students' interest and these are having a very positive effect on learning. The science department, for example, makes good use of the interactive board to share learning objectives for lessons. The mathematics department uses their boards to stimulate involvement in Challenge starters and plenaries. Good use of ICT was observed in a Year 7 geography lesson on volcanoes where the teacher used a computer to play associated sounds and a student captured class responses on the whiteboard. There are, however, too many subjects, such as religious education and design and technology, which are insufficiently effective in their use of ICT.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is effective leadership with a clear focus on improvement.
- There is a high standard of teaching so students achieve very well.
- Lessons are managed effectively so students behave very well and try hard.
- Standards of attainment of some students are still too low.
- Some students need better guidance on how to improve.

Commentary

97. Teacher assessments in Year 9 were below the national average in 2004. This represents satisfactory achievement compared with similar schools. Girls and boys reached similar standards. Last year's GCSE examination results were well below national subject standards. Boys reached much lower standards than girls overall. Few students reached the highest grades. There is no significant difference between the achievements of students from different ethnic groups. GCSE results improved in 2003, but declined in 2004.
98. Students currently in Years 7 to 9 are making very good progress and achieve very well. By the end of Year 9 they reach the same standards as students in similar schools. Students who choose geography in Years 10 and 11 are also making very good progress in their lessons and achieve very well. They have a sound knowledge of key words, and a clear understanding of different environments. For example, their essays on Europe are written clearly, and evidence is used effectively to make conclusions about changes in patterns of farming. Students with special educational needs are supported in many classes and take a full part in the work. Effective support in a Year 7 lesson, for example, helped a pupil complete her work on the local area. Gifted and talented students achieve well. Their work on Antarctica for example, shows higher levels of understanding of environmental issues.
99. Teaching is good. Lessons are planned carefully. Teachers encourage and help students to do their best. They insist on high standards of behaviour and effort at all times. In one lesson for example the teacher set an interesting range of tasks for students to find out about the causes of global warming. They all worked hard, and the class discussion showed they could link pollution from industry and towns, to changes in the atmosphere. In another lesson the

teacher used pictures to encourage students to discuss the effects of natural disasters. The teacher managed a class discussion well. Students responded enthusiastically and gained a good understanding of key words and ideas. Progress of some students is hampered by weak literacy skills. This is a key area for improvement in teaching. Teachers are beginning to make effective use of the new ICT equipment in their classrooms.

100. The leadership and management of geography are good. The head of subject has a clear focus on improvement. He sets a good example and helps other teachers to improve. He has started some effective self-evaluation, so is beginning to get a good idea of the important areas for development. In particular he has begun to look at results of students' assessments, to see how teachers can help students reach their targets.
101. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Students' attitudes have improved and their achievement is much better. Resources are now of better quality and timetable weaknesses have been resolved.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is effective leadership so overall quality of provision is improving.
- Lessons are taught well so students make very good progress.
- Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and effort so students work hard.
- Standards of attainment of some students are still too low.
- Some students are not sure how to improve their work.

Commentary

102. Teacher assessments in Year 9 were below the national average in 2004. This is satisfactory achievement compared with similar schools. Last year's GCSE examination results were below national subject standards. There was no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys, or students from different ethnic groups. Results in the last two years have been substantially better than on previous occasions.
103. Students currently in Years 7 to 9 are making very good progress and achieve very well. By the end of Year 9 they reach the same standards as students in similar schools. Their work shows knowledge of different periods of history and understanding of the causes of change. For example, work on the English Civil War shows students know about the main events, and can explain some of the consequences of the political changes brought about afterwards. Students who choose history in Years 10 and 11 are making very good progress. They have a sound grasp of the key historical skill of using sources to find out about the past. They know about important political and social changes that have occurred. For example, work on Hitler's rise to power helps them understand events leading up to the Second World War. Students with special educational needs are well supported in some lessons and can take a full part in the work. In one lesson for example, the teaching assistant helped a pupil with his behaviour, so he could take an active part in a drama activity about racial segregation in the USA. Gifted and talented students are making sound progress. For example, their work on the Battle of Hastings is detailed and well written.
104. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are carefully planned to include a range of activities, and taught with enthusiasm. For example in a lesson on the French Revolution, the teacher showed illustrations of the storming of the Bastille. He created an atmosphere of excitement as he described events. His interest rubbed off on students who responded with determination and, by the end of the lesson all students were beginning to get a much clearer idea of what happened. Teachers are beginning to make good use of the new ICT equipment. In one

lesson for example, the teacher showed a sequence of old newspaper reports on the Whitechapel murders using the interactive whiteboard. Students took turns to highlight significant phrases and sentences. This helped them understand both the events which occurred and the role of the press in reporting the story. There are some good examples of extended writing, but weak literacy skills hamper the progress of some students because they receive too little support. Teachers do not provide students with enough feedback on what they are doing well or how they can improve.

