

INSPECTION REPORT

MORPETH SCHOOL

London

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 100967

Headteacher: Mr Alasdair Macdonald

Lead inspector: Dr David Benstock

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 April 2004

Inspection number: 265352

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1182

School address: Portman Place
London
Postcode: E2 0PX

Telephone number: 0208 981 0921
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr Matthew Hale

Date of previous inspection: 22 September 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Morpeth School is an 11-16 mixed inner city comprehensive school and is larger than average in size overall. It is situated in Bethnal Green in East London on quite a big site within a dense residential housing and commercial area. It has no green areas on the site itself but it is a pleasant campus, with a mixture of relatively new and established buildings maintained in good condition. The school draws pupils from the immediate locality. The area has historically been one of high deprivation and low aspiration. The socio-economic background of its intake is well below average, and often the circumstances for pupils outside school, both economically and socially, provide very unfavourable conditions in which to study. In the main wards that the school serves, a larger than average percentage of families live in overcrowded households. The school is very popular and oversubscribed. Approximately three per cent of pupils leave or join the school at other than the usual time. The school is racially mixed. Approximately half of all pupils have Asian Bangladeshi heritage, about one third are white British and the remaining pupils are from a wide range of other minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very high. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is above the national average and the percentage of pupils with statements is well above the national average. Standards on entry to the school are well below the national average. The school has been nominated as a 'Leading Edge' school and as such works closely to support other schools. It has received a National Mentoring Award for its work involving the business community. It is part of the Education Action Zone initiative. Achievement awards were gained in each of the past three years.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20243	Dr D Benstock	Lead inspector	
9472	Mr J Edmond	Lay inspector	
10941	Ms R Robinson	Team inspector	Design and technology
17404	Ms J Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
18261	Mr A Hill	Team inspector	Art and design Special Educational Needs (SEN)
10060	Mr D Gutmann	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
23268	Mr K Corrigan	Team inspector	Physical education
4697	Mr R Black	Team inspector	Music
15407	Ms M Harrison	Team inspector	Geography
4486	Mr M Weller	Team inspector	English Drama English as an additional language (EAL)
22360	Mr B Wright	Team inspector	Science
31772	Mr A Kelly	Team inspector	History Citizenship
3643	Mr D Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics
33018	Ms A Read	Team inspector	Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school with some excellent features. It gives good value for money. Overall, pupils achieve very well from a well below average standard on entry. The quality of education provided by the school is very good and it is highly regarded in the community. Leadership of the school is very good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 as a result of very good teaching in these years and a high level of pupil motivation.
- The headteacher and senior staff have a high profile in and outside school, and their very good leadership has been a major factor in the continued improvement of the school over recent years.
- Overall, whilst being at least satisfactory, achievement is not as good and teaching not as effective in Years 7 to 9 as it is in Years 10 and 11, partly owing to weaknesses in literacy skills in the early years.
- There is excellent support for learning from teachers both during and outside the school day.
- In school pupils' attitudes to learning are very good, and relationships between all members of the school community are perfectly harmonious. However, attendance is below the national average and punctuality of arrival to school is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils are treated fairly and, irrespective of ethnic background, ability or special needs, opportunities in the curriculum and an extensive extra-curricular provision are made equally available to all.
- Whilst performance data is analysed by subject managers there is a need for more rigorous use of data to evaluate the curriculum and track pupils' achievement.
- Provision for music is outstanding.
- The links with the community, business partners and other institutions, including feeder primary schools are excellent and these have a direct impact on pupils' achievement.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The quality of education has risen through the teaching, curriculum initiatives and especially the links with the community. Attainment in GCSE examinations has improved significantly. Standards in Year 9 National Curriculum tests have improved overall and the decline in English test results that occurred over the past few years has been halted. Issues from the previous inspection have been addressed well, apart from the continued lack of a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Capped average point scores (best eight subjects)

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	N/a	B	C	A

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

Pupils' standards on entry to the school are well below average and at the end of Year 11 they are broadly average. **Achievement of pupils overall is very good.** It is much better in Years 10 and 11 than Years 7 to 9. Pupils with special educational needs, who are gifted or who have English as an additional language achieve very well due to very good support received. Literacy skills are well below average, especially in writing in the first years but these are improved in later years. Competence in numeracy and ICT is satisfactory. Standards in most subjects are average or just below, and achievement is at least good. Achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11 in the core

subjects of English and mathematics. In science it is good. In music standards are well above average and achievement is very good. In modern languages they are well below average but achievement is satisfactory.

