

INSPECTION REPORT

SYDENHAM SCHOOL

Sydenham

LEA area: Lewisham

Unique reference number: 100741

Headteacher: Ms Daphne Such

Reporting inspector: Mr D P Cosway
OIN: 2734

Dates of inspection: 24 - 28 September 2001

Inspection number: 189650

Full 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 pupils:	11 to 18 Years
Gender of pupils:	Girls
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Ann Fahey
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

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27719	Paul Metcalfe	<i>Team inspector</i>		
30282	Sally Richardson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern Foreign Languages (French).	Accommodation.
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	Jack Haslam	<i>Team inspector</i>		
23268	Kevin Corrigan	<i>Team inspector</i>		
27585	Ken Hounslow	<i>Team inspector</i>	Biology.	
3753	Hamish Wilkie	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	Best value.
	Alan Paver	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
	Sandra Tweddell	<i>Team inspector</i>	English.	Co-ordinator.
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	Graham Preston	<i>Team inspector</i>	Business Education; Health and Social Care.	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is much bigger than average for a comprehensive school, having 1449 pupils aged between 11 and 18. They are all girls, apart from a very small number of boys in the Sixth Form. The Sixth Form is average in size, with 186 students. It offers a broad range of A Level and vocational courses. Some courses are taught at this school; some in two neighbouring schools, within the local consortium. The school serves the Sydenham area of Lewisham in Inner London. The social and economic circumstances of the immediate area are better than the national picture, but pupils come from a much wider area, including areas of social deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, almost 38 per cent. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school has been below average, but is rising. The present Year 7 was slightly above average on entry.

There is a wide ethnic mix in the school, reflecting the rich ethnic diversity of the local area. Just under half the pupils are white. There are 138 refugee pupils. There is a much larger proportion than nationally (26.8 per cent) of pupils for whom English is an additional language: of these 130 are supported by additional designated funding. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs (1.2 per cent) is below the National Average. However, the proportion of pupils on the register of special educational need (22.1 per cent) is slightly above average. Of those with statements, half have emotional or behavioural difficulties, just over a quarter have moderate learning difficulties and an eighth have specific learning difficulties. There are small numbers with physical disabilities. There are two students in the Sixth Form with statements of special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school, with many very good and even excellent aspects to its work. Pupils achieve well. For the last four years, attainment has been below average both on entry and in the year 9 National Curriculum tests, but above that in similar schools. In GCSE examinations, attainment has been in line with the National Average over the same period and very high compared with that in similar schools – in the top five per cent. The quality of teaching is good, overall, and, as a result of this and the very positive ethos in the school, pupils learn well, developing good learning skills, learning to work independently and co-operatively. The school has worked hard on its equal opportunities policy and this is implemented very well. Inclusiveness is a strength. There is very good provision for the gifted and talented pupils, for those with special educational needs, and for reluctant learners. One of the keys to the school's success is the very good provision for the personal development of pupils – through tutors and the excellent personal and social education programme. It is monitored very effectively. The Sixth Form is cost effective. Leadership and management of the school by the headteacher and senior team are excellent, providing clear direction and monitoring the work of the school very effectively. The school has good links with parents. The school gives good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils achieve well and, from below average attainment on entry, attain average standards, overall, in their GCSE examinations.
- Pupils develop good attitudes to school and they work hard. Their behaviour is good.
- Assessment information is used very well to help pupils by ensuring that pupils have realistic targets and make progress in their learning.
- The educational and personal support and guidance that the school provides for its pupils are excellent
- Teaching is good overall, much is very good, and this leads to pupils learning well.
- Overall, the leadership and management of the school and subject departments are very effective.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Although attainment is high overall, not all courses are equally effective in bringing the best out of the pupils.
- The provision for ICT does not ensure that all pupils cover the required aspects of the subject in sufficient depth.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in September 1996. Since that time, the school has improved its performance in GCSE examinations and has raised attainment significantly in the Sixth Form. Well-planned and focused staff development has succeeded in sustaining the good quality of teaching that was commented on in the 1996 report. There has been a considerable improvement in the use of assessment data to ensure that pupils are helped to make good progress. The work of the school is being monitored with increasing effectiveness and the results of this are fed back to teachers on a regular basis.

Progress has been made on all the key issues from the last report. Assessment was the first key issue: it is now a significant strength. The issue about the need to improve the provision for gifted pupils has been dealt with well. Provision has improved in ICT, where both standards and the teaching have been improved. The quality of teaching has been sustained and the work in most classes matches the needs and aspirations of pupils well. The daily act of collective worship for all is still not in place. Overall, however, there has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to continue to improve in future.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and Sixth Form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-Level/AS-Level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	A*
A-Levels/AS-Levels	D	D	C	

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

At the end of Year 9, attainment in the national tests has been below the National Average overall for the last four years, but above average compared with similar schools. Results in English have been in line with the National Average for the last four years and well above attainment in similar schools. Results in mathematics and science were below the National Average in 1999, though well above those for similar schools. Results were well below in 2000 and below those in similar schools. Science and mathematics results improved significantly in 2001, but were still below the National Average.

Pupils make good progress. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils who attained 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C in 2000 was in line with the National Average and very high (in the top 5 per cent) compared with that in similar schools. The proportion who attained five or more passes at A*-G was above average and again very high, in the top 5 per cent of all similar schools. The proportion who attained at least one GCSE pass at A*-G was above the National Average. As the chart above shows, the overall performance at GCSE was in line with the average nationally, as it has been for the past four years, and very high compared with similar schools.

The results for 2001 are very similar to those for 2000, although national comparative figures were not available at the time of writing. The most successful subjects at GCSE in 2000 were sports studies, French, science, information and communication studies and English literature. The subjects that performed least well relative to all others in the school, although the results were close to the average nationally, were German, mathematics, geography and art. In 2001, although national comparisons are not yet available, pupils attained well in history, art, the expressive arts, sociology and French. The school was close to the demanding targets it set for itself in 2000 and 2001.

In the Sixth Form, pupils gained average results in 2000. Overall results in the GCE Advanced and GNVQ Advanced and Intermediate Level courses show that pupils have achieved satisfactorily, having made sound progress from their results in GCSE examinations at the age of 16. The best results in the year 2000 were in art and design, media studies and GNVQ business. Attainment was relatively lower in English literature, biology and other social studies. Attainment in art and media studies has been consistently good in recent years, up to and including 2001. However, in most subjects there are too few candidates for an analysis to be statistically valid. Attainment Post 16 dipped slightly in 2001, as it did in the rest of the consortium.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: almost all pupils have positive attitudes to the school. They want to succeed. They work hard and listen carefully to advice from their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: this helps to maintain a good learning ethos. Good behaviour outside of class ensures that the school is a very orderly and friendly community.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: pupils relate very well to teachers and to one another. Most develop independence and learn to work well and co-operatively with others. They are respectful and considerate.
Attendance	Below average: the school works hard to improve attendance. New procedures for monitoring attendance are in place, but have not yet made a significant impression.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years ten – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Across all the lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better in over 98 per cent of lessons. Four unsatisfactory lessons were observed out of a total of 209. For Years 7 to 11, more than 30 per cent of the teaching observed was very good or excellent, with good teaching in almost half the lessons. In the Sixth Form, teaching was good in a fifth of lessons observed. It was very good or excellent in half the lessons. It was unsatisfactory in two.

The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good, with much that is very good, in Years 7 to 11. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory across the school. Teachers' good planning and preparation of lessons are key strengths. They care for their pupils and give them very good advice and support. The better lessons are purposeful and characterised by high expectations. Pupils have good learning skills because of the good teaching and make good progress. In this inclusive school, the teaching meets the needs of all pupils well. There are some weaknesses in the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT), however. In the Sixth Form, the teaching is helping students to develop independent learning and research skills. The students are mature and responsible learners, as a result.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: the curriculum is broad and reasonably well balanced. There is a good range of GCE A Level courses and vocational courses in the 6th form as well as in Years ten and 11. Some pupils have insufficient coverage of information and communication technology, however, and there is no religious education in the Sixth Form. For Years 7 to 11, the very good provision for extra-curricular clubs and activities provides good opportunities for pupils to broaden their education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good: the school offers an inclusive education that meets the needs of all pupils well. The care and approach of the whole support team underpins the successful teaching and relationships throughout the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good: the pupils at an early stage in their acquisition of English are identified and supported very well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: the provision for moral and social education is very good. The provision for cultural education is very good, with an awareness of the need to prepare pupils for life in a multi-cultural society. The provision for spiritual development has improved since the last report and is satisfactory. There is not a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, however.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is very good. The educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are excellent. This is a very caring school that does not tolerate poor behaviour, promoting respect for all members of the school community.

The school works well in partnership with parents to help them to support their children's learning. The sharing of assessment information with pupils and parents is a strength.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent leadership from the headteacher, supported very well by her senior managers, ensures that the school has a very clear direction for future development. There is a strong commitment to raising standards further. Senior managers have a shared vision of a school that is inclusive and cares for both pupils and adults, promoting equality of opportunity for all members of the school community to learn and make progress. Overall leadership is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their role well. They are involved in the work of the school, in deciding its future direction and in monitoring its work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good: an increasingly wide range of data and very good review procedures ensure that the school is evaluating its own performance very thoroughly. The staff uses this information very effectively to guide their planning and to raise attainment.
The strategic use of resources	Good: the teachers are deployed well and they make good use of the accommodation. Resources are used effectively. The school seeks best value in all its purchasing decisions.

The school applies the principles of best value well to guide its development and its use of funds and resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Most parents who responded are very pleased with the school. Over 90 per cent of them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree that expectations are high; • believe that teaching is good and children make good progress; • think that the school is managed well; • would feel comfortable approaching the school with any problems; • think that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible; • believe that their children like coming to the school. 	<p>Of the parents who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • just over 20 per cent are not satisfied with the work that their children are set to do at home and would like the school to work more closely with them.

The inspectors agree with the positive comments made by parents. Some parents are concerned about homework provision. The inspection team was satisfied with the quality and quantity of homework being set.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Sydenham School is part of the Hillside consortium of three schools offering Post 16 provision. There are a number of institutions offering Post 16 provision in the area. Currently, 184 Sixth Form students are on the Sydenham roll. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds and in the main school, from which a significant number of students come, the number entitled to free school meals is well above average. There are two students with statements of special educational needs. The Sixth Form has the advantage of students who come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, many from black British homes. Approximately 92 per cent of Year 11 go on to further education, about half staying within the consortium. The consortium offers a very wide range of courses: 24 A and AS Level GCE courses and 13 Vocational Courses.

The inspection was only of the provision for Sydenham students, but involved some sampling of provision on other sites.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The Sixth Form makes good provision for the education of its students and gives satisfactory value for money. Attainment is generally average, but there is a variation between courses. In a number of subjects, many students begin their course with low attainment. They achieve well because of the very good teaching. On some courses, levels of attainment are restricted by low GCSE results on entry. The school is aware of this and is taking steps to encourage a broader range of students to stay on into the Sixth Form. Leadership and management of the Sixth Form are good. Students receive good guidance both before entry and when they have been accepted onto courses. The support they are given is good.

STRENGTHS

- Teaching is very good, overall.
- Attainment is average overall and is above average in the communication aspect of key skills, GNVQ business and GNVQ health and social care, media studies and art.
- Students' achievement is currently good.
- Relationships are very good.
- Students have positive attitudes towards work and their behaviour is good.
- The choice of courses is broad and students are given good advice in Year 11 about their future choices.
- Support and guidance are good and help students to succeed.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- There are variations in attainment between courses. Some are more successful than others in getting the best out of students.
- The use of assessment for tracking the progress of students is inconsistent between courses.
- The Sixth Form does not meet statutory requirements for religious education.
- As the school recognises, entry requirements for courses need to be reviewed to ensure that they are always appropriate.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the Sixth Form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the Sixth Form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Teaching is good because members of staff in the faculty are experienced and capable. The pupils achieve well, making good progress in their understanding and knowledge of mathematics at this level.
Biology	Satisfactory. The teaching is good and the staff have a very good understanding of their subject and work well as a team. Attainment is below average. The preparation for the new courses was hampered, initially, by staffing difficulties, but the provision is improving.
Business studies	Very good. Attainment is above average and students achieve highly. Teaching is good and assessment is used well to help students move forward in their learning.
Art	Very good. Attainment is well above average and the quality of the teaching is high. The students are highly motivated and achieve very well because of the commitment, knowledge and enthusiasm of the staff.
Health and social care	Very good. Attainment is above average and students achieve highly. Teaching is good and much is very good. There are good systems for assessment, which are used well.
Sociology	Good. Attainment is satisfactory and students achieve well. Teaching is good and students have positive attitudes towards their work.
Geography	Good. Teaching is good. The attainment of pupils on entry to the course is rising and, along with the good teaching, standards are rising.
English	Good. Students achieve well even though attainment is below average. Teaching is good and much is very good and students use skills of research well to develop their learning.
French	Satisfactory. The numbers taking the course are small, but those taking it attain average standards. Last year, no student went on to study at A2 Level.

Attainment in art, media studies drama was relatively high in 2001. Attainment was below average in 2001 in psychology, because of staffing problems within the consortium, and in general studies. At GCE AS Level, numbers were generally too small to make statistical

comparison valid, but attainment in art was high. Teaching in other subjects is generally good and students achieve well. The communications element of key skills is taught effectively and students attain highly. The other aspects of key skills are newly in place and satisfactory overall, though developing well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good support, sensitive to their personal circumstances.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Sixth Form	Good overall and there is a clear vision for the development of the Sixth Form. Senior managers have a good understanding of the strengths in the provision and what areas they need to develop.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the Sixth Form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The choice of courses. • The school helped them to settle well into their courses. • Teachers are accessible and ready to help. • They enjoy being in the Sixth Form and would advise others to join. • They are taught well and challenged to do their best. 	<p>The questionnaire was completed mainly by students in Year 12, who had only recently begun their courses in the Sixth Form and so were uncertain about some of the questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of outside activities is limited. • There is little advice given about what to do when students finish their courses. • There is little advice about progress in relation to the qualifications they hope to get. • Work is not assessed thoroughly.

Students in Year 13 felt that careers advice was good and they were quickly informed if they were not making progress through the records that are kept of their progress. The students spoken to during the inspection week were full of praise for the school and the quality of education they are receiving. One, who has just begun life as a Sixth Former, wrote on the form: *I am very happy with my work and all of my teachers.* Almost all of the students would recommend others to join the Sixth Form and enjoy being part of it.

The inspection team found that students are justified in their views about what pleases them. Work is regularly assessed and the information is used to inform students about the progress they are making, but there is inconsistency across subjects. The advice about what to do when they have finished their course is satisfactory. Outside activities are limited, particularly sports activities, although there is an enrichment programme, with 'gifted and talented' funded trips.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement "outstanding" in further education and Sixth Form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to "very weak".

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The attainment of pupils Pre-16.

Attainment on entry

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school has been below average, as measured by standardised tests. Analysis of the results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 for primary school pupils who have entered the school over the last two years shows that attainment is rising and is now close to the National Average overall. However, the pupils who took external examinations and national tests in 2000 and 2001, and those currently in Year 9 and Year 11, were below average on entry.

Performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9

2. Attainment at the end of Year 9 in the National Curriculum tests has been below the National Average overall, but above that in similar schools, for the last four years, and has been below the national trend. Overall attainment was above that in similar schools in 2000 and is likely to be higher in 2001, reflecting the improvement in results in science and mathematics.

3. Results in English were in line with the National Average from 1997 to 2000. Levels of attainment dropped slightly in 2001, although national comparisons were not possible at the time of the inspection. They were well above those in similar schools in 2000.

4. Attainment was below average in mathematics from 1997 to 1999, although well above that in similar schools. It dropped to well below the National Average in 2000, and below that of similar schools. Attainment levels rose in 2001, but national comparisons were not available at the time of writing.

5. Attainment at the end of Year 9 in the National Curriculum tests in science was well below the National Average in 1997, 1998 and 2000, but below average in 1999. Compared with similar schools in 2000, results were below average, but they had been consistently well above average in the years up to this. Results improved significantly in 2001 and were in line with the national figures for 2000.

6. The finding of the inspection is that attainment across the curriculum at the end of Year 9 is close to the average for the country as a whole. In this inclusive school, all pupils make good progress, including high and low attaining pupils, pupils with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and refugees. In English, by the age of 14, most pupils have average standards of literacy. Attainment in reading is average across the school. Many pupils use texts well to justify their point of view and they are beginning to understand the techniques that authors employ. Attainment in writing, although close to average, is weaker than the other two aspects of language, as the faculty is aware, mainly because of a lack of precision in the choice of vocabulary and frequent technical errors. Higher-attaining pupils engage in debate well, being aware of their audience, maintaining eye contact and adapting their language in response to the views of others. Many pupils, however, although they have the confidence to take part in discussion and are able to express their views, lack the breadth and sophistication of language to express themselves eloquently.

7. Numeracy standards are generally below average in Years ten and 11, but are improving in Years 7 to 9. The development of the National Numeracy Strategy in Years 7 and 8 is giving girls regular practice in mental arithmetic, which in turn is improving knowledge of tables and bonds. By the end of Year 9, girls' work is generally near the National Average. Standards in science in Year 9 are below average when compared with all schools and average for similar schools. The higher-attaining girls have good knowledge and investigative skills and overall standards are rising.

Attainment in GCSE examinations

8. All pupils achieve well in GCSE examinations, including high and low attaining pupils, pupils with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and refugees. They make very good progress from their levels of attainment at the end of Year 9. Gifted and talented pupils are identified by subject departments, as they are in Years 7 to 9, and they are given more challenging work. They make good progress as a result.

9. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils who attained five or more GCSE grades A* - C in the year 2000 was in line with the National Average, as it has been for the last four years, and very high (in the top five per cent) compared with that in similar schools. The proportion who attained five or more grades A* - G was above average and again very high, in the top five per cent of all similar schools. The proportion who attained at least one GCSE pass at A* - G was above the National Average. The overall performance at GCSE, measured by average point score per pupil, was in line with the average nationally, as it has been for the past four years, and very high compared with similar schools. Compared with schools with similar levels of attainment at the end of Year 9, attainment at GCSE is above average.

10. The results for 2001 are very similar to those for 2000, although national comparative figures were not available at the time of writing. The most successful subjects at GCSE in 2000 were sports studies, French, science, information and communication studies and English literature. The subjects that performed least well relative to all others in the school, although the results were close to the average nationally, were German, mathematics, geography and art. In 2001, although national comparisons are not yet available, pupils attained well in history, art, the expressive arts, sociology and French. The school was close to the targets it set for itself in 2000 and 2001. Overall, attainment in literacy is close to average.

11. The findings of the inspection are that attainment in English at the end of Year 11 is close to the National Average and pupils have good reading skills. In mathematics, attainment is below the national average, but pupils' standards of presentation of their work are particularly high. Attainment in science is below the national average, with girls in Year 11 having unsatisfactory levels of knowledge and recall skills, reflecting the poor prior attainment for that year group. Attainment in geography is close to average, with particularly good coursework. Attainment is above average in history, where coursework is detailed and very well presented. Attainment in ICT is average, but there is too little progress made between Year 10 and Year 11, because similar work is set for both year groups. In modern foreign languages, attainment is above average in French, below in German and well below in Spanish. In music, attainment is close to the National Average and composition skills are good. In physical education, girls attain above average standards, especially in netball. Attainment is well above the expected level set by the locally agreed syllabus in religious education and girls show a mature understanding. Attainment in art is above average. Across Year 11, oracy skills are good and developed well. Levels of numeracy are below average.

The Sixth Form's results and students' achievements

12. Some students attend other schools in the consortium for some subjects, each school offering a part of the total Sixth Form provision. Small numbers of students join the school at Sixth Form Level, including a small number of male students, because the courses they want to follow are mainly based at this school. Similarly, some students who attended Sydenham School from Year 7 to Year 11 move to other schools in the consortium. This affects, amongst others, some science courses, geography, some GNVQ provision and Year 12 art. This inspection concentrated solely on the provision for Sydenham students. There was limited inspection of provision on other sites, but only where students of this school were being taught.

13. Attainment in the Sixth Form is satisfactory and students make satisfactory progress from the levels they gained in their GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11.

14. The attainment of students in the Sixth Form who were entered for two or more GCE A and A/S Level courses, or the equivalent vocational courses, was in line with the National Average in 2000. The average point score dropped slightly from 15.5 to 14.5 from 2000 to 2001. This reflected the lower attainment on entry of this cohort of students. Over time, results in the sixth form have been improving steadily. The average point score has risen year on year, from ten.2 in 1996 to 15.5 in 2000. One factor that depresses the overall point score is that relatively low numbers of students follow a general studies course in the Sixth Form and so the students take fewer examinations than in some similar schools. The school is meeting its targets for Sixth Form performance and the targets it sets are appropriate.

15. Although achievement has been satisfactory in the Sixth Form, measured by comparing results against prior attainment data, the finding of the inspection is that provision has improved to the point where students are, currently, achieving well and making good progress. Particularly good work was seen in art, for example, where excellent teaching, along with a very good understanding of the individual needs of students and how to move them forward in their learning, is raising standards. The levels of challenge are high and students respond to these very well. Afternoon classes continue after school into the evening, all students staying on with high levels of motivation.