105. The leadership and management of history are good. The subject leader has a clear focus on raising standards, and teachers work well together as a team to achieve this. The leader sets a very good example in the way he teaches his own classes. He has begun to look carefully at test and examination results to identify where changes can be made to raise standards.
106. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved, positive attitudes have been maintained and achievement is much better. Weaknesses in resources have been improved but assessment is still not used well enough.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average and achievement in Years 7 to 9 is too low.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is unsatisfactory.
- There are unsatisfactory arrangements for leadership which is failing to improve provision.
- The statutory requirements for Years 7 to 9 are not fully met.
- Teaching is effective in creating a positive learning environment where students share their ideas.
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject and are keen to learn.

Commentary

107. The proportion of students gaining A*-C grades in 2004 in the GCSE short course was below the national average and well below average for grades A*-B. Almost all students in Year 11 sat the examination. Girls performance at grades A*-C was much better than boys.
108. Most students currently in Years 7 to 9 are making slow progress and their achievement is unsatisfactory. Students only have a basic knowledge of the religions they are studying and little understanding of the important beliefs on which they are based. In Year 7, students learn about the life of Abraham and Moses but have little grasp of their significance in Jewish belief and practice. Students in Year 8 know about Hindu beliefs in reincarnation but have little understanding of how this may impact on the way they approach everyday life. Overall, standards are well below those expected by the Waltham Forest Agreed Syllabus. In Years 10 and 11, achievement in the GCSE short course is satisfactory and students make steady progress although standards are below those typically seen. In their work on wealth and poverty, students show sound understanding of the reasons for and against giving money to help the poor but only an outline knowledge and understanding of the teachings that Christians might use to support their viewpoint. In oral work, students support their ideas well with examples and evidence. Written work lacks the detail, explanation and evaluative comment usually seen at this age because students have not developed the skills they need to be successful in the examination. The achievement of students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory because, in most lessons, the work is not well matched to their individual needs. Across Years 7 to 9, more able students do not make the rapid progress they are capable of because they are not sufficiently challenged by their work. In years 10 and 11 more able students benefit from the structured examination course and make steady progress.

109. Teaching is unsatisfactory. The school does not have a subject specialist for religious education and all the teaching is currently undertaken by staff who do not have expertise in this area of the curriculum. This has an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and learning because teachers do not have sufficient understanding of the agreed syllabus and its requirements to teach the programme of study effectively. Although the quality of teaching and learning as seen in lessons is satisfactory, teaching over time, for Years 7 to 9 in particular, is unsatisfactory because students are not making sufficient progress or achieving the standards expected by the agreed syllabus. Teaching across these years does not place sufficient emphasis on enabling students to understand the key beliefs which underpin the faiths they are studying and as a result, they find it difficult to understand the links between beliefs and practice. In a Year 7 lesson on parables told by Jesus, students wrote about the main events in the story but had little understanding of why parables were told or of how a Christian might act in response to what they taught. Across these years, in particular, learning objectives are not made sufficiently clear; as a result, students do not understand what they are expected to achieve in the lesson. The most effective teaching occurs in Years 10 and 11 where the structured examination syllabus provides a framework to support teachers' planning. The most successful teaching has a good range of activities which students find interesting. Learning is most effective when students work together in small groups and share their ideas. In one lesson, for example, students worked in groups to discuss attitudes to helping the poor. They then had to compare their ideas with other groups and think about reasons for and against helping the poor. This helped them to make good progress in their understanding of different attitudes to wealth and poverty. Across all years, teachers successfully establish good relationships with their classes so that students are interested in the topics covered, want to learn and are willing to share their views with others. This was particularly notable in a year 9 class where students sensibly and sensitively discussed their ideas on 'What is God like?' in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Students' personal development is promoted well in lessons through the many opportunities provided to discuss beliefs and values. Across all years, lesson activities do not cater sufficiently for the different learning needs of more able students or those with special educational needs. Although there are many opportunities for students to develop their oral skills through discussions, teachers do not give enough attention to supporting and developing reading and writing skills. There is too little use of ICT to support learning. Assessment systems are not sufficiently developed and as a result, students are not given enough information about what they can do or how they can improve.
110. Arrangements for the leadership of the subject are unsatisfactory. The lack of a subject specialist means that there is no clear vision for the future development of the subject. The humanities development plan lacks clear strategies to raise standards in religious education. Schemes of work are in need of updating and realigning to the programmes of study in the agreed syllabus. In the absence of a subject leader, the head of humanities works hard to ensure that day-to-day routines run smoothly, but overall management is unsatisfactory because there is insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in the department and there is too much inconsistency in practices, such as marking and assessment.
111. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards across Years 7 to 9 remain low. Many of the weaknesses in teaching and learning identified at the time of the last inspection remain. The statutory requirements are still not fully met because the current schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 do not have the breadth or depth of study required by the Waltham Forest Agreed Syllabus.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning, from Year 7 to 11, is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management is unsatisfactory; there is no clear vision or direction for the department.
- Progress is not tracked and students do not have enough information about how to improve.
- Very good pupil attitudes and behaviour, together with positive relationships, are providing an atmosphere conducive to learning.
- The design of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is not giving students sufficient opportunities to succeed.
- Teachers have competent knowledge and are enthusiastic about the subject.