Overall, the development of pupils' personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Understanding of multicultural issues and development of social and moral responsibility is very good. Attitudes to learning are very positive, especially in Years 10 and 11, although attendance is below average and punctuality is an issue. Pupils behave well overall and there is a strong feel of racial harmony in school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good and in Years 10 and 11 they are very good. The difference in the quality of learning arises from the need to develop the aspirations of pupils in the early stages and also the standards of literacy are a barrier. The curriculum is satisfactory, but there is insufficient development of vocational courses, and citizenship is at an early stage of development. Time allocation for religious education is not enough in Years 7 to 9 to cover the Locally Agreed Syllabus and so meet statutory requirements. Extra-curricular activities and opportunities for enrichment, especially in music, are extensive and very good. Excellent support for learning is given outside school hours and overall care of pupils is very good. Partnerships with other institutions are very good and especially with the wider community, they are excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of the leadership and management of the school is very good. Overall both the leadership and management of staff with whole-school and subject responsibilities are very good and the personal leadership of the headteacher is excellent. Governors provide very good support and critical evaluation of the school's provision and work hard on its behalf. Governors have not ensured that statutory requirements for religious education and a daily act of collective worship are fulfilled.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the work of the school. They appreciate the extent to which staff go to meet the needs of the multicultural population. The school is heavily oversubscribed. Pupils are very happy at the school and feel that the teachers have high expectations of them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise the level of achievement in Years 7 to 9 to match that in Years 10 and 11.
- Develop a more consistent and rigorous approach to the use of assessment data to monitor achievement of pupils.
- Improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that time allocated is sufficient in Year 7-9 to follow the Agreed Syllabus in religious education.
- Ensure that a daily act of collective worship is provided.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall, standards are well below average in Year 9 and average in Year 11. Pupils' attainment on entry is well below average, so that their achievement over their time in the school is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The proportion of pupils gaining at least one pass grade at GCSE is very high compared with all schools nationally.
- Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good in many subjects including English and mathematics.
- Achievement in music is very good as a result of the high quality of teaching in this subject, and it is very good also in art and design in Years 10 and 11.
- Achievement over Years 7 to 9 is too low in comparison with that in Years 10 and 11.
- Results in the national tests in mathematics have been improving at a rate faster than is found nationally, and in English in Year 9 results have been declining although the work seen shows there is now improvement.

Commentary

1. In the National Curriculum tests for Year 9 in 2003, the overall performance of the pupils was well below the national average. Pupils enter the school with attainment in national tests in Year 6 in primary schools, well below average, and progress up to the end of Year 9 has been satisfactory. Over the past four years, attainment in Year 9 tests has remained well below average but has improved overall in line with the national trend.
2. Performance in 2003 was very low in comparison with schools admitting pupils of a similar prior attainment, but well above average compared with schools having a similar background and context measured by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The difference in these evaluations reflects very unfavourable aspects in the socio-economic circumstances of pupils at the school. Results for boys and girls have been at a similar level although there are variations from year to year. The school has identified differences in the performance of the various minority ethnic groups, but these differences are relatively small, not least because of the highly inclusive nature of the school.
3. In the 2003 tests, average point scores for English, maths and science, were all well below the national average but relatively, the performance in mathematics was better than English or science. Results in mathematics have risen steadily at a rate above the national trend; whereas in science, the improvement has been in line, and in English, there has been a decline. The school's analysis of achievement of pupils with special educational needs shows that they achieved as well as their peers, due to the good support they receive.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.9 (30.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	32.5 (31.0)	35.4 (34.7)
science	30.0 (29.0)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 238 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Results in the GCSE examinations were in line with the national average, when comparison is made using the 'capped' average scores, i.e. taking the best eight results only into account. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C, was also at the national average. The percentage gaining five or more A*-G grades was well above average, and the percentage gaining one pass grade, G and above at GCSE was very high compared with the national average.
5. The capped average point score in 2003, was well above average compared with schools having a similar range of attainment in Year 9, and the 'value added' measure of progress made by pupils was very high, indicating that very good progress had been made by pupils from Year 9 to Year 11. This level of performance has been consistent in the school for at least the past four years and the improvement in results in Year 11 has been above the national trend. Girls achieve slightly better than boys, but not as much as is found nationally. There is some variation between the attainment of different minority ethnic groups, with Bangladeshi pupils not doing quite as well as others, but the differences are not great.
6. The percentages of pupils gaining grades A* - C in GCSE mathematics, in 2003, were close to national average, and highlight the very good achievement in this subject. In English and science, the percentages were below average. Results were above average in art and design, French, music and business education. Results were lower in design and technology, geography, history, and religious education.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	47 (54)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99 (96)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	35.0 (36.2)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 220 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. Standards seen in lessons and in the written work of pupils are well below average in Years 7 to 9, and broadly average by the end of Year 11. The achievement of pupils from Year 7 to Year 9 is therefore satisfactory, but in Years 10 and 11 progress is much greater and achievement is very good. One reason is that pupils are highly motivated, often as a result of support from the community and mentoring by business partners. They are also made acutely aware of the importance of GCSE qualifications.
8. Standards seen in English at the end of Year 9 are improving and the downward trend in the results of national tests in recent years appears to have been halted. Standards seen in English in Year 11 are below average but also reflect improvement and are much closer to average than previous results indicate. However, pupils with English as an additional language, still have an insecure grasp of grammatical structure. Overall, achievement in English is very good from the low base of entry. In mathematics, standards seen reflect the results in tests and examinations; they are well below average in Year 9 and average in Year 11, indicating very good achievement in the latter years. In science, standards seen are below average in Year 9, and broadly average in Year 11. Achievement of pupils in science is good.
9. In other subjects, standards and achievement vary. Standards seen in ICT in Year 9 are well below average but improving. In Year 11, they are below average, indicating good achievement from Year 9 to Year 11. This is particularly noticeable in the business and communication course. Achievement is very good overall in music as a result of the high

quality of the teaching, and it is also very good in art and design in Years 10 and 11. Pupils achieve well in most other subjects, but achievement in design and technology, and modern languages is satisfactory.

