

INSPECTION REPORT

**THE BRIT SCHOOL
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
AND TECHNOLOGY**

LEA area: CROYDON

Unique reference number: 101849

Principal: NICK WILLIAMS

Reporting inspector: Barbara Hilton
3228

Dates of inspection: 25 - 29 November 2002

Inspection number: 250867

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	City college for the technology of the arts
School category:	City technology college
Age range of students:	14 to 19
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	60 The Crescent Croydon
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Telephone number:	020 8665 5242
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Deacon
Date of previous inspection:	28 October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3228	Barbara Hilton	Registered inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and students' achievement</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9561	Husain Akhtar	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion	<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p> <p>Accommodation and learning resources</p>
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10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	Sociology History	
3258	David Bain	Team inspector	Psychology	
8076	Terence Bendall	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
18446	Joss Bennathan	Team inspector	Theatre Dance	

10391	Val du Plergny	Team inspector	Music	
10448	Michael Elson	Team inspector	Citizenship Religious education	How good are curricular (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) opportunities?
12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (French and German)	
1779	David Leonard	Team inspector	Science	
11975	Thelma McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Musical theatre	
31983	Debra Makin	Team inspector	Arts management Production	
12120	Jack Mallinson	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Dance (post-16)	
19925	Margaret Price	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Art and design	
23030	Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Dance (Years 10 and 11)	
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	Theatre	
1130	Barry Smith	Team inspector	Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities in Years 10 and 11?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The BRIT School for the Performing Arts and Technology is a city technology college for 14-19 year olds. The school is sited in Croydon although students are admitted from boroughs across London and the south east, including parts of north Surrey and Kent. The total roll is 825 with 572 post-16 students and 253 students in Years 10 and 11. Girls outnumber boys by about 2 to 1 in all years. About 30 per cent of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is broadly representative of the home boroughs of students, except that the proportion of students attending the school who come from black Caribbean and black African backgrounds is relatively high and the proportion from Asian backgrounds is relatively low. The attainment of students on entry in Year 10 is broadly average, although all are committed to an aspect of performing arts and related technologies and many are talented or have a particular flair. The proportion with special educational needs is below the national average and of these the great majority is dyslexic. All speak English fluently. As a city technology college the school is funded directly by the Government, with substantial support from the British Record Industry Trust (BRIT), which about 10 years ago established this unique provision in performing arts and related technology.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The BRIT School is a very effective school. Teaching is a strength: good in Years 10 and 11 and very good post-16. Students, who are highly motivated and enthusiastic, are helped to make the most of themselves and they progress very well. Recent General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results have been well above the national average and success on post-16 vocational courses is consistently very good. The school is very well led and managed and provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students achieve very well. GCSE and GNVQ results are rising rapidly and were well above the national average in 2002.
- Post-16 provision and achievement are very good in many areas, providing a very good basis for progression into higher education, performance industries and related technologies.
- Students are highly motivated and respond enthusiastically to the strong support they receive to make the very best of themselves.
- Teachers have high expectations and lesson planning is very good; vocational areas provide a rich range of inspiring activities.
- The ethos is highly positive and reflects the focus of the school on performing arts and related technologies, through outstanding contributions by governors and very good leadership and management, promoting strong teamwork throughout.

What could be improved

- Students' achievement up to GCSE in mathematics, design and technology, and modern foreign languages and in religious education throughout.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in 1996. GCSE results have improved markedly and post-16 results are also better. Teaching is much better now than at the last inspection. Substantial progress has been made in several of the key issues of the last report: raising standards of achievement in core and foundation subjects; adopting systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluating student achievement; the involvement of the governing body in the strategic management of the school; clarification of the responsibilities and management arrangements of the school; and the introduction of an appraisal system. Consistent approaches to improving students' writing and use of language remain areas for development. A new principal has been in post since January 2002. Bearing in mind the very good leadership and management of the school and the highly effective governing body, the school is well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	C	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	-	-	-	

Key

very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

(A/AS-level results are not included here because students took single subjects alongside their major vocational course.)

GCSE and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) results have improved rapidly over the last few years. Students' performance in 2002 was well above the national average and in the top five per cent, when compared with schools with similar proportions of free school meals. This reflects very well on their progress since starting at The BRIT School in Year 10, at which time their attainment was broadly average. GCSE results were high in English, well above average in art and design, dance and humanities, and above average in sociology, science and theatre studies. In mathematics, results while below the national average, were in line with the average in similar schools. Results were below average in French and German and well below average in religious education. Students achieved very well on vocational courses at intermediate level in performing arts, well in art and design and satisfactorily in media. Inspection evidence is that standards overall in Year 11 are above average and broadly in line with results. Students with special education needs progress very well, in line with others. Standards of literacy are good and numeracy is satisfactory. Students use information and communication technology (ICT) very effectively.

Post-16 students consistently achieve very good results in advanced-level vocational courses. In 2002, results were high in the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) National Diploma in production and in musical theatre, very good in theatre, dance and music. Results in the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in art and design and in media were also good. Alongside the vocational courses a significant number of students take a GCE subject at A2 or AS-level. The popular subjects are English, performing arts and creative subjects in which results are usually good. The number of entries and results are lower in history, mathematics, psychology and sports science. A-level results have improved since the last inspection. Inspectors found standards in lessons and work seen to be generally well above average in vocational areas and good, sometimes satisfactory, in other subjects. Students communicate and use information technology well. Their numeracy skills are adequate for their courses. Students with special educational needs are helped to progress very well. Good use is made of challenging targets to raise standards and results. Nearly all students stay for the full length of their courses: retention is high.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Students are highly motivated and enthusiastic about the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Exemplary. Students behave with consideration and courtesy.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent: students' personalities develop very well. They respond extremely well to all the opportunities provided in the school.

Attendance	Good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in other years. Significant numbers of older students have difficulty arriving on time: a better registration system is needed.
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Students contribute wholeheartedly to the school's ethos of respect, trust and creativity. Respect for feelings, values and beliefs is an outstanding feature of the school, which has a diversity of cultures and interests. Post-16 students are happy and proud to be at the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	n/a	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.

Teaching is very good overall with examples of excellence on vocational courses. Students learn very well: they are highly motivated by the relevance of the work to their own interests and the performing arts industry. The adult environment and the many opportunities they have for participating in aspects of the life of the school help them to take responsibility for their own progress. Committed teachers and very good planning enable students to make the most of themselves, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented. Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 enables students to make great strides in performing arts subjects (dance, music and theatre), also in art and design, media, sociology and citizenship. Students are taught and learn well in most other subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Teaching and learning are good in religious education lessons but students do not achieve well enough because of shortage of time. Learning in design and technology and modern foreign languages is satisfactory: a more varied range of activities would assist progress in both subjects.

Marking and assessment are well used in many subjects but practice is uneven and not consistent enough in some subjects, including mathematics and modern foreign languages. In these, teachers do not make enough use of assessment in planning suitably challenging work. The use of homework is also inconsistent. Much involves rehearsal and practical activity and demands on students are uneven. Subject teachers are attentive about students' use of literacy and numeracy (and the key skills of communication and numeracy post-16) although approaches are not consistent across the curriculum. Students' use of information and communication technology is good throughout and in several vocational areas they make excellent use of specialised equipment and software.

Post-16, the great strengths of teaching are in performing arts and related technologies; history teaching is also very good. Other subjects are mostly well taught, but in mathematics too many students are not interested in their GCSE re-sit classes and this is affecting their progress. Overall, students work very hard and take significant responsibility for their own learning and collaboration with others.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The match of vocational courses to students' interests and aspirations is a strength. The time provided for religious education is not enough to allow requirements to be met.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good: students' needs are carefully assessed and provided for in a very sympathetic environment.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural	Excellent: the community is dedicated to maximise every individual's gifts and talents. Staff are very good role models. Spiritual awareness is developed very well through performance areas but students do not have

development	regular opportunities for worship.
How well the school cares for its students	The effective pastoral system ensures the well being of students. The monitoring of students' overall progress is good and in performance subjects students' progress is guided very well. However, in several subjects marking and assessment could be better used to help students understand their progress.

Extra-curricular provision is a strength. Performances and workshops enrich learning in dance, music, musical theatre, production and theatre. Visits, visitors and local organisations enhance work in many subjects. Links with the local community, including students' contributions in local schools, are very strong.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	Very good. The principal and senior staff provide extremely clear direction and manage the interface of professional expectations and provision excellently. The leadership has planned and supported marked improvement in GCSE results as well as steady improvement in post-16 results.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Outstandingly well. Governors have a very good sense of the strategic development of the school and best value. Through their efforts the school benefits from an unusually wide range of community and industry links. Requirements are met except for provision of religious education and a daily act of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Systematic arrangements have been introduced and used for results overall and in some departments although arrangements could be more consistent.
The strategic use of resources	Resources, including specific grants, are used with excellent efficiency to promote high standards. Financial management is excellent.

Staff are very well qualified, especially in performance areas, where many have backgrounds in the relevant industries. Teamwork is strong and support staff play a very positive role; for example, they help students with special educational needs, in technical support, the library, students' services, managing the site and administration. Accommodation is good and lends a professional ambience to work in dance, theatre, music, musical theatre and production. Resourcing is of excellent quality: students have opportunities to work with commercial quality equipment and in a very good library.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their sons and daughters are happy in the school • Expectations are high • The school builds on individual talents and helps students make the most of themselves • Teachers are very supportive and give generously of their own time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge provided in non-performance subjects • Information on homework and progress in some subjects

Inspectors agree with parents about the aspects which please them. Inspectors found work is generally challenging but agree that high standards are not found throughout and could be better in mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education. Inspectors found many students working extensively after lessons, often on practical activities. Written homework, however, is

much more variable in quantity and quality. Progress reports to parents are good. However, in a few subjects marking and assessment could be improved so students have a clearer understanding of their progress.

POST-16 INFORMATION

This is the larger part of the school with post-16 students outnumbering those in Years 10 and 11 by about two to one. This gives the school the atmosphere of a junior college. While all students have a strong interest or talent in performing arts or related industries, attainment on entry has been broadly average. All students are interviewed before entry; nearly all Year 11 progress into the Year 12 and they are joined by about twice as many from schools in the London area and a few from farther afield. Although the great majority travel daily, a small (but significant) minority stay locally during the week. The composition of the post-16 community is the same as for the whole school.

HOW GOOD POST-16 PROVISION IS

Very effective, overall. Students achieve very well on vocational courses: their results are very good. Very good leadership and management have improved results which are better now than at the last inspection. Teaching and learning are strengths. Individual attention enables students to make the most of their talents and some do outstandingly well. Provision is very cost-effective.

Strengths

- Excellent provision in performing arts and related technologies.
- The very good standards and versatility students achieve on their vocational courses.
- Outstandingly good contributions students make to their progress and the school community, through sharing their talents, enthusiasm and initiative.
- Challenge and inspiration provided by highly skilled and professional staff who help students to develop expertise in their chosen field.
- Excellent links with industry, professionals and the community.

What could be improved

- Arrangements for registering attendance.

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 post-16. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. All subjects leading directly to an award were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Students progress well on the AS-level course and attain in line with expectations. Progress on the GCSE re-sit course is limited and standards are below average. Teaching is satisfactory.
Science	Good. Students achieve well. The teacher guides discussion well, enabling students to learn from each other.
Arts management	Very good. Year 14 students have mature attitudes and achieve very well, in response to very good teaching. They deal well with outside agencies and make an important contribution to the life of the school.
Physical education	Satisfactory. The quality of provision is good but there are few opportunities available for a sixth form of this size.
Art and design	Very good. Students achieve well because teaching is consistently very good, incorporating a wide range of art aspects and excellent

	resources.
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Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Media	Very good. Standards are high and students achieve very well. They benefit from teachers' very good subject knowledge and professional expertise. They appreciate and make very good use of the excellent facilities.
Dance	Very good. Standards are well above average. High quality teaching, resources and accommodation contribute greatly to students' very good progress in all areas, including composition, choreography and performance.
Music	Excellent. Subject knowledge and commitment of the teachers enable the students to make excellent progress in all areas. Students' performance, by the end of Year 13, is outstanding. Results are well above average.
Musical theatre	Excellent. Standards are very high, as a result of very good teaching. Opportunities for students' personal development are outstandingly good. The subject fully reflects the ethos of the school.
Theatre	Excellent. Standards are high. Students make very good progress as a result of skilled teaching and many opportunities for extra-curricular work and performance.
Production	Excellent. The knowledge and experience of teachers contribute strongly to students' learning. Progress is very good by students across the ability range.
History	Good. Students progress very well, as a result of enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers.
Psychology	Satisfactory. Teaching is good. While results of external examinations are below average, as are students' standards of written work at an early stage of the course, analytical discussion is above average. Progress is satisfactory.
English	Good. Standards are in line with the average and students achieve well due to the commitment and expertise of their teachers and effective debate in lessons.
French	Satisfactory. Teaching is good and attainment is average, overall. Students with prior experience of the language do very well and all students benefit from the first-hand knowledge and experience of their teachers.

All students cover key skills in their vocational courses. Communication is good, with speaking and listening being particularly effective. Numeracy skills are adequate: students cope with the demands of their courses. Overall, information and technology skills are good; some students make extensive use of specialist equipment and software.

OTHER ASPECTS OF POST-16 PROVISION

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Staff are very supportive; students receive good guidance. Skilled assessment on entry to Year 12 and frequent monitoring and support through vocational courses help students to build on their strengths.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. The clear rationale for post-16 work is reflected in the very good teaching and progress students make. Governors are keenly interested and supportive. Excellent teamwork among staff and students contributes well to generating a professional ethos.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF POST-16 PROVISION

What students like about provision	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are very supportive of individuals: they are allowed to be themselves. • Specialist teaching in subjects of their choice. • They are encouraged to work independently. • The availability of very high quality resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough feedback on progress in some areas. • Time taken to mark homework.

Inspectors endorse students' positive views and feel their concerns are justified because of inconsistencies across subjects. The school's assessment working party is addressing these areas.

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 school's results and students' achievements

1. Year 11 results have improved rapidly over the last few years. Most students take courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) alongside GCSE subjects. In 2002, students' performance was well above the national average and high, relative to schools with similar proportions of students eligible for free school meals. Year 11 results reflect very well on students' achievement since their entry to The BRIT School in Year 10, when their attainment was broadly average (in some years, a little below). In 2002, all students (a high proportion relative to all schools nationally) successfully gained at least one or more graded results at GCSE and the proportion gaining five subjects at the higher grades (A*-C) was well above average. Virtually all students take English, science (single-award) and mathematics at GCSE. Results in 2002 for English were high and for science they were above the national average, however for mathematics they were below the national average (but broadly average, relative to similar schools). Results in each of these core subjects were better in 2002 than in 2001. All students entered the school with a strong interest or flair in performing arts - which is reflected in their achievement on vocational courses. While boys' results were a little better than girls', there are fewer boys than girls in the school and all achieved very well; in most subjects inspectors found their performance to be similar in lessons. Results reflect very well on the progress of students with special educational needs.
2. Students enter the school in Year 10 from a wide range of backgrounds and very many schools. The banding of students by attainment, where it occurs, helps teachers to plan work for the levels at which students are working. Inspectors found standards in lessons and work seen to be above average by the time students reach Year 11. Students progress very well overall in lessons throughout Years 10 and 11, and rapidly in dance, media, music and theatre and in art and design, spurred on by their own enthusiasm and commitment and supported by very good teaching. In these subjects, examples of very high attainment by students were seen. Progress is very good in citizenship education, through a combination of very good provision in sociology and the many opportunities for students to take responsibility and understand the viewpoints of others in performing arts subjects. Progress is satisfactory, rather than good, in design and technology lessons, where students' experience is limited to a small range of skills, although individuals and groups of students extend their expertise by working on productions and projects. Progress is good in individual lessons in religious education but, because of the narrow scope of the syllabus and small amount of time provided for it across Years 10 and 11, overall achievement is low. Students progress well in both English and mathematics and attain standards in lessons in line with the high results in English. In mathematics, with support from teachers in lessons, standards are a little better than results and match national expectations. Students progress well in science; standards are above average in lessons and examinations. All students speak English fluently. Standards of literacy are good overall, with strengths in many areas, but weaknesses in others. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory overall. Students cope with handling numbers and mathematical ideas in their subjects but there is no systematic approach to numeracy across the curriculum. Students in both years make extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT) to assist their learning in many subjects. More is reported on literacy, numeracy and the use of information technology in sections of Part D of the report on English, mathematics and information and communication technology.

Post-16

3. Students consistently achieve very good results in advanced-level vocational courses. Alongside the vocational courses a significant number of students take a General Certificate in Education (GCE) subject at A2 or AS-level. In most years, nearly all pass and they do well in popular subjects including English, performing arts and creative subjects. The number of entries and results are lower in history, mathematics, psychology and sports science. Bearing in mind the modest GCSE results of many who completed their courses in 2002, their final results reflect very

- good added-value. The results include those for students with special educational needs, who achieve very well. Overall, results for male and female students are similar.
4. Attainment in post-16 lessons is above average and progress very good. As lower down the school, standards are better in performing arts (and related technologies), where examples of high standards were seen, than in other subjects. The commitment of students to their vocational area is reflected in their very good learning and progress. In dance, theatre, music and musical theatre, instances of individual excellence were seen and productions and projects reflect high standards resulting from teamwork, with planning, choreography and direction by students. Progress in GCE subjects is good. In lessons, students attain in line with course expectations in English and mathematics, and above average in science; other subjects are in line with expectations. Standards in personal and professional development are good, reflecting very good support in tutorial lessons and through opportunities in vocational courses.
 5. Students communicate effectively, their use of number is satisfactory and of information and communication technology is very good. These key skills are developed as integral parts of the vocational courses, but there is no co-ordinated approach across the curriculum and consequently inconsistencies occur. More is reported about key skills in post-16 sections on English, mathematics and information and communication technology.

Trends and targets

6. Over the last few years, GCSE results have improved rapidly: they are much better than at the last inspection. Post-16 results are also better. Planning over the last few years to improve results has been very effective. Improvements in curricular planning and teaching have strengthened learning. Revision classes have helped students to prepare for examinations. Systematic procedures have been introduced for monitoring and evaluating students' progress. Good use is made of challenging targets to raise standards and results. Targets are set in subjects and for students individually. Analysis of standard tests taken by students on entry shows good value added in most subjects. Statistical measures of relative performance confirm inspectors' findings: on the whole students do better in performing arts subjects, art and design and media than in their other subjects. Every year some students achieve outstandingly well. In 2002, the results of a dance student and one in sociology were among the top five candidates in the country. The school does not analyse results by ethnicity or background. In lessons, no difference was observed in standards among students of different ethnic groups. A small but significant minority of post-16 students lives away from home during the week. They are well supported and achieve in line with the rest. Nearly all students stay for the full length of their post-16 courses: retention is high.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Students' attitudes and behaviour, very good at the time of the last inspection, are now excellent. Students arrive in good heart in the mornings and their interest remains very high throughout the school's working day, which is long. Evening performances are very well supported by students. Parents at their meeting with inspectors said that the school values individual talent and their children like school; students interviewed overwhelmingly confirmed that this is the case. All groups of students, including those coping with difficult circumstances or needs, are highly motivated and enthusiastic, and participate extremely well in lessons and other activities. For example, in Year 11 students were exceptionally well motivated and worked enthusiastically to refine and learn their modern jazz dance; their progress was very good. Students' keenness in a Year 10 art lesson helped them sustain concentration and learn new skills, including computer-aided design, and they made excellent progress in their design work on close-ups. Students with special educational needs respond very well to the support that they receive and learn well, individually and in small groups.
8. Students wholeheartedly uphold the school's ethos of respect, trust and creativity; their behaviour is exemplary, both in lessons and around the school. Year 11 students showed great self-discipline and maturity during their auditions for sixth form opportunities in drama and musical theatre. In a Year 10 drama lesson, students were keen to share their experiences, showed high levels of respect to each other and consolidated their skills of movement and communication very

well. Consideration and courtesy continue during the breaks, when students socialise or carry on practising their performance skills. Respect for feelings, values and beliefs is an outstanding strength of the school, which has a diversity of cultures and interests. Inspectors saw no incidents of any oppressive behaviour. Bullying is not an issue in the school. Students treat school property, including displays, with good care. The number of exclusions, a little increased since the last inspection, is below average. Exclusions are for a short period and purposeful. There were no permanent exclusions in the last school year. Correct procedures for exclusion are followed.