16. In this inclusive school, almost all students achieve well in the Sixth Form, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, and levels of retention are good. However, there has been some relaxation of entry requirements for Sixth Form courses. This reflects the spirit of the broadening of courses that has been introduced by the arrival of the AS Level examinations. As a result, not all taking A or AS courses, or their GNVQ equivalents, attained highly in their GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. Some students have found the level of work too demanding and entry requirements are, correctly, being reviewed.

17. There are no significant differences in achievement between male and female students. Standards of students' oral and written skills are satisfactory. In English, media studies and psychology – amongst other subjects - they debate and discuss well, helping them to a better understanding of the texts they are studying.

18. In 2000, art, media studies and GNVQ business were the most successful of the courses run in the Sixth Form. The average point score in these subjects was above or well above the National Average. Results were low in biology, where the pass rate was very low, in sociology and English literature, because few candidates attained high grades. Numbers were too small at AS Level for meaningful comparison with national figures. In

2000, attainment in GNVQ intermediate science was good, 13 of the 21 candidates gaining a distinction.

19. In 2001 results in GNVQ advanced business were also good, with 24 of the 30 candidates attaining the equivalent of grades A to C. Results in English literature improved, with just under a quarter of candidates attaining grades A to C. Results in art and design and media studies continued to be good. Attainment in psychology was disappointing: partly the result of staffing difficulties that have since been resolved. All the students who followed courses in drama or sociology attained pass grades, with a high proportion gaining grades in the A to C range. Overall, 45 per cent of the passes at GCE A Level and Advanced GNVQ were at the higher grades, A to C, but the overall pass rate was only 76 per cent.

20. Entry levels for most AS Level examinations were low – only one candidate taking government and politics, for example, or sociology. This makes comparison with national pass rates, where they are available, invalid. In those subjects with a higher entry rate, the majority of candidates gained a pass, but relatively few gained the higher grades in the A to C range. Of the 195 subject entries, 145 resulted in at least pass grades, of which 57 were in the higher-grade band. The most successful subject was art, in which all nine candidates passed with grades between A and C. Results in applied mathematics were relatively weak, with only four of the 12 candidates achieving pass grades.

21. The finding of the inspection is that attainment has risen overall in the Sixth Form since the 2001 examination results and that students are attaining close to National Average levels in almost all subjects now and better in some, such as art. There is a detailed commentary on the subjects of the Sixth Form curriculum in Part E of the report. Briefly, attainment is currently well above the National Average in GNVQ Advanced Level business. It is above average in health and social care at GNVQ Advanced Level and in mathematics at GCE A Level. In a number of subjects that were inspected in depth, attainment is close to the National Average, even though attainment on entry to the courses is relatively low, signifying that students achieve well. These are geography, sociology and French, all at GCE A Level. Standards are currently below average but rising steadily in A Level English, as a result of good provision. Attainment in A Level biology is below average, partly because some of the students were accepted onto the course with low prior attainment and find the Level of work difficult.

ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

22. The attitudes and values of pupils are very good and make an important contribution to the quality of their learning. The school has maintained the high standards reported in the last inspection.

23. Pupils have very good attitudes to lessons and to their learning. They show interest in their work, concentrate very well and enjoy the activities prepared for them. Almost all pupils come to lessons with positive attitudes and a willingness to learn. They ask and answer questions, join in discussions and contribute well during lessons. Most pupils are good-humoured and relaxed. They are generally enthusiastic about lessons and rise to the challenges offered them. For example, in English lessons Year 8, pupils responded well to the challenge of understanding Tennyson's ballad *Mariana*, thinking hard before answering questions. Year 11 pupils used sophisticated language to explore the range of issues raised in the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy. Bright and bubbly Year 7 pupils were eager to learn about squares and square roots in their mathematics lessons. Year 9 pupils really enjoyed their science work on why some metals tarnish, because of the way the teacher

related the work to everyday examples. In art, Year 10 pupils were enthralled by the skill of the teacher

when using information technology to depict natural objects. Very occasionally, some pupils' attitudes were less positive. In these very few instances, they were restless and applied little effort to their studies and the lesson. This was generally because the content of the lesson was not put across in a way that interested or motivated them.

24. Behaviour of pupils around the school and in lessons is good overall and, for the large majority of pupils, is very good. All members of staff have high expectations of how pupils should behave and pupils respond accordingly. Pupils think the rewards and sanctions are fair and have a positive effect on the standards of behaviour in school. They were involved in the recent review of the behaviour policy and think that behaviour throughout the school has improved since that review. Pupils socialise well outside the classroom and the atmosphere is good-humoured and lively even when busy. Anti bullying is given a high priority throughout the school in tutorial time, assemblies, anti-bullying week and personal and social education lessons. The pupils' peer support group offers help and support and has been instrumental in resolving and helping many pupils. Pupils report that there is very little bullying. If it does arise, they are confident that it will be dealt with quickly and sensitively. Pupils have a strong sense of loyalty towards the school, and there is very little litter, graffiti or vandalism. Pupils enjoy being at the school and are proud of it.

25. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are of a very high quality and create a supportive and caring atmosphere, in which pupils feel secure and comfortable. These very good relationships have a positive impact on pupils' response and attitudes in lessons. Pupils are valued both as individuals and for their contribution to the daily life of school. This can be seen in the way in which older pupils feel a sense of responsibility towards younger pupils. Discussions in many lessons illustrated pupils' acceptance and tolerance of others. They respect each other's feelings and are supportive of each other in lessons, working in pairs and groups productively. For example, in physical education, Year 9 pupils showed appreciation of each other's trampoline skills and praised efforts and achievement. In religious education, Year 10 pupils showed great sensitivity and awareness when exploring the Christian view of love. In personal and social education, Year 8 pupils had a lively and wide-ranging discussion on the complex relationships within families. Some pupils changed their point of view as a result of their discussions. Pupils are very polite and friendly, and welcome visitors into their school.

26. During the last academic year, there were 6 permanent exclusions (one incident involved 5 pupils) and 89 fixed term exclusions (involving 83 pupils). This is quite high, but exclusions are used as the final stage in a structured process of dealing with unacceptable behaviour. The number of exclusions is falling as the school develops very effective measures (such as the Step by Step centre) to work with pupils to help them to become aware of the effects of their own behaviour and learn to control it.

27. The school has created an environment in which pupils see their learning as important and which gives them the confidence to be themselves and to grow, personally and emotionally. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem are raised by the commitment of the staff and the genuine interest the staff have for each pupil. Pupils are expected to be responsible and to show concern and respect for others. Almost all pupils respond accordingly. The peer support group of Year 11 pupils show great maturity, sensitivity and commitment to their role. They have attended intensive training, mostly in their own time and see themselves not only providing a service for their fellow pupils, but also supporting and helping staff. Older pupils help to run and manage many of the lunchtime and after school clubs. Representatives from each tutor group attend the year council meetings and each year group is represented on the school council. Pupils strongly support the school council and feel that they have a genuine voice in their school. Many pupils join in the variety of activities offered to them and take part in many sporting events and school

productions. All pupils use planners diligently and this helps them to organise their work and time effectively. The pupils are involved in reviewing their achievements each term and setting themselves targets to help improvement. They are very aware of how well they are doing in their studies and want to do their best and improve. Many subjects encourage pupils to be independent learners, with a strong emphasis on research and organisation. In personal and social education, Year 9 pupils were planning a campaign to present their views on a civil liberties topic. Their enthusiasm and commitment to researching, analysing, collating and presenting their campaign, with minimal input from the teacher, was very impressive.

28. Attendance at the school is unsatisfactory. The attendance rate is consistently below the National Average and authorised and unauthorised absences are higher than the National Averages, despite the best efforts of the school. Unsatisfactory attendance is spread across all year groups and most tutor groups. The reasons for absence are many and varied and often condoned by parents. Holidays, looking after siblings and minor illness account for many of the parentally condoned absences. Many pupils travel a long way to school each day and are dependent on public transport and traffic. Punctuality is a problem for some pupils, but is often beyond their and the schools' control.

The Sixth Form

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

29. The attitudes and values of students in Years 12 and 13 are good overall. In lessons, almost all students show great interest in their work and are prepared to put in intellectual effort as well as hard work. For example, Year 12 health and social care students were highly motivated when looking at the origins and developments of the welfare state. In sociology, students were really excited by the topic examining the ways in which the media present football. They enjoyed the method and content of the lesson, teacher and students united in their pursuit of knowledge.

30. The behaviour of students in Years 12 and 13 is good. The high expectations that permeate the rest of the school are also intrinsic to the Sixth Form and students respond accordingly. They appreciate and enjoy the opportunity to take more responsibility for their own learning and enjoy the interaction with other students in the consortium. The Sixth Form study area and common room are treated with respect and students appreciate the facilities and the freedom they are given. Because of the inclusiveness of the school, and the tolerance and respect for all that it fosters, there are no differences in the behaviour and attitudes of any groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, refugees or those for whom English is an additional language, from Year 7 to Year 13.

31. Relationships between students and between students and staff are very good. In lessons, the two-way exchange of knowledge and experience enhances the learning of many students. For example, in a sociology lesson, the relaxed relationship and humorous exchanges between students and teacher led to very good co-operation and a better understanding of the concept of culture and subculture. Students from across the consortium are encouraged to join together to organise such events as the forthcoming Comedy Evening and fund-raising events for charities. Students really enjoy these and the opportunities they offer for interaction with other students. They would like more social and non-academic activities within their school day (such as sporting activities), as these are currently limited.

32. Attendance of students overall is satisfactory, although it varies between subjects. Most students attend regularly because they are highly motivated. However, in general studies the attendance of some students is poor and they miss many lessons.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

33. Teaching is good overall and this leads to pupils achieving well, because they make good progress, are interested in their studies and develop good learning skills. Across all the lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better in over 98 per cent of lessons. Four unsatisfactory lessons were observed out of a total of 209. Around 30 per cent of the teaching observed in the school was very good or excellent, with good teaching in almost half the lessons seen.

34. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good, with much that is very good, in Years 7 to 11. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory across the school. Teachers' good planning and their preparation of lessons are key strengths. They care for their pupils and give them very good advice and support. The better lessons are purposeful and characterised by high expectations. Pupils have good learning skills, because of the good teaching, and make good progress. In this inclusive school, the teaching meets the needs of all pupils well. Work is marked constructively and in enough detail to give pupils a clear guide to what they can do to improve. Information and communication technology is used well in some subjects as an aid to teaching, but not consistently enough across the school.

35. The good quality of teaching is a significant factor in the good progress that pupils make. Teaching has improved since the last report, when it was reported that almost ten per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory.

36. All teachers plan their lessons effectively to take account of the varied needs of different groups of pupils, including the pupils with special educational needs and the pupils for whom English is an additional language. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory across the school and most pupils have sufficient numeracy skills to cope with the demands of subjects up to Year 11. Literacy is taught well in English. In many other subjects, such as art, teachers show a growing awareness of the need to reinforce and develop literacy skills, including the teaching of subject specific vocabulary. However, not all teachers correct basic spelling errors.

37. There are many examples of very good teaching. Such lessons are very well prepared, so that the resources are to hand and of very good quality and the teaching strategies interesting. The result is that pupils are motivated and enthusiastic. The teachers' high expectations, very good relationships and management of pupils means that that no time is wasted and they respond very well to the work the teacher sets. The school has worked hard on developing an effective teaching style across all subjects, with a consistent lesson structure, in which aims are shared with the pupils and work reviewed towards the end of the lesson to consolidate learning. In a music lesson with Year 9 pupils, for example, the teacher's expectations were high and the pupils responded well in the standards of both their work and behaviour. Composing music on electronic keyboards to accompany a film, they worked at a brisk pace and rose well to the challenge. They were excited and interested and the teacher's very good control kept them concentrating, so that much was achieved in the lesson. There were many such examples. A Year 9 class studying love poetry in English were reminded of their targets and worked hard to meet the teacher's very high expectations of them. The teacher's own subject expertise was very good and as a result the pupils were using technical terms with confidence in their mature discussion of the poems they studied. In a religious education lesson with Year 11 pupils, the teacher's high expectations of good behaviour and a high work rate led to the pupils

concentrating and working hard. They responded well to a challenging discussion task, comparing the effectiveness of different ways of punishing crime.

38. In the lessons that were less than satisfactory, the pace of learning was too slow. In an ICT lesson, for example, the teacher's management and control of the class were unsatisfactory. As a result, the pupils did not always listen and so time was wasted because they did not know what to do.

The Sixth Form

39. In the Sixth Form, the teaching is helping students to develop independent learning and research skills. In the Sixth Form, teaching was very good or excellent in almost half the lessons. It was good in almost a third of lessons observed. Teaching was unsatisfactory in two. The students are mature and responsible learners, as a result of the generally very good provision.

40. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons well, progressively building students' knowledge, skills and confidence. All lessons have clear learning objectives, shared with the students so that they know what is expected of them. Expectations are generally high. In the better lessons, students are challenged and expected to make significant gains in learning. Most teachers structure the work and offer individual support and guidance in order to ensure that students make progress in their learning. The good pace of learning is a feature of the better lessons. Teaching is brisk and considerable amounts are covered in each session. Students are regularly reminded of how much time is left and what they still have to cover. All teachers are enthusiastic about the subjects they are teaching and most plan interesting lessons, so that this enthusiasm motivates and interests their students. This increases their commitment, ensures their concentration and encourages them to work hard. In an excellent art lesson with Year 13 students, for example, the teacher's subject knowledge and expertise were so high that she was able to demonstrate the skills she was teaching to a high standard, enthusing and motivating the students to try for themselves. She gave them excellent advice that improved their work significantly, so that they made very good progress. She used resources, such as music and famous paintings, very well indeed to stimulate the students' ideas and create a wonderful ethos for learning. The students' response was excellent. They stayed in the lesson willingly for an hour after the end of school.

41. Where teaching is satisfactory, the pupils make satisfactory progress in the lesson, but the level of challenge is lower than in the better lessons and the students are more passive. There is a narrower range of teaching styles. The students are not as interested or motivated. They are doing less for themselves and their independent learning and research skills are not being developed as fully. In the few unsatisfactory lessons, the planning is weak and the students learn little. In a psychology lesson, for example, the lesson was not planned well and the teacher was not prepared. As a result, the explanations were confusing and the pupils were not learning as much as they should. In a later lesson from the same teacher, which was planned and resourced well, the students made good progress and achieved very well. However, the school needs to review the quality of provision and teaching across Sixth Form courses. The use of resources and of assessment by teachers, along with the range of teaching strategies regularly employed, need to be extended in those areas where provision is satisfactory rather than good or very good. Teachers should build on the experience and expertise available in those subject areas where students' achievement is high.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS AND PUPILS?

The curriculum for pupils Pre-16

42. The curriculum is good overall and conforms to statutory requirements, apart from insufficient coverage of ICT in Years 8 and 9 and the failure to provide a daily act of collective worship. The length of the teaching week has been increased since the last inspection and now meets government recommendations.

43. In Years 7 to 9, curricular provision is satisfactory and all National Curriculum subjects are studied for appropriate amounts of time. There are strengths in the breadth of coverage of many areas, including English, mathematics and religious education. A good range of modern foreign languages is offered. French, German and Spanish are taught and there is the opportunity to take up a second language in Year 9. All pupils receive at least one lesson of dance, drama and music every week, as well as personal and social education. There is insufficient emphasis on singing in music. The coverage of ICT is broad and thorough in Year 7, but unsatisfactory, because of its inconsistency, in Years 8 and 9. For these year groups, there are no discrete lessons, as there are in Year 7. Skills are taught across the curriculum, but not all classes have a consistent and planned experience of ICT.

44. In Years 10 and 11, the quality and range of learning opportunities are good. Pupils follow a broadly based curriculum. This includes the prescribed National Curriculum subjects of English, maths, science and technology. They can make further choices within the modern languages, humanities and expressive / creative subject areas. The breadth of the curriculum has been widened by the introduction of part 1 GNVQ in business, hospitality and catering and health and social care. A number of pupils avail themselves of the opportunity to enrich it further by choosing to study a second language, music or another humanities subject to GCSE Level in after-school "twilight" sessions. Small numbers of pupils also take a GCSE in their heritage language. Some pupils, including those who are disapplied from modern foreign languages, follow another vocational work-related course covering aspects of hospitality and catering, health and social care. Other vocational courses include business and ICT. Issues from the last report such as the length of the school day, the place of the arts and the provision for careers education, have been resolved.

45. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those for whom English is an additional language is good. There is an appropriate and carefully planned programme of support in lessons, with small group work where necessary outside of lessons for those who need additional support.

46. The curriculum is well planned by subject teachers. They pay careful attention to the differing ability levels of their pupils in drawing up their schemes of work, which include provision for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The school has a very strong commitment to equality of opportunity, which is as evident in its practice as in its documentation. There is very good extra-curricular provision, which encompasses a wide range of sports, dramatic, musical and artistic activities. There are a wide variety of trips and residential visits, such as that of the GNVQ pupils to Euro-Disney, the chamber choir's to Venice, the art department's to Paris, Amsterdam, Venice and Barcelona and the language department's visits to Normandy, Andalusia and Berlin.

47. There is very good provision for personal and social education in which a carefully planned programme, overseen by the co-ordinator for this curriculum area, is taught in all year groups by a small team of trained specialist teachers in dedicated rooms. The course

provides good coverage of sex education and drug awareness training. The school makes good provision for careers education and work related learning. All Year 10 pupils undertake two weeks' work experience and GNVQ and vocational A Level students have a one-week work-shadowing placement.

48. Links with the community are satisfactory; these include one with Lewisham College as part of the catering and hospitality element of the school's GNVQ provision. In food technology and textiles, and musical, instrumental and choir practice, there are links with a local special school. This is carefully planned to ensure the best possible integration of, and opportunities for, the pupils involved. Additionally there are very good links with partner institutions, which were further strengthened by the school's recognition as a beacon school in 1999.

The Post-16 Curriculum

49. The choice of courses that are available to students in the Sixth Form is very good due to the wide range offered by the consortium. These include both vocational and non-vocational courses. Students at Sydenham School benefit from good advice in Year 11 that results in approximately 92 per cent of students entering some form of further education. The school has worked hard to implement the new courses and is reviewing its provision in the light of the first Year of AS Level work. Departments have written and developed new course outlines, schemes of work and resources to reflect the new course requirements. Appropriate and relevant careers guidance is given. Students taking the GNVQ courses are given opportunities to pursue work-related experience as part of their study. Good provision is made for students to develop their key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT.

50. Statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education are not met. There is not a consistent pattern of provision. However, students who take general studies study religion as part of the course. In addition, elements are taught through the personal, social and health education course that is followed by all students

51. The provision for students who have special educational needs is good. Their needs are carefully met through a planned programme of support. Similarly, staff are aware of the learning needs of students for whom English is an additional language and specialist support is appropriately sought when necessary.

52. The provision for enrichment activities is satisfactory overall, although sports provision is limited. Students are given good opportunities to attend events at various universities, particularly through the programme that has been established through the gifted and talented initiative. There are also consortium-wide events, such as debates and comedy evenings.

53. All members of staff have good awareness of equal opportunities and do all they can to enable students to access the courses that they wish to study. In mixed gender groups, members of staff use methods that encourage both girls and boys to contribute, usually successfully. There is a wide range of students from different cultural backgrounds in all the classes and all generally contribute and make good progress.

54. The provision for personal development is good. All students have access to the effective programme for personal, social and health education, taught by tutors. The programme includes careers advice and guidance.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education Pre-16.

55. The overall provision for spiritual moral social and cultural development of pupils is good. In some areas it is very good. The school's commitment to this aspect is expressed in its aims and values. It has recently completed an audit of this provision and there is a whole school commitment to seeking opportunities for identifying and promoting this aspect of the curriculum throughout the school. This is reflected in the school ethos, where there is a strong sense of loyalty and shared values.

56. All subjects have identified those areas in their curriculum where spiritual development can be promoted and several examples were observed during the visit. In a music lesson, pupils were moved by the performance of a flute composition that had been written by a pupil. In religious education, pupils are frequently given opportunities to reflect upon their own values and beliefs. Pupils in a Year 7 class were considering their own response to creation stories. In English, the reading of *The Highwayman* held pupils spellbound. A very strong personal and social education course offers pupils frequent opportunities to explore questions of meaning and purpose.

57. The school is prevented from holding a daily act of worship by problems of accommodation. However assemblies are seen as a vital part of this provision and it seeks to abide by the spirit of the law through a carefully planned programme of assemblies. In the assemblies visited during the week, there was a strong emphasis on social moral and cultural issues. Pupils played a very active role in a presentation setting the scene for black history month. There was an absence of opportunities for spiritual development. An examination of previous notes and plans suggest that this is frequently the case. For this reason, the overall provision for spiritual development is satisfactory, rather than good.

58. The provision for moral development is very good. Relationships in the school are characterised by respect and tolerance. Teachers provide very good role models, seeking to promote in the pupils a sense of self worth and independence. This is reinforced in many subject areas. Moral issues are addressed overtly in both the Humanities and the Personal and Social Education lessons. A Year 8 group was observed actively examining the role of the family in personal and social education. In religious education, a Year 11 group was discussing thoughtfully the relationship between crime and punishment. Assembly themes frequently focus on subjects that encourage pupils to examine their own approach to moral issues.