Commentary

112. Standards and achievement are unsatisfactory. Results in the GCSE short course examinations in 2003 were well below average. In 2004, results remained similar overall but girls significantly outperformed boys. The results in Food Technology were much closer to those seen nationally, representing significant improvement. At the end of Year 9 teacher assessments are well below national standards.
113. Students arrive at the school with skills that are well below those seen nationally. In work seen the rate of progress from Years 7 to 9 is not high enough. Although students make satisfactory progress in a range of making skills the standard of design work is poor. Insufficient opportunity is given to students to work independently, which is required to reach higher levels; for example, all students in a Year 9 class were observed making identical 'steady hand games' to the teacher's design. Current projects and curriculum design in Years 7 to 9 are inadequately preparing students for the rigours of GCSE, depressing their achievement. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve at least as well as other students. In Year 11, students make unsatisfactory progress due to a lack of structure to support them through coursework and insufficient monitoring of their progress resulting in deadlines not being met, especially for boys. Most students do not have the skills to work independently and are not taking responsibility for their own learning. Insufficient use is being made of ICT; the new suite of computers is yet to have any impact on raising standards.
114. Overall, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Teachers and students form very good relationships creating a good atmosphere for learning. Students co-operate well with each other. They are willing to help others, sometimes to the detriment of their own progress. Assessment systems to track students' achievement and plan support strategies are not in place. Students are not clear about how well they are achieving or what they need to do to improve. Expectations are not currently high enough and poor quality work is often unchallenged. Designing skills are not being taught in a progressive way so students do not have a sufficiently wide range of strategies to choose from at GCSE. The range of materials students experience in Years 7 to 9 is too narrow. The lack of computer-assisted design (CAD) and computer-assisted making (CAM) means students are not experiencing new technology. Many lessons are too dominated by teachers explaining their own ideas and lack a range of exciting teaching and learning strategies. In the best lessons there is a starter which gains everyone's interest, a main activity which gives students a good chance of achieving objectives and a plenary which summarises what has been learnt, but these lessons are much too rare.

115. Leadership is unsatisfactory. The present interim system, where material areas are led separately, results in a lack of vision about the future of design and technology as a whole, and no clear plans to move the subject forward. Management is unsatisfactory. The use of data is not sufficiently developed to track students' progress and check whether they are likely to attain long-term targets. Long and medium-term plans are not adequately 'joined up' across material areas and are not demonstrating progression. The current development plan does not reflect the increasing technological demands for the subject and there are no plans to address the need for CAM equipment. Accommodation is good, although the split-site arrangement is impacting on learning time as students move to lessons from the main building. Health and safety procedures are being reviewed and the department has good technician support.
116. There has been insufficient progress since the previous inspection. Overall, standards have remained well below those seen nationally despite a significant improvement in food technology. Teaching has worsened from good to unsatisfactory and this has produced a decline in learning, despite very good student attitudes and behaviour.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

117. The introduction of GCSE **media studies** is having a positive impact on students' engagement in lessons.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good.
- The achievement of students of all abilities is good.
- Overall standards of drawing are well below the national average.
- Students are not given clear targets on how to improve their work.
- Not enough use is made of information and communication technology.
- Data on the performance of Year 9 students is not analysed.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are good.