9. Students' personal development is excellent; they respond extremely well to all the opportunities provided at the school. Students are successful in forming constructive relationships with adults and other students. Co-operation and collaboration are evident in lessons and in preparation for performance events, as observed, for example, in a Year 10 music lesson. Students value each other's performances. All groups of students mix and work together very well as, for example, at lunchtime when The Space is used for performance and assessment activities. Students show good care and concern for others by following safety instructions in practical activities, some held in a highly specialist environment. Students are very well organised and act like responsible adults. They understand the importance of hard work and take responsibility for their own achievements. They willingly take initiative in choosing their work and how to set about it; this approach is a part of their everyday working and is extremely well developed.
10. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now good, being above the national average. Unauthorised absence is below average. Students are sometimes late, mostly because of transport problems or the travel distance involved but this does not really disturb learning since the teachers are well skilled at minimising disruptions.

Post-16

11. Post-16 students are happy and are proud to be a part of the school. They enjoy excellent relationships with staff and with each other; these help them to participate effectively in lessons and cope well with their courses. The collaborative atmosphere in a Year 13 personal and professional development lesson enabled staff and students to constructively discuss auditions and students made rapid gains in confidence about their own abilities. Students' attitudes to work in lessons are very good, with many examples of excellence - as in Year 13 musical theatre, when students were rehearsing a scene from *The Hired Man* and in Year 12 production where they were recording music for a radio trailer. They are eager to succeed in the world of performing arts. The vast majority complete their courses, about half proceed to higher education and nearly all the rest take up jobs in the creative industries. Students are well organised and complete work within the time limits given. While their attitudes are very good, their recorded attendance is merely satisfactory. Unauthorised absence appears high because the school does not have a satisfactory system of recording post-16 attendance. Students are courteous young adults and behave extremely well.
12. Students express themselves very well when discussing their work and plans for the future, and they are keen to talk about their interests and achievements. This was clear in interviews with students, including a discussion with a group of students involved in community theatre. All groups of students, including boys and girls and students from different ethnic backgrounds, show maturity and confidence in response to the supportive and college-like atmosphere in the school. All students have the opportunity to meet with a tutor on a regular basis to review their progress and set targets for future work. They undertake these reviews seriously. The personal and professional development education lessons and formal and informal contacts with tutors help students to learn to make informed choices about personal issues.
13. The students are encouraged to develop good organisational skills and the ability to take responsibility for their own learning; for example, in art, dance and music. The work of the student council and the tutorial programme provide opportunities for the development of the students' social skills and decision-making. Students work extremely well with others, as when Year 12 students worked in groups on the theme of 'protest' during the lunchtime of the inspection week. They show initiative and work out how to tackle activities, for example,

organising tournaments for younger students. They readily use research materials, including the Internet. Their investigative skills are very well developed.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is very good, overall, particularly post-16. Students benefit from very good, occasionally excellent, teaching in their vocational areas and there are examples of very good teaching across the curriculum. Teaching was good at the time of the last inspection and is better now. The high standards in performing arts subjects reported at the last inspection have been maintained and teaching in other subjects is generally better.
15. The very good teaching and high motivation of students, who come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, enable them to learn very well, and gifted and talented students to do outstandingly well. They acquire good basic knowledge of their chosen vocational area as well as in National Curriculum subjects. They acquire the skills required, including perseverance and initiative, to achieve a successful performance. They work at a very good pace and make good use of their time. They learn to evaluate and accept constructive criticism about how to improve. Because relationships are excellent, students contribute well and are confident in their learning. Students are very ready to help each other and work co-operatively, as observed in a Year 10 music lesson, when a very competent violinist helped another student with the guitar.
16. Teachers draw very well on their subject knowledge and backgrounds. Their knowledge enables them to ask well-focused questions, as observed, for example, in media and in religious education. In performance areas, demonstration and specific questions help students to learn quickly, as observed when Year 11 were learning about modern jazz techniques (in dance) and about theatre as social commentary (in theatre). In English, teachers draw ably on their knowledge of literature to help students understand the main point of texts, as observed when Year 10 were studying *An Inspector Calls*. Teachers make very good, sustained use of French and German in modern foreign language lessons, which helps students to develop good accents and appreciate the foreign ambience.
17. Teachers' expectations are generally very high and students respond to them very well. In art and design, for example, teachers' enthusiasm and wide-ranging technical capability help students to incorporate many aspects of art and design in their work, as observed when Year 11 students used digital techniques in creating images in the style of Patrick Caulfield. Students' experience is less varied in design and technology. Year 10 students, for example, do not always engage with the tasks, some of which draw on a limited range of skills. On the other hand, challenging topics in sociology enable students to develop good understanding of social structures and societies. Topics covered contribute well to students' understanding of citizenship, and their evaluative skills.
18. Teachers use a good range of methods and approaches. Work is generally very well planned. In dance, music and theatre students develop individual and team skills by working together for projects, small and large-scale productions. In many topics, teachers draw on examples from a wide variety of ethnic and cultural contexts; this range is especially wide in music and dance. In technical aspects, students use excellent equipment to help them learn - as observed when Year 10 students, working on a radio project, used computer software to record their work. Year 10 students were also observed making very good progress in information and communication technology, creating a poster, and making use of publishing and digital imaging software. Lessons frequently start with recapitulation, to help students remember their earlier work, as observed in mathematics when Year 10 students learned about area and volume, and Year 11 students learned about graphs. Objectives are made clear at the start of some science lessons. This was seen when Year 10 students were learning about atomic structure, and Year 11 about the effect of heat on substances, but it is not always the case, which sometimes slows down students' learning. During lessons many teachers constantly assess students' competence and guide them to do better. Students also learn to evaluate their own work and that of others, as observed, for example, when Year 11 students were creating work for performance (in drama). This is a strong feature in performing arts subjects and helps students to do well, and some to reach very high standards, but in several subjects assessment in lessons or marking could be strengthened, as in science, mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education.
19. Time is excellently used in vocational courses so students learn to work effectively. Attitudes are sometimes more relaxed in physical education lessons, not helped by the erosion of time

because of travelling to games facilities at Crystal Palace. On the other hand, Year 10 students benefit from specialist instruction in activities such as sailing and learn very well. The very good use made of the well-resourced library helps students to gain research skills in many subjects. Homework is set in most subjects but practice is inconsistent and in some subjects homework consists of extended coursework; some students need help in planning this.

20. Teachers in subject areas are generally attentive to students' use of literacy and numeracy, although approaches are not consistent across the curriculum. English teachers set a good example, with lessons devoted to topics such as paragraphing, for example, and explanation of the use of apostrophes, but on occasion more emphasis could be placed on technical vocabulary in subjects. Good attention is paid to the use of language in sociology, as observed when accurate use of words helped Year 11 students understand the difference between socialisation and social control. No particular attention is paid to numeracy in mathematics, or in any other subject, but students cope with help from their teachers, as the need arises. Students' use of information and communication technology assists their learning and homework in many subjects. The systematic teaching of information technology in Year 10 enables them to use a good range of applications.
21. Students with special educational needs are supported well. They are taught almost entirely in lessons with other students. Learning is supported additionally through individual and small group lessons. The good range of provision, support staff and teachers' knowledge of individuals, help students to progress very well. Systematic planning by subject teachers to address students' individual education plans is not well developed.

Post-16

22. Teaching and learning post-16 are very good and strengths of the school. More very good teaching is evident than at the last inspection. Students at the start of Year 12 make rapid progress in performance subjects and related technologies. They work hard - many put in many hours above taught lessons - and acquire new skills which they practise and put into effect for productions and projects which are assessed. As they build on their skills, motivation and confidence are strengthened and they take significant responsibility for their own learning and collaboration with others. Over the course of Years 12 and 13 their knowledge and understanding are deepened through many links with professionals and activities in the performance industry. Relationships are excellent. Students learn in an adult environment. Their contributions are valued and respected and they are helped to do very well.
23. Teachers are very well qualified for the subjects they teach. Their understanding of course requirements and practical matters about performance deepen students' understanding. In a Year 12 dance lesson for boys, the students made very good progress in modern dance techniques, while consolidating their understanding of the physiology of warm-up sessions and the need for health and safety. Year 12 students in musical theatre made excellent progress in a lesson about conveying emotion in song through using imaginative exercises and drawing on participants' own contributions. The use of real-life context speeds learning, for example, of set designs, lighting and make-up techniques by production students (for *The Hired Man*, the production at the time of the inspection). Other vocational areas also have a keen performance edge. Expectations are high; students respond well and expect highly of themselves; gifted and talented students achieve exceptionally well. In theatre, for example, Year 13 students were helped to see what they could make of scenes from a project, *Finally we are no one*, by incisive intervention by the teacher. Lunch box theatre (five minute monologues by Year 13) and Political Protest Day (Year 12 drama in groups) plunged students into realistic performance situations, resulted in very good learning and provided students with direct audience reaction. The only classes in which students were not well motivated were for students re-sitting GCSE mathematics; lack of interest was affecting the progress of many.
24. Teachers' subject knowledge enables them to ask searching questions, for example, about characterisation, as observed in an English lesson as *Edward II* with Year 13; about polynomials in a mathematics lesson for Years 12 and 13; and about deprivation and privation in a Year 12 psychology lesson. Very good knowledge, which spans course requirements and the management of the entertainment industry, brings the arts management course alive and enables

the teacher to give clear explanations of matters such as copyright. Especially in performing arts and related technologies, teachers draw very effectively on the richness of students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds and of local communities. A topic in dance, for example, has benefited from displays by an Indian dancer: styles are well represented in Year 13 performances for assessment.

25. Homework is well used overall and includes practising performance as well as written work, some of which, as coursework, lasts several weeks. Marking is regular on the whole but sometimes not frequent or detailed enough, as in mathematics, French and production. In lessons, teachers help students to improve by asking thoughtful, astute questions: this is an excellent feature in performing arts subjects and students benefit by learning how to evaluate their own progress. Self-evaluation is an area for development in art and design. In dance, more use could be made of students' own evaluations in setting targets for further improvement.
26. Post-16 lessons are well planned and organised. Change in activities keeps the momentum going in some (for example, history). The community sports leaders award is well planned by physical education teachers, so students learn how to organise and evaluate sports activities. Detailed, rigorous planning in art and design enables students to make very good progress in learning techniques (for example, photography) and to appreciate a wide range of applications and styles (as in a Year 13 lesson observed on still-life drawing and paintings). Good choice of lesson topics engages students' interest in French; in a Year 12 lesson observed, they made very good progress in discussion of the film *Amélie*. Discussion is well used to promote understanding, for example, in science, as when Year 12 students developed their understanding of autism through class discussion. In psychology, students' skills of oral analysis develop well through the teacher's good use of questioning. In history, debate among groups of students (mostly Year 12 with some Year 13) on the motion of *Churchill - saviour of the nation?* enabled them to make very good progress in historical analysis and argument.
27. Communication, numeracy and information and communication technology are well taught as part of the vocational courses. As lower down the school, there is no co-ordinated approach to teaching key skills, so inconsistencies occur. Students' progress in physical education would be strengthened by further emphasis in lessons on the use of technical language and in psychology, for example, students need help with their written work. The use of information and communication technology for presentation assists many students, including those with dyslexia and other special educational needs. Teachers adapt work in lessons for those with difficulties and they progress very well on the whole, in line with all students.
28. Teachers make excellent use of extremely good resources in art and design, media, production, musical theatre, theatre, dance and music. The excellence of resources is both in traditional resources (for example, musical instruments) and also in information and communication technology. This variety is used in many lessons, especially in performance and related technologies. Technicians give excellent support to teaching, for example in production and in media. The value to students of the technology and technical support is that they enhance their creativity, competence and their awareness of the breadth of the performance industry.

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

29. The quality and range of the curriculum are very good. It serves the purpose of the school and the aspirations of students very well. The curriculum overall has changed little since the last inspection, when it provided full access to the required subjects of the National Curriculum and allowed students to specialise in aspects of the performing arts. The time allocated each week, 27 hours, is above the minimum recommended. The five-term year supports students' learning very well. Students choose a 'strand' from dance, music, theatre, media and art and these can be studied for GNVQ intermediate or GCSE awards. They study National Curriculum subjects including French or German and can choose a minor option from arts subjects and physical education. Although the curriculum was broad and balanced there were reservations at the last inspection about some aspects of curricular provision in modern foreign languages, physical education and information and communication technology. These difficulties have been

overcome. Languages receive sufficient time and physical education, although presenting a narrow curriculum, meets requirements and makes the best out of limited facilities. All students have access to information and communication technology as the result of the introduction of a one-year short course in Year 10. Where the curriculum does not meet requirements is in provision of religious education. Not enough time is allowed for requirements to be met. The focus of provision in design and technology is to support GN/VQ performing arts. This role is appropriate in the context of the school, but there are overlaps with other subjects and schemes of work could helpfully be reviewed.

30. In performing arts subjects the curriculum is a strength: a very wide range of activity is provided in dance: jazz, choreography, tap, modern, musical theatre, improvisation and body maintenance are just a few of the topics studied. In sociology, the curriculum is broad and balanced and benefits from extensive extra-curricular and community links. It is a favourite subject of some students in Year 11. However, provision in mathematics and science, while satisfactory, is weak in some aspects: they include few extra-curricular activities or links beyond the school. In mathematics, a change in syllabus has contributed to improved results. In science, students' scope is limited because only single-award science is offered in Year 10 owing to other pressures on the timetable.
31. While attention is paid to literacy in English and some other subjects, little consistent emphasis is placed on literacy across the curriculum. Inspectors noted some weaknesses in students' use of vocabulary and written work. The school is aware of this shortcoming and staff development is planned, early in 2003. Students, with the help of subject teachers, cope with the mathematical demands of their courses. However, no systematic attention has been paid to numeracy across the curriculum and students do not receive practice in subject areas which would strengthen their progress in mathematics. Arrangements to support students' information and technology skills have improved greatly with the introduction of a short course GCSE for all. Additionally, the open access information and communication technology area is available - and used by students - for about 12 hours each day.
32. Extra-curricular provision is a strength: so much extra-curricular activity is offered in performing arts subjects that it is difficult to mark a boundary between curricular and extra-curricular work in the extended working day. Visits, performances and workshops enhance the curriculum in dance, music and theatre. Students learn a wide range of skills by participating in productions at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Fairfield Halls and Crystal Palace. Visits and visitors range from individual artists to organisations such as the police, who make a significant contribution in sociology. Most subjects offer clubs, such as astronomy GCSE offered at lunchtime by the science department and extra 'catch-up' sessions. Students greatly appreciate the amount of time teachers give in helping individual students to improve. Very good as it is, extra-curricular provision is lacking in some areas. Few activities are provided by mathematics, and for sports. No foreign visits are arranged to help students to improve their competence in German. The school has very strong links with the local community. BRIT students run productions in local primary and special schools and the nearby pupil referral unit. Year 10 are scheduled to perform for Croydon schools in March 2003.
33. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. They are fully integrated into all aspects of the school's life. Teachers and support assistants adapt work in lessons to meet the needs of individuals. Departments are provided with information on students' abilities but the extent of their planning to match them is very varied. This is good in music and in information and communication technology and assisted in several subjects by broad grouping of students by ability (for example, in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages). Planned individual and small group lessons are provided for some students. Additional support is provided from outside agencies to meet specific needs, for example, hearing or vision impairment. The learning resource centre, as well as being a teaching room, is used and appreciated by students as a quiet place to study.
34. All students have access to what the school offers. The application and interview system helps each student to find the most suitable course. Personal and professional development lessons provide an organised programme of personal, social and health education and cover requirements for sex and health education and drugs awareness. Sociology lessons provide a very good basis for citizenship education, which is strengthened through many opportunities to consider

relationships and responsibilities in subjects, including dance and theatre. Careers education is well structured. A programme of work based learning takes place at the end of Year 10 and is supported by materials supplied by the careers officer, who also interviews all students.

Post-16

35. Overall, the post-16 curriculum is very good. It is exceptionally well focused on preparing students for higher education and careers related to the performance industries. In one respect, however, statutory requirements are not met. Religious education is not provided.
36. The outstanding strength is the match and organisation of the curriculum to help students to progress in their chosen fields. The selection process for Year 11 students (both BRIT students and those from other schools) is well planned to help teachers to judge students' potential strengths. The school fulfils a regional need. Nearly all Year 11 students progress into Year 12 and they are joined by about twice their number, mostly from schools in Greater London. Each of the main vocational areas offers breadth within its programme of study. In dance, for example, a range of dance techniques (including jazz, classical ballet and tap) is covered, together with body maintenance, choreography and other subjects, some related to business studies and rehearsal. Much collaboration occurs across the areas. In staged productions, for example, theatre, dance and music students may work with production students and draw on aspects of arts management in costing the show. The combination of breadth of experience with specialist provision in aspects which build on students' strengths provides an excellent basis for progression. The organisation of the year into five terms supports learning and assessment arrangements for the unit-structured courses. The extended day provides very good opportunities for students to practise or work on their own or in small groups. Students regularly make use of facilities both before and after school, until about 6.30 pm.
37. Alongside their vocational courses, many students take AS-level subjects, which add breadth and strengthen applications for higher education. The school is responsive to students' wishes and needs. In a few subjects, A2-level courses are run, depending upon numbers. Key skills are well covered because they are integral to vocational courses, although the demands placed on students for communication (written and spoken, use of numbers and information and communication technology) varies greatly across subject areas. For example, most students make regular use of information and communication technology - frequently for word-processing and accessing information. Some students use sophisticated techniques for image-manipulation, controlling sound and music. Few make use of spreadsheets and data analysis. No monitoring has taken place of students' experience and competence in key skills across the post-16 courses. Provision of personal, social and health education, known in the school as personal and professional development, is satisfactory. Requirements are met in provision of health and sex education and drugs awareness. The careers programme is very good. In part this is covered in personal and professional development, with attention given to making choices and applications to higher education. Students also benefit greatly from curricular links in their vocational courses with professional organisations, the dance, media, theatre and music industries and backgrounds of their teachers.
38. An outstanding strength of the post-16 curriculum is the breadth and richness of activities outside lessons. Many are within the school, with the foyer performances and productions being paramount, most of which are used for formal assessment and contribute to students' success on their courses. However, the team work engendered and celebratory style surrounding the events are captivating and add much to the personal and professional development of students directly involved and their audience. Industry links are excellent. Students benefit from master classes (in musical theatre), workshops with actors, directors and producers from companies as varied as the Royal Shakespeare Company to Frantic Assembly (in theatre) and from staging their own productions in prestigious venues such as the Fairfield Halls, Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Cartoon Club, Croydon (for music). Students have also benefited greatly from community activities. They have had opportunity to paint wall murals for a neighbouring early years centre; help students, some with special educational needs, in local schools; some participate in Saturday morning (BRIT kids) classes with local young people. Annually, at the end of term 5, a week-long festival enables students to work on projects, both within and beyond the main vocational area. In 2002, to celebrate its first ten years, the festival was particularly active, and for

friends, ex-students, and the neighbourhood provided cutting-edge theatre, dance broadcasts on their own radio station (BRIT-FM) and a live music stage.