59. Social development is cultivated throughout the school. The strong sense of community is reflected in such things as the general movement of pupils around the school, the lack of litter and general condition of the school. Pupils are actively involved in the school council, helping at parent's events and in the everyday events that occur in the school. The personal and social education programme encourages the development of social skills that are then transferred to other subjects. Pupils enjoy being involved in discussions. Their responses display a maturity of thought and are sensitive to other life styles and beliefs. This high level of tolerance is reflected in physical education, where pupils appreciate the contributions made by everybody, including those with learning difficulties. In English, pupils examine women's rights; whilst in history and geography issues of poverty and homelessness are covered. The provision for social development is very good. Pupils work well co-operatively.

60. The provision for cultural development is also very good. English covers a wide range of literature from all cultures, whilst art and music draw their inspiration from a wide variety of past and present civilisations. The multicultural nature of society is celebrated in assemblies. The school takes care to acknowledge the festivals of all religions and makes good provision for pupils who wish to celebrate their own festivals. For example, during

Ramadan, space is made available for those who wish to perform their daily prayers. The beliefs and life styles of all the major religions found in society are well covered in religious education, where the emphasis is on tolerance and respect for all religions. In dance lessons, pupils are currently investigating Indian style dance. The modern foreign language department organises numerous trips to European countries.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education Post-16.

61. The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students in the Sixth Form generally reflects that for pupils in the rest of the school. Overall, it is good. In some areas it is very good. There is a whole school commitment to seeking opportunities for identifying and promoting its delivery throughout the school.

62. All subjects have identified those areas in their curriculum where spiritual development can be promoted and several examples were observed during the visit. In an art lesson, jazz music was played and the students explored their feelings and responses to the music in the way they reflected the sensuous quality of the music in their collage work. The spiritual element of this lesson moved to a higher plane when one of the female students took over from the CD player and played live jazz on her clarinet. Overall, however, spiritual development is only just satisfactory and is the weakest of the four elements. There are two reasons for this. The first is that it is not planned for across curriculum areas, varying according to the interest and expertise of particular teachers. The second is that the school is not meeting statutory requirements to teach religious education to all students in the Sixth Form and so is losing the opportunities for reflection and the exploration of spiritual values that this subject would supply. The school believes that it cannot provide a daily act of worship for all in the sixth form every day, because they do not have a suitable space. However, there is a carefully planned programme of regular assemblies, with a strong emphasis on social moral and cultural issues.

63. The provision for moral development is very good. Relationships in the sixth form are characterised by respect and tolerance. Teachers and tutors provide very good role models, seeking to promote in the pupils a sense of self worth and independence. There are clear rules and the ethos of the school is one of tolerance and respect for others.

64. Social development is cultivated throughout the Sixth Form. The strong sense of community and the very good accommodation for students promotes a sense of social responsibility. Students are actively involved in such things as the school council, helping out at parent's events and in mentoring and supporting younger pupils. The personal and social education programme is a strong feature of the Sixth Form and develops students' social skills and awareness, as well as aspects of citizenship. Collaborative work in lessons teaches students to co-operate and be aware of the needs and contributions of others. The provision for social development is very good.

65. The provision for cultural development is also very good. As in the rest of the school, English covers a wide range of literature from all cultures whilst art and music draw their inspiration from a variety of past and present civilisations. The multicultural nature of society is celebrated in assemblies. The school takes care to acknowledge the festivals of all religions and makes good provision for pupils who wish to celebrate their own festivals.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS AND PUPILS?

The provision Pre-16.

Assessment

66. In the main school, the use of assessment to guide curriculum planning is very good, as are procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress.

67. At the time of the last inspection, weak assessment and its ineffective use were seen as the single most significant problem retarding the school's general progress. Since then the school has made very good progress in this aspect of its work. Now, very good assessment systems and their very effective use are underpinning the drive for further improvement.

68. The new computer programme that generates this information is fully installed on the school's widespread computer network. It reaches all faculty bases and year heads. The faculty teaching teams increasingly accept that this information provides clear guidance for raising standards further. They recognise that it complements the work sampling and classroom observation in honing the effectiveness of teaching methods. The deputy head teacher, and the senior teacher responsible for generating data, provide all sections of the school with increasingly manageable, up-to-date information and help them to understand how to make effective use of it. The school's policy of self-review for the faculties makes the role of faculty head a very significant one in improving standards and team building. The policy is also very effective in including middle managers and their teams in the processes of assessing needs of pupils and of generating and implementing development planning. This is based on good, detailed analysis of the performance of each child, each class and each teacher.

69. All teachers are now provided with a baseline of detailed information about the attainment of each pupil on entry to the school. This underpins a solid infrastructure of assessment, with strong focuses at the end of Year 9 and across the GCSE courses. On this is built a map of individual progress, using marks gained by each pupil across the school. This is used thoroughly throughout the school to measure progress and set targets. Its use is a particular strength of the technology areas, of religious education and geography. In GNVQ, assessment is very detailed, shared with pupils and is supportive and positive, so that pupils know how to improve. Assessment is satisfactory in music, but is inconsistent at this early stage as teachers come to grips with the new National Curriculum Levels.

70. The use of assessed material is a particular strength of the GCSE courses. Predicted grades are checked against performance in tests and 'mock' examinations. The school has a largely effective policy of setting 'aspirational' target grades (above those that prior attainment would predict) which are well known to the pupils and which encourage them to aim higher. A few pupils, however, even in Year 11, still have low aspirations and do not respond well to these targets.

71. The use of assessment information by pupils is less uniform in the lower school. Where it is firmly in place, pupils know their target grades and can trace their own progress by mapping it on charts in the front of their exercise books. Based on strong information from the subject areas, year heads can identify who is making good progress - adding value to their prior attainment - and who needs support to improve further. Support from class

teachers and the pastoral team is very good for individual pupils. Girls say they like the one-to-one review of their work with their tutor in mid-year. The issuing of the full report in September, rather than July, means that most girls start the year knowing their targets for the term to come.

Support and guidance

72. Overall, the care and support that the school provides for its pupils is very good, with some excellent features. Parents recognise and value this support and it is an aspect of its work of which the school has every right to be proud.

73. The school is a very caring place where pupils feel safe and confident. All members of staff work very closely as a team. They have an in-depth knowledge of all their pupils and a genuine concern and interest for their welfare and progress. The very high quality relationships are the basis upon which much of the personal support is built and this contributes to pupils' ability to get the most out of every day. All members of staff are excellent role models for the girls and the school is a very happy place for pupils, staff and visitors.

74. The school has developed an excellent range of strategies to support and monitor the personal and academic development of every pupil in the school. This area has been developed since the last inspection and is now a clear strength of the school. Tutors and heads of years play a pivotal role in this. They all take their role seriously and are committed to providing the best support for pupils. Through intensive tracking of academic performance and constant monitoring of all aspects of pupils' life at school, pupils who need additional help are identified and offered extra support tailored to their individual needs. The Step By Step centre is extremely well managed and organised. It is exceptionally effective in recognising and helping those girls who are having difficulties in a variety of areas. Its work is wholly integrated into the life of the school and seen as an essential ingredient in the raising of the achievement of those pupils directly involved. Whether the problem be one of behaviour or attendance, physical or emotional, academic or social, the origin of the problem is recognised. An appropriate plan is drawn up with the pupil and parents to help the pupil get the most out of lessons and for her learning to be disrupted as little as possible. Pupils and parents speak eloquently of how their lives have been changed because of the help they have received. Mentoring programmes exist in all year groups and pupils are confident that their teachers will help them find a solution to their problem.

75. There are very good procedures for promoting good behaviour across the whole school. A recent review of the behaviour policy involved all staff and pupils and everyone has a clear understanding of the high standards expected. Daily life is based on a climate of trust, honesty and respect and virtually all pupils respond accordingly. For example, at lunchtimes and breaks, most classrooms are left open and pupils have free access with the minimum of supervision. Rarely does this result in any problems. All members of staff apply the behaviour management system consistently. Pupils understand it clearly and feel that behaviour has improved since the recent review. In every incident, pupils record their own reaction and response to what happened, how this goes against the code of conduct of the school and how they could have avoided or prevented the situation. In this way, pupils understand and acknowledge that they must take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour and for the consequences that may follow.

76. The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. Through detailed and daily checks on registers and lessons, they quickly identify problems. Each tutor identifies two pupils each half term that they will work closely with to try and improve their attendance. Various strategies are used with support teachers and learning mentors and the attendance of many pupils improves. Many pupils come from families where absence is readily condoned for a variety of reasons and the school tries very hard to persuade these families of the benefit of regular attendance.

77. The school has a very well managed approach to the promotion of the physical well being of pupils. Arrangements for dealing with sickness and those for first aid are efficient, sensitive and appropriate. Child protection procedures are also very good and well co-ordinated. There is a focused and professional approach to health and safety across the school. A full assessment of the site and premises is carried out annually. Issues for action are recorded and any action required is appropriately carried out. Equipment is subject to annual checks. Procedures for the health and safety of students are managed well with experienced staff in roles such as health and safety.

The provision Post-16

Assessment

78. Overall, the procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good and the school is continuously developing and refining them, but they are less well developed in the Sixth Form than they are in the rest of the school. The school is developing a comprehensive database on individual students, based on results of national tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results. Performance is also analysed using externally produced formulae to predict attainment grades in the Sixth Form. The school organises regular reviews of students' progress. However, information on prior attainment is not used as consistently or rigorously as it is for pupils in Years 7 to 11, where it is a strong feature, and the tracking and targeting systems are not as comprehensive.

79. The school has a Sixth Form monitoring and review system. Students' progress and their final examination results are monitored by both gender and ethnicity. Most students feel well informed and motivated by this process. Marking in all subjects is developmental and informative. The assessment of each major piece of work is usually followed by an opportunity for the teacher and student to discuss the strengths and weaknesses and establish how the work can be improved. Students interviewed felt that their work is marked well and that the dialogue with teachers is useful. Their academic progress is monitored termly, through profiles that include information on attendance, predicted grade, a '*working at*' grade and a checklist for class work, homework, attitude to study and any additional targets. Tutors and students have a private action-planning meeting in which they review achievement and set targets. The discussion is recorded and student and tutor keep a copy to refer back to. In this way, students and parents are kept well informed on the progress being made. At Christmas, Year 12 students complete a *How are you getting on?* survey, in which they assess their own performance in each subject and their general feelings about Sixth Form life. Students interviewed said that they are well supported and that they all know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Advice, support and guidance

80. The induction arrangements for students are very good. There is a thorough, well-planned programme, with many valuable features, which begins in Year 11. The induction programme for Year 12 covers the ground rules for Sixth Form life, with inputs from outside speakers on self-organisation and study skills. Year 13 students talk about their experiences and offer any help and support if needed. Year 12 students say that they settled in very well and are very appreciative of the help and advice they have received from everyone.

81. The school provides a good level of support and guidance for its Sixth Form students that meets their wide variety of personal and educational needs. Their personal development is carefully monitored. The head of Sixth Form, form tutors and subject staff all know the students well and are willing to give as much help as they can to ensure that the students, including any who have special needs, achieve well. Students have confidence in their tutors. They are allocated to tutor groups on the basis of the courses they are studying and stay with that tutor for two Years. The tutor is the main point of contact and provides a stable point for students to refer to. The good relationships that exist between students and staff ensure that students always feel there is someone to listen and to talk to and someone who will identify concerns quickly. The tutorial programme is carefully planned and incorporates a range of speakers and visits and prepares students well for life in and after the Sixth Form. Guidance on higher education and employment applications is good and students report the information they receive is helpful and they are confident about moving on, especially to colleges and universities. Students report that they find tutors and subject teachers are very accessible and always ready to help. They feel comfortable and well supported and believe that teachers treat them with respect and as adults.

82. Students are expected to have a mature and responsible attitude to their work and studies and, because of this, they do not have to be in school unless they have a timetabled lesson. However, all students are expected to be in school on Monday mornings, when there is an assembly and tutor period. Monitoring of attendance in lessons is very good. An attendance checker monitors every lesson against a register and then feeds the information into an attendance database daily. Tutors receive weekly reports and can quickly chase up unexplained absences and identify patterns of non-attendance. Students sign a learning agreement (also signed by parents) that sets out the school's and students' responsibilities. Their academic progress is then monitored termly, by subject teachers and their tutors.

83. The school is always seeking new ways to involve Sixth Form students more in the daily life of the rest of the school. Year 12 and 13 students are often asked to speak to Year 11 pupils in assemblies and in personal and social education lessons, to give a first hand account of what pupils can expect in the Sixth Form. Some Year 12 students have helped to support the literacy programme. A development for the future is to identify high attaining Year 10 pupils for a university summer school, to encourage them to consider higher education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, PUPILS AND STUDENTS?

84. The school works hard to develop its relationship with parents, resulting in the continuation of the good relationship reported in the last inspection.

85. Parents have positive views about the school. They are pleased with the standards that the school expects from pupils. Parents feel comfortable approaching staff with questions and concerns. They feel that the teaching is good and that their daughters are

making good progress. Through the pre-inspection questionnaire, some parents indicated they are less pleased with the homework set and that the school does not work closely with them, but they represent a very small minority of parents.

86. Parents receive a good range of information about the school and its philosophy and approach. The prospectus is professional, attractive, informative and readable. It gives an accurate picture and flavour of the school and what parents can expect. The governors' annual report provides parents with the information they require and gives them a good insight into the activities of the school. Each year group has a curriculum handbook that provides detailed information on what pupils will study in the year ahead and how parents can help at home to support learning within each subject. The newsletter, *Snippets*, is a lively account of school developments, events, and pupils' achievements. All around the school are displays of pupils' work and activities, giving parents and visitors a flavour of what goes on and of the achievements of pupils.

87. Parents are invited to an annual review where, together with their daughter, they meet the tutor to discuss the written report and jointly decide on targets for pupils to work towards. A survey, held after the last annual review, showed that parents are very pleased with the organisation and format of the review and the level and quality of information they obtain from it. The reports give parents a good indication of the progress their daughter has made over the previous year. They are easy to read and to understand. Reports indicate clearly whether pupils are working to their best and whether this is above, below, or in line with the expected level for that age. The additional comments from teachers vary in quality. All indicate a good personal knowledge of pupils, but some are more practical and useful than others. Similarly, some of the targets indicated are rather general, whilst others give pupils and parents helpful suggestions on specific work that can be done to help improvement. A further parents' consultation evening later in the year gives parents the opportunity to talk to subject staff about achievement within subjects. Attendance at the review and parents' evenings is very high, with over 90 per cent of parents regularly attending, even when it means taking a day off work to do so. Staff and older pupils are used as interpreters for those parents who find English difficult. These parents greatly appreciate this. Overall, parents receive good information on the progress their daughters are making.

88. The school is keen to encourage parents to take an active part in their child's education. Tutors stay with the same group through the years resulting in a stable point of contact for parents and good relationships. Tutors are quick to contact them when a problem arises and information is shared, where necessary, with appropriate staff. There is close liaison between the school and home regarding behaviour issues and parents are appreciative of the help and support given to pupils and families. The home-school agreement is in place and clearly indicates what both parties can expect from each other. Through the information they receive, parents have a clear picture of the standards the school expects, particularly relating to behaviour and the value of the individual within school. They are asked to check pupils' planners regularly and use them to communicate with tutors and subject teachers when necessary. A number of parents do this. The school provides further information and advice through special curriculum evenings and through distributing government publications, such as *Learning Journeys*, to give more specific curriculum information. This was in direct response to informal feedback from parents, who wanted advice on how to support learning effectively at home.

Students' views of the Sixth Form

89. Parents are very supportive of the school and believe that their children enjoy coming to it. Those who returned the questionnaires and attended the parents' meeting

were happy with the school and what it achieves. In contrast, some of the Sixth Form students who completed their questionnaire expressed concerns about some aspects of their life as Sixth Formers. They feel the school offers a narrow range of activities and enrichment courses outside the main courses. Some students do not feel they are kept sufficiently well informed about their progress. This contrasts with the inspection finding that the quality of marking and of feedback to students on their progress is good. The range of activities and enrichment courses is satisfactory, but could usefully be extended, especially in terms of sporting opportunities.

90. When talking to students, however, a different impression is given. They talk positively about the support and care given by staff. They feel they are being treated as adults and that the support given to them is good.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

91. The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher, ably supported by the senior management team, are excellent. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. The senior team and heads of subject, monitor the school's performance very well and this is an area of strength. As a result of this analysis, effective action is taken to improve the work of the school. This has led to good progress since the time of the last report and the school is well placed to improve in future. The leadership of middle managers is good and leadership and management overall in the school is very good. Appraisal of teachers, through a system of performance management, is in place and the process of monitoring the effectiveness of teaching is established. Resources are deployed well to improve the quality of education for the benefit of pupils and the school succeeds very well in getting the best value from its use of its funds and resources. Levels of staffing are good. The teaching staff is well qualified and all teach their specialist subjects. The learning support assistants are well deployed, sufficient in number to meet the needs of pupils, and are supporting pupils' learning effectively. Leadership and management overall are very good.

92. The headteacher, along with the other senior managers, provides very clear direction for the work of the school. The vision and aims for the school are set out clearly in the school prospectus. The school aims to prepare young women for the challenges of the contemporary world. It encourages all pupils to seek academic success, to develop their thinking skills and to be adaptable. That it succeeds so well in all of these areas is the result, in no small measure, of the guidance emanating from the senior team and the example they set to all. The expectations that the school has of teachers, parents and pupils are firmly established. The home-school agreement makes clear to parents their part in the process of educating their children. The sharing of good practice has helped to bring about consistency of good teaching across the school. The school's aims and expectations are closely linked to the policy for equal opportunities. There is a particularly strong commitment to equality of opportunity. This is an important factor in the school's success, for it helps to ensure that all pupils, whether high or low attaining, have an equal chance to succeed.

93. Many of the concepts outlined in the school's charter and in the policy for equal opportunities are already evident in the school development plan. Much of this is focused on the development of all who work in the school: the professional development of teachers and the further development of teaching styles, along with the very effective use of assessment information. There is a strong focus on the further improvement of examination results, while not losing sight of the importance of other aspects of school life, such as pupils' personal development.

94. The action taken to meet the targets for development has been effective. The improvement in the pupils' performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9, for example, indicates that the actions taken by the senior managers and governors, along with the department concerned, have succeeded in raising attainment significantly in mathematics. This subject area had disappointing results in 2000. The results overall were in line with the National Average, but out of line with English. Additional support was put into the department, its work was monitored positively and constructively, and additional teaching resources were supplied. The management structure of the faculty was adjusted. An expert teacher post was created to support the head of faculty and the second in charge in the running of the department. The particular brief was to work on the improvement of teaching and learning styles (a very successful innovation that has since been extended to other faculties). The result of all this, along with the positive response and hard work of the teachers, has been an increase in the proportions of pupils gaining Level 5 and Level 6 in the 2001 tests.

Leadership and management: Post-16

95. The staff with responsibility for the Sixth Form carry out their roles well, providing good guidance to teachers and students arising from their monitoring and evaluation of their work. The Sixth Form aims are fully reflected in the planning and work of the Sixth Form. The head of Sixth Form works well with the school's senior management team in the strategic planning of Sixth Form development and in the monitoring and evaluation of Sixth Form teaching and courses. All Sixth Form tutors are effective in mentoring students and the quality of this mentoring, based on the system of target setting and tracking of pupils' progress, is a perceived strength in the provision for Sixth Formers. It is praised by Year 12 and Year 13 students and their parents.

96. Financial planning is satisfactory. Costs in the Sixth Form are carefully balanced within the consortium and broadly speaking the funding is allocated fairly across the three schools involved. The governors' finance committee monitors carefully the expenditure allocated to the Sixth Form and there is no subsidy from the main school supporting the Sixth Form expenditure. The director of studies for the consortium plays an important role in the management of the Sixth Form provision and the governors' 16 to 19 committee is fully involved in the management of the consortium arrangements.

97. The school is meeting the challenge of resourcing the new arrangements for Post 16 courses in a positive way, and has actively promoted the notion of a two-stage Post 16 curriculum to its students and parents. The senior managers and the governors are closely involved with the rest of the consortium in strategic decisions over levels of funding and staffing to provide a breadth of courses and choice for students.

98. However, despite the best efforts of the school, the senior managers cannot always accurately forecast how many students may enter the sixth form across the consortium or may leave at the end of Year 12. This can result in some groups in Years 12 and 13 being very large, over 30, or very small. This is not best serving the educational needs of all students. The problem was being resolved as the term went on and means sought to reduce the class sizes. The needs of the consortium require that an average group size of 18 is maintained. This is relatively high and means that where minority courses are supported, with groups of five or fewer students, there has to be a corresponding rise in the size of groups in more popular subjects.

99. The principles of best value are firmly in place and support every major budget decision, as well as the day-to-day management of the school. Overall, the Sixth Form gives satisfactory value for money.