Commentary

118. Standards of art and design on entry to the school are well below the national average. By Year 9, National Curriculum teacher assessments show that standards are much closer to the national average. This represents good achievement from Year 7 to Year 9. Until this academic year, all Year 10 and 11 students developed their art and design within a combined arts course, involving art and design, music, drama and creative writing, leading to a GCSE in expressive arts. Over several years results on this course have been very good, with over 70 per cent of students consistently gaining a grade A*-C.
119. Current students, in the first three years, demonstrate good achievement. This is particularly noticeable from Year 7 to Year 8 when standards of drawing, use of colour and finished artwork become close to the national average. Work becomes much more mature with good use of colour. Work in three dimensions, using wire, is also effective and is strengthened by preparatory working drawings. Progress is insufficient in Year 9 where standards return to be below the national average. There is clear evidence in Years 8 and 10 that the introduction of a discrete art curriculum has resulted in higher overall standards of basic artistic skill.

120. Year 11 expressive arts students achieve well to attain below average standards. They enjoy considerable freedom to express their ideas in a range of arts disciplines. In lessons seen, high ability students produced work of a very good standard using a combination of art forms. The standard of the majority of students' work is below the national average but still represents good achievement. Drawing standards on this course are well below average.
121. Teaching is good. All lessons have clear objectives and are taught with enthusiasm and energy. Both teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise and communicate this effectively. Students' interest is maintained by lessons that are well structured and have rapid pace, which maintains students' interest. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and contribute well to effective learning. Teachers have a good relationship with students within a friendly, good-humoured atmosphere where students are willing to take risks and experiment. Work set is challenging but all abilities are able to cope as a result of individual support being given throughout lessons. Consequently the achievement of all abilities is good. Homework, including reference to the work of famous artists, is used effectively and its relevance is directly linked to classroom work. There is too little emphasis on teacher demonstration and this impairs students' progress. Students do not receive enough assessment feedback on their performance or sufficient targets for improvement. There is no use made of ICT to broaden students' methods of producing art.
122. Leadership is good. The newly appointed teacher responsible for art and design has a clear vision of how the subject should be taught and developed and is supported well by his teaching colleague and the curriculum leader of expressive arts. Management is good. Well-produced development plans show a good grasp of aspects of overall provision that need improvement. Schemes of work ensure a broad curriculum coverage and there is a good balance between two and three-dimensional art. The introduction of GCSE fine art reflects current staff expertise and provides a wider curriculum choice. There is good teamwork and on-going mutual support within the department. Communication with senior management is good and the subject is contributing well to whole school priorities. The quality of teaching is systematically monitored and teachers benefit from regular in-service training. However, data on the performance of Year 9 students is not analysed and, therefore, is not informing curriculum decisions. Students enjoy visits to the major national galleries and there are numerous opportunities for them to continue their work at lunchtime and at regular after school art clubs.
123. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. There is now a wider choice of courses available and overall levels of artistic skill have improved.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective leadership and excellent accommodation make a strong contribution to students' high achievement.
- Good teaching leads to high levels of interest, very good behaviour and good learning.
- Extra-curricular activities contribute well to the development of students' self-esteem.
- There is insufficient assessment of students' work to let them know how they can improve.
- The quality of instrumental and vocal tuition is too variable.
- There are no computers, which has a limiting effect on the improvement of students' composing and writing skills.