Personal development

39. Provision for students' personal development in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 is excellent. Social and cultural development are outstandingly strong. The school has created a culture in which personal initiative and social responsibility are prized and rewarded. Post-16 students take considerable responsibility and assist with younger students, for example, in dance. The school fosters the skills of presentation and performance through practical work and constant attention to technique. Opportunities occur across the whole curriculum for students to develop collaborative skills by working in pairs or groups, often in mixed aged groups. Vocational courses by their nature require students to develop initiative and responsibility. Students experience democratic participation by electing councils to represent them. Representatives use form time to consult with their tutor groups. A major innovation since the last inspection is the introduction of sociology to meet the requirements of citizenship. Sociology is very popular with students because the GCSE course is a very good introduction to the study of society. It gives students a systematic conceptual approach to what they explore more subjectively in other subjects. This development since the last inspection has raised very good provision to the standard of excellence.
40. Provision for students' cultural development is excellent. The school is a resource of ethnic and cultural diversity in itself and the life of the school reflects and enriches students' experience. Countless opportunities exist to take part in performances, from major shows to small fringe theatre productions. In the summer the school holds a festival week of events and celebrations. Assembly is an opportunity for students to share their diversity of heritage and culture. In English students enjoy literature from a wide range of cultures and poetry by both men and women. Post-16 dance covers not only traditions as different as African Caribbean and Indian but also the contemporary British repertoire. Art and music offer a very wide range of approaches including use of the latest electronic techniques. Links with the local community and other schools add social and cultural enrichment. The only gap is that the school does not give enough time for students to continue learning about Christianity and the impact of religion in different social and cultural traditions.
41. Provision for spiritual development is very good. The school's distinctive curriculum with its emphasis on the performing arts allows students to identify and explore what inspires them. In each strand of the performing arts the school promotes individual talents within a community of mutual support. The school exists to give its students the opportunity to understand and communicate human feelings. Teachers show students how to reflect on and present human experience and how to evaluate critically each other's performance. Students are taught to exercise critical judgement with a spirit of generosity. Assemblies are valuable occasions for raising awareness of culture and history. The school has no arrangements for students to experience collective worship daily and no plans to introduce it. The omission of religious education in Year 10 and the shortage of time in Year 11 deprive students of the opportunity to reflect on issues from an informed religious point of view.
42. Provision for students' moral development is very good. The Student Agreement promotes the very highest standards of behaviour. Staff provide very good role models. Opportunities to take responsibility occur throughout the daily life of the school and through participation in the community. The Political Protest Day held by students in Year 12 drew attention to such contemporary issues as adultery, prostitution and AIDS. In science, students consider the ethical dimensions of inherited disease, environmental pollution and non-renewable resources. The rights and wrongs of life feature in many lessons and help students to a mature sense of morality. In dance, for example, students have to learn sensitivity to each other as a necessary condition for successful choreography. The programme of personal and professional development includes topics that develop moral sensitivity and sociology in Years 10 and 11 offers a structured, conceptual approach.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

43. The care the school provides for students' welfare, health and safety is good. The environment for learning is secure and supportive, as at the time of the last inspection.
44. The school makes good provision for students new to the school and those joining in Year 10 have the opportunity of attending a two-day induction. The school's pastoral system is effective in ensuring students' well-being in school. Tutors regularly review students' personal development. Individual students giving cause for concern are discussed at regular pastoral meetings and pastoral targets revised if necessary. All members of staff know and understand the needs of students well and respond sensitively to them. Student services, centrally placed in the main building, provide a focus for the students seeking help, support and guidance. Students are well informed about choices, through support provided in the personal and professional development programme. This is augmented through work placements and the many opportunities to work in a professional context, in the vocational courses. Parents feel that the school helps their children in becoming mature and responsible.
45. Child protection procedures are in place; the vice-principal as the nominated person keeps others informed about the issues. Training is arranged for appropriate numbers of staff in first aid and the school nurse attends regularly. Accidents to students and staff are properly recorded. Health and safety practice is generally good. The site manager is knowledgeable and ensures that the premises, including the specialised accommodation and equipment, meet health and safety requirements and teachers and students are aware of them. The health and safety hazards pointed out by the last inspection are now rectified. Some minor hazards were noted during this inspection and the school has been informed about them.
46. The school's attendance officer takes a close interest in ensuring that attendance is recorded accurately and that registers are kept in accordance with statutory requirements. Absences are promptly detected and effectively followed. All registration requirements are now met and the school obtains good attendance in Years 10 and 11. Discipline expectations are made clear through the student agreements and students are mature enough to fulfil them. The atmosphere of respect and courtesy in the school very successfully promotes good behaviour and manners. Opportunities for students' social development and understanding of others are excellent; as a result, anti-social behaviour is not a feature of the school.

Assessment

47. This aspect of the school's work, identified as a key issue for action by the last inspection, has improved. The monitoring of students' academic performance is generally good. The school makes use of nationally standardised tests for monitoring students' overall progress and they are given minimum target grades in each of their subjects. Students' previous, current and projected standards are recorded on a spreadsheet. This information is kept centrally and shared with heads of subjects. Teachers use this information, together with marks given by teachers, to set subject targets at the assessment days, which are held for students and their parents. Data collected are then used to monitor students' performance. Practice in subjects, however, varies. The assessment of students' work and monitoring of progress are good or very good in many curriculum areas: for example, they are good in art and design and in sociology, and very good in English, dance and music, where assessment is used as a valuable tool for improvement. Arrangements are satisfactory in mathematics and science, but in both these subjects marking could be better used to set targets for improvement. Assessment is integral in vocational courses and is good, because students have a clear understanding of how they are achieving and what they should do to improve. Public examination and assessment results are analysed but the school does not analyse attainment by different groups of students, including those of minority ethnic backgrounds. The use of assessment information to plan the next stage of students' learning is a strength in vocational areas, where activities are modified and planned to help students to progress. In other subjects practice varies, and in art, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education assessments are not linked clearly enough to course requirements and understood by students.

48. The assessment of students' special educational needs is thorough. Information about their attainment on entry is well used to track progress, which is regularly and correctly reviewed. The school meets requirements for provision, as outlined in students' statements of special educational need.

Post-16

Assessment

49. The effectiveness of the school's use of assessment data to monitor the performance of students is generally good. Assessment criteria for assignments and other coursework are clear. Teachers regularly assess work and monitor progress. However practice, lower down the school, varies. For example, assessment procedures are good in English, dance and music and provide clear guidance to students on their strengths, but they are unsatisfactory in science where students do not have a clear idea of their progress. Some parents at their meeting with inspectors were puzzled about assessment post-16. The students interviewed were well satisfied with the marking of their work and the advice they are offered on how they might further improve but felt that their work is not always checked promptly. Assessment week helps in identifying problems and students' individual needs, setting targets for improvement and monitoring individual performances against target grades. The assessment based on performance events is very good. The school's procedures for assessing work in vocational areas meet the requirements of awarding bodies. Reports from external verifiers are analysed and an action plan is agreed covering the findings of reports, in order to improve practice.

Advice, support and guidance

50. Information and guidance for students about their courses is good. The prospectus and other publicity material are well presented. They give prospective students clear information about the school and the subjects on offer. Potential students are able to attend open days, which they find helpful in deciding whether to pursue their applications. The admissions process is effective. The induction programme helps students to settle into their courses quickly. Teachers and other staff are supportive and friendly towards students in the school which has the feel of a junior college. Guidance and advice on applying to higher education are helpful and a good proportion of students progress to higher education. Tutors, on courses in performing arts and related technologies, many with professional backgrounds, give useful advice to students who want to use their performance skills and enter the relevant industry. Feedback on students' progress to parents is good. Support for students with specific educational needs is good.
51. Students are allocated a personal tutor from their main vocational area. They receive good guidance and support from their tutors and use them as the first point of contact when problems or difficulties arise. Students also seek help and guidance from student services staff, who provide advice on a wide range of issues, including information on boarding facilities in the area, and access to other specialist support, if necessary.
52. The procedures in Years 12 and 13 for registering students' presence in the school are unsatisfactory. Registration is carried out in lessons and this makes it difficult to ascertain overall levels of students' attendance. The trial use of an electronics system is yielding more reliable information about who is in the school and where.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. Partnership with parents, sound at the time of the last inspection, is now good. Parents have favourable views about the school and what it achieves. They feel that the school builds very well on individual talent and that their sons and daughters like school, where their personalities are well developed, they are expected to work hard, taught well and make good progress. The inspection evidence supports these views. Some parents would like to see improvement in the challenge and progress in non-performance subjects and clearer information on homework. Inspectors found that work is generally challenging and that students progress very well on the

whole, but acknowledge that the very high standards in performance subjects are not found throughout and could be stronger in, for example, mathematics, modern foreign languages and religious education. Inspectors found many students to be working extensively after lessons, often engaged in practical activities, using computers or the library. Written homework, however, is much more variable in quantity and quality.

54. The quality of information that parents receive from the school is good. Parents receive both formal and informal information, such as the prospectus, the governors' annual report and letters. The prospectus omits information about arrangements for worship, required by legislation. The progress reports on individual students keep parents well informed about what their children are doing, how well they are doing and how they are supported at the school. Parents have opportunities to discuss their children's progress at consultation evenings. Parents of students with special educational needs are invited to reviews. All these initiatives to reach out to parents enable parents to influence their children's learning well.
55. Many parents are knowledgeable on matters about performing arts and related technologies. They support their children's learning by motivating them and valuing the provisions at the school. The school can rely on parents' co-operation in addressing any concerns about their children's performance. Parents' attendance at consultation and curriculum meetings is good, although their day-to-day involvement in the life of the school is low, because many parents are not from the local area. However, the parent teacher association is well supported. Overall impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good.
56. In many respects post-16 students have more favourable views about the school. They acknowledge excellent opportunities for their personal development and talk very positively about the school and their experience. The great majority think that they are well informed about course options and that they are given the right kind of help and advice to settle into the sixth form. They find that staff are very supportive and specialist teaching is helpful. However, some concern was expressed in the questionnaire about the information regarding the progress that they are making towards their qualifications and the advice they receive about their futures. These points were discussed with students: they were happy with the guidance for the next stage of their education and their futures but regarding information about progress they felt that teachers do not always meet the deadlines in marking their work.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

57. The school is very well led and managed. Its main purpose - to provide education and career opportunities for young people in creative industries - is fully reflected in its work. Students respond very well to the opportunities the school provides and are successful in the courses of their choice. The school has made very good progress since its last inspection in 1996. Improvement in GCSE results has been marked and post-16 results are better. Teaching is now very good overall: in the last inspection it was good. The school is very good at helping students to make the most of themselves and the talents they have. Equality of opportunity and racial harmony are very strongly and effectively promoted. The racial equality policy was being finalised at the time of the inspection, after thorough consultation. Substantial progress has been made in most of the key issues of the last report. Two aspects of the school, which were weaknesses at the time of the last inspection, remain weak now: the school does not meet the statutory requirements either for the provision of religious education or for daily worship.
58. Most aspects of leadership and management are strengths. The governing body has been pioneering in establishing the school, and use their very considerable knowledge and influence of the performing arts and related technologies to foster links and enrich its provision. They are reflective about its role and evaluate developments in relation to the overall purpose of the school. Through visits to departments and attending school events they are very well informed about its work. They monitor expenditure and the work of the school critically and have high expectations of its results and performance. The British Record Industry, at the time of the inception of the

school, established The BRIT Trust, which through donations benefits young people generally, including The BRIT School. The Annual BRIT Awards, while independent of the school, generate support for the Trust and the school. Through governors, and the links they have fostered, students have singularly good opportunities to be part of highly prestigious events, participating, for example, in the Music Industry Trust annual dinner, Carlton TV's Child Prodigies and LWT's pilot for Ant and Dec's new show.

59. Leadership in the school provides extremely clear overall direction. Much of this is due to the principal and senior staff who manage the interface between professional expectations and the school's provision excellently. This is illustrated in the daily life of the school - for example, the box office reception, the (almost daily) foyer events and the high quality equipment used in subject areas. Leadership and management in the main vocational areas are strong, promoting excellent teamwork and high standards. The current principal took up his appointment in January 2002. Since his arrival several aspects of managing the work of the school, for example, subject planning, assessment and cross-curricular links, have been strengthened through initiatives and working parties to build on good practice. Relationships with students are excellent: they are encouraged to be part of the professional team. The sense of shared commitment to the aims of the school among governors, staff and students is extremely strong.
60. Very good systems are in place for planning for improvements; these have been made more systematic since the arrival of the new principal. Overall priorities for development are properly identified and costed within the school's financial planning cycle. Planning in subjects is newly established in some areas, but strongly led for the main vocational courses. In several subjects, heads of department are acting in a temporary capacity but the day-to-day arrangements work smoothly and senior managers are assiduous in providing support. Co-ordination of support for students with special educational needs is very capable and organised; legal requirements are met. The regular cycle of afternoon meetings involves all staff in planning for school improvement. Performance management arrangements are very good. Review of the school improvement plan over the three-year planning cycle shows that very good progress has been made in main priority areas. For example, provision for core subjects (English, mathematics and science) has been strengthened, assessment systems introduced and attention focused on raising the attainment of middle-ability students at GCSE: these factors have contributed to the rapid improvement in results. Systematic arrangements are in place for the monitoring of teaching. These are augmented in the main vocational areas by frequent team-teaching. Arrangements for staff development are good. Specialists are invited into the school to help staff with particular aspects of their work. A constant dynamic between professional aspirations and the taught curriculum, maintained through the school's many professional links, creates an open-mindedness and flexibility of approach in vocational areas which is unusually good. Staff new to the school, and those who join the school from professional backgrounds, are very well supported.
61. Little emphasis has been placed on co-ordinating literacy across the curriculum and none on numeracy. In the last sixth months an effective working party has devised activities that will improve students' literacy. These include a day of international story-telling, and an assembly designed to explain how oral traditions are passed on from Africa to the Caribbean and thence to America and England. The school has also decided in the last year to give weaker students in Year 11 an extra lesson each week devoted solely to literacy. Groups are small and the impact considerable. But there has so far been no staff training to put in place a consistent approach to literacy in all subjects, although this is planned.
62. Financial planning is excellent. Over the last few years priorities have been well supported. The BRIT Trust has supported capital projects - for example, the new sound system in the Obie Theatre and provision of computers in the open-access area (which is extremely well used by students). Funding for special education needs is effectively used. The school has a keen sense of best value. For example, contracts are carefully negotiated and the site manager and his staff contribute well to small improvements (for example, the provision of barres in dance studios) and routine maintenance. Management information systems are very effectively used, overall. The school is considering improvement in the post-16 registration arrangements, through use of an electronics system to provide better monitoring information. The amount of money coming into the school is determined by the formula and is the same as for other schools of a similar size and

age range. Bearing in mind the very good quality provision and very good progress made by students, the school gives very good value for money.

Resources: Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

63. The school is very well and appropriately staffed. Many teachers in vocational areas have professional experience and, together with curricular links with performing arts industries and community groups, they give a strong professional edge to the work of the school. Team work at the school is strong and support staff play a very positive role - for example, helping students with special educational needs, in technical support, the library, students' services, managing the site, administration and financial management. Pressure on services is heavy at times, for example, technical support.
64. The quality of resources and accommodation differs between areas of the curriculum. Accommodation is generally good. There are excellent dance studios, production rooms, performance areas and computer suites and very good recording studios. In contrast with this positive picture which boosts attainment, the technology suite is only satisfactory, one science laboratory is not fully equipped and the old gymnasium is not adequate to teach the physical education curriculum. Some rooms in musical theatre are over-resonant. Religious education has no permanent base. The specialised accommodation is very effectively used and is of particular significance in the sixth form courses. Pressure on space is high in some areas, for example, in music and art. Displays are purposeful and project the performance nature of the school well. The site manager and the maintenance staff are vigilant and keep buildings safe and clean. The school is working on developing an outdoor area for performance as well as a quiet study space for post-16 students in the recently renovated East Wing.
65. The school has invested substantially in learning resources: overall, they are very good and specialist equipment is excellent. Books and computers are generally sufficient to support students' learning. The learning resources centre, well managed by professionally qualified librarians, is a very good resource that helps teaching and learning. It contains a variety of resources, including information and communication technology, audio-visual materials, books and periodicals; the stock of pre-recorded compact discs is impressive. The school has invested well in computers for students, teachers and support staff. Students use good up-to-date machines, many of which provide access to the Internet; post-16 students use them consistently and productively. The staff have access to a number of machines, giving access to the school's Intranet and facilities for sending and receiving e-mail. While little use has been made of computers in design and technology, mathematics and modern foreign languages, the school has plans to expand resources for these subjects. Demand for computers is high. Specialised equipment, some of which is of commercial quality, is excellent, especially in the areas of art, music, audio-visual recording and editing, and production, and boosts students' learning substantially. The use of the community to support the curriculum and learning is extremely well developed.

Post-16

66. Post-16 provision is very well led and managed overall. It is the major part of the school. Inspection evidence is that judgements which apply to the school overall apply equally to provision for post-16 students.
67. Overall leadership and direction are excellent. High standards are maintained and the school is successful in its main aim: preparing young people for higher education and careers in performance industries. Governors are keenly interested and involved in the work of The BRIT School - and maintain their interest in the progression and futures of ex-students. As in Years 10 and 11, however, the school does not meet statutory requirements for provision of religious education and a daily act of collective worship.
68. The progress, results and success of post-16 students are closely monitored, by governors, senior staff and directors of the main vocational areas. Additionally, personal commitment by teachers to the progress of individuals helps students, who are very highly motivated, to make the most of themselves. The school is keen to improve further. The principal has strengthened the

management of post-16 pastoral care, to ensure more consistent approaches across vocational areas. Inspection evidence is that pastoral support is good.

69. Planning for improvement and finance for post-16 education are very capably managed, as for the whole school. The school has a very good sense of best value in planning its provision. Teaching costs are securely within the budget allocation. Post-16 students gain great benefit from using the excellent technical facilities and support in many areas; many take opportunities to use the school facilities until the early evening.
70. Post-16 provision gives very good value for money, bearing in mind the amount of money coming into the school, students' achievements which are well above average and their attainment on entry, which is broadly average. Post-16 students contribute hugely to the very positive ethos of the school through their example, participation and initiative - illustrated, for example, in their frequent foyer performances.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

71. *To raise further the standards of work, attainment and progress of students, the governors, principal, senior leadership and staff should:*
- (1) improve teaching and students' progress in mathematics, design and technology and modern foreign languages by:
 - strengthening the scheme of work and the quality and consistency of marking of students' work in mathematics (paragraphs 18, 47, 84, 85, 158 and 159);
 - improving curricular planning and providing more challenging tasks in design and technology (paragraphs 17 and 111);
 - extending the range of teaching methods and use of assessment in modern foreign languages (paragraphs 18, 47, 128 and 129).
 -
 - (2) provide more time for religious education in order to ensure continuity of learning throughout and full coverage of the syllabus (paragraphs 29, 57 and 144).

Post-16

- (1) change the registration procedures so that students' attendance is properly accounted for and monitored (paragraphs 11 and 52).
72. In addition to the preceding areas for improvement, the following less significant weaknesses need attention: monitoring and marking of homework (paragraphs 18 and 19); use of students' individual education plans in subjects (paragraphs 21 and 33); monitoring of results by ethnicity (paragraph 6); co-ordination of support for literacy and numeracy across the curriculum (paragraphs 20, 27 and 31); deployment of technical support (paragraph 181); provision for collective worship (paragraphs 41, 57 and 67). Accommodation needs improvement or review in subjects including science, design and technology, musical theatre, physical education and religious education, and pressure on space is high in music and art (paragraph 64).
73. Improvement in mathematics, design and technology and modern foreign languages was included within a key issue of the last report. Religious education was not a weakness at that time because it was taught within humanities.
74. The school is well aware of its strengths and areas for improvement. Plans include improvement of mathematics and modern foreign languages, of accommodation for design and technology and registration of post-16 students. Working parties established recently are addressing several of the less significant weaknesses.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 10 – 11	90
	Post-16	101
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		70

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 10 – 11							
Number	4	20	38	27	1	0	0
Percentage	4	22	42	30	1	0	0
Post-16							
Number	9	56	30	6	0	0	0
Percentage	9	55	30	6	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y10 – Y11	Post-16
Number of students on the school's roll	253	572
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	39	85

Special educational needs	Y10 – Y11	Post-16
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	1	6
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	17	44

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	17

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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 4 (Year 11)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002 (01)	26 (35)	76 (85)	102 (120)

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	26 (21)	25 (32)	26 (34)
	Girls	66 (43)	72 (81)	76 (83)
	Total	91 (64)	97 (113)	102 (117)
Percentage of students achieving the standards specified	School	89 (53)	95 (94)	100 (98)
	National	(48)	(91)	(96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	57.0 (40.0)
	National	(39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	101 (29)	99 (86)
	National		(n/a)

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
363	2	0
6	0	0
27	0	0
35	0	0
7	0	0
7	0	0
23	1	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
59	1	0
22	0	0
10	0	0
9	0	0
13	0	0
241	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y10 – Y14

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	41.9
Number of students per qualified teacher	20

Education support staff: Y10 – Y14

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	537

Deployment of teachers: Y10 – Y14

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.1
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Average teaching group size: Y10 – Y14

Key Stage 4	19
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
	£
Total income	3,819,929
Total expenditure	3,772,973
Expenditure per student	4831
Balance brought forward from previous year	114,342
Balance carried forward to next year	161,298

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	15.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	825
Number of questionnaires returned	119

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	22	1	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	58	32	3	1	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	39	2	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	37	11	5	11
The teaching is good.	51	42	1	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	40	9	3	11
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	34	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	24	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	42	42	10	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	51	36	3	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	37	0	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	30	7	0	24

Other issues raised by parents

Nineteen parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector. They were well pleased with the school, what it offers and achieves. They said that it provides an exciting environment, in which talent is valued and well used.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGE 4

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve very well: GCSE results are well above average.
- Teaching is consistently good and assessment is very well used.
- Teachers show great commitment to their students' success.
- Very good extra-curricular activities broaden students' experience and understanding.
- Team work and leadership are strong.