Resources

100. The provision of accommodation for the Sixth Form is good overall. The provision for social and personal development and independent learning is very good. A separate Sixth Form block houses a spacious, well appointed common room with good amenities for male and female students. On the ground floor also there is a room for private study and a valuable facility shared with the rest of the school, a viewing theatre with a large television and a DVD player. The students have their own common room. This facility is much appreciated and the students respect it and look after it in a way that would put many other schools to shame. Within the school, students have good access to computers and a number of machines are available for use in the school library. The library offers a good place for students to study quietly. The main school library is on the first floor of the Sixth Form block and has ample room for private study. There is also an additional area dedicated to Sixth Form use that contains 9 computers and a video editing facility. Students also have access to photocopying facilities. Although the computer facilities are good, there is a need to widen the range of the book resources for Sixth Form subjects. The librarians are very helpful and support the students well in their pursuit of independent study.

101. Teaching rooms are satisfactory. They are generally well decorated with good display areas. However, rooms in some areas, for example sociology and business education, rooms are too small for current group size.

102. Learning resources within the subject areas are generally good. There is a good match between the qualifications and experience of the staff to the demands of the curriculum. All members of staff are teaching subjects for which they have proper qualifications. In science and performing arts, members of staff work well together as a team. The calibre of support staff, for example the school librarians and the media resources team, is very good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

103. This is a successful school. In order to continue to improve and to raise levels of attainment even further, the governors, headteacher and teaching staff, with the support of the local education authority, should:

- Continue to seek ways of raising attainment in subjects that, at GCSE, are relatively less successful than others in ensuring that pupils make the best possible progress in their learning.

- In order to do this, the monitoring of teaching and learning needs to continue to focus on the recognition and sharing of the most successful practice:
 - * review the provision for the teaching of ICT in Years 7 to 11 to ensure that there is a coherent programme for all that meets fully the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Minor issues

104. There are two minor issues for the school to consider. Although they were not regarded as serious enough to be key issues for the school, nevertheless the inspection team believes that the governing body should consider:

- * developing further the provision for the spiritual development of students and also seek ways to meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all.
- * continuing to work with parents and carers, as well as outside agencies, to raise attendance levels.

Sixth form

Key Issues:

- There is a variation in attainment between courses. The school needs to identify and share best practice in order to ensure that all students are fully involved in their lessons and able to work independently.

- The school, through the consortium, needs to continue to review the entry requirements for courses to ensure that students do not embark on programmes of study that are inappropriate for them.

- The use of assessment for tracking the progress of students is inconsistent between courses.

- The Sixth Form does not meet statutory requirements for religious education.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	172
	Sixth form	37
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		51

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	10	45	79	36	2	0	0
Percentage	6	26	45	22	1	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	4	14	11	6	2	0	0
Percentage	11	40	30	16	5	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the Sixth Form here as each lesson represents more than percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7–Y11	Sixth Form
	1262	184
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	523	

Special educational needs	YR–Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	330	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	408

Pupil mobility in the last school Year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	55
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	98

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.5
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.2
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting Year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final Year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting Year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	0	253

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	159	109	86
	Total	159	109	86
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	63(61)	43(48)	34(41)
	National	63(62)	65(62)	59(55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	19(22)	14(21)	9(11)
	National	28(28)	42(38)	30(23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	150	93	106
	Total	150	93	106
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	60(71)	37(48)	42(61)
	National	64(64)	66(64)	62(60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	21(35)	12(27)	7(26)
	National	31(31)	39(37)	29(28)

Percentages in brackets refer to the Year before the latest reporting Year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final Year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting Year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	0	221	221

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	108	210	216
	Total	108	210	216
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49(41)	95(95)	98(98)
	National	47.4(46.6)	90.6(90.6)	95.6(95.8)

Percentages in brackets refer to the Year before the latest reporting Year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38
	National	38.4

Figures in brackets refer to the Year before the latest reporting Year.

Attainment at the end of the Sixth Form (Year 13)

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-Level or AS-Level examinations:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	0	48	48

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-Levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-Levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	N/a	16.3	16.3	N/a	0.7	0.7
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

Figures in brackets refer to the Year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	99
Black – African heritage	132
Black – other	326
Indian	23
Pakistani	9
Bangladeshi	15
Chinese	15
White	646
Any other minority ethnic group	184

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y7-Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	90.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.7

Education support staff:

Y7-Y13

Total number of education support staff	33
Total aggregate hours worked per week	704

Deployment of teachers:

Y7-Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	68 %
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Average teaching group size:

Y7-Y13

Key Stage 3	22.7
Key Stage 4	24.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school Year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	14	1
Black – African heritage	10	0
Black – other	29	3
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	28	1
Other minority ethnic groups	16	1

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

Financial information

Financial Year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	5281300.00
Total expenditure	5308600.00
Expenditure per pupil	3723.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	29190.00
Balance carried forward to next year	26460.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	38
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	38

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1449
Number of questionnaires returned	44

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	43	9	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	48	41	7	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	11	61	11	7	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	42	23	2	0
The teaching is good.	35	51	12	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	40	19	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	36	5	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	36	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	37	23	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	45	34	2	2	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	36	7	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	32	16	2	9

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents are concerned about homework provision. The inspection team was satisfied with the quality and quantity of homework being set.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES, PRE-16

English

105. The overall provision in the subject is good.

Strengths:

- Pupils achieve well at the age of 14 and 16 and attainment is broadly average.
- The teaching throughout the school is good.
- The subject is very well led.
- Marking of pupils' work is very good and gives ideas for how pupils can improve their work.
- The behaviour of pupils is good and most have positive attitudes towards their work.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Areas for improvement:

- Skills of writing are less well developed than those of reading, speaking and listening. There are particular problems with the technical accuracy of written work.
- The faculty has worked to develop skills of drafting but these are not yet embedded into the practice of all teachers.
- Information and communication technology is not used consistently across the department.

Standards and achievement

106. Standards attained at GCSE have been average in English and English literature, despite the attainment on entry being below average. Performance in English literature has been better than that in English. The faculty has recognised this and has worked hard to bring English results up to those of English literature. More pupils take English literature than in most schools. In 2001, attainment fell, because of temporary difficulties in staffing the faculty, resulting in a series of appointments of temporary, and often unqualified, staff.

107. The standards of pupils in Year 9 have also been average over the past few years, despite the below average attainment on entry. In 2000, attainment in comparison with schools that take in pupils from similar backgrounds was well above average. Attainment dropped slightly in 2001, also because of the staffing difficulties.

108. The inspection found that attainment is average for both 14 and 15 year old pupils and pupils' achievement is good. This is because the provision in the department is good and is improving. The department is now fully staffed, with well-qualified teachers. The senior management team has worked hard and innovatively to ensure that the department is in this position by, for example, beginning a graduate teacher scheme. It is anticipating possible difficulties in staffing and taking steps to mitigate these in advance.

109. The achievement of pupils for whom English is an additional language is good. They receive good provision from the team that supports these pupils. In addition, the teachers in the English department tailor work to suit their needs. Likewise, pupils who have special educational needs make good progress. They are also well supported by the support staff, teachers and the work they are given. Higher attaining pupils achieve well. They are given additional challenges in the lessons and these tasks extend their knowledge, skills and understanding.

110. By the age of 14, most pupils are able to put forward a point of view and to justify their opinion with evidence. Higher attaining pupils engage in debate well, being aware of their audience, maintaining eye contact and adapting their language in response to the views of others. Many pupils, however, although they have the confidence to take part in discussion and are able to express their views, lack the breadth and sophistication of language to express themselves eloquently. Pupils make good progress, because teachers encourage debate and discussion, and by the time they leave Year 11, many have gained an awareness of their audience and have gained sophistication of language. Almost all pupils are confident to take part in discussion and, when working in groups, all take part.

111. Attainment in reading is average across the school. By the age of 14, many pupils use texts well to justify their point of view and they are beginning to understand the techniques that authors employ. Many in Year 9 appreciated the mood of the poem *Ain't I a woman* and the anger felt by the author. Many lack the precise vocabulary to analyse texts orally or in writing. The faculty is aware of this and all teachers encourage knowledge and understanding of specialist language, by using it themselves and being careful to ensure that explanations are given of the terms. This is having an impact, especially on the higher attaining pupils, as was seen in a Year 9 class when pupils were asked to choose a poem and present it to the class. One pupil analysed the emotions expressed by the author using a good technical vocabulary. By the age of 15, many pupils read fluently, expressively and accurately and they develop a good understanding of the layers of meaning in texts. They have a good grasp of the methods authors use to convey meaning. In Year 11 classes, studying the poem *Havisham*, higher attaining pupils made notes about the poem and many in the class went deeply into the structure of it. The understanding of many was beyond their ability to express their thoughts.

112. Attainment in writing, although close to average, is weaker than the other two aspects of language, as the faculty is aware, mainly because of a lack of precision in the choice of vocabulary and frequent technical errors. Higher-attaining pupils handle different styles of writing well, such as writing to persuade an audience of a point of view. They show a good awareness of their audience and manipulate language well. They use their skills of research well in writing, drawing on the information they have gained. Two pupils in Year 9 a poem based on their reading of *Still I Rise* by Maya Angelou, which began:

*As I sit and watch
My hopes and dreams are clear
Weakened by my soulful cries
I can see no fear.*

*My soul which once was broken
Has healed deep and true
I can see my feelings
And they do not belong to you*

113. Many pupils organise their writing well, but a number lack the confidence to explore different structures of writing and their vocabulary lacks breadth. By the age of 15, writing is usually organised, imaginative and clear, and is presented well. Vocabulary is appropriate and ideas are well developed. Members of staff are appropriately developing good methods for helping pupils to improve their writing through drafting. This practice is not yet embedded throughout the faculty.

114. The very good relationships between adults and pupils is a catalyst for the good behaviour and positive attitudes that pupils display in the classroom. Teachers value the pupils and all the contributions they make to lessons. This gives pupils the confidence to try hard and to respond in class. Pupils in Year 8 studying *The Highwayman* responded well to the excellent questions put by the teacher. On several occasions, the responses were wide of the mark, but the teacher did not dismiss them. She made a careful and considered response to the answer, before moving on to discuss the question further. The motivation resulting from this approach was very high.

115. Pupils work extremely well in pairs and groups and the collaboration is very good. A pupil in Year 9, who is at an early stage of learning English, gained much from working in a group. Although unable to join in the discussion, she showed great interest, watching and listening to the activity. With the skilled help of the specialist support teacher, she produced work that was appropriate to her level of understanding of English. Inevitably, there are a number of pupils who have poorly developed skills of listening and concentration and who quickly lose interest if the activity is too difficult or insufficiently challenging. In the main, teachers handle these pupils well so they do not disrupt the lesson. Pupils are encouraged to develop independent skills of research and they find and use dictionaries proficiently. They are skilled at organising themselves in groups.

Quality of education

116. The teaching of English is good overall and frequently very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Despite a large number of staff being new to the faculty, there is a high degree of consistency in the teaching, supported by the faculty planning which gives good guidance, but also allows teachers the flexibility to reflect their own style of teaching. This is highly appropriate and works well. In addition to the good features of teaching above, all teachers have a very good understanding of the subject using it very well to extend the learning of the pupils. One feature of this is the questions teachers ask that encourage pupils to reflect deeply on their reading. Teachers have high expectations, so pupils know that they must give thoughtful responses.

117. The choice and use of texts is challenging and promotes good learning. Teachers also read texts in a way that motivates, enthuses and entrances pupils. Pupils were held spellbound by the reading of *The Highwayman*. Pupils in Year 11 were equally motivated by the expressive reading of the poem *Havisham*, which they were comparing with the character of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*. This feature, coupled with the enthusiasm teachers have for their subject, is engendering a love of literature for many pupils and extending the gifted and talented well.

118. Time is used well by all staff, which supports good learning. Members of staff are encouraging pupils to annotate texts using copies, which focuses their attention on their reading. Classrooms are well managed so that time is not wasted. All teachers use a range of methods, such as working as a class, in groups or pairs and individually. This maintains interest and deepens their understanding of language as they listen and respond to the views of their peers.

119. The quality of marking is a key strength in the department, although there is inevitably a degree of inconsistency. Teachers enter into a written dialogue with pupils, asking questions and making suggestions for its improvement. The marking is extremely thorough and detailed. Some teachers, but not all, use information and communication technology, mainly for word processing. The head of faculty knows that this is an area that they need to develop.

Leadership and management

120. Leadership and management within the faculty are very good and one important reason for the good achievement of pupils within the faculty. There has been good progress in the areas that were identified for improvement in the last report, because of the hard work and commitment of the staff. Pupils now progress well, teaching is good and much is very good. Assessment and marking have developed well and the curriculum is covered in depth. The faculty has experienced difficulties in recruiting qualified English teachers, but is currently fully staffed with qualified teachers. The faculty is large and appropriate methods have been developed to ensure that communications are good. Appropriate priorities have been identified for development.

Literacy

121. The English faculty is adopting a thoughtful approach to the introduction of the national literacy initiative, highly appropriate in view of the good practice that exists in the department. A pilot is taking place and members of staff involved are reviewing how best to use the suggested framework in the light of the needs of pupils in the school. Many faculties are aware of the need to develop skills of literacy and are promoting them well. Key specialist words are reinforced in drama, mathematics and religious education. The science faculty is aware of the need to promote a consistent approach to accuracy of spelling and grammar. In geography, there is a very good awareness of the need to reinforce literacy in the context of the subject, so pupils are encouraged to write at length and to use skills of research. There are good examples of empathetic writing in the history department.

MATHEMATICS

122. Overall the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths:

- Improving attainment.
- A strong management structure.
- The high quality of teaching.
- Good Key Stage 3 scheme of work, incorporating National Numeracy Strategy concepts and materials.
- A strong belief within the faculty that standards should be higher.

Areas for improvement:

- Limited provision for the use of ICT.
- No whole school numeracy policy.

Standards and achievement

123. The overall provision in mathematics is good. On entry, girls' attainment in previous years has been below the National Average overall, but there has been a rising trend and the results for the current Year 7 in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests were very close to the National Average. Standards of attainment in the 2000 National Curriculum tests at age 14 were well below those expected nationally and below those for similar schools. The proportion of girls achieving higher levels was also well below National Averages. The

results were similar to those for the previous year. The results were similar to those for science, but below those for English. The 2001 provisional results, however, showed a significant improvement at both the expected level, Level 5, and higher levels, and were similar to those in the other core subjects.

124. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, girls attained well below the National Average for grades A* to C. This was below the results for science and well below those for English. The unconfirmed figures for 2001 represents a small improvement. The results indicate sound progress across the Years 10 and 11 when compared to schools with similar results in the tests for girls at age 14.

125. Overall girls make at least satisfactory and occasionally good progress from Year 7 to 11.

126. Inspection evidence indicates that the rise in standards seen in the 2001 tests and examinations is now being reflected in the classroom. By the end of Year 9, girls' work is generally near the National Average and by the end of Year 11 girls are below, but close to, the national standard. The generally very good teaching seen is beginning to have an effect. Numeracy standards are below average for many girls in Year 11, but the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools and the Key Stage 3 enhancement schemes are beginning to have an impact on standards in Years 7 and 8.

127. By the end of Year 9, higher-attaining girls can use their understanding of locus to determine the appropriateness of garden designs and can plot and interpret straight-line graphs. Lower-attaining girls can carry out simple money subtraction with some confidence and use tally charts effectively to construct bar charts. By the end of Year 11, high-attaining pupils can use vectors confidently to carry out geometric transformations and can plot and interpret non-linear graphs. Lower-attaining girls can draw accurate pie charts and evaluate areas of regular figures using nets. Girls' standards of presentation are generally good and occasionally very good. In many lessons, girls willingly explain their understanding of aspects of the subject using appropriate mathematical language. Additionally, key words are normally displayed in most lessons. Information and communication technology is underdeveloped in mathematics. There is not a uniform provision for all girls throughout the school, though examples of very good use of ICT in a Year 9 data-handling investigation were seen in a limited number of classrooms. The faculty needs regular access to ICT facilities in all years. Calculators are used sensibly and accurately in lessons. The faculty is sensibly beginning to develop the use of graphical calculators.

128. Girls' progress in lessons is generally good and often very good. Girls enjoy success and learning new techniques. Thus, a higher attaining Year 7 class investigating relationships for the difference between two successive squared integers saw the pattern and one girl in the group successfully applied her understanding to the general case. They appreciate group working and challenge. This was seen in a Year 7 class, girls successfully developing data-analysis recording sheets. The isolated cases of less successful progress were associated with less dynamic teaching. The numeracy assistant and classroom learning assistants help girls with learning or additional language difficulties very effectively. Gifted and talented pupils, pupils with special educational needs and pupils from all ethnic backgrounds generally achieve well and make good progress.

The quality of education

129. The large teaching team contains three members new to the school. They are developing relationships and establishing credibility with their pupils very quickly. The team

is well qualified and has an appropriate range of experience. In the lessons seen, teaching in the vast majority was very good, with only two assessed as good and one as satisfactory. This excellent teaching profile is a reflection on the efforts of the school and the faculty to raise teaching and learning standards in mathematics. It also shows the competence of the new members of the faculty. Teaching is a strength of the faculty. Particularly good learning was seen in a Year 8 group considering the properties of parallel lines. They were carried along with the enthusiasm of the teacher and all girls enjoyed being successful in identifying alternate and corresponding angles using the F, Z and C model. Teachers know their subject well and usually have good relationships with their classes. This was seen to very good effect in lower-attaining Year 10 and 11 classes, who were motivated by good teaching, with much praise and understanding displayed by their teachers. This approach is very important when basic numeracy skills are so poor. Teaching styles are largely traditional, though good use of the overhead projector was seen in several lessons. Learning would be made more interesting in some lessons by the incorporation of more material from the world outside of school. The internet should also be considered as a source of stimulating data. Gifted girls are given encouragement through extra classes in Year 11 after school and in various masterclasses on Saturdays. Girls with special educational needs and with language difficulties are generally well supported in classes. They make good progress as a result.

Leadership and management

130. The faculty is very well led by a very hardworking, caring, dynamic head of faculty who has been in post for two weeks. She knows the teachers in her large team very well, having been assistant head of faculty in the school and is very sensitive to their needs. Fortunately, she has within her team two capable new seconds in command and has inherited a very sound smooth running faculty. Many of the successful policies and procedures in the faculty, including the scheme of work for Years 7 to 9, were created by the previous head of faculty. Assessment procedures, examination result analysis and target setting are all good in the faculty. These have also helped raise standards. In the past, the faculty has been understaffed and also suffered from staffing instability. This undoubtedly depressed results in public tests and examinations. The new team has the potential to raise standards significantly. They are clearly all very hard working and dedicated to the task of doing their best for all girls. Since the last inspection, the time allocation has been increased, the National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced and teaching has improved dramatically. Overall the faculty has made good progress.

Numeracy

131. Numeracy standards are generally poor in Years 10 and 11, but are improving in Years 7 to 9. The development of the National Numeracy Strategy in Years 7 and 8 is giving girls regular practice in mental arithmetic, which in turn is improving knowledge of tables and bonds. The numeracy club run by the numeracy assistant at lunchtime is helping raise the standards of numeracy of lower attaining girls in Years 7 and 8. The school needs now to develop and implement a whole-school numeracy policy. Numeracy is taught effectively in several subjects across the curriculum. In science girls plot graphs and evaluate formulas; in geography data collection and statistical techniques are used in investigations and analysis of fieldwork. In design and technology girls measure and weigh accurately, in ICT girls use formulas in spreadsheets. In physical education girls measure work rates and use data presentation techniques and in the vocational subjects good use is made of data analysis and display techniques.

SCIENCE

132. Overall, the quality of provision in science is good.

Strengths:

- Improved standards particularly at Key Stage 3.
- Good teaching,
- Good assessment procedures,
- Much improvement from the last inspection,
- Good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement:

- Specific target setting for all girls.
- The GCSE curriculum and scheme of work.
- The use of data logging equipment - allowing girls to use it rather than to experience its use by demonstration.

Standards and achievement

133. Standards in Year 9 are below average when compared with all schools. In National Curriculum tests in recent years, results have been well above average for similar schools. In 2001, there was a significant improvement in results, which are likely to be close to the National Average when comparative information is available. Results in science are similar to those in mathematics, but considerably worse than those in English, reflecting the national picture for girls. Up to this year, results have showed no significant trend and have remained below the National Average. Girls achieve results in line with expectations given their below average attainment on entry to the school. Standards on entry are improving, which is evident from work seen during the inspection.

134. Standards at GCSE are about the National Average, but very high when compared with those of similar schools. However the percentage of girls achieving the highest grades (A*/A) is below the National Average. The percentage of girls attaining grades A*-G is above the National Average. By the end of Year 11, girls gain better results in science than in mathematics and English. Girls achieve very well, gaining GCSE results well above what might be expected based on their attainment at the end of Year 9.

135. Many girls have satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers prepare girls well for their coursework, so that they achieve results in line with their prior attainment for this important component of their GCSE. Teachers make good provision for gifted and talented girls through extension work. Girls with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress because of the help they receive as a result of the teacher and support staff working well together. Most teachers use the technical language of the subject well and improve the girls' literacy skills by the use of key words. Students' explanations of scientific principles are generally satisfactory. The increase in attainment recently is particularly obvious in the difference between the highest groups in Years 9 and 11. The Year 11 girls have relatively low recall and understanding of previous work and are barely at the National Average. The corresponding Year 9 girls have well above expected levels of knowledge and understanding. Most importantly, they can apply this understanding to new examples, which will enable them to obtain the higher GCSE grades when the time comes.