Commentary

124. Teacher assessments for students aged 14 in 2004 were well below the national average. Every pupil aged 16 in 2004 took the GCSE expressive arts examination with music as an optional art form. Results for this examination were significantly above the national average in 2004 representing very good achievement.
125. Current students' achievement is good. Standards at the start of Year 7, when students enter the school, are well below expectations. By Year 9, standards have improved to be below expectations. Students' practical skills have improved; they show a basic understanding of chords and produce simple but effective group compositions, although their use of notations is very limited. Speaking and listening skills are developed well in aural work. In the expressive arts course, although the standard of the work seen is below national expectations for music, students produce project and collaborative work using a combination of art forms and this work is of a higher standard. The new GCSE course has raised expectations for music in Years 10 and 11, and students' practical skills are developing well. Listening skills are also improving, with students showing understanding and knowledge of the instruments and structures of Indian music. However, all students are not given sufficient opportunities to write appraisals of their own work or other music so writing skills do not develop sufficiently.
126. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons have clear objectives and these are used effectively to structure learning. Practical work is organised well, leading to high levels of interest and very good behaviour. Teachers are effective in letting a whole class know how well objectives have been achieved but there is insufficient assessment of individual students' work to enable them to understand what they have to do to improve. Additional classroom support is not offered to students with special educational needs or those for whom English is an additional language, and this adversely affects their progress.
127. Accommodation for music teaching is excellent but resources are just satisfactory. There is a generous collection of keyboards and classroom percussion instruments that are used well, but at present there are no computers for composing or recording work. The school's stock of recorded and printed resources for listening and appraising work is also too limited.
128. Leadership and management are good. The new head of faculty has already made good progress with raising expectations of teaching and learning and has a very good vision for the development of music, including the imminent provision of an ICT suite. New and developing schemes of work have been introduced. Monitoring and evaluation of classroom teaching is regular and objective, supported well by the school leadership team. The expressive arts teachers work effectively as a complementary team and support each other very successfully across different subject areas.
129. A few students, mostly girls, receive additional instrumental and vocal tuition. These lessons are fully funded as part of the school's strong ethos of including as many students as possible. The small sample of lessons seen during the inspection suggests that there is insufficient co-ordination, resulting in provision which is too variable and includes unsatisfactory elements. The creation of curriculum links with feeder primary schools is also necessary to raise pupil achievement further. There is a substantial range of extra-curricular activities, including the gospel choir, steel pans groups, African drumming, keyboard club, and small woodwind ensemble. These are very successful in raising the self-esteem of participating students and contribute strongly to the positive ethos of the school. However, as with instrumental tuition and the new GCSE music course, boys are underrepresented in these activities.
130. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. Timetabled provision for music across Years 7 to 9 is now appropriate, and students' behaviour in lessons has improved to be very good. Teachers now make good use of questioning techniques and use technical language in their teaching. More work is still needed with assessment for individual students' learning, and

the quality of instrumental and vocal tuition is still too variable. Nevertheless, the department is well placed to make further progress.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress to attain average standards by the time they leave the school.
- Good teaching enables students to learn well and constantly improve their performance.
- Effective leadership and management has successfully broadened the curriculum so that a wide range of students' needs are met.
- Indoor practical accommodation is poor.

Commentary

131. By the end of Year 9, in the most recent teacher assessments, the majority of students are performing at a level that is below that typical for their age. The school's base-line assessment, however, shows that students enter the school with standards well below the national average, so this represents good progress from Years 7 to 9. There was no significant variation in standards attained between different groups of students, or boys and girls. The school has recently introduced GCSE, which will be examined for the first time in 2005. There are, therefore, no GCSE results to compare with the national picture.
132. Current students enter the school with much lower-than-average standards and make good progress so that their standards of work, by Year 9, are only just below those typical for their age. Students develop a good understanding of the importance of exercise and competent knowledge of major muscle groups. Students in Years 10 and 11 continue to make good progress so that by the end of Year 11 most are working at a level which is typical for their age. All groups who follow the GCSE course make good progress in developing their understanding of the theoretical elements of the GCSE syllabus and applying these to sporting situations.
133. Teaching is good and students learn well. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of physical education is a particular strength. They provide good opportunities for students to evaluate and improve their performance. For example, in a Year 7 dance lesson the teacher provided students with a well-focused opportunity to observe and evaluate their partner's performance and let them know how they could improve. Students did this well and it greatly enhanced their learning. The school's policy of open access to the subject at GCSE means that students from all groups can participate. Students with special educational needs, or where English is not the home language, are well supported by subject teachers and achieve well. There is good support by teaching assistants for targeted students, especially in GCSE theory lessons. Whilst marking of students' GCSE work is regular it does not contain enough information on what students need to do to improve further, nor does it relate marks sufficiently well to the GCSE syllabus. Teachers use questioning well to ensure students have understood theoretical elements of the syllabus and can apply these to sporting situations. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on the function of the circulatory system, the teacher asked detailed questions about the functions of the heart, lungs and blood supply, especially changes when undertaking physical activities. Students responded well to these questions and this enhanced their confidence and their learning.
134. The department is led well. The new curriculum leader provides good leadership and acts as a good role model for her colleagues. She is currently supporting another teacher to develop her understanding and knowledge of dance which has been recently introduced to the curriculum. There is a strong, shared team drive to raise standards. Management of the subject is also good. There are well-written schemes of work in place, with effective risk assessment, and the

curriculum has been widened with the introduction of GCSE. Accommodation is poor. The school has one gym, limited hard court play areas with few facilities and access to nearby playing fields is too limited. At the time of the previous inspection the school had very good access to a nearby local-authority-run sports hall during the school day. This is no longer the case and the school now competes on the grounds of cost for this facility. This restricts the range of physical activities the department can provide and is a barrier to learning.