Areas for improvement

- The opportunities provided for students to work independently.
- Expectations of standards of speaking.
- Proportion entered for GCSE literature so that more students have opportunity to gain this certification.

75. Attainment in English on entry is at the national expectation. Progress is very good in the next two years, so that GCSE results in English language are well above the national average. Until recently few students were entered for literature and even in 2002 only two-thirds took the examination, but of those who did all but one obtained grades A*-C: results were high. Girls tend to perform better than boys but no more so than they do nationally. Within the school these results are better than those for mathematics and science. Students with special education needs make good progress, as do those who are talented. Those who speak English in addition to their home language are fully fluent and make the same progress as everybody else.
76. Standards observed in lessons and in work seen are broadly in line with these results. All students show very positive attitudes to the subject. They work well individually and in groups. The ablest students write accurately, with a good understanding of paragraphing, punctuation and sentence construction. Less able students are now given an extra lesson each week to improve basic literacy. All students know well the texts to be studied in literature. Their criticism is perceptive. Particularly impressive was the way in which a less able Year 11 group, working in pairs, improvised the conversation in which Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth to commit murder. They grasped and portrayed the emotions of the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to a high standard. All classrooms display the poetry that students write for themselves, using language that is sensitive and fresh. However, essays would be even better if students had more practice. With that would come greater fluency and awareness of how to develop an argument.
77. How well students speak is related to the context. As in the improvisation of a scene from *Macbeth* they show they can speak well, and in several lessons students made acute comments on what they had heard. But in presentations to the class they tended to read from a script rather than speak from the heart. In one debate the ablest students made good use of facts, but only spoke passionately when they discarded their notes. Overall, standards of speaking are no more than average. Although individually articulate and voluble in small groups, in whole-class discussion they do not speak clearly or listen very attentively to each other. Virtually all students read modern English fluently. They have no problem in coping with the texts they study and they benefit from practice in reading Shakespeare aloud. They read for pleasure, although few students borrow books from the school library.
78. Teaching is consistently good and as a result students learn rapidly and make very good progress. Teachers have good knowledge of the texts and National Curriculum requirements. They prepare thoroughly and mark conscientiously. Students warmly appreciate teachers' willingness to give advice and support. Teachers make good use of assessment data, giving students challenging targets. They explain things clearly. They inject variety, particularly in lessons that last for an hour and a half. They expect students to draft and re-draft their work, using computers effectively for this. A mentoring scheme supports those who are achieving less

than they could. Relations with students are very good. In the best lessons there is very good use of group work, prompting students to explore ideas for themselves. However, some teachers could be even more effective if they were more imaginative about the tasks they set and provided more opportunities for individual or collaborative work. There is no doubt that students are learning much from what their teachers tell them. They know their own strengths and weaknesses. But they could fruitfully be more independent.

79. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. This is shown most dramatically in examination results, which had been below the national average, but are now well above. This progress has been achieved partly by giving more time to the teaching, but chiefly by the team work of a very well led department. Teachers support each other, share their good ideas and ensure they have a common view of standards. They organise many out of school activities and in every way show they are committed to their students' success.

Literacy

80. Standards of literacy overall are good, but the school's strategies for ensuring consistent standards across the whole curriculum are in need of further development. Literacy is developed as part of the work in English. The inspection revealed some very good work in many areas, but weaknesses in others. No attention has been given to literacy in mathematics. Most teachers in all departments expect students to write at length and re-draft their work and many students use information and communication technology to improve the presentation of their work. Good focus is placed on written work in sociology and drama. Written work in science is generally good. However, it is not developed well enough in media studies (especially in the folders of lower ability students) or in art. Most teachers correct spelling mistakes and explain the meaning of technical terms. In science and in dance, however, students lack confidence in the use of technical terms because they are neither explained nor used consistently well by their teachers. The library is very well equipped, and well used. Students generally speak well. They are naturally articulate and most teachers give plenty of opportunity in all subjects for this skill to be used. In modern foreign languages, however, few opportunities are provided for students to practise French and German in spontaneous discussion and in physical education students do not have enough opportunities to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their work through evaluation. The more formal aspects of speaking and listening are not so well developed, as was observed in some debates and presentations, and occasionally in drama.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- GCSE results have improved markedly in recent years.
- Teaching is good overall.
- Students work well with their teachers and each other.

Areas for improvement

- The quality and consistency of marking of students' work, using an agreed system so that students know how to improve.
- Development of schemes of work to systematically improve the key skills of numeracy, literacy and information technology.

81. The GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2002 show a marked improvement on results in previous years. Although results at the higher grades (A*-C) remain below the average when compared with all schools nationally, they are in line with the average relative to similar schools. Results across the full range of grades (A*-G) in 2002, broke the pattern of earlier years, when they were in line with national average, and dipped a little because a significant number of students were absent from the examination. Relatively few students are entered for the higher tier examination and this limits the number who can gain the highest grades (A*-B). Students do not do as well in their mathematics examinations as in English or science.

82. Standards in lessons and in the work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 were broadly in line with national expectations; students were progressing well. Year 11 students are in line to achieve average standards at the end of the year. The more able students attain above the national expectation; for example, they develop satisfactory algebraic skills that enable them to solve quadratic equations effectively by factorising and using formulae. They are less confident when using substitution methods to solve simultaneous equations. Average attaining students use coordinates, including negative numbers, to construct tables of values and determine the graphs of equations. They use fractions and decimals competently and calculate averages, for example, mean, mode and median. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress; teachers are understanding and sympathetic to their needs. For example, in a Year 11 class of low ability students including students identified as having special educational needs, all students were able to establish a rule within a sequence that involved negative values and use the rule to generate further terms of the sequence. This was as a result of the teacher's clear explanations and individual support given to those students who required further clarity.
83. The quality of teaching is good overall; it is never less than satisfactory. Students' learning is closely linked to the quality of the teaching. Lessons are mostly well planned and classes are well managed. Students participate fully in nearly all lessons, in discussion and varied activities. In most lessons, students are helped to learn systematically by teachers' clear explanations and step-by-step development of mathematical ideas. For example, in a well-structured Year 11 lesson, students made good progress. They constructed tables of values using positive and negative values to determine a line graph to represent an equation. They produced graphs that were both neat and accurate.
84. In lessons where there are weaknesses, students' learning is satisfactory, rather than good, and a minority of students coast in their learning. The aims and objectives of lessons are not always shared and reviewed with students, so they do not understand what they are expected to achieve, and how well they have done. Planning does not always take account of the levels of students' understanding. Examples were observed of work being too easy for some (on volumes) and too complex for others (on equations). Generally work could be more challenging for more able students. The attitudes of the students to their learning are good overall; they are never less than satisfactory. Students are interested in their work and focus well on the tasks. Relationships between the students and their teachers are very good; they are respectful and courteous and support each other. Students' behaviour is exemplary.
85. Students' progress is monitored through end-of-module tests and half-yearly examinations. More frequent tests would strengthen opportunities for students to revise and consolidate their learning. There are inconsistencies in the marking of students' class work and homework; not all work is marked and there is no agreed system of marks or grades across the department.
86. Currently there is no head of department; two members of staff are sharing responsibilities to ensure some cohesion in the running of the department. Inevitably there has been limited progress in dealing with the department's identified priorities. The scheme of work needs improvement. There is no agreed planned approach to promote students' mental skills in handling number or strategies to involve the use of computers to enhance the learning of mathematics. Arrangements are being made for a member of staff to review software for use in the department. Although there is a whole-school focus to promote students' literacy skills there has been no implementation of this in mathematics lessons. Few opportunities are provided for students to use their initiative and help them to take responsibility for their own learning, by pursuing open-ended tasks and research assignments. The quantity and quality of books available for the students' use are good, but there are no computers in the department. Classrooms are attractive areas in which to work; they are spacious and displays, that include posters and students' work, are colourful and interesting.
87. Day-to-day arrangements work smoothly. Individual teachers are conscientious. Focus on improving results has been effective. Improvement since the last inspection is reasonable, in view of the absence of a head of department, but substantive filling of that post is required to support further improvement.

Numeracy

88. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory, overall. In mathematics, although some students demonstrate good mental skills in using numbers (for example, in the calculation of coordinates), there are too few opportunities to encourage and reinforce numeracy skills; there is no planned programme within the department or across other subjects to strengthen students' mental skills in handling numbers and mathematical ideas. The school has identified this as an area for development later in this academic year.
89. A number of subjects use number but have no systematic approach to the development of numeracy skills. In music, good attention is given to number, for example, in the use of beats in the bar and time signature. Students handled calculations relating to the Post Office competently in a German lesson but the mental skills of students in French were less secure when converting to and from the euro currency. In science, students effectively tabulate results to help them construct graphs but are less good at interpreting graphical information; standards are average. In both design and technology and in physical education, effective use is made of basic measures (such as millimetres, centimetres and metres).

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Examination results are improving steadily and standards are above average.
- Teaching is good and students achieve well.
- Students concentrate well and ask for help when they need it.

Areas for improvement

- Provide opportunities for higher attaining students to extend their learning.
- Use marking more effectively for setting targets to help students improve their work.

90. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2002 were above the national average and higher than those in similar schools. Results have been improving steadily, and improved further in 2002. However, the proportion of students gaining the highest A* and A grades remains well below the average nationally.
91. Standards seen in lessons and written work were above average in Year 11, reflecting the recent improvement in GCSE results. Students, including those with special educational needs, make good overall progress through Years 10 and 11. Higher attaining students are not given enough encouragement to move beyond the basic lesson content; as a result their progress is less good, although still satisfactory. When students enter the school in Year 10 standards are about average. Most know the basic sequence of processes in human digestion but a significant minority is unable to explain the purpose of each stage. For example, a common response was "digestion breaks down the food and takes the goodness out". Students achieve well in their lessons, reaching standards that are above average by Year 11. More able students use their scientific knowledge to make predictions about experimental outcomes, such as gauging the effect of changing the concentration of a reactant on rate of reaction, but few analyse or consider the uncertainty of their results in enough detail to attain the highest grades. Standards reached by the small number of students taking double award science are above average.
92. Teaching and learning are good overall, although there are weak aspects in some lessons. Just over half the lessons seen were good and all the rest were satisfactory. Good lessons are well structured; students know what they are expected to learn and their learning is reinforced by a review at the end. A key feature in almost all lessons is very good relationships between teachers and students; as a result, behaviour is very good and lesson time is fully used for productive learning. In Year 11, the teacher captured students' interest by showing them examples of articles made from plastic to illustrate uses of plastic materials. Students concentrated well throughout the lesson and consolidated their learning at the end by completing a worksheet

reviewing various methods of disposing of waste plastic. Students are quick to ask for help when they need clarification; teachers respond well, often interacting with almost all individuals during the course of a lesson. Some lessons are less well structured and the pace of learning is too slow, because, for example, students copy from the board giving little thought to the content. More able students are held back because they are not given enough encouragement to move beyond the basic lesson content, as in Year 10 when an opportunity was missed for them to research how the symbols of chemical elements were derived. Marking of students' written work is inconsistent. Comments are sometimes detailed and show students how to improve, but too often marking is superficial and comments do not set targets for further improvement.

93. Students' investigative skills are satisfactory overall in Year 11, but weaknesses in analysis and evaluation of experimental results are not rectified early enough. Most students write well, with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, teachers do not place enough emphasis on key words, such as 'polymer', to ensure that students' understanding of their meanings is secure. Exercise books are very well kept and form an accurate record of work for future revision. Students' numerical skills are not systematically developed in science, but are adequate for tasks such as working out costs of domestic electricity. Their skills in using information and communication technology in science are not well enough developed because access to suitable equipment is inadequate.
94. Leadership and management of the science department are satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The proportion of students gaining A*-C grades in GCSE examinations has more than doubled, and teaching is better now. However, planning for future development does not address key areas for improvement in enough detail, for example, by setting a measurable target for the proportion of A*/A grades to be achieved in 2003. Lack of suitable textbooks for students to keep at home restricts homework, particularly activities for the more able. One of the science rooms is not fully equipped as a laboratory so that practical work is not always possible at the appropriate time.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **very good**.

Strengths

- Results are very good; students progress very well through courses that are well integrated with other expressive and visual arts areas.
- Teaching is consistently very good. Teachers are extremely enthusiastic about their subject, provide high quality individual advice and guidance for students and set a challenging pace.
- Courses are well planned, and delivered; exciting high quality resources including innovative use of computer aided design and displays provide an inspirational learning environment.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures for recording assessment and comparing standards to those nationally.
- Provision of vocational courses, leading more directly to post-16 courses.
- Technical support, to help organise resources.

95. In 2001, GCSE results were well above the national average and even better in 2002: all students gained A*-C grades in both the art and design and the photography examinations. Results in 2002 were the best in recent years and show considerable improvement since the last inspection. Achievement overall is very good for students across the ability range, including those with special educational needs. Inspection evidence and predictions based on teachers' knowledge of students' work indicate that results in 2003, while probably not as high as in 2002, are likely to be very good.
96. Standards of work seen in art and design and in photography were above expectations. High standards are promoted through the exploration of a wide range of art media and the styles and techniques of other artists and art movements. The latter are used very effectively to develop students' own styles and techniques. Experimental work is well researched, rich in colour and

pattern quality, and mostly developed from direct observational drawing. Work shows strong commitment and productivity is high. Students understand the relationship between technical proficiency and aesthetic qualities. This is evident in photographic work in both years, where students' workbooks show a good balance and integration of theory and practical work. Photographs for the portrait theme using pinhole and digital cameras show equally aesthetically-pleasing qualities. Art and computer aided design are also exceptionally well integrated. For example, Year 10 produce strikingly original computer generated designs and colour harmonies from scanned direct observational drawings of shells, based on studies of art deco and the work of Andy Warhol. Although students are good at evaluating their work, there is scope for further improvement in the quality of written work and independent research.

97. Good working relationships with teachers and peers are formed through mutual interest in art, and respect for the expertise of teachers. Behaviour in lessons is very good, often excellent, and attitudes are extremely positive. Students show great enjoyment in the subject and are very keen to be creative, including those with special needs, who learn well through investigating and exploring art media. Students respect each other's ideas, beliefs, and values.
98. Teaching and learning are very good, with some excellent features. Teachers communicate their subject knowledge very enthusiastically. Schemes of work and lessons are planned in detail and include references to previous and future tasks, the work of artists and art movements, and cross-curricular links. Aims and objectives are clearly stated and good demonstrations, and lively question and answer sessions aid assessment and reinforce learning, as observed in a lesson on contact printing and good darkroom practice. Teachers have high expectations of their students and set exciting and challenging tasks. A brisk pace is set through alternate whole class and individual tuition. Excellent features include the use of a wide range of resources, art book references, and computers to stimulate interest and provide direct learning experiences. Well managed plenary sessions and evaluative summaries provide continuity and consolidate learning. Art and design work is well integrated with visual communication and media studies. Exciting displays provide an inspirational learning environment and promote high standards. While individual feedback to students during lessons is of a high standard, there is room for improvement in the procedures for recording assessment, tracking of progress and matching standards to those nationally. Marking and evaluating work is completed at the end of each project and assessments are adequately documented: however, records need to cover students' attainment from entry to the school.
99. Leadership and management are very good; there is clear direction for the subject. There is an ethos of raising standards and improving teaching and learning. The art department works well as a team, showing great enthusiasm for the subject and commitment to helping students succeed. Strengths are the stimulating environment and links with other visual arts subjects and educational establishments. Good development plans identify areas for development, but need prioritising. No vocational course is provided to prepare students for the style of learning in the sixth form. Improvements since the last inspection are good. Standards of attainment and the quality of teaching have improved and there is capacity to improve further, within the current staffing, resource and accommodation arrangements. However, additional technical support to help organise resources is still needed.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision is **very good**.

Strengths

- Citizenship has been introduced into the curriculum very well.
- Students show excellent attitudes and make very good progress.
- Teaching, based on the concepts and skills of sociology, ensures very good learning.
- The ethos of the school supports participation and responsible action.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers could make more use of assessment as a tool for learning.

100. Attainment by Year 11 is above expectation. All students benefit from provision in sociology and make rapid progress. They gain the knowledge needed to be an informed citizen to a higher level than expected. They understand concepts such as social control and distinguish between biological, psychological and sociological explanations for crime. They know about the work of the police in society and interpret their role from different perspectives. They recognise that perceptions of society vary from person to person and from social group to social group. They use their imagination well and reflect critically on their own role as young people in society. They express their own points of view very well but they also listen with respect to opinions with which they disagree. They approach their study of citizenship in a more conceptual and dynamic way than the programme of study requires and this makes their grasp of rights and responsibilities in a democratic society much more secure and confident than expected. They learn how to do research and investigation using the methods of social science. Their skills of enquiry and communication are good. Skills of participation and responsible action are evident throughout the school in students' support for good causes, their involvement with the community and through their commitment to the performing arts. The school council shows students forming and presenting opinion through representation. High levels of personal maturity and excellent attitudes to their own learning contribute significantly to the very good progress students make towards becoming informed citizens.
101. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers show a fine grasp of the content and methods of social science. They use their knowledge effectively to introduce students to the range of roles citizens occupy, their relative significance to each other and to society as a whole. The clarity and structure of teachers' presentations and their precise use of language are of great benefit to students. Students not only learn about the role of the criminal justice system but also interpret its operation from perspectives of deviance and criminality. They develop basic skills very well; lessons have a good sequence of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Lesson planning is very good. Teachers challenge students with specialist concepts and then show them how to apply such thinking to recent events in the news. Teachers engage students in discussion so that they readily ask and answer questions. Students work effectively in both their oral and written work. Management and motivation of students are always very good and sometimes excellent. Students maintain interest and concentration and their sustained intellectual effort is another excellent feature. Homework is good but assessment, as a tool to help each individual student's progress in learning, needs further development. Monitoring students to see how well they are doing and then showing them how to do even better is an area for improvement. The use of level or grade descriptions would help pupils know more about their own process of learning and allow them to set themselves targets.
102. The quality and range of learning opportunities are excellent. The GCSE course in sociology covers much but not all the required content. Other subjects and the programme of personal and professional development give further coverage. The contents of the performing arts curriculum and the ethos of the school as a whole offer a wide range of opportunities for the development of skills of participation and responsible action. Compliance with new requirements and the adoption of the GCSE course have provided students with an excellent programme for citizenship. In discussion with inspectors Year 11 students were unanimous in their praise. Its introduction has been a success.
103. The aims and values of the programme of citizenship emerge from and reflect clearly the aims and values of the school. Action taken to comply with new requirements has been very good. Commitment to improvement combines with the capacity for continuing and increasing success. A major strength in the school's provision is the very good match between teaching staff and the demands of the curriculum. Access to a very good textbook has been an important factor in this early success and individual use of the textbook for homework would be a further advantage.

DANCE

Overall, the quality of provision in dance is **very good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and standards reached by the students are consistently very good.
- Assessment is used effectively to track students' progress and to set challenging yet realistic targets.
- Efficient and very professional management of the department gives clear educational direction for students and teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Students' use of technical vocabulary when speaking, to improve their clarity.