The quality of education

136. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and, in about a quarter of the lessons, it is very good. It is a credit to the teachers in this large department, dealing with some potentially difficult girls, that no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching for girls of different ages. Importantly, teachers are confident to undertake adventurous teaching and experiments, which enables girls to learn well. Teachers manage the girls well, so that they all have every opportunity to learn. Partly as a result, students work well together carrying out experiments and move responsibly around the laboratory to collect materials and equipment. They mostly follow their teachers' instructions to wear safety glasses and consequently work safely. Behaviour is good. Girls have respect for others, which they demonstrate by putting up their hands to answer questions rather than calling out. They have good relationships with their teachers and each other. When talking to each other and their teacher they are courteous and polite.

137. Clear objectives are set for every lesson. Teachers use a wide range of methods and resources to achieve these objectives. Several teachers make good use of the class set of laptop computers, so that girls can quickly retrieve information from modeling software, whilst at the same time developing their ICT skills. Teachers mark girls' work regularly and share important test data with them so that they know what level or grade they are working at. Teachers should now look for ways to improve standards by giving girls more precise targets about what they need to do to improve. Teachers report how well girls do in their experimental investigations in the reports to parents, but fail to tell parents about their strengths and weaknesses in the other attainment targets.

138. Overall girls learn well. A mixed ability group of Year 7 girls made good progress learning about variables and values. A key feature of this lesson was the careful planning of the teacher, which enabled the girls to understand well these complex concepts. Year 8 girls learnt well how to test for water and carbon dioxide when breathing out. The clear explanations and organization of the teacher led to all girls carrying out this experiment both safely and successfully. Highest attaining Year 9 girls learnt well how to rank metals after carrying out displacement reactions. The teacher used a combination of practical work and carefully prepared questions to consolidate the girls' understanding of one of the most difficult concepts in chemistry. Another teacher made good use of the recently acquired laptops to help some Year 10 girls to explain in terms of particles how increasing the concentration of a solution can make a reaction go faster. Year 11 girls learnt well how genetic diseases are inherited. Again the teacher used a range of resources to capture the girls' interest, whilst at the same time meeting the demands of the examination syllabus. Teachers can be justifiably proud of the work they do to improve girls' learning.

139. All girls take GCSE double award science. Teachers are considering the introduction of the three separate sciences for the highest-attaining girls. In addition the department should also look at the possibility of offering another type of GCSE course for some of the lower-attaining girls. The department is large enough to offer a range of GCSE courses. The technician team is efficient and supportive. The department has recently acquired laptops, which are used well. However it is not possible for girls to use data logging equipment because there are insufficient sensors. Apart from this deficiency the department has good provision for equipment and textbooks.

Leadership and management

140. The acting heads of department provide good leadership and management in the absence of the head of faculty. The high quality of the handbook indicates that the absent head of faculty also has good leadership and management skills. The department now has very good assessment procedures to track the progress of the girls. The department gives due attention to health and safety but still some problems exist. Chemicals, which are either out of date or no longer used, should be disposed of. A few written risk assessments for experiments exist but these are not linked to the particular group of girls carrying out the work. Teachers rely too much on the safety aspects mentioned in textbooks.

141. The department has addressed all of the issues raised in the last inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

The quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- The levels of attainment in the GCSE classes are above average.
- Management, organisation and teamwork in the department are all strengths.
- Pupils make good progress.
- Teaching is good in the lower school and very good on the GCSE course.
- The pupils are developing a good understanding of a wide range of artistic techniques.
- The use of assessment is good.

Areas for improvement:

- Pupils' expressive skills are stronger than their technical skills in Years 7 to 9.
- The monitoring of examination results over time and the use of this information need to be stronger.

142. Art attainment at the end of Year 9 is above expectations for the ages of the pupils. By the end of Year 11, attainment is above expectations for the GCSE course. In the 2001 GCSE art examination, 64 per cent of pupils gained *A to C grades. This continued a consistent trend, in recent years, of GCSE art results that are above the National Average.

143. A feature of almost all work is its individuality. From Year 7, pupils can involve their own ideas, interests and experiences as they develop their responses to the work set, so that their work in art is always individually expressive. Each is encouraged to explore the possibilities of a project in a different way, making each piece unique. Pupils respond very positively to these opportunities, working productively with keen enthusiasm and enjoyment. Pupils handle materials and processes skilfully, often accomplishing intricate feats of craftsmanship, or controlling their materials so that their expressive intentions are realised.

144. In all year groups, visual research and experimentation in sketchbooks feature strongly at the development stages. However, for some pupils, their expressive skills are stronger than their technical skills. Often their ideas are very evident, but sometimes, particularly in Years 7 to 9, creativity is constrained by modest practical work. The current Year 11 pupils show strengths in all these aspects and attainment is well above average. These pupils demonstrate a good understanding of a wide range of artistic techniques. In their finished products, there are many examples of complex imagery, often with powerful meanings conveyed through the use of colour, tone, texture, pattern and composition.

Their tonal work is often good. Even the lower attainers show skill in tonal work when doing exercises, but do not always transfer the skills well to their larger scale work. Almost all work very well from direct observation. Knowledge and understanding about art and design are good. Pupils can discuss other styles or periods of art, sometimes using specialist vocabulary. Overall, pupils are able to use their study of the work of great artists to influence their personal response to their projects. This gets progressively as they move through the school, showing increasing levels of evaluation and critical appreciation of great art as they get older and their writing becomes more evaluative.

145. Teaching is good overall for all year groups. In no lesson seen was it less than satisfactory and in many it was good or very good. In all art lessons observed there was an atmosphere of relaxed yet disciplined purpose. Expectations are high and the pace is vigorous. Lessons are well prepared and planned to provide good development over time. Expert subject leadership provides pupils with the confidence they need to learn new skills. All teachers have high expectations and use questioning well to extend and challenge. All pupils receive evaluative, one-to-one support, enabling them to develop according to their own needs and abilities, and in this way pupils of all levels of ability are enabled to succeed. There is a strong and successful emphasis in the teaching on the development of skills. In a very good Year 7 lesson, for example, the teacher explained and demonstrated very well techniques for representing tone and shade. As the pupils proceeded to try these out for themselves, what could have been a mundane exercise had purpose and excitement because the teacher's own expertise and enthusiasm had enthused her pupils. This is evident in many lessons, especially for the pupils following GCSE courses. Pupils share their art teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and they value the advice they receive. As a result, they behave and work well and make progress. Literacy skills are developed well and the specialist vocabulary of the subject is taught well. Assessment is a strength. Marking is thorough and helpful. In Years 7 to 9, it is sometimes generous to encourage pupils, but in GCSE classes it is detailed and evaluative. Target setting is used well. Homework is used well to extend the work done in class.

146. The subject is led very well. Management, organisation and teamwork in the department are all strengths. The head of department's dedication and enthusiasm are clear, and she is an excellent role model for her staff. The work of the department is monitored through classroom visits and she has a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of her staff. There is a need for a closer monitoring of GCSE performance, so that assessment can be used to influence curricular planning. Overall, however, art is a strength of the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

147. Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Standards of work seen are high and pupils have a good understanding of design and technology.
- Pupils achieve very well and make good progress, including those with special education needs.
- Teaching is consistently good; lessons are planned exceptionally well and proceed at a very rapid pace.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.

Areas for improvement:

- The lack of resources for newer technologies and information technology limits

148. Attainment at age 14 for 2000 is below national expectation. The results for 2001 show an improvement. This improvement is shown through lessons seen and the record of teacher assessments. Through a series of focused tasks and design assignments pupils build up a resource of skills, knowledge and understanding. Work in folders is varied and includes opportunities for pupils to generate and develop their ideas in different product areas. The quality of graphics is good throughout Years 7 to 9 and teachers ensure that all pupils have the skill and techniques to fully represent their ideas effectively. Pupils use their skills in ICT, and experience a module in control technology. However, limited provision and sometimes difficult access to computers holds back the pupils' development of these skills. Pupils experience concurrent programmes within Years 7 to 9, in food technology, textiles, resistant materials and graphics. They develop key planning skills and techniques alongside a range of practical skills, which provide a basis for more open-ended work in the GCSE course. Pupils show interest in the design assignments and many are beginning to develop a personal style. They are confident in practical situations and they use tools and equipment sensibly and effectively. There is much good work and pupils obviously enjoy the challenge. Pupils are aware of assessment criteria and what they need to do if they are to improve their work. Teachers review the progress of pupils regularly and details of National Curriculum levels attained, progress made and targets for improvement are communicated to parents. Pupils' achievements are good.

149. Attainment at the age of 16 is in line with the national average. Pupils opt for a GCSE course from food, textiles, graphics or resistant materials. There is a further option in Hospitality and Catering (GNVQ). These programmes make different demands on pupils although they work to a common framework for the presentation of their work. Graphics is a skill which all pupils use effectively and there is evidence of the use of ICT, particularly in the folders of project course work. There is need to develop ICT further within the context of subject studies in all the options offered. Design folders are of a high standard and there is evidence of considerable depth of research and analysis as pupils plan their work. Presentation is good and there is much evidence of attractive and innovative design work. Practical work is done carefully and pupils use tools, equipment and machinery with confidence. The quality of design products overall is good and reflect a wide range of pupil styles and interests. Health and safety matters are given high profile and pupils use appropriate guards, eye protection and clothing. In 2000, the number of pupils gaining higher grades in GCSE examinations (A*-C) is in line with the national average. In the 2001 examinations pupils did particularly well in food technology and graphics. Interim assessments show that only one third of pupils achieved a pass grade in the first module assessed for GNVQ Catering and Hospitality.

150. Pupils' attitudes are positive and many demonstrate enthusiasm for, and enjoyment in, their studies. They are attentive and show interest in the challenges and assignments offered. Pupils respond positively to codes of conduct in specialist rooms and their behaviour is very good. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are good. Pupils are able to concentrate for appropriate periods of time and they are keen to succeed. Those with special educational needs are clearly identified by staff and copies of individual education plans are used to focus work more closely to the needs of the individual. Special educational needs pupils make good progress and achievement is good. Assessment profiles and periodic review provide all pupils and parents with important information about progress and attainment.

151. The quality of teaching overall is good and there are examples of very good teaching. Teachers have created a positive and attractive learning environment, within which many pupils find interest and stimulation. The teaching team is experienced and hard

working. Work is well managed, resources appropriately organised and lessons well prepared. Schemes of work are structured and progressive. They enable pupils to introduce their own ideas and influences. Assessment is detailed and provides important information to pupils and teachers about progress and development. There were many very good lessons seen which had pace, expectation, structure and purpose and teachers used their enthusiasm and personalities effectively to stimulate pupil behaviour. Homework is integral to current work in class and diary/planners are used to communicate with parents. There are links with the community outside school and the curriculum is enriched through these contacts. Teachers use display well and this contributes considerably to pupil interest and the development of ideas. Of the lessons seen during the inspection the majority were good, or better. One lesson seen was unsatisfactory. The team has insufficient technician support and this throws a burden of preparation tasks on the teachers.

152. The department is well led by an able and enthusiastic teacher who, together with a team of specialist teachers, has co-ordinated the work of the department very well. Administrative procedures are good and documentation full and detailed. Schemes of work are in place and are very thorough. Some minor up-grading is required in the workshops. A major area of curriculum development for the future is ICT, where there is a need for improved provision and the introduction of CAD/CAM facilities and control technology. The department has addressed the issues listed in the last inspection report and there have been a number of improvements. Leadership is positive and the management system effective and these are reflected in the steady progress, which has been made since the last inspection.

153. The leadership and management of the department are good, with a clear vision and direction which will lead to effective strategies to promote curricular improvements. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in the work of the department. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. There is good delegation to ensure the effective contribution of staff with management responsibilities. There is a formal programme of monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching including peer observation of lessons. There is monitoring of the work of the department by the senior management team. The department has identified appropriate priorities and targets and takes necessary action and review of progress towards them. There is a scheme of work to assist teachers planning and a department handbook to outline clearly the policies, aims and objectives of the department. A development plan has been produced identifying key areas for improvement.

154. The department has made good progress with the areas identified for development in the last inspection. There has been improvement in the teacher assessment results at Key Stage 3 and GCSE results. The joint planning covering all aspects of design technology ensures that the work is challenging and provides progression. There are very good systems in place to monitor the progress and attainment of pupils. The department still has to develop projects relating to systems and control and computer aided design.

155. Accommodation is satisfactory: the size and number of rooms is appropriate for the number of pupils being taught. The level of resources and equipment available in the department is good and directly affects the standards that can be achieved. The lack of resources for newer technologies and information technology limits coverage of the programmes of study and the standards that pupils can attain.

156. The department has carried out a risk assessment and made the necessary improvements to ensure the safe organisation of resources and accommodation in the practical workrooms and the practical projects.

GEOGRAPHY

157. The quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Improvement in the quality of provision for geography in the main school.
- Management, organisation and teamwork have improved substantially since the last inspection.
- Progress across the main school is good.
- Teaching is good in the lower school and very good on the GCSE course.
- The very good climate for learning, based on very good relationships between teachers and pupils and the fast pace of teaching and learning, are special features of the department.
- Teachers are developing new and appropriate teaching styles.
- The use of assessment is very good and is improving rapidly.

Areas for improvement:

- The concentration on gaining very high course work marks at GCSE is detrimental to performance in the written papers and is slowing the departmental rate of improvement at GCSE.
- More fieldwork in Year 9 would provide a better balance to the course.

158. Though attainment on entry is rising, research undertaken as part of the graduate teacher programme shows that many pupils on entry to the school have a restricted knowledge and understanding of the subject and some are not aware they have previously studied geography. The inspection of lessons and the scrutiny of exercise books confirm teachers' estimates that, by the age of 14, standards are above those expected at that age. Because attainment on entry to the school of pupils now in Year 9 was below the National Average, pupils have already made good progress across the lower school. Pupils' rising levels of attainment spring from the challenges their teachers present, constantly requiring them to work at the higher levels of the National Curriculum, where they are expected to use their knowledge, understanding and skills to answer questions and solve problems.

159. GCSE results have improved steadily over the last four years and for the last two years have been in line with the National Average. Pupils make better progress than in most schools nationally, but within the school, pupils make slower progress than in most of their other subjects. Teachers concentrate on gaining very high marks on coursework, arising from the popular and successful field week on the Dorset coast. Consequently, pupils reach high standards, but complete much more work than is necessary for the examination and this reduces time spent on improving performance in the written papers.

The quality of education

160. Teaching and learning are good overall and better on the GCSE course than in the lower school. Teachers successfully create a very good ethos in which it is perceived as normal for pupils to work hard. Very good relationships with the girls and high expectations of their work and behaviour underpin their success. They also ensure that pupils are kept busy by establishing a habitually fast working pace. The pupils respond increasingly well to become mature learners on the GCSE course.

161. Pupils learn to manage their work well, moving easily between a variety of resources. They understand different texts and comprehend maps, diagrams and good coloured photographs all on the table at the same time. They can extract information from all of these resources and use their findings to answer questions and solve problems. These management skills are increasingly well learned.

162. Teachers seldom ask a direct question for information but expect pupils to link the eruption of an active volcano with its influence on human activity or the strange shapes of desert rocks with wind erosion.

163. Literacy skills are well developed through geography, underpinned by a strong policy. Pupils are expected to answer questions in full sentences. Reading round the class happens in almost every lesson and numbers of girls volunteer. Standards of reading are secure: pupils listen carefully and support any uncertainty. The pupils work habitually in pairs so that lessons are seldom quiet because they continually share what they know, understand and can do in a working conversation. Thus they develop very good social skills. Writing is encouraged by expecting them to write in a variety of ways: empathy with the people of Sicily is expressed through writing a newspaper report on a volcanic eruption; vivid poetry expresses deep feelings about an earthquake at Kobe.

164. Word frames are well used to gather and organise information before writing at increasing length. Sorting statement cards helps pupils to order their thoughts, to discard what is not important and to organise arguments for and against a point of view. An example is a decision making exercise about how to minimise environmental harm before the opening of a limestone quarry. Pupils produce good research on topics such as on tourism in West Africa and some outstanding work was produced by those of high prior attainment in Year 8, researching the future of farming in Britain.

165. Pupils learn to research simple topics using books and computers in Year 7 and some good work on word processing and data analysis is seen in Years 7 to 9. Not all pupils receive their entitlement to have part of their course taught through the use of computers. The department does not know how many pupils own their own computers, though it uses references to web addresses as extension homework and encourages pupils to use the school's computers.

166. Whilst the use of numeracy has not been audited in geography lessons, teachers habitually use mathematics in their lessons, and in the examination course work there is evidence of good use of statistical analysis. Assessment systems are very good and are used very well to set targets and to modify the curriculum, to ensure that pupils are set appropriate and challenging work.

Leadership and management

Coming as it does from within a team that works well together, leadership is very good. The policy of self-review has given rise to a clear and sensitive perception of what is needed to improve further. This is supported by good professional development and by very good use of the graduate training programme, post-graduate support and good relations with a local college. Students are trained, recruited and retained as able young teachers. Teachers have a secure base in this large school because they identify with their own desk and office space in a discrete humanities area.

HISTORY

167. In history, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- The good quality of the teaching.
- The leadership and management of the department.
- Assessment and monitoring.
- The attitudes and behaviour the department engenders in pupils.

Areas for development:

- Develop programmes of study to include a greater focus on source handling skills.
- Review the scheme of work for Year 9 to achieve more appropriately balanced coverage.
- Integrate opportunities to develop information and technology skills into schemes of work consistently.

Standards and achievement

168. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in GCSE examinations has been consistently above the National Average over recent years by some ten or 15 percentage points. The proportion of pupils achieving such grades has varied between two-thirds and three-quarters, some 10 to 15 percentage points above National Averages. In 2001, more than three quarters of girls gained grades A*-C. In terms of the average points score per pupil, they outperformed their counterparts nationally by half a grade. The attainment of pupils in Year 9, as measured by the end of year teacher assessments is almost exactly in line with the National Average

169. By the age of 14, a good proportion of pupils read with confidence. They can select from a range of sources to identify both positive and negative consequences of the parliamentary enclosure movement - such as the ending of indiscriminate breeding and the disappearance of common rights. They synthesize information well in undertaking extended writing. Pupils of all ability levels are less secure in their interpretation and evaluation of sources, offering statements such as "it is reliable because it comes from the time". The habit of reflecting upon the provenance of sources before reaching conclusions is not yet ingrained. They have a good understanding of the historian's ability to take an overview.

170. At GCSE Level, pupils are attaining above average standards and complete a considerable quantity of written work. In a lesson on the terms of Versailles Treaty, pupils were able to comment on the shock felt by many Germans because they had expected it to be based on the Fourteen Points. They acquire a detailed understanding of the problems that beset the Weimar republic and are able to apply their knowledge well to produce balanced and well argued accounts of its chances of success. In Year 11, pupils understand and can explain the strategic importance of the Sudetenland. They investigate the reasons for deteriorating international relations during the 1930s and can offer perceptive and persuasive explanations of the failure to halt German expansion. There are particular strengths in questioning and arguing evident in their extended writing, which build well on the skills developed in earlier years

171. Attainment on entry to the school has been below average for a number of years, so pupils make good progress to reach national expectations by the end of Year 9. Pupils continue to make good progress on the GCSE course to achieve above average standards at the end of Year 11. Good progress is also made by pupils whose first language is not

English, lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, because teachers ensure that the resources and tasks are well suited to their abilities and needs. An important element in explaining the good progress in all years is the good and very good attitudes and behaviour evident in three-quarters of all the history lessons seen. Pupils respect each other and their teachers and are keen to contribute to lessons. Willing attendance at after school support sessions also makes an important contribution to standards in Years 10 and 11.

The quality of education

172. The quality of teaching is good overall. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen and teaching in half of the lessons observed was good and very good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and detailed lesson planning is very effective in accommodating the widely differing ability levels with which they are faced. Lesson objectives are clearly identified and communicated to pupils. Books are marked regularly. Although errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are occasionally overlooked, there is much helpful comment. An important element in the achievement of the girls is the very good assessment procedures used in the subject. Data is very well used to identify potential and to monitor attainment. Targets are set to raise achievement. Pupils are involved in evaluating their own progress, as mark schemes and National Curriculum Levels are shared with them.

173. Teachers use a good variety of teaching methods, although occasionally these are didactic rather than investigative methods. Teachers use question-and-answer techniques well to explore, consolidate and extend pupils learning. Literacy is well supported through the display of keywords and pupils develop their own glossaries of subject-specific terminology. Lessons are nearly always briskly paced, especially at GCSE Level.

Leadership and management

174. Another contributory factor to the high standards is the strength of leadership and management in the subject. The head of department has an energetic and active approach and is an excellent role model for her staff and pupils. She has a thorough understanding of the department's strengths and the areas where the potential for further development exists, such as the need to make more use of ICT as a teaching tool. The other teachers in the department, who are well qualified, teach in adjoining rooms. This proximity contributes to the effective monitoring of teaching and learning. A further asset is the close collaborative relationships within the department resulting from mutual support and the sharing of good practice. New assessment procedures and the development of more challenging tasks in Years 7 to 9 have contributed to good improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

175. The provision is unsatisfactory.

Strengths:

- Almost half the teaching is good.
- Facilities and resources have improved significantly since the last inspection.