135. Progress since the previous inspection is good. The department has maintained the high standards recognised in 1999. The department has worked hard to offer a more appropriate range of curricular activities and successfully introduced a GCSE course.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

136. **Business studies** was sampled during the inspection. It provides a positive new choice in Year 10, and students demonstrate considerable interest and enthusiasm in their work. Students are achieving well to attain standards close to national expectations. They use and understand a good range of technical vocabulary such as cash flow forecast, fixed costs and price discrimination. Most give examples of how each of these are applied in practice. Teaching is good, with clear planning to enable students to meet examination requirements. Lessons are structured well and this enables students to work at a good pace. Teaching is enthusiastic, expecting and getting students to work hard and concentrate throughout lessons. There are several opportunities for students to develop the vocational relevance of the course, including a visit by a local business person during the inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

137. **Personal, social, careers, citizenship and health education (PSCCHE)** was sampled during the inspection. The programme provides good opportunities to support students' personal development. There is no overall scheme of planned work but the programme does provide appropriate sex and relationships education and teaching about the dangers of drug abuse, which meets statutory requirements. The programme is taught by a team of teachers who are working hard to deliver it effectively, but the teaching of the tutorial programme is uneven and not sufficiently supported by staff training. Procedures for the assessment of students' attainment have not yet been agreed, and legal requirements to report progress to parents are not met. There are some very effective elements of careers education, particularly work experience in Year 10, university visits for some Year 8 students and preparation activities for choosing options at the end of Years 9 and 11. However, an overall programme has not been planned or evaluated leading to confusion for students about the purpose and expected outcomes of the various elements, and statutory requirements not being met.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory** but with some significant areas for development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are many good examples of citizenship being developed across the curriculum and through a range of other activities.
- Students have very positive attitudes and feel empowered to make a difference.
- There is enthusiastic leadership in this area and good progress has been made in identifying and implementing initial provision.

- An audit identifies coverage of the programme of study but there is insufficient co-ordination to ensure coherence and progression across the years, and no action plan to prioritise improvement.
- Assessment and reporting do not meet statutory requirements.

Commentary

138. Standards achieved by the age of 14 are below national expectations. Students are making satisfactory progress in each year group. Standards by the age of 16 are almost reaching national expectations and students continue to make satisfactory progress. In all years there are differences across the three strands of citizenship. Students are making insufficient progress in gaining knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens; for example, they do not know about the British democratic system, the economy or the wider picture such as the European Community. Students are making satisfactory progress in developing their skills of enquiry and communication including the ability to debate important issues, although this is not always done within a citizenship context. There is very good progress in developing skills of participation and responsible action. Through a wide range of opportunities, such as the school council and Making Learning Better, students participate effectively and feel that they make a significant contribution and difference to their community.
139. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, both within subjects across the curriculum and in PSCCHE. The planning of an appropriate range of activities often engages and keeps the interest of students as well as developing their skills. The good relationships and positive feedback provided by teachers gives confidence to students to participate actively in the lessons. However, there is insufficient planning to ensure that specific areas of knowledge are developed. In some lessons citizenship learning is not sufficiently overt so that students cannot make connections across this area of work.
140. Leadership in citizenship is satisfactory and management is unsatisfactory. The relatively new leader in this area is enthusiastic, with a sense of purpose and high aspirations for all students. There is a clear wish to improve both the organisation and delivery of citizenship. All teaching staff have been involved in developments, with each subject identifying their contribution. Good role models are provided by the citizenship co-ordinator and many other staff in the school. Insufficient work has been done to identify priorities and actions needed. There is no clearly defined programme of study to relate citizenship to other aspects of PSCCHE, work related learning and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. Developments are making good use of the staffing and resources available but there is insufficient support through staff development. There is currently no monitoring and evaluation of citizenship and statutory requirements for assessment and reporting are not being met.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	5
Students' achievement	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well students learn	3
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets students needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for students	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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

poor (6); very poor (7).