104. GCSE results in 2002 improved from 2001 with a very high proportion of A*-C grades (84 per cent). (No national averages are available for comparison.) In professional dance examinations the students achieved very well: virtually all passed and a very high proportion of students gained the highest grades in jazz, modern and tap dancing.
105. Standards reached by students in Year 11 are well above average in all aspects of the GCSE and GNVQ courses. Students achieve very well. Students' work is dynamic, refined and reflective of the differing styles of dance. For example, in a jazz lesson the students were very quick to learn new set routines and interpret the feel and flair of the dance. Their work is exciting to watch. When refining techniques the students show very good body tension and extension. They use their eyes and heads very effectively for focus in their polished performances. When asked to give spoken evaluative comments about their own and each other's work they are astute but not always confident in using technical terms. Their written work is also well above average. They are able to link theoretical aspects to their practical experience and their analytical skills are good. They understand different types of choreographic styles and use information technology skills effectively to illustrate project work in the GNVQ course. There is no set pattern of attainment for students of different ethnic backgrounds or those with special educational needs. The small number of boys who study dance reach above average standards and achieve very well.
106. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is consistently very good. Well-qualified specialists have very good subject knowledge that enables students to make rapid gains in their technical ability and also in understanding theoretical aspects. Frequent informal assessment highlights areas for individual and group improvement. Constructive criticism is well accepted by the students who practise diligently to improve their performance. The students arrive at their lessons well prepared to work hard and are exceptionally well motivated. Assessment procedures are very good. Progress is monitored at all times and the information is used in combination with the students' own evaluation to set realistic yet challenging targets relative to their own ability. Teachers are very well aware of each of all examination requirements. The GNVQ course provides particularly good links to citizenship. Students are given a good introduction to marketing and production systems associated with the performance industry. Homework assignments are varied and link well to lessons.
107. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The day-to-day organisation and good development planning result in a well run, efficient department. The environment is intellectually and physically challenging for both teachers and students. The curriculum offers a wide range of examination courses and also allows students to further their interests not only in lessons but also in extra-curricular activities. Extra specialists are employed to teach styles such as street jazz giving greater depth and also providing a male contribution to teaching. Extra-curricular activities are popular and high standards are reached. The studios, which have sprung floors, mirrored walls and good audio equipment, have positive impact on standards and are appreciated by the students. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Very high standards have been maintained and a GNVQ course has been successfully introduced.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Results on the GNVQ performing arts course are very good.
- Staff work well together as a team.
- Students have positive attitudes to their work.

Areas for improvement

- The challenge in tasks set for students, to develop their technology capability in line with their abilities.
- Curricular planning, to exploit opportunities to work with other subjects and make effective use of information and communication technology.
- Accommodation, which is not suited to the type and range of work which takes place and presents hazards.

108. The design and technology department makes a contribution to the GNVQ performing arts course offered in Years 10 and 11. It also offers a GCSE design and technology course in textiles. Staff in the department teach parts of courses offered by other departments.
109. Students achieve satisfactorily. Results at GCSE have been a little below the national average. In 2001, girls did better than boys, and their results were average. In 2002, the department contributed to the GNVQ course in performing arts. Results were very good with 93 per cent gaining a pass grade or better.
110. Progress in lessons and work seen was satisfactory overall, although some students achieve at a higher level, especially some of those following the GCSE textiles course. There was little significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or of the various ethnic groups. In GNVQ stagecraft in Years 10 and 11 work consists of fairly straightforward tasks, such as mask making, which do not allow students to develop design or practical skills to a high level and do not allow the most able students to work at a level commensurate with their ability.
111. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and learning is usually satisfactory as a result. Lessons are planned in an appropriate way, but the work which students experience lacks breadth although it overlaps with work done in other areas. Students who go on to study production in Year 12 will often return to similar tasks. Other overlaps occur with information and communication technology in Year 10, aspects of graphic art in Year 12, and costume designing and making in Years 12 and 13. In GCSE textiles, tasks do not appear to capture the interest of students. In some lessons students are not taught the skills necessary to improve their work, as seen in a Year 11 lesson on set design where students lacked the skill to draw in perspective, but there were no plans to teach them this skill.
112. The department is managed satisfactorily. Substantial changes in the ethos of the subject have occurred since the last inspection and many of the comments in the last report no longer apply. There is a shortfall between the department's stated purpose, vision and aims and its provision. Although there is a very good success rate at GNVQ, there is not enough planning for students of different abilities. Assessment is not frequent enough to help students know what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. The department does not make effective use of information and communication technology as a tool for teaching and learning. Day-to-day practical matters are satisfactory, although some practices present hazards and were discussed with the school.
113. Resources are good, but the size and layout of rooms are inappropriate for the lesson activities. Sometimes there are conflicting uses of the workshop/design area with two classes in the same space. The textiles room is inadequate for the use to which it is put, although plans are in hand to upgrade it, and the necessary funding has been allocated. Once the department has decided on the type and range of work to be offered, a range of suitable textbooks needs to be provided to avoid the extensive use of photocopies.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Strengths

- The scheme of work for the GCSE course is very well organised.
- Students' progress is strengthened greatly by the many opportunities they have for using information technology in their other subjects.
- Facilities in information and communication technology rooms are excellent.
- Staff are very well led and work well together as a team.

Areas for improvement

- Promote strongly the regular use of information and communication technology in all subjects.

114. The school now offers a GCSE short course in information and communication technology. Current Year 10 students are the first to follow this course. Students in all years make extensive use of information and communication technology to assist their learning in other subjects.
115. In the information and communication technology lessons and work seen, attainment is in line with expectations and has the potential to be much better by the time the students reach the end of their course. Students plan well, research information using the Internet, manipulate images and combine them with text. All students work hard in information and communication technology lessons; the learning atmosphere is purposeful. Many examples were seen of very good use of information and communication technology, especially in performing arts subjects and related technologies. Small numbers of students in Years 10 and 11 often work in mixed groups with sixth formers on advanced applications to further their individual projects and support school productions for which provision of specialist equipment and software is excellent. Many students make very good use of the open access information and communication technology area. Much good work is done using word processing, desk top publishing, graphics and the Internet for research. Very good use is made of software applications in art and design. The use of computers is uneven across the curriculum, relatively little use is made of information technology in, for example, mathematics, design and technology and modern foreign languages. Overall, however, students make very good progress in choosing and using information technology tools and information sources. They use a good range of applications confidently and to a very good effect. They work independently much of the time.
116. The quality of teaching is very good, with no significant weaknesses. Students' learning in information and communication technology lessons is always good, and usually very good. Their learning in lessons is strongly reinforced by their many opportunities throughout the school. The scheme of work is very well prepared and specialist teachers use their knowledge and understanding very effectively to help individuals to succeed. Lesson tasks are well planned so all students can participate and, typically, during a lesson students concentrate fully and learn new skills. In Year 10 lessons observed, students benefited from high-level individual help and advice. They made very good progress in manipulating maps and designing film posters using desktop publishing and commercial image-manipulation software. The tasks were well planned so they captured the imagination of students and organised effectively so that all could start and progress very well. Lessons are very well managed, with all necessary resources to hand. Teachers explain to students how they will be assessed and what evidence is required, so they understand clearly what is expected of them. Students become confident learners; in lessons observed they readily helped each other. Not all lessons are taught by subject specialists but all teachers have enough knowledge and skill to support students effectively and they are helped to overcome technical difficulties by specialist staff.
117. Leadership and management of the GCSE course are very good. The department handbook and support materials are very detailed, and provide clear guidelines for other staff teaching the course. Staff work well together as a team. The recently established course has great potential to achieve high standards although more detailed planning could be done on ways in which students of different abilities can be helped and how aspects of spiritual, moral social and cultural development can be integrated into lessons and tasks. Resources for the subject are excellent and used very well.
118. The school information and communication technology policy is clear and concise and a good working tool for the immediate future. The school improvement targets which relate to information and communication technology are appropriate and will aid developments. The school has

recently carried out an audit of the use of information and communication technology in all subjects which will aid future planning.

MEDIA

Overall, the quality of provision in media is **very good**.

Strengths

- Achievement at GCSE is very good.
- Students are keen to learn and progress quickly, particularly in practical production.
- Teaching is good; lessons are very well planned and paced.
- Facilities for video and sound production are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for students to practise and take a keener interest in their writing.

119. Results at GCSE are very high and have improved since the last inspection. GNVQ results have been satisfactory, although this course has discontinued. More girls than boys study media; there is no significant difference in their results. Students who choose media also study GCSE art and design and GCSE photography.
120. Standards seen were above expectations in Year 11. Students successfully combine written and practical work in their coursework assignments. They approach the planning of practical topics with confidence having learned what is feasible and what is too ambitious from their work in Year 10. They respect and use well the technical equipment in the recording and video studios. Year 11 students, creating an advertising campaign suitable for television, quickly learned the important criteria because of the teacher's clear explanations and perceptive questioning. They showed good understanding of the impact of camera angle, body language, facial expression and the product's 'magical property' for its target audience. Students are assisted in their note-taking by well-prepared writing frames. A number of Year 11 boys showed reluctance in writing but a clear preference for videoing their advertisement and using the excellent equipment in the school. Folders indicate that some lower attaining students do not plan with enough detail and some writing is too brief. However, the presentation and accuracy of finished work improves as a result of good word processing. The very high standard of presentation of a television news bulletin by higher attaining students reflected keen intellectual interpretation.
121. Students make very good progress from Year 10 to Year 11. They reinforce their understanding of media concepts and improve their analysis and interpretation of texts. In their radio project, they learn how to record the voice and operate the control desk with its associated software. They build on this experience in Year 11 by inserting and editing more complex sounds and pictures in their audio and video recording. In practical photography, they learn the process from the pin-hole camera to advanced digital techniques and later apply these skills to enhance their own practical work. The achievement of all students is very good as a result of well-focused teaching, the high expectations of the teachers and the excellent facilities.
122. Attitudes to the subject are very good. In Year 10, students find agreement for group decisions can be difficult, especially when there are roles to be played in front of and behind the camera. By Year 11, students collaborate well together and are supportive of each other, but self-critical in evaluating their own work. They are keen to do well and improve. Relationships are very good. Students express respect for the teachers' professional expertise and the opportunities they provide.
123. Teaching is good, with very good aspects. Teachers' professional knowledge and understanding are excellent. Very good planning results in a fast pace, a range of activities and a suitable mixture of theory and practice, which is essential in the subject. Handouts are written by teachers and issued to students to consolidate new learning and, although most students use these well, they are in danger of replacing students' own notes. Teachers monitor students' progress carefully to ensure no one falls behind. They mark students' finished work in detail so that

students know how well they are doing and how to improve. However, students' drafts and the notes they take are not checked so regularly.

124. Leadership and management are very good. Improvement since the last inspection is good. There are clear plans for future development and commitment to growth in the subject.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Cultural awareness is developed well through authentic use of the foreign language throughout most lessons.
- The warm and supportive approach of staff encourages students' efforts.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to improve GCSE results.
- Develop teaching methods so that students' interests are engaged and they can become more independent in their learning, using their imagination and creativity to make progress.
- Use information technology to further students' learning in languages.
- Continue to develop assessment procedures so that students receive regular feedback and know what they can do to improve.

125. GCSE results in French and German are below average. They have improved steadily and the results for 2002 continue this rising trend, with the proportion of students with grade C or better improving slightly in French and considerably in German. In German, boys performed much better and results overall in this language are now only just below the national average. In 2001, students did not do as well in modern foreign languages as their average performance in other subjects.
126. Within lessons, standards are variable but overall below average, reflecting the wide range of experience students bring into Year 10. (A few have no experience of French or German before Year 10.) In both languages students find it hard to use the language in spontaneous situations; listening and speaking are below expectations. In French, whereas more able students in Year 11 write short passages with reasonable accuracy in the past tense, some struggle to write sentences without assistance. Written work is similarly of varied quality in German. Some very good examples of independent writing were seen. Students generally use nouns and noun endings correctly but weaker students have difficulties using verbs with correct verb endings.
127. The progress observed in work seen during the inspection was satisfactory for students of all levels of ability. Students who have prior experience of languages other than English make good progress and students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Recent results indicate little difference between the achievement of boys and girls. However, the Year 11 top sets in French contain many more girls than boys and this indicates that, currently, girls are more likely to do well than boys.
128. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory, with several strengths. The management of students is usually effective and teachers have established good relationships. Homework is set and followed up. Teachers provide an encouraging environment and speak the language they are teaching most of the time during lessons. They have high expectations of behaviour, which are usually met. The response of teachers to students' written work is positive and helpful. The main weakness in the teaching is that the methods employed are not always effective in promoting learning strongly enough. Students are not given the opportunity to speak the language to each other in realistic contexts and it is rare for them to be able to use their imagination or be creative in lessons. For example, students simply read from their script when they were required to practise buying a railway ticket; they did not have to memorise the words and no element of the dialogue was unpredictable. Some opportunities to pursue matters of particular interest to the students are missed. For example, while they are often required to adopt different roles in lessons, it is rare for them to use their acting or performance skills. Attitudes towards the subject are satisfactory. Nevertheless, students lack confidence in their abilities, in many cases as a result of low attainment in previous schools and experience of failure. This causes some students to take little interest in their language lessons and to have low expectations. However, most students can clearly see the relevance of the subject and are encouraged by the warm and supportive approach of their teachers.
129. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The acting head of department has effectively directed the work of a temporary teacher and of the foreign language assistant. Marking and teaching are monitored and teamwork is good. A set of priorities for development has been agreed, which the staff are committed to achieving. However, whilst the priorities are appropriate, they do not include action to improve teaching, such as to improve students' fluency or spontaneity in speaking, and to encourage their independence in their learning. Assessment procedures require further development and there is not enough use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning.

130. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards of attainment in public examinations are still below national averages. There are still few foreign links, visits and exchanges. Nevertheless, the leadership of the department has the potential to succeed and build upon the improving examination results. The time provided for modern foreign languages is now adequate. Assessment procedures and the attitudes of students have improved.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Standards of performance are high.
- Students make very good progress as a result of very good teaching.
- Students are highly motivated and become accomplished learners.

131. In recent years students have followed a course leading to the award of GNVQ intermediate. This is still provided in Year 11. Students in Year 10 are being prepared for GCSE examinations.
132. Attainment on entry to Year 10 is usually very high in a particular aspect of musical performance, which is sometimes quite breathtaking. Although almost all students have extremely well developed aural memories, the majority come into school with a set of skills and knowledge about the process of music which is well below the national average. However, GNVQ intermediate results for Year 11 are above the national average. This is representative of a rising trend and of considerable improvement since the last inspection. The work seen during the inspection was usually above average, with the performance element being outstanding. Year 11 students are on track to achieve at levels well above the national average in their next examinations. The value added by the music provision is very high by the end of Year 11.
133. In the music business element of the GNVQ course, the students use their considerable amount of common sense and personal experience to determine how to organise a public event efficiently. The composition element of the courses, together with the technical and technological aspects, is hard work for many students but they persevere to good effect. The course work shows rapid growth in the necessary knowledge of such basics as time and key signatures, how to add up the beats in a bar and what a bar is. It also shows some quite advanced composition for small orchestral groups, which is fully scored. The regular and frequent assessment of the solo and group performance work is done against close and well-known criteria. The assessment events give students the chance to perform, in the foyer, to the positively critical audience of the rest of the school, staff and visitors. Thus, they know exactly how they are getting on, and they become their own best critics. They rehearse effectively, work hard, and are very supportive of each other. They display very professional attitudes, and enormous talent. Their talent in the practice sessions is all-pervading. All students display levels of talent significantly above average and among them there are stars.
134. The quality of teaching is very good with many examples of excellence and no significant weaknesses. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. The peripatetic tutors make an invaluable contribution to the musical education and the development of skills of almost all of the students. Crucial elements are the subject expertise of all members of staff, including the music technicians. They understand how different students learn differently and make specific provision for these individualities. Teachers have the highest expectations of effort and sensitivity to others' needs and make consistent demands for a real sense of ensemble in lessons and rehearsals. Questions and suggestions are used skilfully to elicit true understanding and assessment and homework is used excellently to promote learning. A climate for learning is maintained in which students feel safe enough to use trial and error and to ask if they are not sure. This means that students consistently learn very effectively. They become accomplished learners as a result of the teaching, and also because they are absolutely determined to succeed in their chosen studies and to understand fully all that they need to know in order to move on to the next stage. They have extremely positive attitudes to their work, to their friends and to the school. They take significant levels of responsibility for their own learning, work very hard and

sustain their own impetus. They spark off ideas and test their learning among themselves, and rely on each other's differing skills. As they progress their understanding increases that music manuscript is the realisation of sound on paper, whereas they have been looking at it the other way round. They evaluate their own and others' work in a generous, positively critical and professional manner and often make very useful suggestions, which are leapt upon by the recipients. Of particular note is the way in which they work with each other to the maximum support of whoever is the focus for a particular performance and how they rapidly become accomplished accompanists.

135. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. Very good standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Team work is very well developed. The ethos is strongly positive. Each member of the department carries a brief for training the others – so that the teacher with a specialism in music technology, and the music technicians, have a responsibility to train all other members of the department in their skills. Planning is based on thorough review and understanding of the broader context, as reflected in the re-instatement of the GCSE course in Year 10. The accommodation is barely sufficient to cater for the individual and group work which courses demand, because of the numbers of students. Peripatetic tutors often have to work in very small, badly ventilated rooms.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The standards students reach in the varied options and GCSE practical activities.
- The positive, mutual respect between teachers and students.
- The use of local sports centres and their specialists to give breadth to the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- The number of specialist teachers, to give greater depth of knowledge and thereby raise standards.
- Assessment systems, to include the systematic setting of targets and tracking of progress.
- Closer links with other departments for the sharing of management skills.

136. In Years 10 and 11, all students take a core course in physical education and some also opt to take the subject at GCSE. Results in 2002 were in line with the national average and the students achieved satisfactorily relative to their predicted grades. This is the first set of results for the school.
137. Students in Year 11 studying for GCSE are reaching average standards. In theoretical aspects, the higher attaining students have a good grasp of each module and show particular strengths in anatomy. Middle and lower attaining students have a good recall of facts in the end of module tests but do not perform so well in end of year exams. Their notes are satisfactory but not always complete. The majority of students are above average in practical activities. In sailing, the Year 10 students are able to rig a dinghy and can sail on a broad reach. They know how to tack and can bring the boat alongside the pontoon. In trampolining, they show good body shape and control in complex routines. They are quick to learn new skills and achieve well.
138. Standards reached by students in Year 11 core lessons are average. There is a marked difference in the quality of work between trampolining and badminton. In trampolining, the students effectively use the skills acquired in dance to produce sequences that are refined, technically correct and with good focus on balance. In badminton, very few students reach the expected level. They have a limited range of shots and they are slow to anticipate the shuttle. The girls play with a square stance and find it difficult to rotate their shoulders. A small number of students have a good grasp of tactical play and are able to outwit their opponent with change of pace and angle of shot. They all know how to score correctly. No set pattern is evident in the attainment of students of minority ethnic backgrounds or those with special educational needs. Overall students achieve satisfactorily.

139. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are good. Students are taught by one specialist teacher, two non-specialists and a range of qualified instructors at several sports centres. The best progress occurs when the teachers have good depth of knowledge and logically build skills up to the final activity. Assessment in lessons leads to constructive criticism resulting in the students refining their skills. Question and answer sessions are used effectively, particularly in sailing, to provoke thought and reason through problem-solving tasks. The instructors have high expectations of the students making their own decisions and learning by discovery in a safe but challenging environment. Teacher and student-demonstrations are used effectively to show good technique. The teachers' subject knowledge in badminton is secure but lacks the depth required to pick up on areas of technical weakness. Tasks sometimes progress too quickly before skills have been sufficiently consolidated. The GCSE course is taught at a good pace and with a satisfactory range of homework tasks that link well to lessons. Good use is made of the interactive white board to teach aspects of theory. Students use word processing skills in conjunction with a software programme to make accurate notes. Work is marked with helpful comments but is not often graded in relation to GCSE grades. Targets are not closely linked to predicted grades. The students in all lessons have too few opportunities to make oral evaluations of each other's work. Mutual respect between the teacher and students has a positive influence on students' personal development. The range of good quality extra-curricular activities and fixtures against other schools is satisfactory. However, it is difficult to join local leagues because of the timings of the school's terms and number of teachers available.
140. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory with some effective features. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. A GCSE course has been introduced in which the students achieve satisfactorily. The school now leases a gymnasium but it is in a poor state of decoration and needs repair. The students are able to use the adjoining school's field for football. Overall the facilities at the school are still not adequate for the delivery of the curriculum. However, an innovative curriculum has been created to offset the limitations of the facilities at the school and it meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Whilst considerable time is lost in travelling to and from the venues the students are able to try a variety of activities and use first class facilities that would not otherwise be possible. There is still only one specialist and this limits the number of extra-curricular activities on offer. Closer links with other departments would help to develop ideas and share good practice in management skills and assessment procedures.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning in lessons are good.
- The intellectual effort made by students is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The school's provision of time is well below what students need.
- Students should learn about more than just Christianity.
- GCSE results are very low with boys doing much worse than girls.
- Some teaching shows lack of subject knowledge.
- Teachers do not use assessment as a tool for learning.