Areas for development:

- The school is not meeting its statutory obligations.
- There is a need for a detailed scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 in which all aspects of the ICT curriculum are met.
- Work needs to be planned to take account of prior attainment.
- Appropriate assessment criteria need to be identified, and pupils' attainment should be recorded so that achievement can be monitored over time.
- The scheme of work for Key Stage 4 does not ensure appropriate progression

Standards and achievement

176. The school has made some positive changes since the previous inspection, but in some aspects of the subject progress has been slow. There has been a marked improvement in the resources for ICT. The school has computer suites with interactive whiteboards that are used for general purpose and specialist teaching, as well as networks and laptops in a number of subject areas, the Study Centre and the Library. Nearly all of the computers have access to the Internet. The network manager, appointed since the previous inspection, oversees and maintains all computer equipment very effectively. The ICT specialist teachers in the school have only recently been appointed.

177. Since the last report, the school has changed the way it teaches ICT. In Years 7 to 9, the Year 7 classes have a taught lesson for one period per week by specialist teachers, while in Years 8 and 9 ICT is taught by other departments who book the ICT rooms. A significant number of opportunities for bookings have not been taken up and, as a result, the pupils have not been given the opportunity to develop their ICT capability. Standards in Year 7 are in line with expectations. However, there was little evidence provided by the school or seen during the inspection in Years 8 and 9, so it was not possible to form a judgement of attainment at the age of 14. The school is not meeting its statutory obligation to teach the National Curriculum for ICT in Years 8 and 9. There are some very good, if isolated, examples of work being produced. For example, in physical education, pupils record their performances using ICT and these are entered onto a spreadsheet and compared with others. This enables the pupils to plan a programme that will help them improve their performance. Similar examples of the good use of ICT were seen in mathematics, science and English.

178. The school's GCSE results have been in line with national expectation for all schools, and good when compared to those of similar schools. However, the examination was taken by only a small group of pupils. Since last year, all pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive specialist teaching for one period per week and are entered for the Key Skills award in information technology. Examination for this course will take place at the end of this academic year for the first time. During the inspection, the work in Year 11 was similar to that being done in Year 10. The school will need to consider the appropriateness of the work being provided during the GCSE years so that pupils can make progress.

The quality of education

179. The vast majority of the teaching was good or satisfactory, in equal proportions, with one lesson in ten being unsatisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they share the lesson objectives with the pupils. In a significant number of lessons, however, the work for the most able provided insufficient challenge. Where lessons are good, the planning and activities are well timed and the pupils' interest is maintained. Explanations are crisp and to the point, thus helping pupils to understand complex processes. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, a difficult drawing was broken down into simple stages that made it easy for the pupils to understand how they could create their own complex figure. Pupils took pride in their work and persevered, experimenting and overcoming difficulties.

180. Pupils generally behave well in class, helped each other and treated the equipment with respect. Teachers' good relationships with pupils enable them to create a pleasant and productive atmosphere in which pupils work at a good pace. Where lessons are unsatisfactory, explanations are rushed and the pupils do not understand the purpose of the lesson. In nearly all lessons seen, teachers circulated, helping pupils to overcome difficulties and assessing the work done. However, the use of help sheets would have enabled them to focus more on questioning and challenge rather than on explaining the techniques of the program. In a significant number of lessons, there was little evidence that pupil's prior achievement was taken into account.

Leadership and management

181. The leadership and management are satisfactory, because much has been achieved and improvement is evident since the last report. There is still much to be done, but the new co-ordinator has a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. Currently there is neither an agreed policy for ICT, nor a scheme of work available for Years 7 to 9. The school does not have an assessment policy or a strategy by which pupils' work is gathered and assessed. The scheme of work for Years 10 and 11 will need to be reviewed so that pupils have opportunities to move to more demanding work as the course progresses. The newly appointed ICT co-ordinator has recognised the shortcomings and is preparing a development plan to address these issues.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

182. Overall the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is good.

Strengths:

- By the age of 14 attainment in French, German and Spanish is broadly in line with the National Average.
- By the age of 16 attainment in French is well above the National Average. Higher attaining pupils achieve good standards of reading and writing.
- Virtually all pupils are entered for a full GCSE examination and achieve a grade.
- Pupils have a good choice of three languages from the age of 11, with good provision for the study of a second language from the age of 13.
- All of the teaching is satisfactory, most is good and some is very good or excellent.
- Support clubs, extra curricular activities, visits and extra guidance from foreign language assistants are effective in building pupils' confidence and improve their competence in the three languages.

Areas for improvement:

- By the age of 16, attainment in German is below the National Average and in Spanish it is well below the National Average.
- Pupils have insufficient experience for improving their linguistic skills in some aspects of ICT.
- The fluency of older pupils in French and Spanish is marred by weak pronunciation.

FRENCH

Standards and achievement

183. By the age of 14 standards are broadly in line with the National Average. GCSE results in 2000 were well above the National Average. Pupils' grades in French were generally better than their grades in other subjects. This is contrary to the national tendency. Provisional results for 2001 indicate this standard has been maintained. As at the time of the last inspection, virtually all pupils who chose to study French at the age of eleven achieve a GCSE pass at the age of 16.

184. Teachers' assessments indicate performance in line with National Averages at the age of 14. This is supported by evidence during the inspection. Pupils of all abilities can understand their teachers' good use of French for everyday business around the classroom and in the taped material on topics familiar to them. All can ask and answer questions simply in French. Some higher attaining pupils attempt to expand their answers. They use their initiative well when they are unsure of vocabulary, especially when they are attempting to express opinion as, for example, where they live or where they would like to live. Pronunciation overall is satisfactory. Most pupils read with good understanding, though largely from course book texts. They produce good, accurate written work, because they have a good understanding of basic structures. Some venture further, introducing imagination and humour into their work, as seen in posters welcoming visitors to the school. Pupils in the current Years 10 and 11 are developing their reading and writing skills well in line with requirements of their examination syllabuses. Higher achieving pupils use a good range of vocabulary and idiom in their writing, but are careless at times. Lower achieving pupils tend to rely on guesswork when they read longer texts rather than working out meaning. Listening skills are generally satisfactory. Some higher-attaining pupils in Year 10, are capable of sustaining lengthy, witty dialogue with their teacher and each other.

However, generally, pupils are more reticent and in Year 11, even for higher attaining pupils, fluency is hampered by weak pronunciation.

GERMAN

Standards and achievement

185. By the age of 14 standards are broadly in line with the National Average. GCSE results in 2000 were well below the National Average. Nationally, pupils' grades in languages tend to be lower than their grades in other subjects. In 2000, pupils' grades were generally lower than would be indicated by this national tendency. Provisional results for 2001 would indicate that standards have improved significantly. As in French, the entry numbers for German are high and all pupils achieve a grade.

186. Standards observed during the inspection support the teachers' assessment that pupils are achieving in line with National Averages at the age of 14. Pupils contribute willingly to oral work in class, although, for the most part, they do not attempt to expand their questions or answers. Their pronunciation is good. They listen attentively and effectively to their teachers and to simple recorded material. Their written work is neat and competent, indicating a good grasp of basic structure. Higher achieving pupils write at some length. Their work, however, is generally not particularly creative. Pupils of all abilities read simple factual material in their course books easily, higher achieving pupils read longer texts well for gist and detail. As in French, pupils in Years ten and 11 develop their reading and writing skills well in line with examination requirements. Also as in French, many pupils are reticent to speak. However, higher achieving pupils in Year 11 are gaining in confidence. They are starting to respond freely and with some humour to their teacher and to each other. Their pronunciation is good.

SPANISH

Standards and achievement

187. By the age of 14 standards are broadly in line with National Averages. GCSE results in 2000 were well below the National Average. As in German, pupils' grades in Spanish were lower than their grades in other subjects by a greater margin than the national tendency. Provisional results for 2001 would indicate a slight improvement overall and a significant improvement in the numbers of pupils achieving the highest A* and A grades. As with the other languages, the entry rate at GCSE is very high and all pupils entered achieve a grade.

188. Standards observed during the inspection support teachers' assessments that pupils' attainment is in line with National Averages at the age of 14. Pupils' listening skills are good. They understand taped material easily, picking out several details simultaneously. Higher achieving pupils respond fluently to questions, adapting new material quickly to suit their own purpose. Lower achieving pupils expand structured role-play effectively with material from other topic areas. A Year 9 class easily adapted the simple introduction of a guest into an enquiry into diet and health considerations, with only minimal suggestions from their teacher. Their pronunciation is good. Pupils' ability to write in Spanish is less developed than in the other languages. They are able to write at length about themselves and their daily life. However, their writing remains simple and their grasp of basic structure is weaker than either in German or, especially, in French.

189. There is evidence of underachievement in Year 10. Higher achieving pupils lack confidence in all skill areas. They are unable to comprehend simple written material

effectively or use context to deduce meaning. Their writing is simple and, when working in class, marred by basic errors. Their spoken Spanish is hesitant and pronunciation poor. They have difficulty comprehending material on tape. Lower attaining pupils achieve more appropriate standards. Their writing, though simple, is more accurate and they speak about themselves with greater ease, although their pronunciation remains weak. Standards are much higher for higher-achieving pupils in Year 11. They have developed good reading skills. They can appreciate style and structure well and use their analysis to improve their own writing. They follow fluent Spanish easily and respond satisfactorily. However, the writing of lower achieving pupils remains simple. They have difficulty responding in Spanish and their pronunciation is weak.

ALL LANGUAGES

190. Overall pupils make good progress in all three languages relative to their ability. There is no significant difference in the rate of progress of any one particular group, including the rate of progress of pupils with special educational needs. The rate of all pupils' progress is more related to the expectations of their teachers. Where expectations are high, pupils of all abilities in each of the languages make significantly better progress.

The quality of education

191. The quality of teaching is, overall, good. No teaching seen was unsatisfactory. For younger pupils to the age of 14, three out of four lessons are good or better and one in four lessons is very good or excellent. For older pupils to the age of 16, one in two lessons is good or better with one in three lessons very good or excellent. Strengths in teaching include the high level of personal skill of all staff and lessons that have clear objectives. They are conducted at a brisk pace but provide pupils with the support they need to perform tasks and activities successfully. A particularly good example was seen in a Year 9 French lesson where several pupils with special educational needs had the confidence to identify and discuss their favourite teachers because of the additional support materials provided for them and, in particular, the unobtrusive encouragement given by their teacher.

192. Teachers, for the most part, are good managers of their pupils. Classrooms, therefore, are orderly places, conducive to learning. Teachers judge the mood of pupils well and adapt their style accordingly. A boisterous group of Year 10 pupils in German was kept on the task of discussing schools because of the rapid interchange of stimulating and calming activities chosen by their teacher and the range of interesting extension material available for the abler pupils in the class. As a result of the generally good management of pupils, most pupils are enthusiastic and committed learners. They respond willingly in lessons and work well independently, in groups and in pairs. They take full advantage of extra support and guidance. They take pride in the presentation of their work. They are developing the ability to be self-critical and are sufficiently confident to take risks with language to convey their own meaning. They appreciate the patterns that underpin structures in language. However, a small minority, particularly amongst lower achieving pupils, lack self-discipline and cannot work effectively on their own or in small groups. They lack any sense of pride in their work.

193. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and give them good advice on how to improve. Homework that consolidates and extends pupils' knowledge is set regularly. Where teaching has weaknesses, it is characterised by poorer classroom management and a subsequent lack of pace. Tasks are not sufficiently well planned to enable pupils to succeed and the overall expectation of the teacher is not high enough. Teachers make good use of audio and visual tapes to help pupils evaluate their own work. However, the

use of other information and communication technology, such as the use of email to stimulate writing or word processing for rigorous critical appreciation of personal style, is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

194. The head of the department has a clear vision of where the department is at present and the direction in which it should be moving. This has been achieved by thorough planning and self-evaluation, as well as the good use of data from assessment to improve teaching and learning. Management is aware that teaching is uneven across the department through routine monitoring of the work of the staff and the progress of pupils. Good support for individual professional development and good teamwork are helping to eradicate this inconsistency. Languages have a secure place in the curriculum. Pupils have the choice of one of three languages from the age of 11. There is ample time for the study of a second language for the higher-achieving pupils from Year thirteen. A good range of extra curricular activities and support from foreign language assistants boosts pupils' confidence and competence in all three languages.

195. Since the last inspection attainment at the age of 14 has improved to be in line with National Average rather than national expectation. Results in GCSE examinations have improved, especially at the higher grades. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly with clear advice on how to improve.

MUSIC

196. Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Teaching and learning is mainly good.
- The department is very well equipped with electronic keyboards.
- Students show positive attitudes and behaviour is good.
- The range of opportunities in instrumental and vocal tuition is excellent and involves a high number of girls. Tuition is free.
- The range, numbers involved and standards reached in extra-curricular work are well above average.
- Music is well led and organised.
- Since the last inspection report there has been good improvement.

Areas for improvement:

- By Year 9, standards are below average; performing, composing and listening skills are underdeveloped.
- During Years 7 to 9, students sing insufficiently to meet the full requirements of the National Curriculum.

Standards and achievement

197. Music forms part of expressive arts for Years ten and 11. GCSE examination results in expressive arts between 1997 and 2000 were broadly average when compared with all schools, but were above average when compared with similar schools. Results in 2001 improved, with two thirds of the pupils gaining grades A*-C.

198. Pupils enter the school with very variable musical experience, in terms of the quality of their musical education in their previous schools, their levels of interest and degree of

home support. Most pupils enter with below average attainment in music and teachers' assessments confirm this. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are approaching the national expectation. However, the current Year 9 is a year with less musical ability, overall, than these younger pupils. They have made good progress. However, standards are below average, although pupils' achievement is good. Performing, composing and listening skills are underdeveloped. Most pupils are working at about Level 4 or 5, but some talented pupils attain higher levels. Although there are ample opportunities to join one of the many choirs, there are few opportunities to sing in class and therefore the National Curriculum has not been fully taught. Pupils keep good time when playing in ensemble. In order to raise standards even higher, the department could consider developing pupils' instrumental performing skills even more, by giving them greater experience of instruments other than keyboards and wider opportunities to use their own instruments. Pupils compose with confidence and are developing skills approaching the average level expected. Students listen respectfully to each other when performing, but their general musical knowledge, for example of instruments, composers, forms, structures and well known pieces of music is below average.

199. In expressive arts GCSE work, there are groups in Years ten and 11. By Year 11 standards are broadly in line with those expected. Pupils make appropriate use of music in their work with dance and drama; the most talented, as seen on videotape, obtain excellent results showing imagination and good levels of integration in devised performances. A Year 10 music GCSE group meets after school. Standards are well above average and pupils' achievement is very good. Pupils' performing skills are good, averaging about grade 4. They show good understanding of devices and structures in composing and create imaginative and original compositions, often making good use of music technologies. They listen well to each other and their general musical knowledge is good. In both courses, pupils achieve well, because of good teaching and their most positive attitudes.

The quality of education

200. Teaching to all years was good in all the lessons seen. Teachers show secure subject knowledge so that they teach confidently. Teaching is energetic and lively, motivating the pupils. Instructions are clear so that the pupils always understand the objectives. Schemes and lesson content are thoughtfully put together. Assessment is used well to ensure that the work set is appropriate for all pupils. Expectations are mainly appropriate, with lessons matched, generally, to the needs of pupils, but higher attaining pupils could be stretched more. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and make similar progress to the others. Lessons have clear structures and are well organised. The management of pupils is very good so that lessons are orderly. As a result, relationships are very good and pupils are usually good humoured and work well, especially in practical work. Lessons start briskly and maintain a good pace so that pupils remain focused. There is insufficient use of visual aids, such as OHP, illustrations or classroom display. Music technologies are used well and pupils in Years 7 to 9 make effective use of the class computer on a rota basis. The assessment is supportive and shows them how they can improve. Most are attentive and work productively; they are very supportive of each other, keen to answer questions. The most enthusiastic involve themselves in opportunities offered by the department and musical opportunities outside school. Attitudes are mature and pupils take full advantage of the free instrumental tuition available to them and opportunities in extra-curricular work. This strengthens their achievement.

Leadership and management

201. The management of music is good and the department has made good improvement since the last inspection. Music is well organised and the staff and visiting teachers form a strong team. There is clear monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance. The strategies to raise standards are constantly under review and resources are used imaginatively to enhance teaching. There are useful links with other schools, which allow the students to join forces to make music, but curricular links with the primary schools need strengthening. Music accommodation is barely satisfactory. It is cramped, because large classes are taught in small rooms. Noise levels affect other classes and there are insufficient practice areas for group work. These constraints limit the opportunities to make music in the classroom. Keyboard resources are good and support pupils' learning well, but there is an urgent need for tuned percussion instruments, such as xylophones and glockenspiels, to enhance creative work.

Physical Education

202. Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Teaching and learning is mainly good or very good.
- The majority of the current GCSE groups are performing above the level of national expectations,
- Several pupils demonstrate exceptional performance, particularly in netball
- Students show positive attitudes and behaviour is good.
- Basic skills are taught very well.
- The department is very well led
- Since the last inspection report there has been good improvement.

Areas for improvement:

- In 2001, GCSE examination results were well below average.
- There is a need to review the provision of the timetabled curriculum for Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 in terms of time and the range of sports offered, to ensure that there is sufficient opportunity for all pupils to reach their full potential.
- Teachers need to review the current schemes of work so that they include National Curriculum Levels and ensure that the learning objectives of lessons are always made clear to pupils, so that they know what is expected of them.

Standards and achievement

203. Although GCSE results in physical education have been above the National Average for several years, in 2001 they were well below average. Only 27 per cent of pupils gained A*-C grades. This was an unexpected outcome. A number of pupils were unable to match their satisfactory practical performance within the demands of the theoretical component of the examination. The department is addressing this issue by devoting extra time and resources to this part of the examination. In the lessons observed, the overwhelming majority of the current GCSE groups are performing above the level of national expectations, with several pupils demonstrating aspects of exceptional performance, particularly in Year 11 netball. Pupils in this year group are able to demonstrate increasingly refined techniques, are more consistent and effective in their performance and can undertake a number of different roles, such as performer, coach and official.

204. The majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are working at or above the level of national expectations. They are able to adapt and refine existing skills and apply these to new situations; they are able to work constructively in pairs and groups. For non-examination groups in Years ten to 11, the majority of pupils are working at the expected level of attainment. They generally show a good understanding of how to improve individual skills through practice, as well as being able to participate effectively in team games, where knowledge of tactics and positional sense is required. In both key stages there is however a wide spectrum of attainment but teachers accommodate this through the planning of effectively differentiated activities.

The quality of education

205. Teaching is a major strength of the department; teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and are very well prepared for lessons, which are generally well structured, use a variety of teaching methods and are conducted at a lively pace. There were no unsatisfactory lessons observed; six of the seven Year 7 to 9 lessons observed were good or very good and half the lessons in Years 10 and 11 were good or better, and one was excellent.

206. Basic skills are taught very well by all teachers. In Years 7 to 9, in netball, the majority of pupils can catch, pass and use the correct footwork as well as hold their positions in game situations. The same pupils in trampolining lessons were able to demonstrate simple but effective and controlled routines using a variety of basic techniques. In one very good Year 8 netball lesson, pupils were able to progress to 'dodging and feinting' as a more advanced skill, which they were then able to employ in the full game. In an excellent Year 10 trampolining lesson, the teacher placed an emphasis on 'extension and control' as a means of improving the quality of performance; pupils responded superbly, and with added encouragement from peers, were able to produce skilful and aesthetically pleasing routines. Structured lessons that use formal award schemes, as observed in a good Year 11 basketball/table tennis lesson, provide purpose and encouragement for pupils to improve their basic skills and gain recognition for progress and achievement.

207. Teachers set high expectations of pupils, both in terms of performance and behaviour. As a consequence, pupils stay on task and progress well in lessons and over time. Pupils are well behaved and respond well to the firm but friendly control exercised by teachers. Instances of unruly or unpleasant behaviour, which are rare, are dealt with efficiently and with a minimum of fuss.

208. Lessons are inclusive and the provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent. In addition, the many open-access clubs and activities provide further enriching opportunities for these pupils. The work with visually impaired pupils is particularly noteworthy where the activities, games and modified equipment provide real opportunities for these particular pupils to progress and enjoy the subject. Talented and gifted pupils are also catered for through a range of additional school clubs, teams and extra-curricular activities, and they are given information and encouragement to join local sports clubs. School teams, particularly netball, and individual competitors have enjoyed success at a number of sports at both local and higher levels.

209. The timetabled curriculum, which cannot be described as extensive, does meet statutory requirements. In terms of time allocation, two 50 minutes period are timetabled for Years 7 to 9 but only one for Years 10 to 11, the latter being adequate for the majority of pupils. However, the curriculum is supplemented with the above mentioned clubs and activities that provide ample opportunity for pupils to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding in a wide range of sports.