141. Students follow the GCSE short course for one year, either in Year 10 or Year 11. At the end of that year the school enters all students for the examination. In 2001 results for students in Year 10 were below the national average. Results for students in Year 11 were well below the national average. In 2002 no Year 10 students sat the examination and results for Year 11 were well below average, especially those of boys.
142. Observation of lessons and analysis of students' work show that attainment in Year 11 is below the standard expected. Students show no knowledge of any religion other than Christianity or how the beliefs and practices of different religions make a difference to individuals and communities. In their attitudes and behaviour, however, as well as in their personal development

and relationships, students show a high degree of maturity. They make good use of the time they have in lessons to deepen their understanding of life and to develop their own beliefs and values. Students know important Christian teachings but are unsure about their meaning and application to life. They try hard to respond and reflect but find religious ideas difficult to express in their own words. They know that Christians give different interpretations to their beliefs but do not understand why they differ. They write with little precision and often use technical terms incorrectly. Girls are good at involving themselves, at asking and answering questions and in discussion with the teacher. Boys take much less part. Most students will not do themselves justice in the examination, especially boys. The progress of students in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.

143. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have an affirming manner. They manage and motivate students very well. Teachers are very good at planning lessons with structure, sequence and clear objectives. Time is used well and students work efficiently in both oral and written tasks. In the best lessons, expectations are high and there is an element of challenge and inspiration. Students respond with a high level of intellectual and creative effort. In exploring different forms of Christian worship students recognise the value of both liturgical ceremony and silent reflection. A weakness is that not all teachers show enough knowledge and understanding of religion and of the purpose of religious education. It is misleading to tell students that when they explain the meaning of the Apostles' Creed that there are no right or wrong answers. An important but undeveloped area is assessment as a tool for learning. Neither teachers nor students make enough use of the grade descriptions and assessment objectives of the examination. Students do not measure their progress and then set themselves new and higher targets. They are not involved enough in their own learning.
144. Provision for religious education is unsatisfactory because the school does not give enough time. The amount is less than half what students need: they have one lesson a week in either Year 10 or 11 but not in both. One consequence is that they learn about Christianity only. The curriculum lacks breadth, balance and relevance because it does not include any other religion, as required by the Education Reform Act. Shortage of time frustrates students' desire to learn about religion, and from their study of religion to learn more about life and about themselves. Some students come voluntarily for extra lessons outside curriculum time. They recognise the value of what they learn and that they do not have enough time. They also want to achieve good grades in the examination. Despite what the school says in its self-audit, provision for religious education is not fully in place in Years 10 and 11. Although aware of the requirement the school does not provide for post-16 students. The agreed syllabus suggests flexible and practical ways in which religious education may be part of the programme for post-16 students' personal and professional development.
145. The school's leadership and management of religious education are unsatisfactory. The leadership has not ensured a clear educational direction. Commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed exist in the classroom but lack support from senior management and the governors. The mismatch between some non-specialist teaching staff and the demands of the GCSE course is a further weakness. Accommodation is also unsatisfactory: there is no permanent base for the display of work or to illustrate levels of attainment. Resources for learning are inadequate with a shortage of textbooks for the GCSE course.
146. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The school has not given religious education enough priority. Students do not receive their educational entitlement, so that despite good teaching they still do not make enough progress and they do badly in the examination. The school's provision needs improvement.

SOCIOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in sociology is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards are above average; the department has made a very good start in introducing the subject.

- Teaching is very good; it is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and enables students to achieve very well.

Areas for improvement

- One of the sociology classrooms is cramped, damp and cold and not conducive to learning.

147. The first full group of students to take GCSE sociology will sit the examination in the summer of 2003. Until recently, students took a humanities course in Years 10 and 11. A small group who took sociology last year achieved results that were above the national average and inspection evidence is that standards remain above average. Students show a secure understanding of key sociological terms and concepts such as social control or deviance. They understand the main features of social structures such as the family and education. They are beginning to apply concepts and theories to real situations and to show understanding of the methodology of the subject. Students of all abilities work hard to use correct terminology and their skills in analysis and in verbal debate are high.
148. As a result of the very good teaching, and of students' very positive attitudes towards the subject, their achievement is very good. Students with special educational needs progress as well as others, particularly in lessons where there is classroom support. This very good progress is evident both in lessons and over the two years of the course. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, students showed some initial confusion over the terms 'socialisation' and 'socialising': after very clear explanation from the teacher, all showed that they had a good understanding of the difference between the two terms. Students also become more confident and articulate over the two years of the course.
149. Students' attitudes towards the subject are excellent. They behave extremely well, show very high levels of motivation and cite sociology as a particularly enjoyable subject that relates well to everyday life and enhances their work on other courses. Classroom relationships are very positive and students clearly have high expectations of how they should behave and work.
150. Teaching is very good overall and enables students to achieve very effectively. Teachers are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and good role models for the subject. They demonstrate high expectations of what students can achieve and students respond by expecting highly for themselves. They make very good use of everyday examples and experiences to illustrate complex concepts and theories. Students are encouraged and expected to express their own opinions and to use supporting evidence when doing so. Questions are well tailored to students' abilities and confidence although, just occasionally, teachers develop too much of the answers themselves. Focus on developing students' literacy skills is very good. This was evident, for example, in a Year 10 lesson where students were making class presentations on the development of feminism. The quality of speaking and listening was high.
151. Leadership and management are very good. The subject effectively meets the needs and interests of the students and is enhanced by strong cross-curricular links. Units of study have been very carefully chosen to this end. It also contributes substantially to aspects of students' personal and social education and to education for citizenship. The head of department has a very clear sense of purpose and direction that is shared by all members of the team. Staff work very effectively as a team, sharing good practice and strategies for further development of the subject. Although accommodation is adequate, one of the classrooms is cramped and cold.

THEATRE

Overall, the quality of provision in theatre is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve very well in lessons and examinations.
- Teaching is very good: students develop very good understanding of theatre-techniques and characterisation.
- Students' learning is enhanced greatly by many opportunities to participate in productions and by theatre visits.

- Leadership is outstandingly good and engenders excellent teamwork.

152. Standards are above average in examinations and lessons with some examples of high standards. Students make very good progress as their attainment on entry is average or below. Although they have been selected on the basis of interest and potential in theatre, their actual experience may be limited. In 2002, the majority of students obtained distinction or merit awards in their GNVQ at intermediate level. Almost all completed the course. In 2001, GCSE results were well above average but in 2002 they were not so high, although still above average. However, these students had completed the course in one, not two, years. Boys achieve about as well as girls, which is better than they do nationally.
153. At the end of Year 11, GNVQ students devise their productions, taking classics such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan* and *The Wizard of Oz*, as their stimulus. They understand and use a wide range of naturalistic and abstract techniques, selecting those which are most appropriate. Dress rehearsals took place during inspection week. Students in one production were creative in suggesting ways to make movement and role more effective. They have gained experience in evaluating their own and group performances, which contributed to their very good progress. Aspects of performance, such as voice control, are learned in technique classes. In rehearsal, some students find voice projection challenging at first. They write at length, keeping rehearsal diaries and explaining projects they have undertaken. After studying *1984*, including background research, they are able to comment in depth on characters and themes. Students work very well together, listening constructively to each other and their teachers. Frequent productions and performances encourage independent judgements which they are confident in expressing. GNVQ students in Year 10 make rapid progress, especially in understanding drama technique, as in a topic on theatre as social commentary. Progress at the start of the GCSE course is good. In a lesson on characterisation students became confident in shaping characters and adding detail; some very successfully assumed the parts of small children playing. Standards were in line with expectations at this stage.
154. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent academic and professional knowledge. In Year 10 lessons on *Requiem* by Wilfred Owen, students made excellent progress because the teachers deepened their understanding of the poem and strengthened their knowledge of drama techniques, such as alienation, by their skilful questioning, and by encouraging them to draw on their own experiences when writing letters, as if soldiers in the trenches of World War I. Very good use of warm-up exercises, mental and physical, establishes total concentration quickly in most classes. The planning of individual units is effective in defining the tasks and assessment criteria and is structured to help students reach the highest standards. Occasionally, when the lesson is more loosely structured, pace slackens and students' progress is less rapid. Basic communication skills are well taught. Written work is well organised, developed and presented. The oral emphasis in lessons ensures that students are confident and fluent communicators but some use of non-standard English and informal language is inappropriate. Homework, both practical and written, is regularly set and advice on improvement is given orally or in writing. These methods work well in mixed ability classes. Students with special educational needs make very good progress, in line with others.
155. Leadership is excellent. The director has a very clear vision and leads a committed team of teachers who work very effectively together. They know students very well and are generous with extra help. The personal development of students is excellent. Cross-curricular work such as *A Ticket to Ride*, which recreates the experiences of children during the Holocaust, forces students to confront such happenings most imaginatively. Theatre visits and opportunities to participate in productions are frequent. Since the last inspection, good standards in teaching and learning have been maintained. Extra-curricular opportunities have become even more extensive.

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

In the inspection, 15 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics (a)	2	50	62	-	15	0.50	1.51
Mathematics (b)	4	50	n/a	-	n/a	0.50	n/a
Science for Public Understanding	3	100	n/a	-	n/a	1.60	n/a
Product Design	2	50	n/a	-	n/a	0.50	n/a
Media (a)	1	100	n/a	-	n/a	3.00	n/a
Media (b)	10	90	n/a	30	n/a	2.70	n/a
Dance	1	100	n/a	-	n/a	2.00	n/a
Music	1	100	84	-	29	2.00	n/a
History	5	80	n/a	-	n/a	1.20	n/a
Psychology	6	83	n/a	-	n/a	1.00	n/a
English Literature	10	90	n/a	10	n/a	1.80	n/a
French	1	100	78	-	13	3.00	1.65

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	100	43	100	87	10.00	5.80
Business: Arts Management	12	75	n/a	8	n/a	2.00	n/a
Physical Education	1	100	92	-	25	4.00	5.09
Art and Design	15	93	96	20	46	5.20	6.57
Performing Arts, Media, Film, Theatre	53	91	93	40	31	5.96	5.53
Dance	12	100	89	58	39	7.67	5.53
Music	8	100	93	63	35	7.75	5.74
English Language	3	100	91	67	30	6.00	5.27
English Literature	15	100	95	33	37	5.87	5.91

Advanced vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design Advanced. GNVQ	16	100	n/a	44	n/a	38	n/a
Media BTEC National Diploma	33	97	n/a	24	n/a	67	n/a
Music BTEC National Diploma	36	89	n/a	58	n/a	22	n/a
Performing Arts National Diploma, Dance, Musical Theatre, Production, Theatre	144	97	n/a	37	n/a	59	n/a

BTEC National Diploma and GNVQ

	No. in final year	Pass No. (%)	Merit No. (%)	Distinction No. (%)	Not completed (%)
Male	74	4 (5)	33 (45)	31 (42)	6 (8)
Female	155	5 (3)	56 (36)	90 (58)	4 (3)
All	229	9 (4)	89 (39)	121 (53)	10 (4)

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection covered, in detail, AS-level and GCSE resit courses in mathematics and the AS-level science for public understanding course. No other separate courses are offered in mathematics and sciences.

Key skills elements of vocational courses include work on the application of number but there is no consistent approach across the school to the development of key skills and no links developed with mathematics for the application of number.

Overall, standards are average. In mathematics, students' standards of numeracy are good. Although there is no consistent policy, opportunities are used to develop mental number skills, for example, when substituting positive and negative values in equations. Students are encouraged to use mental number skills in multiplying and dividing numbers. In arts management and production, students use number skills confidently in measuring, scaling and recording. Students in drama skilfully apply number skills when devising a budget for marketing; they determine revenue following statistical analyses of costings. Number is not well promoted in media studies although use is made of simple graphs and grids. The subject handbook in music has a clear statement relating to numeracy, however, there is no established policy to develop the application of number. The work in the subject is tied to mathematical patterns and awareness.

Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers plan lessons well so explanations are clear.
- Students taking AS-level courses demonstrate strong commitment to their course and progress well.

Areas for improvement

- Planning of work programmes to take account of key skills (communication, application of number and computing).
- The entrance criteria for GCSE re-sit courses so that students have a reasonable chance of success.

156. In recent years very few students have followed AS or A-level courses. Results have been low with the exception of one student in 2001 gaining A grades at AS-level. Only one quarter of the students re-taking GCSE in 2001 gained a C grade or above; five students failed to gain a grade.

157. Standards in the work seen in lessons and in exercise books are in line with the AS-level course requirements but below expectations in the GCSE re-sit groups. Students following the AS-level course develop good algebraic skills and use these to find factors and remainders when working with polynomial expressions; they understand and apply the sine and cosine rules to find angles and sides of triangles. They make good progress. Students re-sitting GCSE have a wide range of attainment levels. Overall, they demonstrate sound algebraic skills and use these to determine and sketch straight-line graphs of given equations; they are less confident when subtracting negative values. Their graphs are neat and clear. A minority of students, although familiar with equations and determining solutions, is less competent when rearranging terms. The frequent absence and poor punctuality to lessons of many of these students limits the progress they can make over time.

158. Teaching is satisfactory, overall; it was good in about half of the lessons observed and never less than satisfactory. Students learn well when the teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and work is well organised to cover topics in logical order. On occasion, however, the teacher misjudges the amount students understand and moves too quickly for some who have not consolidated their earlier work, as observed when GCSE re-sit students were changing the subject of a formula. Teachers do not always place enough emphasis on the aims and objectives of each lesson to help students understand what they are meant to achieve and take responsibility for their own learning. Too many of the students retaking GCSE lack motivation and this can slow down the pace of the lesson (for example, in a Year 13 GCSE group only one quarter of the students was present) and some do not do their homework. AS-level students work hard, they are interested and enthusiastic and enjoy the challenge to succeed. In lessons observed on binomial expansions and polynomials, the teacher made good use of questions to focus students' attention and gauge their understanding. Students recognised patterns in mathematical expressions and learned well. The teacher also exploited opportunities to develop students' number skills, for example, by substituting numbers in equations, which helped to maintain a good teaching pace. The presentation of the students' work varies too much and not all work, both for GCSE and for A-level, is marked. There is no consistent practice for the marking of students' work across the department. Students would benefit from constructive comments to show them how to improve.

159. Currently there is no head of department; two members of staff are sharing some of the responsibilities of the department. Teachers meet regularly to ensure the department continues to run smoothly. However, limited progress is being made with the identified priorities in the department's improvement plan. For example, there is no agreed policy to promote the key skills of the application of number, communication and computing. Numbers in the AS-level courses are beginning to increase, although slightly, and this represents some development since the last inspection report; further development is needed. Too many students following GCSE courses have little commitment and realism about improving grades.

Science for Public Understanding

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well in lessons and examination results are improving.
- Teaching is good and high quality discussion allows students to learn from each other.
- Students value opportunities to research topics that impinge on social and moral issues.

Areas for improvement

- Use assessment more effectively in target-setting to help students achieve their examination goals.
- Provide greater variety of learning activities.

160. The results of AS-level examination in 2002 were satisfactory and significantly better than those in 2001, when they were well below average. Bearing in mind their GCSE results, students did about as well as expected. In both years, the number of students entered was very small. Students now in Years 12 and 13 reach above average standards; all should gain grades in the A-C range, and one may gain an A grade.
161. Teaching is good, and often very good. As a result, students are doing better than expected in relation to their GCSE results. The work captures students' interest because it touches on many topical issues that raise social or moral questions, such as the ethics of testing drugs on animals and the safety of the MMR vaccine. They are keen to find out as much as possible and make good use of opportunities to carry out further research. Students achieve well in lessons because their teacher uses good subject knowledge effectively in guiding discussion; as a result students learn well from each other, as well as from the teacher. In one lesson, the teacher introduced the subject of autism in children and then developed very good discussion by drawing on students' own experiences and knowledge. The teacher has high expectations and students respond positively, as when they were asked to speculate about reasons for the current increase in tuberculosis cases after 50 years of decline. Students usually concentrate very well, but lesson activities sometimes lack variety so learning trails off towards the ends of some double or triple lessons. Students often improve their communication skills by presenting their research findings to other members of the group, but information and communication technology is not used as effectively as it could be in enhancing presentations.
162. The subject is well led and students benefit from a clear view that they should themselves be the main contributors to lessons. Students say that they enjoy lessons and particularly appreciate the high quality discussions and opportunities to carry out research. However, they are unclear about how well they are doing. Assessment information is not used well enough to help them work towards their target AS-level grades. Little comment was made about post-16 science in the last report but the number of students was even smaller then.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The school no longer provides separate courses in engineering, design and manufacturing. In 2001, one student took AS-level product design and, in 2002, two students took A-level design and technology. All passed, with satisfactory grades. Elements of design and manufacturing are included in performing arts courses: in art and design and in media and production, particularly, and these are reported separately. Students apply design and technology understanding and skills very well in these contexts.

BUSINESS

The inspection covered, in detail, the BTEC National Diploma in arts management provided for students in Year 14. No other business courses are provided. Elements of management, such as the legal issues of copyright, appear elsewhere in the performing arts curriculum adding breadth to students' understanding of working in the performance industry.

Arts management

Overall, the quality of provision in arts management is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students progress very well, benefiting from their work placements and many links with the performing arts industry.
- Expectations are high and teaching has breadth and depth.

Areas for improvement

- Rigour in monitoring the progress of students.

163. Recent BTEC National Diploma results were satisfactory. Results have improved since the introduction of the course. Students work in lessons at a level above expectations, with students of all capabilities making very good progress. They use their knowledge and understanding of the arts industry very effectively to inform debate and discussion. They display a firm grasp of the fundamental concepts of management issues. For example, in developing a sponsorship proposal equal emphasis was placed on both parties, with consideration of their needs, aspirations and potential benefits. Students engage in lively debate which demonstrates breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding of the issues. In group work and in presentation students of all capabilities articulate their points clearly. They use technical terminology effectively and structure their arguments coherently. Different opinions and viewpoints are discussed constructively, with students acknowledging strengths in others' arguments with comments such as, "we didn't think of that" or "that is a good idea". Although note-taking is limited, written work is generally of good quality and spelling is accurate. Some lessons have inadequate space for large groups.
164. The good teaching is based on comprehensive subject knowledge and application in both theoretical and practical situations as, for example, in developing the sponsorship proposal for presentation to senior executives in the performing arts industry. Students have considerable knowledge of the industry and excellent opportunities to practise their skills in real situations and in work placements. In consequence, students are interested, listen carefully to points raised and ask questions when they do not understand fully or want more detailed information. They learn very well. Lesson planning is good with clear purpose and specific outcomes, so students know where the lesson is going, what they are trying to achieve and are fully aware of deadlines and time-scales. Questioning is used effectively to explore points thoroughly and ensure responses from across the range of abilities. Expectations are high, so students strive to achieve their best. Behaviour is very good and students display maturity in their responses.
165. Subject management is satisfactory. Deadlines are met and records are kept of students' work. However, there is potential to improve standards further through more rigorous monitoring of progress as students undertake the units of work. This course did not feature in the previous report but its introduction adds breadth to the curriculum and is a valuable opportunity for students.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

No separate courses are provided in information and communication technology although extensive and excellent use is made of specialised applications in art and design, media and production, which are reported separately, in detail. Examples include the design of theatre lighting layouts and the use of technology to monitor sound levels and record sound in radio studios. All students on entry to Year 12 have an introduction to the computing facilities. Many make very good independent use of the open access information and communication technology area. Much good work is done using word processing, desktop publishing, graphics and the Internet for research, but the widespread use of other software applications (for example, spreadsheets) is limited. Overall, provision is very good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on the one course offered in physical education which leads to the community sports leaders' award. No other courses are offered in this vocational area.

Physical education

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The community sports leaders' course is well organised and taught.

- The students' mature approach to learning independently is helping them to achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- The range of sporting opportunities to benefit all students in the sixth form.
- Students' use of technical vocabulary when writing and speaking, so their intentions are clear.

166. A-level and AS-level results in 2002 were below average. The one student who took A-level achieved satisfactorily but AS results were disappointing: many students did not take the examination. AS and A-level courses are no longer on offer.

167. The students who are currently taking the community sports leaders' course are achieving well and reach average standards. They understand the course requirements and have a satisfactory grasp of how to organise tournaments and competitions in a range of activities such as football, basketball, volleyball and dance. They design eye-catching promotional posters using computer graphics. They make astute evaluative comments about the success of their tournaments and how to improve them but many lack confidence in using technical vocabulary. Some wider issues, such as their own commitment and the participants' punctuality were discussed at length, reaching constructive conclusions. Their written plans vary in quality. The majority have thought through the organisation process logically but others have put down ideas as they come into their heads with little attention to sequencing. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as the others because they are given extra help with planning.

168. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are good. The teacher has a good understanding of the course requirements. There is a good balance of direction by the teacher and high expectations of the students to take responsibility for planning and organising tournaments, within a safe environment. A varied range of stimulating tasks develops team building skills and collaborative work. Students respond well to the tasks and are gradually gaining an understanding of the importance of clarity when giving instructions. More emphasis and comment on this skill from the teacher would accelerate their progress. Apart from this, assessment in lessons is effectively used to improve understanding.

169. Students are enthusiastic about the course and like the independence extended to them. They feel well supported and value the mutual respect that exists between the teacher and themselves. They talk confidently about their aspirations and how this course will help them if they choose to follow a career in teaching. They are looking forward to the programme of visits to primary and special schools to try out their coaching skills. Progress since the last inspection is mixed. At that time there was no mention of post-16 physical education. AS and A-level courses have been introduced but since withdrawn. The sports leaders' course is well organised but there are currently no other curricular opportunities for students to study sports science or to take part in organised team games. The students expressed disappointment about this. Leadership of the department is satisfactory.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The school does not teach courses in this area, but aspects of health and social care are taught elsewhere, for example, in science, dance and production.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The school makes unusually good provision in this area. The inspection covered, in detail, art and design, media, dance, music, musical theatre, theatre and production.

Art and design

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve well because teaching is consistently very good and they receive high quality individual tuition and guidance.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject and determination to raise standards.
- Courses are well planned and structured.
- Exciting, good quality resources, including innovative use of computer aided design, promote high standards.

Areas for improvement

- Students' independent learning skills, including their understanding of course requirements and self-assessment.
- Development of learning opportunities and course choice through further links with other performing arts areas in the school.
- Provision of technical support and space for the safe storage of post-16 work.

170. The department offers the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) in art and design; AS and A2-level courses in art, and an AS-level course in photography. Results are good, and improving. In 2002, students achieved good results in both the AS-level and the AVCE courses. In 2001, A-level results were broadly average. On the basis of current assessments the school anticipates results for the AVCE course in 2003 will be better than in 2002.

171. The quality of work in progress, on display, and in students' portfolios, confirms these standards. The achievement of students in Years 12 and 13 is very good relative to their earlier attainment; they are in line to do well. Students have good understanding of the use of colour and composition in image making and knowledge of a wide range of art and design media. Year 13 experimental work, for example, using mixed media to explore graphic techniques, shows a very good knowledge of the properties of art materials and is highly expressive and creative. Large scale self-portraits, and detailed drawings and paintings of still-life and natural forms, show above average observational skills, with good understanding of proportion and spatial relationships. Both Year 12 and Year 13 students understand the value of abstraction in graphic work and use computers extremely well to enhance and manipulate images. The work of well known artists such as Lucien Freud and Patrick Caulfield are used effectively to develop students' own styles and techniques. Photographic work, involving the study and work of professional photographers, enables students to understand the importance of lighting, viewpoints and compositional techniques as seen, for example, in very imaginative Year 13 work on the theme 'lost'. Students show an average awareness of contemporary art; they know how fashion constantly changes and influences other art forms. Their assessments of the Turner Prize entries show understanding of the major influences. Students evaluate their work reasonably well and record their thoughts and ideas in visual and written form. However, documentation of processes and lines of inquiry needs greater depth. Exactly how and why students' work may be affected by art and design movements past and present requires further development. Curricular specifications and student log books are provided, but they are not used enough or related to assessment criteria.

172. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. Teachers are very enthusiastic and determined to raise standards. Course structure and planning are extremely well detailed. Resources are carefully prepared, aims and objectives are clearly stated and well communicated through good demonstrations and questioning that aids assessment and reinforces learning. Teachers have high expectations of their students and set challenging tasks. Strategies used to motivate and stimulate creativity are very effective and result in a brisk pace, which leads to high productivity. This is especially evident in printmaking, where a wide range of ideas and media are used experimentally, or when digital cameras are used to quickly record the shapes and colours in a small part of a still-life group. Regular review and assessment of work is good for individuals. The quality of verbal feedback is very good, and at times excellent. More opportunities are needed for students to contribute to their own learning in lessons and private study. Students need more help with study skills and guidance on self-assessment procedures. The enthusiasm and positive attitudes of the students are major strengths. Students take great pride in their work. Excellent use is made of information and communication technology for research and for developing designs. Course assignments involve some good work with outside agencies and other educational establishments (such as a colourful mural for the local early learning centre).

173. The department and courses are very well managed. Courses cover a wide spectrum of art and design aspects. The aesthetic and technical sides are exceptionally well covered. Leadership is very good; there is an ethos of raising standards and improving teaching and learning. Team work is excellent and students benefit from the wide ranging expertise and interests of teachers. The art department works well with colleagues in media and visual communication but links with other subjects could be strengthened. High quality resources promote high standards, as do the informative and inspirational displays in the art rooms and around the school. The recording and collating of assessment information to monitor students' progress could be improved. Space is at a premium in art rooms and in these cramped conditions there is a risk of damage to students' work.
174. Overall, good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Courses offer more choice, and student numbers and results have improved. However, more technician help is needed.

Media

Overall, the quality of provision in media is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students are enthusiastic, particularly for practical production work, and achieve very well.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and commercial experience result in high expectations.
- A developing range of courses is attracting a growing number of students.
- Facilities for recording, filming and information and communication technology are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- The attendance and punctuality of some students are unsatisfactory.
- The organisation of technical support staff does not support radio production efficiently.

175. Two media courses are provided. The two-year course leading to an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in media: communication and production, which replaced the BTEC National Diploma last examined in 2001. A one-year AS-level media course is open to students in Years 12 and 13 whose main studies are in other disciplines. The school has changed its courses since the last inspection. It is retaining the AVCE and developing a two-year full A-level in media studies. Whilst qualifications for recruitment are now more rigorous, these changes offer better opportunities for a larger number of students to study media at a level appropriate to their needs and abilities.
176. Overall, results are good. Students' results on the vocational course in 2001 were high with over 90 per cent gaining distinction or merit. Results dipped in 2002, when there were staffing difficulties, but results were satisfactory. The AS-level results in 2001 and 2002 were good. More female than male students take courses in media and their results are generally higher. The results indicate very good achievement as a significant number of students, particularly those taking AVCE, start the course with no previous knowledge of media and with average or lower attainment at GCSE. Rarely do students leave or not complete the course.
177. Standards are good and improving. The varied standard of work of Year 13 AVCE students reflects their wide range of attainment at GCSE. Year 12 AVCE and AS-level students, who entered the course with higher GCSE grades, learn more quickly and produce a higher standard of work. All students develop high level vocational and technical skills and talk about their work with knowledge and enthusiasm. Their production work in video, radio and animation is polished and occasionally outstanding. The excellent facilities and support from teachers with experience in professional production promote good achievement by students in creating short films and radio recordings of a high quality. For many students, this is their best work. Students know the main concepts within media and, in using them to analyse texts and visual material, show increasing awareness of cultural context. More complex ideas are fully grasped only by the higher attainers who display a sharper and more critical understanding in their writing. Lower and average attaining students struggle with technical vocabulary. Students who experience difficulties with literacy make satisfactory progress because of the emphasis on careful drafting and on structured writing

by the teachers. In speaking, students adopt a constant informal register which is not appropriate for all occasions. All students use appropriate techniques for investigation and research. They learn quickly how to make full use of the excellent information technology resources available.

178. Students' attitudes are usually very good. They are highly motivated and approach their class and homework seriously, devoting much of their own time to improving and finishing their work. They enjoy topics which draw on popular culture and moral issues important to them. Girls focus better than boys on the set tasks and make a good effort to meet deadlines which are a vital aspect of the vocational course. Students with casual absence have difficulties in keeping up with the rapid pace of work. Students arriving late disrupted learning in a number of lessons during the inspection. The level of advanced study is challenging for lower attaining students who are heavily reliant on teacher support. However, the emphasis on good collaboration, where students feel supported by others, assists progress. Relationships and personal development are very good and students speak highly of the support they receive. On occasion, successful past media students return to give technical advice, as with the updated school web-site.
179. Teaching is consistently good and there are many strengths. A distinctive feature is the teachers' subject knowledge coupled with professional experience. Very good planning ensures lesson objectives are clear and students know what they are learning. Teachers' knowledge of students is good, evident in the caring personal guidance offered and the high quality marking which identifies strengths and targets for improvement. The emphasis by teachers on accurate, well organised note-taking and writing enables higher attaining students to develop a style that is mature and personal and the lower attaining students to improve their basic communication skills. Teachers consistently and thoroughly monitor students' progress and provide appropriate guidance and individual challenge to students of different abilities. Although there are students who remain passive in lessons, continuous tracking of their progress by teachers prevents them from falling too far behind and underpins the very good retention rates. No successful strategies are in place to improve attendance and punctuality.
180. Material studied offers good opportunities for students to consider in spiritual and cultural issues. Films, such as *The Sixth Sense* studied by Year 13, give students the chance to reflect on behaviour and emotion. Styles of humour are explored in programmes like *Fawlty Towers*, in which students analyse misplaced social interaction. Topics on advertising and marketing allow students to learn about the commercial world they plan to enter and they have a strong voice on manipulation and the representation of gender and race. However, with an over-riding emphasis on popular culture, opportunities are missed to engage in broader intellectual issues or take full advantage of the diverse and multi-ethnic backgrounds of the students.
181. Leadership and management of the department are very good. All paperwork is meticulous. Regular monitoring of teaching is planned although not yet in place. Staff changes over the last two years have had an impact on the continuity of work and learning. The organisation of the technical staff is not planned efficiently to support production coursework in the radio studio. A well-prepared subject handbook is very helpful in maintaining consistent practice. Examination results and examination board comments are analysed closely in order to improve the course and the teaching. Commitment to the growth of the subject is strong. Since the last inspection, the successful development of media has been a considerable asset to the school.

Dance

Overall, the quality of provision in dance is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students' understanding and technical skills are very good.
- Very good teaching enables students to learn very well.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are excellent: they extend students' range of dance styles and experience.
- Studios and resources are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The recruitment of boys on dance courses.
- The contribution students make to target-setting.

182. Results of A-level examinations and the BTEC National Diploma are consistently well above the national averages. Standards in lessons and work seen by Year 13 students are well above those expected nationally. Their work shows very good improvement from standards at the beginning of Year 12; all students are achieving very well. Compositionally, their work is creative and inventive. Most students have very good understanding of choreographic devices and the effect they have on audience, including solo, duet and group work. Technical skills are very good across a range of different dance styles. In a Year 13 lesson, students showed strong rhythm and understanding of different tap dance qualities, with light and shade. They understand the influences of different traditional dance forms on contemporary choreographers, such as Alston and Shobana. Students can analyse their work and discuss it confidently, applying a range of choreographic and theoretical principles. The standards of a small minority are not quite as good; their performance is not as creative or expressive and they move less effectively from rehearsal to performance. Standards among Year 12 students are well above those expected nationally. They have made very good progress since starting the course and are achieving very well. They understand the health and safety aspects of dance and put these into practice. Students' choreography and performance show high levels of planning and technical ability. This was very evident in a contemporary dance lesson, in which students were preparing for a public performance. Their work showed very good style, musicality and dynamics. Students give each other constructive criticism on their creative work. A few have less sense of physical expression and their grasp of theoretical aspects is more limited.
183. Students in Years 12 and 13 overall have good key skills. Information and communication technology is very evident in students' major written assignments. For example, in work on ballet choreographers, most students use Internet research and data analysis, including graphics; a few do not make enough use of information technology to enhance their learning and written presentation. The majority is able to write at length on a variety of topics; all show good listening and speaking skills. High attaining students show refined, extended writing skills, as for their solo choreography work based on an abstract poem entitled *The Wise Triangle*, by Vasko Papa. The written work of a few students lacks grammatical accuracy and good presentation skills. Students are adept at using technical vocabulary. They confidently deal with number; this is evident in tasks involving notation. Boys and girls achieve similarly well.
184. Teaching is very good, benefiting from the wide variety of professional experience and understanding of the teachers, which enables students to learn very well. Most teaching includes very good planning and technical input. Challenging teaching and schemes of work that build on previous learning promote very good progress. Students refine technical, analytical and choreographic skills and improve their understanding of the performing arts business. In a Year 12 practical lesson (on jazz), the excellent technical input of the specialist teacher, including very high quality demonstration, resulted in all students making considerable improvement in their understanding of how to perform sequences, in a jazz dance style. Teachers manage students very well and maintain extremely good relationships with their classes. Their expectations are very high, particularly of performance and safety. Teachers provide excellent opportunities for students to develop as independent learners. In their eight week long production project, Year 13 students explore their own production role (as in marketing or costume design); they choreograph, rehearse and perform to the public. A few Year 12 students take longer to adjust to the more independent nature of post-16 study; they receive good support from teachers, who guide them effectively towards a wealth of background information, including the very well resourced library and subject base area. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. They listen to instructions, communicate very well in group work and confidently try new skills. The retention rate on dance courses is very good, but boys miss out on dance opportunities: few opt to study the subject. Students' learning is greatly enhanced by the outstanding extra-curricular programme, including public performances, workshops and involvement with primary schools.
185. Leadership is very good. The wide range of courses is well managed. The director is ably supported by a dedicated team of full and part-time specialists. Very good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Assessment systems are very good and are used well to monitor students' progress and to set targets, but students could contribute more,

from their self-evaluation. Planning is very well detailed. Students' learning is enhanced by access to high quality resources and accommodation. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The high standards of examination results, teaching and resources, have been maintained.

Music

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Standards are rising: students make the most of their talents and achieve very well.
- Expectations are the highest and students respond by learning very well.
- Students are very highly motivated, work hard and enthusiastically.
- Leadership is excellent supported by very strong team work.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation is under heavy pressure and its use needs review.

186. The department offers BTEC National qualifications including a variety of optional awards in performance, practical music-making and music technology. Attainment on entry to Year 12 is usually below the national average in music, but students display quite outstanding performance and, or, composition skills. Results at the end of Year 13 are well above average, and the trend in results for all courses is upwards. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. Coursework by students at the beginning of Year 12 is sometimes very basic, and shows real gaps in many students' knowledge of time and key signatures, chord construction, Italian terms for dynamics and similar elements. However, coursework at the beginning of Year 13 is well above average, shows a good grasp of the elements which were omissions a year before and indicates that the next set of results will be very far above the national average.
187. Students' very good achievements are the result of very good teaching, which includes many instances of excellence. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection. The peripatetic tutors make an invaluable contribution to the musical experience of almost all of the students. Teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge, excellent teamwork, and total commitment to the students' success. Expectations of effort, generosity and commitment are of the highest and very good use is made of questioning to elicit understanding. Above all there is clear understanding of how students, who do not necessarily read music or have familiarity with the mathematical constructs on which music is based, nevertheless have internalised their sounds, harmonies and chordal progressions. This means that students could work through and understand counterpoint construction – as by J S Bach – and, in the same morning, understand, play and sing the contrasting drum music of Kenya and southern India, with some style and much passion. In between they sang madrigals in four-part harmony to develop their sight-singing abilities. The music technology and business elements of the courses are very valuable to all the students. In the former, they learn the valuable skills of recording and 'bending' sound to the best possible effect, including their own sounds. In the latter, they learn about the complicated business of copyright and how vital it is that they understand, as it can radically affect their earnings. They are intrigued that the BBC 'got it wrong' when they adopted *Nessun Dorma*, by Puccini, as the Football World Cup song, when the change in the copyright rules in 1988 meant that it had gone back into copyright.
188. Students' performances are electrifying. This is why most of them wanted to come to the school and they are absolutely single-minded about the business of making music with others in public, to the delight and congratulation of the members of the school, and visitors. They not only perform, but compose also and the compact disk (CD) produced for the Queen's Golden Jubilee is an elegant exposition of the range of their skills and talents.
189. The sense of joint endeavour in the department is extremely strong. This comes from the excellent example - set by the staff - of how different disciplines can work together towards a common goal and it translates and communicates itself very strongly to the students. Provision is rich. The curriculum is flexible and very responsive to the needs and abilities of all the students. The range of courses available is very good and, together with the many opportunities for extra-curricular activities, students have an extremely broad range of learning opportunities. They thoroughly appreciate this, as well as the time and care which the department lavishes upon

them. In lessons, there is a very obvious demand for good manners and a generosity of spirit when listening to other students performing, or when playing as an accompaniment to them. They are very sensitive to this. The pure joy in successful performance sustains them through the hard work required - and they work very hard. They show a singularly high level of independence and skill in most areas, yet sometimes still arrive without a pencil. Pressure on accommodation is heavy and its use should be reviewed.

Musical theatre

Overall, the quality of provision in musical theatre is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are very high: students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good; teachers make good use of their professional experience and expertise.
- The subject makes a very effective contribution to students' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that students' attainment in vocal skills is in line with their attainment in other areas.

190. Musical theatre is offered as a course leading to the BTEC National Diploma. It provides a modular course in dance, drama and music. The course has become increasingly popular; numbers have increased almost three-fold since the last inspection, although girls continue to outnumber boys, by about three to one. For students in Year 12 it has replaced A-level courses in performing arts, but some students in the current Year 13 are completing the A2-level course as an additional qualification. The work in this course was sampled, and standards are average.
191. Standards in the musical theatre course are well above average. Since the last inspection, when most students were awarded a pass grade, standards of attainment have risen significantly; in 2002, a high proportion of students was awarded distinction. All other students gained a merit, and only one or two failed to complete the requirements of the course. Students' achievement during the course is very good. The rapid progress made in Year 12 is sustained throughout Year 13. The retention rate is very good. Many students go on to study the subject further, either at performing arts colleges or university, and others go directly into the performance industry. At the end of Year 12, during which all students follow a common curriculum, students choose one of two routes designed to equip them for whichever direction they may take in the next stage of their career. The dance, drama and music components of the course are well integrated, providing students with very good opportunities for developing a wide range of performance skills and knowledge.
192. Students perform well, frequently achieving very high standards. Most students become competent in interpreting situations and emotions, and in communicating these to their audience. Students of very high ability are able to engage their audience in emotional situations through powerful portrayals of human dilemmas. At performances of *The Hired Man*, which took place during the week of the inspection as part of the course in performing for Year 13 students, the audience was at times transfixed and obviously moved by the authority of much of the acting. Students develop very good dancing and movement skills, which they use to great effect in devising and realising sequences in choreography. They also understand the importance of, and quickly become competent in, non-verbal ensemble skills of alertness, eye contact and crisp rhythmic response. Coupled with honest evaluation of the quality of their efforts and a tenacious desire to perfect the results, they learn to perform complex choreographic sequences with discipline and very good control. In one lesson, a rehearsal for the group's forthcoming production, choreography was used very effectively to portray comedy. Students in Year 12 make very good progress in this area. During the course of their lesson high ability students devised, rehearsed and presented an extended sequence using a range of choreographic devices; these were well controlled, imaginative and innovative, showing a flair for taking calculated risks. At all stages, students are fully aware of the need for a central focus on performance.