Leadership and management

210. The department is very well led. The head of department sets high expectations and provides clear objectives for a very capable team to follow. Pupils are assessed regularly and teachers generally know the levels at which pupils have reached or are aspiring to. The department has fully embraced the new technology and is making good use of recently purchased video and camera equipment to record and analyse pupil performance.

211. The department has continued to make good progress since the last inspection. In order to sustain this progress they should review the current schemes of work so that they include National Curriculum Levels; and ensure that the learning outcomes from lessons are made explicit, and in many cases simpler, as an aid to both differentiation and lesson evaluation. There is a need to review the provision of the timetabled curriculum for Years 10 and 11, in terms of time and the range of sports offered, to ensure that there is sufficient opportunity for all pupils to reach their full potential. Even more significantly, there is a need to review the lack of timetabled Sixth Form provision of PE. At present, Post 16 pupils who wish to continue with sporting activities have little opportunity to do so.

Religious Education.

211. The overall provision for religious education is very good.

Strengths:

- Attainment is above the National Average.
- Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of a range of major world faiths.
- Pupils discuss religious beliefs and moral and spiritual issues sensitively and well.
- Teaching is very good and pupils learn very well.
- The management of the subject is very good.

Areas for development:

- Higher attaining pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are not always challenged sufficiently.

Standards and achievement

212. Standards of attainment in Year 9 are above the National Average. At the end of Year 11 in 2001, a small examination group was entered for the full GCSE and all achieved A-C grades which is well above the National Average. The number of A* grades was particularly good. The current Year 11 groups are not taking any examinations. Standards of attainment are between Level 5 and 7 in the local Agreed Syllabus. This is above the National Average. The quality of learning is very good with the teaching being a particular strength.

213. The Lewisham agreed syllabus has two attainment targets. At the end of Year 9, the standard of achievement in attainment target one (AT1) is very good. Pupils have a good knowledge of the major beliefs and practices of the main religions covered. A good example of this was seen even earlier than Year 9, in the work done by Year 8 pupils on Hinduism. They have a sound understanding of the Hindu concept of Brahma. Pupils in Year 9 understand the important role that religious ceremonies such as baptism and daily prayer play in helping members of faith communities express their religious commitment. They fully appreciate the value that festivals have in confirming and enriching a person's faith. Year 9 pupils have produced some very good projects on the festivals that are found in Islam. Their understanding of the diversity of practices that exist within religions is good. In some innovative work using spreadsheets, Year 8 pupils have analysed the various Christian denominations

214. Their achievement in attainment target two (AT2) is good. They are willing to express their own values and beliefs yet at the same time have a very sensitive awareness of the beliefs and life styles of others. In a Year 9 group a pupil from the Greek Orthodox tradition was sharing her experiences of baptism in a very supportive group discussion.

215. The ability of the higher attaining pupils to critically evaluate and analyse such things as religious language and symbolism is not so well developed. Year 7 pupils have a very thorough knowledge of creation stories but do not fully recognise them as examples of religious mythology. The higher-attaining pupils do not make the progress that they should. Progress for all other pupils including those with special educational needs is very good.

216. Currently, Year 10 pupils have just started the short course GCSE. Already they are making good progress. They are developing their understanding of the teaching of religion on contemporary social and moral issues. One group examined sensitively the meaning of love and marriage in the Christian tradition. Their willingness to share their beliefs and values with others was exceptionally good. The teachers have created an atmosphere of trust and respect which gives pupils confidence to participate in group discussion. They are well informed, yet recognise the importance of valuing the beliefs and life styles of others.

217. Year 11 pupils are not taking the GCSE, but the standard of work is just as good. Pupils take a pride in their written work. It displays a mature understanding of the issues covered. Last Year they produced some very good projects that displayed a sound grasp of the variety of faiths that are found in our society, including a very good one on Rastafarianism. They are able to express their views in a thoughtful and mature manner and to bring to bear their knowledge and understanding of religious teaching on the topics discussed.

The quality of education

218. The quality of learning is good. The teaching is at least satisfactory. In the ten lessons, seen three were very good and four good. Committed and hardworking teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject. Using a variety of teaching methods, they create a sensitive and challenging learning environment to which pupils respond in an enthusiastic manner. They retain the interest and motivation of the pupils by ensuring that lessons have pace and challenge. In a Year 10 lesson on the Christian teaching on marriage, the teacher moved the lesson forward using a variety of discussion techniques. The teaching of literacy is very good. Key words are displayed, booklets used and punctuation reinforced. In a Year seven class, pupils used a booklet produced by the department to keep key words and concepts under review. When using the whiteboard, the teacher made sure that speech marks were correctly placed. Relationships are positive and supportive.

219. Teachers are skilful at creating an atmosphere in which respect and tolerance are encouraged. This was illustrated in a Year 9 lesson on baptism in which pupils were willing to share their own experiences. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and of those with English as a second language are well met, both in the provision of resources and the support of teachers and learning assistants. Assessment is very good, with positive marking and good monitoring of progress. Adequate resources and learning materials are well used. A teacher used a short video clip effectively to illustrate teaching on the life of Christ. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual moral social and cultural development. A good example was seen in Year 7, where pupils reflected thoughtfully upon their own image of God.

220. There is a shortage of tasks that encourage pupils to develop the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation and in a minority of lessons the teacher did not give pupils sufficient time to develop their own responses. However these are relative weaknesses that the department is well placed to rectify.

Leadership and management

221. The management of the subject is very good. There is a strong team spirit with clear aims and objectives. Teaching is monitored well. Although the use of ICT is limited, the department has pioneered two units or work that are based on the use of computers. To avoid repetition, the department needs to obtain good information about the work that is done in primary schools. Better use could be made of the local faith communities. The school has yet to meet statutory requirements for religious education in the Sixth Form.

Progress since the last inspection is good. Teaching has improved and as a result standards have risen.

PERFORMING ARTS

Drama in Years 7 to 9

222. The quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Teaching is good.
- Pupils work hard and achieve highly.
- Behaviour is good and pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject.
- The subject is well led.

Areas for improvement:

- Continue to develop methods of assessment.

Standards and achievement

223. Pupils achieve highly due to the good teaching within the faculty. Pupils in Year 9 develop good confidence and show a high degree of maturity in their work. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils have a good sense of audience; they use expression well and understand the effect of tension on an audience. Many pupils understand a range of technical terms as teachers reinforce specialist language very well. They use space effectively and use dramatic conventions, such as freeze-framing with sophistication. Higher-attaining pupils achieve highly as they are challenged by their work and lower attaining pupils also achieve highly because the tasks are made appropriate for them. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve well because staff understand their needs.

Quality of education

224. Teaching is good. Teachers have a very good understanding of the subject, drawing on it well to encourage pupils to understand and use specialist terms and to know about dramatic methods. Questions are used effectively. In Year 9 lessons, pupils successfully explored the nature of five characters and developed them in their groups because of the focused questions asked by the teachers. Teachers demonstrate techniques well, so that pupils have very good models for their own work. A key strength is the way in which pupils of different attainment are given a range of appropriate tasks to develop their learning. Relationships in classes are good and this helps to manage the behaviour of groups that are lively, or have pupils for whom listening or concentration is difficult.

225. Pupils collaborate extremely well when working in groups and this extends their understanding of role most effectively. They respect one another's views, taking on board different suggestions made by their peers. Behaviour is good and most pupils enjoy the subject because it is made interesting and lively by the teachers involved.

226. A method of assessment is being developed in conjunction with the music aspect of performing arts to track the progress that pupils make. Pupils have a record card and criteria for progress are being developed. This is highly appropriate. The performing arts faculty contributes well to the extra-curricular activities of the school, through productions. The subject makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development and makes a major contribution to their skills of literacy. The accommodation is adequate, although the use of the hall causes difficulties with resources, as they have to be moved because the hall is in constant use.

Leadership and management

227. Leadership of the subject is good and there is a clear direction for its development. Members of staff work closely together so there is good cohesion within the teaching of drama. The priorities for development are appropriate.

Extra-curricular music

228. Over 275 girls receive instrumental or voice lessons from eight visiting teachers; this is about 20 per cent of the school's population and is a well above average number. The school is to be highly commended for providing free tuition. Some parents make a voluntary contribution, which helps to extend the range of choice. Standards are broadly average. Teaching is good and some very good teaching was observed in voice tuition. The progress and achievement of pupils is good in relation to their ages and the time they have received tuition, but practice is too variable and they do not have practice books. Monitoring of pupils' progress needs strengthening. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is very good and includes five choirs, flute ensemble, clarinet group, recorder group, string group, music theory group, jazz band and the guitar ensemble. Standards (especially in vocal work) and the quality of teaching are very good and sometimes excellent. The visiting teachers give good support to these groups. The school promotes termly concerts and regular musicals, such as the recent *Wizard of Oz*, involving large numbers of students. Music groups perform in assemblies at the end of terms but the regular use of music in assemblies is underdeveloped and constrained by the short time available. Groups perform frequently at local primary schools, festivals and local arts and charity events. The chamber choir has taken part in ENO workshops, performed at the Barbican and the Royal Festival Hall and undertook a concert tour to Venice in 1998, when they sang high mass at St Marks. These activities reflect the dedication of staff, support of parents and the enthusiasm of the musicians whose performances and successes bring great credit to the school. The school is justifiably proud of its growing musical reputation.

Dance

229. Of the five Year 7 to 9 lessons observed, four were judged to be good or better. The majority of pupils is working at or above the level of national expectations. The pupils are able to link skills, techniques and ideas together and then can apply them accurately and appropriately. Both the teachers observed taught effective and well-planned lessons, in which pupils revisited previously learned skills, worked collaboratively in groups and

made progress. In one very good Year 9 lesson, on group sequences based on 'rituals', pupils concentrated on timing, accuracy and body extension to produce aesthetically pleasing and skilful dance routines. In the same lessons, pupils made excellent progress, being able to produce more advanced movements and sequences. Pupils enjoy dance lessons, remain on task throughout and respond positively to the teachers' firm but friendly control of lessons. Whilst lesson planning is effective, teachers should concentrate on making learning outcomes more explicit as an aid to evaluating the success of lesson activities and objectives.

PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

230. In the inspection, nine subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

231. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

GCE A Level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	Per cent gaining grades A-E		Per cent gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	100	89	100	45	10.00	5.99
Physics	2	50	88	0	41	3.00	5.72
Chemistry	2	50	89	0	42	1.00	5.87
Biology	8	13	88	0	34	0.54	5.28
Business studies	6	100	91	67	30	8.33	5.34
Computer studies	2	100	85	0	85	3.00	4.57
Communication studies	28	100	93	32	30	6.14	5.42
Drama	2	100	99	0	36	6.00	6.49
History	1	100	89	100	34	8.00	5.43
Sociology	11	73	88	36	37	5.09	5.46
English	17	94	96	12	36	4.35	5.90
Psychology	27	78	88	15	35	3.48	5.34
French	4	75	91	0	39	3.00	5.74
General studies	33	82	85	12	28	3.82	4.85
Music	1	100	93	0	35	4.00	5.72
Art	8	100	96	63	45	8.00	6.42

GCE AS Level courses

Subject	Number entered	Per cent gaining grades A-E		Per cent gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
French	1	100	78	0	17	1.00	1.81
Business Post GNVQ	16	13	n/a	n/a	n/a	14.77	10.78

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

232. The focus was on mathematics. Five lessons were observed, of which two were numeracy key skills lessons. These were the first of the course and students had a consistent experience in both classes. The introduction to the course was clear and the teachers were concerned to motivate their classes. In both cases they succeeded to the extent that, following the introduction, students were able to say how the course would benefit them. They all became involved with the first task (of script analysis), understood what was required and were able to gather the appropriate data.

233. In science, the focus was on biology, but physics and chemistry were also sampled. Two lessons were observed – Year 12 physics and Year 13 chemistry. In both lessons the teaching was good. The Year 13 chemistry group's examination results are likely to be below average when comparative data is available. However students did as well as might be expected at A/S Level considering their GCSE results. The chemistry students found it quite difficult to calculate the amounts of substances present at equilibrium in an esterification reaction. In the physics lesson, although the students met the entry requirements for the course, they showed below expected knowledge and understanding of forces.

MATHEMATICS

234. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is very good.

Strengths

- The department has a shared commitment to improvement and teachers have high expectations.
- Students are consistently monitored and given counselling and support.
- The teaching is very good, tightly focused on what the students need to know and do in order to achieve examination success.
- Students' presentation skills are generally very good. They take a pride in their work.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment on entry for Year 13 students was relatively low.

Standards and achievement

235. The inspection covered the Year 12 and the Year 13 A level courses offered by the school. The Year 13 course covers pure mathematics and statistics. The Year 12 AS course covers pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. This is the second year that the school has run courses in the school. In the past, students wishing to study the subject at A level went to other establishments within the consortium. The results for the eight AS students in 2001 were disappointing, but not entirely surprising given their results at GCSE and the depressed national results in the new style examination. These students hope to raise these grades during their Year 13, alongside their other modules. The eight Year 12 students come with good GCSE results including two A*, and three A grades. Thus, the school hopes to raise standards in 2001 AS examinations. The school is sensibly trying to establish A level mathematics as a part of their core provision.

236. Inspection evidence confirms that Year 13 students are in line with the average for A level students nationally. Year 12 students, who have only been in school for two weeks, have made a very good start to their studies. The very good teaching in the Sixth Form has

clearly helped raise standards within the current Year 13. The higher attaining Year 13 students use differential calculus with some confidence in pure mathematics, but some lower attaining students find algebraic manipulation difficult. In statistics, higher attainers use the normal distribution with confidence, but lower attainers find expectation theory difficult. In mechanics, the highest attainers use vectors with confidence, but some lower attainers find difficulty in resolving forces in problems involving friction on the inclined plane. Students' presentation skills are generally very good. They take a pride in their work.

237. Teaching in the Sixth Form is very good. Students are keen to learn and very good progress is made in lessons. The small teaching groups make lessons essentially tutorial in nature and the very good relationships between students and staff help the learning process a great deal. Students enjoy participating in discussion, thus, in a Year 12 statistics lesson on stem and leaf diagrams, students came willingly to the board to demonstrate their understanding. In a Year 12 mechanics lesson students debated with interest the assumptions made in the study of frictionless impacts of point masses. Teachers know their subjects well and are adept at keeping the pace up with astute probing, questioning. The strengths of teaching lie in the teachers' good subject knowledge, shared high expectations, and a very clear purpose, with defined learning outcomes for each lesson, which are shared with the students. Explanations are clear. Students are challenged intellectually in lessons. This was seen in a Year 13 statistics class where students successfully used their understanding of the Binomial Distribution applied to an investigation of spread of a non-infectious disease to the Poisson Distribution approximation to the same problem. Students' learning is helped by effective weekly marking with helpful diagnostic comment.

238. As a result of this good practice, the learning and attainment in all lessons was at least satisfactory, and there was already evidence of a level of focus and purpose which would lead to increased rates of progress and higher attainment as the term progresses. Students respond well to the good teaching. The very good leadership and management of the department make a significant contribution to the progress and attainment of the students. The department is led and managed well. The management structure of the faculty has just changed and a teacher is now in charge of sixth form mathematics, but responsible to the new head of faculty. This structure is sensible and, given the very good teaching and close teamwork seen during the inspection, bodes well for raising standards in the subject. The students are closely monitored throughout their courses, using the school's information and communication technology systems. The subsequent counselling and intervention, sometimes providing additional lessons, contribute to the levels of attainment both at AS and A-levels. The very good progress that the mathematics department ensures that pupils have made by the end of Year 11 provides them with a challenge to maintain this rate of progress in the sixth form. The evidence suggests that this challenge is increasingly being met. It is a pity that the school has been unable to staff a GCSE re-sit class within the school this year. It would seem unfair in terms of inclusion to not offer this to the many students who currently leave Year 11 without an A* to C GCSE pass.

Biology

239. Overall, the quality of provision in biology is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- The team of biology teachers is working well together.
- The quality of teaching is good.

Areas for improvement:

- Review entry requirements for the course to ensure that all students will benefit from it.
- Use data logging equipment in experiments/demonstrations in Year 12.

Standards and achievement

240. The GCE A-Level examination results this summer were significantly better than last year. In 2000, results were very low when compared with the National Average. This year's results are significantly better, but are likely to be below the National Average when comparative data is available. A-Level results have fluctuated over the last four years with no particular trend. Only on one occasion were they at the National Average. Very few students have failed to complete the course.

241. In 2001, Year 12 took the new A/S course. Comparison with previous data is not possible because this is a new course. When A/S results are compared with A-Level data, the proportion of students who gained a pass grade was well below the National Average, with no students obtaining the highest grades, A and B. In relation to their GCSE results, however, students did as well as was predicted. The number of students choosing to study biology is high and increasing. The consortium sets minimum standards for entry on to the A/S biology course, but these were not kept to last year and consequently students were allowed on the course when they were unlikely to succeed. There is currently one group in each of Years 12 and 13. There are 21 in the Year 12 group, which is high for this level of work. Overall biology is a cost-effective subject. This judgement is a fine balance between the high number of students opting for this subject and the standards achieved by the students, which are low. About half the students who were on the course last year have opted not to study biology to A2 Level in Year 13. These students sensibly took advantage of the new system, which allows students to concentrate on those subjects where they are more likely to find success.

242. The standard of work of current students is below average. In the lessons seen, students learnt well: the result of good teaching that made appropriate demands on them. Good lesson planning, using a good range resources, helps to maintain students' interests. In one lesson, Year 12 students were encouraged to improve their independent learning skills by the provision of several different work sheets when learning about the structure of amino acids and proteins. Some students found the work very difficult because of their lack of chemical knowledge. Year 13 students in another lesson showed below expected knowledge of previous work on fertilisers and biogas. During the lesson, the teacher gave the students a balanced explanation of the effects of intensive farming on the environment. However it was clear that these inner city students have very limited experience of the way of life in the countryside and this was inhibiting their attainment in this topic. However, the department ensures that all students take part in a field trip during the course, which addresses the problem.

243. Teaching is good overall, and students learn well as a result. The principal features of teaching are very good biological knowledge and understanding, good planning, and a wide range of methods and resources used to aid learning. Teachers, however, do not provide students with sufficient opportunities to develop their basic skills of communication, numeracy, and ICT. The school provides these students with discrete lessons to improve, but the department should try to develop this work further. Teachers must provide Year 12 students with the opportunity to use the data logging equipment. It is very important at this level that students can link sensors to their experiments and analyse the information from

them using computers. There are plans for Year 13 students to use this equipment on their field course.

244. Students show expected levels of interest and respond well to the variety of teaching styles that they experience. When working in small groups, students cooperate well with each other in a mature way, listening to the points of view of others.

245. The satisfactory provision for biology is a finely balanced decision. There are issues, some of which are within the school's control, whilst others result from the consortium's arrangements. The preparation for the introduction of the new course was unfortunate. There were staff changes in the department that meant that the teachers who finished up teaching the new course had too little time to prepare. A teacher did attend the examination board's training day, but only after the course was well under way. The students' views were that the teachers were under pressure to complete the course and that many topics were rushed. The consortium took the decision not to allow any students to be entered for module tests in January and that all tests should be taken at the end of Year 12. Although, because of the planning problems, students were not ready for a module test in January, this is an unsatisfactory policy. Relatively low-attaining students would certainly benefit from the modular approach, which the examination board provides. Timetable constraints, because of consortium arrangements, mean that students have whole mornings taking just biology. It is possible that if biology were better spread across the week, learning would be more efficient. Students would have more time to consolidate their work. Usually, two teachers share the teaching of a group. There are four biology teachers for Post 16 work who meet regularly to decide the teaching programme and share ideas. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory, although hard working, well-qualified teachers have done their best, under quite difficult circumstances, to redress the problems. Since the last inspection, the department has increased the number of students opting for biology in the Sixth Form, but improvement overall has been unsatisfactory.

BUSINESS

246. The overall quality of provision is very good.

Strengths:

- Standards of attainment in the GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education are both high with students achieving very well in relation to their previous attainment.
- Planning and organisation including the preparation of guidance and learning materials, is of a high standard
- Assessment is detailed and supports students' learning well
- Teaching is particularly good in terms of course organisation and lesson planning.

Areas for improvement:

- There are few areas of significant weakness and the following describe aspects that would further strengthen the very good provision.
- Not all teachers share the high standard of classroom practice that exists within the wider faculty.
- Learning and assessment provision has yet to fully prepare students for the new examinations.
- Some teaching rooms are too small and insufficiently resourced to cope with the larger classes.

Standards and achievement

247. Since the last inspection the school has significantly improved success rates in its vocational courses in business. In 2000, 80 per cent of students successfully completed the GNVQ Intermediate Level, which is above the National Average, and the pass rate rose to 85 per cent in 2001. Most students achieved significantly better than would be expected from their attainment at the age of 16.

248. In the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (Vocational A Level), attainment in 2000 was well above National Average, with 76 per cent gaining distinctions and 96 per cent achieving the qualification. These high standards were sustained in 2001, with most students making very good progress in the course and, on average, achieving higher levels than others following GCE A- Level courses in the school.

249. In lessons and work seen, standards in the GNVQ Intermediate Level in business are in line with National Average. Students have secure research skills and in a lesson on market research, for example, were beginning to appreciate the different types and sources of information. Most students start the course with limited knowledge and lower than average communication skills. They make very good progress over the course, becoming more confident and independent in their work. This good progress is shared by a number of intermediate students with special educational needs, who benefit from additional learning support in lessons.

250. In the Vocational Advanced Level, students often have lower than average entry qualifications, but go on to develop a good range of knowledge and research skills. As a result, the standards of coursework are high in relation to the National Average and reflect considerable personal organisation and effort. Within the assessed assignments, students demonstrate a good understanding of different business models and apply them well when given specific contexts. Students are currently less strong in evaluating economic and business theory and, in that respect, are still adjusting to the demands of the new external examinations.

251. Students are very positive about their work and this is reflected in the growing popularity of the vocational courses and the higher than average proportion of students who complete the vocational courses. Students benefit from the courses in terms of their social development as a result of an emphasis on active learning and personal organisation and research.

The quality of education

252. Teaching is good overall. In lessons seen, nearly three quarters of teaching was good and on occasion, very good, with the other lessons being satisfactory. Teachers have a secure grasp of their subject and plan their lessons well. This is seen in the detailed learning schemes that help students better understand the course structure and assessment. Marking is positive and constructive. Teachers provide detailed comment that shows students how they can improve their coursework. In the best lessons, questioning is used well to develop learning points and provide opportunities for students to work through an argument. Scenario-based activities are also used effectively to enable students to apply their learning, for example, in an activity to design a staff induction programme. Less strong practice makes excessive use of dictated notes and overlong presentation by the teacher. These limit opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning. Class management is mostly secure, even in the larger than average teaching groups, and all staff set high expectations about work and deadlines that students meet.

Leadership and management

253. The recently promoted head of faculty provides good leadership to a diverse team responsible for personal and social education, physical education, work related learning and vocational education. She is well organised and committed and directly manages vocational education in her role as GNVQ Co-ordinator. The work of the department is

monitored well and assessment is used satisfactorily for target setting and to inform planning. The head of faculty is well supported by a number of dedicated staff, including the co-ordinator responsible for work related learning. Those teachers have produced very good quality course documentation that includes well-produced course handbooks for staff and students. Student learning is well supported by accessible ICT facilities. A number of the smaller rooms struggle to cope with the growing numbers on these popular courses.

VOCATIONAL COURSES: HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

254. The overall quality of provision is very good.

Strengths:

- Standards of attainment in the GNVQ Intermediate Level are high and students achieve well in relation to their previous attainment.
- Teaching is very good in terms of planning and classroom practice
- Assessment is detailed and supports students' learning well
- Planning and organisation including the preparation of guidance and learning materials, is of a high standard

Areas for improvement:

- Adjust learning and assessment provision to prepare students for the new examinations
- Broaden assessment techniques including those for practical activities.

Standards and achievement

255. The school has considerably improved its results for GNVQ Intermediate Level in health and social care. In 2000 they were well above National Average, with a 90 per cent pass rate and 64 per cent of students gaining distinctions. These results were sustained in 2001 with most students achieving very well in relation to their prior attainment.

256. In lessons and work seen, standards in the GNVQ Intermediate Level in health and social care are above National Average. The lower attaining students have a sound understanding of the main specialist terms relating to, for example, the health and social agencies and human growth and development. Those students can collect and present information with some accuracy though most are less able to evaluate their evidence. The higher attaining students have stronger research skills, can apply their knowledge and show greater insight in evaluating their own activities and experiences. Students achieve very well during the course particularly in the way almost all students develop more secure ICT skills, so enabling them to successfully complete the coursework. This very good progress was particularly evident for one Intermediate Level student with a statement of special educational need, who actively participated in class discussion and group work.

257. Students have made a good start in the newly introduced Vocational Advanced Level and achieving standards at least in line with National Average. In one lesson, for example, students showed a developing understanding of the Welfare State and could draw on some demographic and sociological insights in their class discussion. The higher attaining students were beginning to appreciate, for example, the consequences for social and health planning of demographic change.

258. Students are very positive about their work and this is reflected in the growing popularity of the vocational courses and the higher than average proportion of students

who complete them. Students benefit from the courses in terms of their social development as a result of an emphasis on active learning and personal organisation and research.

The quality of education

259. Teaching by health and social care staff was very good in three quarters of lessons and on occasion, excellent. All teaching had pace and variety that actively involved students throughout the lesson. The best teaching uses questioning and 'brainstorming' well to develop and share ideas was evident in an Intermediate Level lesson that looked at ways of measuring human growth. Group work is well used to develop understanding and develop important key skills such as working with others, problem solving and oral presentation. Teachers have a good understanding of and enthusiasm for their subject and plan their lessons well and this is reflected in detailed learning schemes that help students to understand better the course structure and assessment. On occasion, observational evidence is underused, particularly in assessing practical skills, but in general assessment is very good. This is evident in the positive and constructive marking of assignments and the detailed comment helps students improve their coursework.

Leadership and management

260. The recently promoted head of faculty leads a diverse team responsible for personal and social education, physical education, work related learning and vocational education. She is well organised and committed and directly manages vocational education in her role as GNVQ Co-ordinator, monitoring the work of teachers well. The head of faculty, working with her team, has produced very good quality course documentation that includes well-produced course handbooks for staff and students. The faculty is also adjusting its assessment system to meet the needs of the newly introduced Vocational Advanced Level in health and social care and the use of assessment to set targets and inform planning is satisfactory. Student learning is well supported by accessible ICT facilities and the specialist rooms have good displays, though additional learning materials are less evident in those rooms.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

261. The focus was on art and design at GCE A Level, but media studies and drama were also sampled. In both media studies and drama, examination results were above average in 2000 and students generally attained grades as predicted from their GCSE results. One lesson of each was observed. All were at least good. In the drama lesson, very good teaching enabled students to explore the challenging play 'The Love of a Nightingale'. This led to students gaining a very secure understanding of the dramatic impact of language. In the media lesson, excellent organisation enabled students to explore a variety of strategies used to disseminate information. Students gained understanding of bias and technological influences in this practical session.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

262. The focus was on art and design at GCE A-Level. Lessons were also observed in drama and media studies. Very good, sometimes excellent, teaching was observed in these subjects, which are strong in the school. All the students entered for A-Level drama in 2001 obtained a pass grade and most attained higher grades in drama than in their other

A Level subjects. There was also a ten0 per cent pass rate in media studies. There were no grades below D. Again, the candidates overall attained significantly better grades in media studies than in the other A-Level subjects for which they were entered

ART

263. Overall, the quality of provision in art is very good.

Strengths:

- Examination results are high.
- Students have very good knowledge of artists and artistic techniques.
- Students produce confident and skilful large-scale work.
- Much of their work is vibrant and exciting
- Teaching is very good.
- The leadership and management is excellent.

Areas for improvement:

- Critical studies are mixed in standard. Some show good individual thought and research.
- Others depend too much on copying from reference materials.

264. Attainment in the GCE A-Level examination in was well above nationally expected standards. All students who took the examination gained a pass and half gained the highest grade, A. No one attained a grade below C. In relation to their GCSE results, they did better than expected. Numbers taking the examination were too small for a comparison between the results of male and female students to be valid.

265. In the work seen in the school, standards are well above average in Year 13. Students show a good grasp of three-dimensional work, and can produce large and exciting pieces based on the study of other artists and art movements. In addition, there is evidence of thorough research and attention to detail. Students also paint and draw very well, and evidence of good painting was seen in all students' portfolios. All the students draw well from life, and show a good understanding of pencil work, using line and tone with confidence. This can be seen in their drawing from the human figure, which is vigorous and exciting. Their composition skills are strong and their experimentation with materials is varied, imaginative and of high quality.

266. The work produced by Year 13 students is vibrant and often exciting. They work with great confidence in large or small scales and can use a wide range of artistic processes with considerable skill. There is evidence in their professional approach to their studies and in the quality of their art of serious artists at work, with unusually high levels of dedication and commitment to their work shown by all nine students. They are making excellent progress, building well on their success in the 2001 AS Level examination, when all nine gained A or B grades. Their critical studies are more mixed in standard, however. Some show good individual thought and research. Others depend too much on copying from reference materials

267. Teaching and learning are very good overall, and achievement is very high as a result. A strength of the teaching is the excellent subject knowledge of the teachers, which enables them to make a good match of materials and methods to the attainments of the students. They have high expectations. One of the lessons seen, in the afternoon, was expected to continue late into the evening, long after the school day had finished, and every student unquestioningly remained to the end to continue their work. This shows how very effectively the teachers' dedication and expectations have influenced the attitudes and work rate of the students. Lessons are also well prepared. For example, in a lesson on collage, the teacher used a wide range of media from the visual and performing arts to great effect to stimulate ideas and responses. Music was played to help the students to

match their lines and the tone of their work to musical moods. One student contributed by playing live music. The teacher used her knowledge of art to give clear and fascinating insights into the work of great artists, which gained high levels of student interest. This promoted good learning as students were guided in their practical work. There are no weaknesses in the teaching.

268. Students show very high levels of personal involvement in their projects and undertake independent work with a high level of interest. This is because teachers give them good individual coaching, and guide their research, encouraging them to develop their work individually. They use research well to support and extend their work and their sketchbooks show that they can effectively explore ideas and develop themes.

269. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has generated a strong sense of teamwork, ably supported by the second in department. Teachers exchange ideas and share good practice to the benefit of their own teaching and the students' experiences of art. There is a shared commitment to improve, and standards are rising. There has been good improvement since the last report

HUMANITIES

270. The focus was on geography, which is not being taught on the school site, and on sociology.

GEOGRAPHY

Strengths:

- Teaching is good.
- Materials are well prepared in advance.
- Key skills such as numeracy and social skills are addressed through teaching.

Areas for Improvement:

- The rate of progress across the AS and A2 courses is satisfactory, but the group taking the A2 examination in 2001 did not achieve well in relation to their attainment in the GCSE examination.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is not as strong as that of the main school.
- Alternate cohorts of students are taught at one of two different schools within the consortium.

Standards and achievement

271. Numbers have been too small for safe comparison with national standards over the last four years except to say that eighty per cent of the students gained at least a pass grade in that time. In 2001, numbers increased and attainment was broadly in line with the National Averages and is so currently. The rate of progress across the AS and A2 courses is satisfactory, but the group taking the A2 examination in 2001 did not achieve well in relation to their attainment in the GCSE examination. Currently, however, students are making satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment.

272. The attainment on entry of students to the AS course in 2001 is mostly high, but there is a wide range and a minority of students have either lower than usual GCSE grades or no prior experience of the subject. This is not unusual. The number of higher attainers staying within the consortium to study geography is increasing. Because of the consortium

arrangements, opportunities to make judgements about attainment were restricted, but in the examples of work seen, standards were close to the average level expected.

The quality of education

273. The small amount of teaching observed was good. The strengths were: good subject knowledge expressed in the management and explanation of a good range of appropriate materials and texts, good classroom management, the fast pace of teaching and the effective remoulding of well-recalled prior knowledge and understanding to fit the new learning of flood hydrographs.

274. In class, students attained at and above the level that would be predicted from their prior attainment, in their GCSE examinations. They made good progress in their learning by focusing what they had previously learned separately about climate soils and river processes to combine them into new learning about how very heavy rainfall influences the flow of rivers and what influence this can have on human lives. They used good arithmetical skills to read complex graphs with a number of variables.

Leadership and management

275. Because of the consortium arrangements it was not possible to form a judgement on the quality of leadership and management. The detail of the analysis of Sixth Form courses and of monitoring teaching is not at the same level of intensity as in the main school.

276. Students are well adjusted to the consortium system. They remain in contact with their friends and school friendship groups influence seating in lessons, but they see the benefit of working with larger groups. Their only grumble was that the bus that ensures transfer to other sites does not always leave on time.

Sociology

277. In sociology, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- The quality of the teaching.
- The attitudes and the behaviour of students.
- Students' involvement in and contributions to their lessons.

Areas for development:

- Resources (each student should have her own textbook).
- The need to increase the range of resources for independent learning.
- The need for more opportunities to use ICT to enhance learning.

Standards and achievement

278. The attainment of students in last year's GCE A Level examination was in line with expectations. The proportion of students obtaining A and B was at almost exactly the National Average, while the proportion achieving a pass grade was somewhat below the National Average. This represents an improvement on the two previous years, when attainment was either below, or well below, National Averages. In the 2001 examination the proportion of students achieving a pass rose considerably, while the proportion

achieving higher grades increased slightly. National comparative figures have yet to be published.

279. Students quickly acquire knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological concepts, theories and topics. In the first weeks of the course they are initiated into sociological methods by undertaking content analysis of newspapers in order to test theories about media representations of football fans. They make good progress to be able to accurately apply concepts such as deviancy amplification and dismissive labelling to the way in which the tabloid press report the unrest associated with football. Lower-attaining students find it easier to express their ideas orally rather than in writing but are able to question critically the assumptions behind everyday and media stereotypes. Although there are some weaknesses in the technical accuracy of their written work they gain confidence in the recognition and use of concepts such as sub culture, youth culture and war imagery.

280. It was not possible to see any Year 13 lessons, but students' files revealed a particular strength in coursework. The opportunities to show their skills and knowledge through coursework are clearly valued by students, judged by the amount of care and effort they put into it. There was ample evidence of detailed planning and clear explanation of how topics chosen related to previous research. Students understood the advantages and disadvantages of the methodologies they employed and reflected on the reliability of their findings. Some very high quality work had evoked compliments from the exam board on the department's marking procedures. Evidence seen during the inspection supports departmental data in indicating that attainment on entry to the course is below the National Average. Students, therefore, make good progress to achieve results in line with the National Average at A Level.

The quality of education

281. Sociology is well taught; teachers' subject knowledge and understanding enables them to offer clear explanations of principles, concepts and theories when clarification is required. Stimulating and provocative contemporary materials are well chosen, resulting in the active involvement of students, who therefore assume a much greater degree of responsibility for their own learning. This is well supported by departmentally produced resources, covering sociological concepts, theories and studies. Detailed planning, combined with energy, enthusiasm and pace, contribute to good learning in lessons. Methods used promote group interaction and oracy skills. An informal approach and the sensitive, tactful management of students contribute to good relationships. There is good emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, but opportunities to use ICT to aid learning are missed.

Leadership and management

282. The subject is well managed and led. The teacher responsible has a clear vision of how the subject should move forward having undertaken a detailed review and produced an associated development plan. The teachers are well qualified and deployed with a good mixture of age and experience; close collaborative relationships result in effective monitoring of teaching and the sharing of good practice. The department has effected good improvement since the last inspection.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

ENGLISH

The Sixth Form

283. The overall provision in the subject is good.

Strengths:

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is very good.
- Relationships and behaviour are very good.
- Marking is very good and indicates how students can improve their work
- The department promotes independent skills of study well.

Areas for improvement:

- The use of assessment to inform teaching and to measure progress is inconsistent.
- Although working hard, a number of students are passive and lack the confidence to contribute to discussion.

Scope of provision

284. The faculty caters for some 15 students who are taught across the three sites of the consortium. GCE AS and A2 courses are offered in English Literature on the Sydenham site and GCSE English is available for those who do not have the qualification.

Standards and achievement

285. Standards are below average, due to the low GCSE profile on entry of many of the students. In 2000 and 2001, almost all of the students who entered the examination gained A to E grades. The achievement of students however, is high, due to rigorous and skilled teaching and almost all last the full course.

286. The inspection found that standards are similar to those in the past, but that the qualifications on entry to the AS course are better than they have been and students in Year 12 already have a good understanding of how authors use language to create mood. Higher-attaining students argue a point of view clearly and cogently, supporting their opinion by reference to the text. Average and below average attaining students sometimes use colloquial English inappropriately and lack fluency. Most students read with good understanding and they understand the importance of knowing something about the context in which the text is set. Students in Year 13 were beginning a study of The Romantics and all had been asked to research the period. All had some understanding of the Romantic period, helped by the teacher who very effectively drew on her knowledge of art, history and music to add to the discussion. All students are able to give a personal response to their reading, but many are hampered by a limited vocabulary that prevents them from putting forward a point of view precisely.

287. Students make good progress, due to the high expectations of the teachers and rigorous marking of work that is responsive to the students and challenges them to reflect on what they have written. As a result, they work hard and at full stretch. Students for whom English is an additional language achieve highly. One Year 12 student had prepared a commentary on the opening of a modern novel. She showed good insight into how the

writer had use a range of literary techniques to create the mood of the novel. The discussion that ensued extended the understanding of other students in the class. Lower attaining students also achieve highly. In the mixed classes, boys contribute effectively to the discussion and achieve well, but some girls are rather passive.

Quality of education

288. Teaching of A Level English is very good. Teachers have a very good understanding of the subject that they use well to motivate and enthuse students. They are insistent on students using correct language in their analysis of text and constantly reinforce its use through repetition and asking students to think about their descriptions. Questions are used most effectively to probe and develop understanding and to create a climate for discussion. This was seen in all the lessons, particularly in a Year 13 lesson on literature about war. The preliminary discussion, enhanced by sharply focused questions, enabled students to critically analyse texts in pairs for structure and language and to form an opinion about the extracts. Relationships are very good so that students feel confident to make mistakes. Shyer students, although reluctant to come forward with an opinion, are willing to give one when pressed. Students are expected to work independently, researching a topic and finding out information for themselves and they respond well to this expectation. Some teachers are using planning with achievement objectives as a reminder. This works very well and focuses the lesson closely on the objective. Teachers are aware of students who are reluctant to contribute and take care to include them in their questioning.

289. Work is regularly marked to a high standard and the faculty is developing assessment in order to track the progress of students in relation to their predicted grades. Students appreciate the support they are given by members of staff.

Leadership and management

290. The leadership of the faculty is very good and teachers of the Sixth Form are well qualified and well supported by the structure of the faculty. It is a large faculty and several of the teachers hold senior management responsibilities. Good methods have been found to overcome the possible problems that this could cause and communication within the faculty is good. The head of faculty is aware that the qualifications on entry to the A Level course need to be raised if results are to improve.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

291. The focus of the inspection was French, but work in Spanish was also sampled. No students are currently studying A-Level German in the Sixth Form. This year there is no A2 course running in Year 13 in French. Three students in Year 12 have just begun an AS-Level French course. It was not possible to observe actual classes on this course, as provision has been made outside the school and the consortium. One student of AS Level French was interviewed and her current written work sampled.

292. GCE A Level Spanish has not been a feature of Sixth Form study over recent years. At the present moment there is no A2 Spanish in Year 13. Three students in Year 12 have just begun an AS-Level Spanish course. As with French, provision for this course has been made outside the school and the consortium. One student was interviewed and her current written work sampled. The standard of attainment and progress of students at the

beginning of their AS-Level course in Spanish this September is satisfactory and teaching is good.

FRENCH

293. Overall, the quality of provision is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Arrangements are made for students to continue with their language studies despite a very low uptake in the school and in the consortium.
- Even at this early stage in the course, good progress has been made in the transition from GCSE to AS-Level
- Students are committed and enthusiastic. They speak confidently and fluently.
- Teaching is good

Areas for improvement:

- Written work is careless. Basic grammar needs further consolidation.

Standards and achievement

294. Over the last three years, low numbers of students have been entered for A-Level French. Results have varied. In general they have been in line with National Averages. There have been no higher grades (A or B), but results have been satisfactory relative to the prior attainment of students. The most recent results were below average. This may be attributed to changes in staffing in the department during the year.

295. The evidence from work seen in student's files and from the interview during the inspection shows that standards are satisfactory and about average for the beginning of the AS-Level course. The student interviewed spoke with confidence and conveyed her opinions effectively. In order to express her views, she adapted her existing knowledge of the language well and sought additional vocabulary in French naturally. Her pronunciation and intonation were satisfactory. Her use of present and future concepts was good; she was less secure when handling material in the past. Her comprehension of spoken French was good. Very little written work has been completed so far. Some classwork shows evidence of carelessness in basic grammar.

The quality of education

296. No actual teaching was observed, but evidence in the student's file and from the student, herself, suggests that teaching is good and appropriate strategies are in place for transition from GCSE to AS Level. The quantity of work covered in two to three sessions indicates a brisk pace. Already vocabulary and idiom to reflect nuance in personal opinion have been introduced. Basic grammar drills have been used for consolidation and the range of tenses extended. Exercises to extend knowledge of France and French culture have been completed. Students have had opportunities to seek information from each other in French and report this information to the whole group. An appropriate written task that will require use of the new material introduced this term has been set for early completion. Clear individual guidance has been given in classes on how to improve.

297. The student interviewed was mature, attentive and showed considerable interest in the subject. She has the ability to learn independently. She is confident and demonstrated that she had already been taught the skills to become a fluent communicator. She can

seek information orally and report it accurately. She is impressed with the access she has been given to reference material in libraries and through the internet. She knows where to seek help should she require it. She has a clear idea of the shape of her current course, the demands of A2 French and how modern foreign languages will help her chosen career path.

Leadership and management

298. Good lines of communication have been established between the school and the providing institution so that students' progress can be regularly monitored. Students receive very good formal and informal support from the school Sixth Form coordinator. They also have recourse to the modern languages department in the school, where the staff has a high level of personal skill and expertise in their subject.