193. Most students have good singing voices and enjoy creating a full, exuberant sound. They are capable of an effective range of dynamics. Very soft, crisply articulated passages in numbers from the musical *Pippin* were well used to provide dramatic contrast. Vocal quality suffers to some extent when combined with the complexities of movement; frequently, tone is lost when the vocal line extends into the upper register of the voice. This is particularly noticeable in girls' singing. Students need to listen with greater discrimination to the quality of the sound they produce to ensure that intonation is precise, vowel colour is appropriate and diction is clear. While their acting skills are generally very good, not all have developed a consistently clear delivery of spoken lines. Their sense of timing and inflection are good, but at times a lack of clear articulation mars the overall effectiveness of their acting. Students undertake written assignments conscientiously. Their research is extensive and thorough over a very wide range of topics, and much of their writing reflects the pleasure and satisfaction they have gained from their new knowledge.
194. Students learn well and make very good progress because the quality of teaching is very good. All staff are very experienced practitioners in their various disciplines, and many are directly involved in the performance industry. They are deeply committed to students as individuals, and communicate their love of the performing arts with passion and intensity. Course content is carefully considered to provide a full understanding of the diverse and complex nature of successful performance. Lessons are thoroughly planned with clear objectives to ensure that learning takes place systematically and progressively. Expectations are very high, and students' work is rigorously assessed so that they know how to improve. No student is permitted to be content with first attempts. As a result, students respond with enthusiasm and commitment, accepting constructive criticism with equanimity and working with tenacity to improve further. Homework is used effectively to consolidate new learning and to provide continuity for creative thinking. Work is often very well planned for different abilities: students described various lessons in which, for example, more experienced dancers were set tasks which extended their technique and imagination while other less experienced students learned basic technique. Technical language is used as a natural means of communication; as a result, students quickly acquire a vocabulary which they readily use as the most appropriate means of expression. Support for students with special educational needs is very good. Students who have dyslexia are given individual help in developing strategies which will permit them to write satisfactorily. Relationships are at all times very good. Several students receive extra tuition in singing from a team of peripatetic teachers. In the small number of lessons observed expertise was very high and the quality of teaching was very good.
195. Students concentrate well and work very hard. They give a great deal of their time outside of lessons to practising or research, and develop good habits of reliability and self-organisation, although some have not developed good punctuality. All students are anxious to succeed, and take full advantage of the many opportunities available in the school and beyond to further their experience. They are self-critical and honest in their appraisal of each other's efforts, but remain considerate and supportive of one another. Students work co-operatively and amicably together without regard for differences in ethnicity or gender, fully aware of the importance of good teamwork.
196. Much of the equipment is of professional quality and accommodation is generally suited to the demands of the subject. However, some rooms are poorly ventilated and over-resonant. In smaller rooms this is exhausting for the teacher. The resonance of one classroom prevents students in larger singing groups from developing good aural discrimination. One practice room is shabby. Fluctuations of temperature in some areas at times create unsatisfactory working conditions.
197. Leadership and management are very good. Educational direction is very strong: it takes students' aspirations well beyond the confines of the requirements of the diploma course, enabling them to develop insight and breadth of vision. Students' work is carefully assessed and records are meticulously maintained. Students themselves said that they felt well informed about their progress and that they knew how they could improve further. Members of the department work collaboratively as a team, and communications are very good. However, the evaluation of the outcomes of teaching is not rigorous enough in all components. As a result, students' attainment in vocal skills is lower than in other components. Contact with peripatetic

teachers tends to be informal and so opportunities for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and for assessing students' progress are lost. Members of staff work tirelessly to organise and maintain a rich programme of performances in a variety of musical genres from review and cabaret to full-length musical shows. In addition there are many visits to professional productions and backstage in theatres, and regular workshop sessions. Contact with higher education institutes is good, and the department is engaged in developing further links with local primary schools. Improvement since the last inspection is very good, and the department is well placed to improve further.

Theatre

Overall, the quality of provision in theatre is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Achievement is high: students gain distinction or merit at BTEC National.
- Very good teaching motivates students who make excellent progress.
- Performance and improvisation skills are excellent.
- Community links enhance students' skills and experience.

198. Almost all students follow a course leading to the BTEC National Diploma in performing arts. A few students take A-level GCSE in Year 13 and some opt to take AS-level examinations in Year 12. Standards in the BTEC National Diploma course are well above expectations. In 2001, 75 per cent achieved distinctions, and while the proportion was lower in 2002 it was still very good. Almost all of the large number of students completed the course (57). This reflects excellent progress, from students' attainment on entry. Results in A-level examinations are satisfactory. In some years student numbers have been low but achievement has been reasonably good. In 2002, results at AS-level were good.
199. At the end of Year 13, students have a very wide range of relevant skills. Excellent performance and improvisation skills were seen during inspection week. Eight monologues, prepared as examination pieces, devised and performed in a small space within a five minute period, showed their ability to create and present a character most effectively. In the best pieces, the social nuance was conveyed, the twist in the dialogue and, in one or two, the range of emotion expressed were outstanding. The extent of ability to accept and give constructive criticism of their own and others' work is unusual. In preparation for professional or university auditions, all Year 13 students watched a video of their individual performances and then discussed them together. Teachers and students were totally united in the search for the highest achievement. Students have a very good understanding of arts administration, management and marketing. In voice technique lessons, students use their voices clearly, modulating them suitably and projecting them effectively. They have an excellent understanding of and the ability to apply the theories and working methods of individual directors such as Augusto Boal, Mike Leigh and the company approach of Theatre de Complicite in their own work.
200. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers often use their excellent knowledge and professional experience to provide, through thorough questioning, a framework which then allows students' creativity to shape an improvisation or performance. In all lessons, there is a sense of common purpose and trust. On occasion, after discussion, students raise analytical questions. After reading a scene from *Look Back in Anger*, they raised the problem of balancing the writer's intended interpretation of a character with that of the actor. The planning of the units is excellent but occasionally a lesson is less structured and pace and challenge slow down. Homework is regularly set and very good advice on improvement is always given. Technical terms are well taught and students use them accurately. Information and communication technology and numeracy skills are effectively taught in the relevant units. An excellent feature is the way in which students are encouraged not only to be independent but also to take the initiative and to use their own creativity. Year 13 students both lead their own workshops, and also act as assistants in other years, and are completely responsible for some aspects of the production. The department gives excellent opportunities for the ambitious and motivated students to direct and perform their own shows. Students with special educational needs make the same excellent progress.

201. Leadership of the department is excellent. The teachers' teamwork is a very good model for the students. Students appreciate the guidance and help of the teachers about their career choices. The range of curriculum opportunities inside and outside the daily timetable is exceptionally good and students use it fully. On Political Protest Day, Year 12 students had researched a range of topics (republicanism, anti-legalisation of cannabis, children and racism, street crime, Sharia law and others), and then presented their viewpoint as dramatically as possible. Considerable creativity was shown in tableaux characters. Roles were very well sustained. The links that the department is developing with the community through BRIT Kids, the St Giles school, and professionally with Paines Plough Theatre company, extend opportunities still further. Since the last inspection, high standards in lessons and examinations have been maintained. The development of extra-curricular activities has further enhanced the curriculum. Improvement has been very good.

Production

Overall, the quality of provision in production is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Students achieve very well: results are high.
- Students learn very well, benefiting from the unusually good professional experience of teachers and production staff.
- Students are highly motivated; they respond very effectively to professionally-challenging demands.
- Specialist facilities are excellently used.

Areas for improvement

- Informing students about their progress, strengths and weaknesses so they know how to improve.

202. The BTEC National Diploma in performing arts is provided with a focus on production. Results are high, reflecting very good achievement by students. The course is structured so that students benefit from the work environment established within the school itself. Students use the specialist resources to develop technical production skills as support for the numerous performances and shows. They work to tight deadlines and experience the pressures of regular performance, practice and rehearsal schedules. Their experience in a professional environment is exceptionally good. Work on design, in costume, lighting and sets shows very good understanding of purpose. Students talk confidently and knowledgeably about the effects created by different fabrics, creation of mood and atmosphere in lighting and practical considerations of shadow, sight lines and space in designing their sets. The best examples are supported by detailed notes and project designs which explain the planning and design processes, with comprehensive personal comments and evaluation, showing excellent depth of understanding. Designs are often innovative although presentation shows variation in quality. Students generally use equipment sensitively taking great care with detail.

203. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers, with production staff, provide unusually good comprehensive subject knowledge gained from a range of practical and professional experience. Students learn the 'trade' from people who have real insight and their understanding develops breadth and depth. Teachers explain clearly lesson purpose and objectives, students know what they are expected to achieve and concentrate and settle quickly to tasks. Relationships are very good, teachers often act as mentors or guides, taking students through processes systematically and discussing issues as they arise, highlighting key points. Students respond with maturity, working very effectively on their own or in small, mutually supportive groups. They listen carefully to the teachers and to each other and are confident enough in their capabilities to suggest alternative strategies and discuss each other's ideas objectively. Supporting notes on skills are clear and unambiguous, acting as a very good resource for future work. Lesson pace is generally good although on occasion it lapses. Demands placed on students to meet deadlines are extensive; they have to focus on tasks, work effectively in teams and are expected to give of their time to meet the demands of the profession. They respond enthusiastically, making very good progress.

204. Management of the course overall is good. The course is well structured with good development and extension of practical skills to meet the requirements of examinations. Students are assessed regularly although not all understand the assessment criteria, where their weaknesses lie or how they can improve as the work is in progress. Resources and facilities make a significant contribution to standards and are managed with excellent efficiency. Equipment is of a very good specialist standard, including new technology alongside the more usual manual or mechanical equipment in many theatres.
205. Progress since the last inspection is very good. Results have improved, teaching is well planned with clear focus and direction and opportunities to follow the course have been extended to all post-16 students.

HUMANITIES

The inspection covered, in detail, history and psychology. No other humanities subjects are provided.

History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve very well in view of the fact that they have not studied history at GCSE; standards in document analysis are good.
- Teaching is very good: it is enthusiastic and reflects strength of subject knowledge and high expectations of students.
- Students are highly motivated and participate actively in their lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Students lack the detailed historical knowledge needed to support their analysis, and to gain high results.

206. Examination results in AS-level history were below the national average in both 2001 and 2002. Most passed, but did not receive the highest grades. However, it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons because the numbers of students involved were small. The students achieved very well in view of the fact that they had not taken history at GCSE. Standards in the document analysis paper were higher than in the rest of the examination: two students in 2002 achieved grade A for this component. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of students' work suggest that, although overall standards remain below average, achievement is very good relative to students' earlier attainment. Numbers, though still small, have increased this year, indicating that the subject is gaining in popularity.
207. Students analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence to produce well-balanced and convincing arguments. This was evident, for example, in a lesson on the significance of Churchill in British history when students examined a series of photographs and speeches in order to assess his importance. The analysis of these sources was of a high standard. Students make very good use of opportunities to discuss their opinions in both formal and informal debate. Their essays are well constructed and neatly presented. The main weakness in standards is that students lack the detailed historical knowledge with which to support their arguments. This is because most have not studied the subject since the end of Year 9 and find it difficult to marshal the necessary large body of factual knowledge needed at sixth form level. This is a key area of development. The department realises this and is working hard to develop this aspect of learning through, for example, strategies such as beginning lessons with 10 questions.
208. Students learn very well in their history lessons. This very good learning results from both the quality of teaching in the department and from the students' own committed attitudes to study. Teaching is very good. Teaching has many significant strengths which have positive impact on both students' attitudes and the quality of their learning. As a result, students make clear

increases in both the range of their knowledge and in the depth of their understanding. The content of lessons is challenging and students are encouraged to develop their own historical viewpoints. The teacher makes very good use of questioning to clarify and reinforce students' understanding. Evaluation of students' work is speedy and thorough and helps them to focus on what they need to do in order to improve their work. Students are encouraged to use the correct historical terminology and are specifically taught the skills of skim reading and note taking. This is helping them to make better use of their historical knowledge. They have access to a wide range of books and other resources. During the week of the inspection, for example, they looked at Mo Mowlam's interpretation of Churchill on the recent BBC Great Britons programme and compared it with Roy Jenkins' recent book. This was done with the aid of an electronic whiteboard. As a result of the enthusiastic and knowledgeable teaching, students have positive attitudes towards the subject. They are hard working, amenable and motivated. They clearly enjoy their lessons and value what they are learning.

209. The subject benefits from very good leadership and a clear sense of direction shared by both the head of social studies and the specialist teacher. No mention was made of post-16 history in the last report.

PSYCHOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good, enhanced by the teacher's good subject expertise.
- The quality of students' oral analysis of case studies is good.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very good.
- The departmental analysis of reasons for poor results is accurate and has resulted in appropriate curricular changes.

Areas for improvement

- Results at AS-level, which are well below average.
- The quality of students' written work, to improve their response to examination questions.
- The systematic sharing of information with other psychology teachers about the effectiveness of different teaching and learning styles.
- Opportunities for students to carry out research and present this to the class.

210. Psychology was introduced as an option at AS-level four years ago in response to student demand. It is a popular subject, attracting a large group of students each year, mostly girls. In the first two years only a third of the class completed the course. In the last two years more students have completed the course but results remain below the national average.
211. The school has correctly identified a number of factors which have influenced these results. Most students have not studied a social science subject before coming into Year 12. This has now been addressed with the introduction of sociology in Year 10. One of the three AS-level modules has been entered in January. This has been too early for most students, has led to some dropping the subject and demotivated others. The current students will enter all three modules in June, re-sitting where necessary the following January. An analysis of students' written work and observation of lessons confirms the appropriateness of this decision. Students' oral analysis of case studies and ability to hypothesise on reasons for results obtained through research are good. Their recall of previous work is also good. In work on deprivation, they were able to compare case studies, analyse the variables which might have influenced each case and suggest where this challenged some theories of child development. However, at this early stage of the course, students' written responses to examination questions are below average. Answers tend to be too descriptive, to include irrelevant information and are sometimes clumsily expressed. They have yet to develop the facility to synthesise a short cohesive response to a question, with appropriate reference to research.

212. AS-level psychology is a completely new subject for all students in Year 12 and their progress is satisfactory. They are very enthusiastic about the subject. Most had little knowledge of what the course entailed before they started and a few left after the first few lessons. Those remaining find the course challenging, but relevant to their studies in performing arts. Students work well. They listen attentively to the teacher, questioning where they do not understand. Most participate in class discussion and collaborate well in group work. They make good use of texts and support each other when answering written questions, challenging each other's responses. They keep notes very effectively. However, while some organise their work in an exemplary manner and carry out research between lessons, others do not and are thus unprepared to answer examination questions.
213. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The subject benefits from being taught by an experienced teacher, who is undertaking a degree in the subject. Lesson planning is good, with clear objectives. The teacher's exposition to the class is very good. In this, she displays very good up-to-date subject knowledge. Relationships in the class are excellent. The teacher encourages lots of discussion and group work. While students are encouraged to carry out research between lessons, they would benefit from more structured opportunities to do this. For example, by being required to present case studies, they have researched, rather than the teacher always making the initial presentation. However, within a long session, students experience a good range of learning activities, involving teacher exposition, whole class and group discussion and individual written work. The teacher has high expectations of students. They are asked challenging questions and provided with good individual support about answering written questions. However, students may benefit from earlier opportunities to share responses to written questions, and the use of writing frames. For example, students struggled in defining the terms secure and insecure attachments, which diminished their confidence in answering the subsequent questions which were more straightforward. Students are encouraged to use information and communication technology in carrying out research and occasional use is made of an interactive whiteboard in lessons. However, information technology is not systematically used for researching topics. Interactions in class are excellent. Good use is made of humour. The teacher knows the students well and has a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Marking of work is of good quality, both supportive and diagnostic. The teacher monitors students' work regularly.
214. The subject is taught by one teacher, who as head of humanities teaches a range of subjects including English. She meets other psychology teachers as part of her degree course and attends training each year. However, this has not yet developed into a network with other teachers for systematic sharing of information about the effectiveness of different teaching and learning styles. Planning for the subject is thorough, with a sound scheme of work and a good range of resources for reference.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection covered, in detail, English and French. No other courses are separately provided.

The core skill of communication is developed as a planned element of vocational courses and an integral part of English. Standards are good, overall, and best in speaking and listening. Students readily engage in discussion about their work, such as in media lessons, and in debate, as in psychology and history. In science, they present research findings to the group. In most subjects their capacity to evaluate their own and others' progress in lessons is outstandingly good, as observed in dance and in theatre. Most students use technical language well in performing arts subjects but some in media find this difficult. Most advanced courses require an element of research and the library is a very helpful resource for this - and is well used in dance and musical theatre but the range of books for French is narrow. In history, students learn to analyse a wide range of material critically and they are helpfully taught specific skills to help them to do so. Generally, most written work is good, and in dance it is extensive. Students' written evaluations in media and art and design are good, but progress in art and design would be strengthened by better documentation by students of their lines of inquiry. Most students in physical education organise their work well, but some find this difficult and students in English, in Year 12 especially, and in psychology, need help in structuring their written work.

English

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- Consistently good teaching enables students to progress well.
- Discussion is well used to deepen understanding.
- The subject is very well led and co-ordinated.
- Assessment is well used to monitor students' progress and help them to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers' expectations and guidance on written work, to improve the standard of essays.

215. Students enter Year 12 with results that are in line with the national averages or just above. They make good progress and achieve results in AS-level examinations that are above the average. Results in the A-level examinations have been in line with national averages for the last few years.
216. Standards observed in lessons and in written work are in line with these results. Students are very well motivated. They say they enjoy the lessons and appreciate the help they receive from their teachers. This became obvious during the week of inspection. Students know the set books intimately and read other similar texts for comparison. They also delve into works of criticism, enabling them to set literature in its historical and social context. All discussion observed was lively, articulate, relevant and well informed. Students enter into impassioned debate about, for instance, the nature of kingship in a play like *Edward II*. They had clearly learnt a great deal about the different versions of civilisation represented in the novel *Things Fall Apart*, and could argue about the values of each. However, standards of writing are more variable. In Year 12, students are still not expressing themselves with enough accuracy. The less able have difficulty structuring their essays persuasively. They do not have a good grasp of how to interpret what a question properly requires, how to incorporate quotations, how to begin an essay or how to end it; they need more guidance and practice in writing.
217. Teaching is good so students learn well. Teachers know the subject well. For example, they can explain lucidly and entertainingly the Greek myths that underlie poems like *The Lotus Eaters* and *Ulysses*. They encourage students to compare the set poet, Tennyson, with others not on the syllabus, such as Blake and Keats. They know how to engender debate and are adept at making judicious interjections to move the debate forward. They mark essays with thoroughness. Where (as in Year 12) there are errors in the use of English, they correct these with great attention to detail. It would help further if they also explained in more detail how to rearrange the argument to make greater impact.
218. Students speak enthusiastically about their experience of studying English. They enjoy the stimulus of debate and feel they are making good progress. They are deeply grateful for the help their teachers give. They have chosen to study English because they had enjoyed it in earlier years, and have no regrets about their choice.
219. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, and has been reflected chiefly in examination results. The subject is very well led and co-ordinated with regular meetings, sharing of good practice and monitoring of students' progress. Resources are good. Many students now make full use of the Internet for research into the lives and work of the writers being studied. They are aware of their weaknesses and what they should do to improve.

French

Overall, the quality of provision in French is **good**.

Strengths

- Students make good progress in well taught lessons with authentic use of French throughout.
- Resources are varied and relevant to the interests of the students.

- The atmosphere in lessons is constructive and encouraging.

Areas for improvement

- Expectations of students, so they become more independent in their learning, researching and gaining access to resources for themselves.
- Guidance provided in the Year 12 induction programme in order to assist students in making the transition from GCSE to AS-level work.
- Assessment procedures, so that students receive regular feedback and know what they can do to improve.

220. Results at the end of Year 12 are average. There is no difference in the standards achieved by male or female students. The number of candidates choosing to study AS-level French is small, but the subject is becoming steadily more popular and the number working towards the examination in 2003 is over twice the entry in 2001.

221. Progress in lessons is good overall. Some students enjoy a natural advantage (such as having parents who speak French) and make very good progress. The difference between the standards of GCSE and AS-level is considerable and even though students make good progress, few obtain the highest grades. Despite this, those who choose to continue with French at AS-level have positive attitudes. Even those who are finding the transition difficult to manage are making an effort to rise to the challenges involved. They are good at identifying parts of speech and in lessons acquire new vocabulary and knowledge of sentence structures, extending their ability to read and understand French in authentic situations. Students are encouraged to pursue their own ideas and interests. For example, in the Year 12 class, students have studied the biographies of famous French cinema actors and obtained information and stills from French films, through the Internet.

222. Teaching is good with several strengths. The French used in lessons is entirely authentic and teachers are always ready to share their personal experiences of French education and culture with the students in an interesting and engaging way. The content of lessons is relevant and resources are well chosen. For example, in a lesson observed, students listened to a radio programme about divorce in France which was followed by discussion of the issues involved, as well as by grammatical analysis of the transcript. The work is skilfully planned so that all students of all abilities are fully involved. For example, in topic about divorce, the grammatical exercises were carefully graded. In another lesson, students were paired in a way which enabled them to gain and give each other confidence: the strongest worked with the weakest and students of middle ability worked together. Some weaknesses in the teaching were observed. While attention has been paid to encouraging the students to be independent in their learning, this aspect has not been fully developed. In particular, students' study skills are weak, they are not aware of strategies for following up their curiosity for French language and culture and do not possess the means of gaining access to appropriate resources; the library stock is poor and opportunities in lessons for guided exploration of the Internet are rare.

223. Leadership and management of French post-16 are satisfactory. The teachers work well together to produce resources and lesson plans of good quality. Students feel well supported, but some have been surprised by the jump from GCSE to AS-level and would welcome support and guidance on how they might become more independent learners. Assessment procedures are being developed, but do not yet give students the regular, detailed guidance they need on how well they are doing and how they can improve. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.