10. Standards in the area of special educational needs (SEN) are as high as in other curriculum areas. Nearly every pupil with a statement of special needs, gained more than five GCSE passes at A*-G, with two pupils gaining seven or more passes at A*-C, in the 2003 GCSE examinations. Because of the very good support they receive, SEN pupils achieve at least as well as others in their classes.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance is below the national average. Punctuality is unsatisfactory. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attitudes and relationships are very good. Behaviour is good and exclusions are moderate.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Attendance is below the national median and unauthorised absence is above. Too many pupils are late both for school and in getting to lessons.

Commentary

11. The friendly and caring ethos encourages in pupils an enthusiasm to learn and to take part in the extensive range of activities provided both inside and outside the school. Pupils are enterprising and take their responsibilities seriously, particularly the 'Seniors'. The school's high expectations of pupils and the strong supervision provided, especially by the senior management team, ensure that behaviour in the classroom and round the school is good, sometimes very good, though some boisterousness in the narrow corridors is evident during lesson change over. There were fifty fixed period and three permanent exclusions last year, broadly in proportion to the numbers in each ethnic group.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	398	14	1
White – Irish	5	0	0
White – any other White background	11	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	30	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	7	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	549	25	2
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0

Black or Black British – Caribbean	49	5	0
Black or Black British – African	39	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	5	0	0
Chinese	10	0	0
Any other ethnic group	39	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	15	0	0

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

12. During the inspection there was no evidence of bullying, racism or other harassment, and pupils are confident that the school deals immediately with any such untoward occurrences. The school is outstandingly successful in ensuring all races and creeds work and mix well together. This leads to very high quality relationships all round. Pupils' self-esteem is satisfactory and the school does all it can to develop it. Those selected for interview with the inspection team were articulate and confident and were positive about their lives at school.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.2%	School data	2.0%
National data	7.2%	National data	1.1%

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

13. During the first two terms of the current year the level of attendance has remained unchanged, but the unauthorised proportion has risen slightly to 2.4 per cent. The measures in force to promote good attendance are satisfactory and parents make a reasonable effort to ensure that their children attend regularly. Pastoral staff know exactly which individual pupils are late, but there is no common system for recording lateness throughout the school.
14. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils take responsibility for their own actions and have a good understanding of the wider community. They acknowledge the potential of social, cultural and ethnic diversity showing a good awareness of the values and cultures of others. They appreciate different faiths and are aware of the different beliefs of other cultures. Pupils have a clear understanding of what is right and wrong and understand the need for rules in their own community and in school. They show respect for others and have a strong sense of fairness and justice. Most are prepared to listen to advice and to amend their behaviour if necessary. Moral, social and cultural values are well understood and underpinned by school activities. Spiritual understanding through deeper self-knowledge and reflection is less well developed and opportunities for such reflection are often incidental rather than actively promoted.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are good, overall, and very good in Years 10 and 11. The breadth of the curriculum is satisfactory but the extra-curricular and enrichment activities make very strong contributions. Provision for the care, support and guidance of pupils is very good and the links with the community are excellent.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Assessment is satisfactory overall, although there is considerable inconsistency in practice between departments. It is very good in music and drama, and in the latter years of English but it is unsatisfactory in religious education, mainly since insufficient information is given to pupils to enable them to improve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships and management of pupils ensure that the majority are very focused on learning, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Planning is very good so that pupils are all fully included in the lessons and in most subjects a variety of activities generates motivation and commitment.
- Assessment is inconsistent across departments and, in particular, practices in marking are very variable.
- Teaching and learning in music in Years 10 and 11 are excellent.

Commentary

15. Teaching and learning are at the centre of the ethos of the school and maximising their effectiveness is a very important objective for all teachers. Teachers are committed to improving their practice and this strong attribute is clear in their approach.
16. In approximately half of the subjects taught in Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are good. They are very good in music and satisfactory in mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT and modern languages. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are better. They are very good in English, mathematics, art and design and drama, and excellent in music in these years. The teaching is good in other subjects, apart from design and technology and modern languages, which are satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are generally better in Years 10 and 11 partly because there is a sharp focus on achievement in GCSE examinations, and partly because pupils are well motivated, for example by the diverse variety of activity and mentoring by members of the community.
17. During the inspection 125 lessons were observed and of these well over two-thirds were good, or better, and nearly one-third were very good or excellent. However, in Years 10 and 11 where 46 lessons were seen, nearly half were of this high quality. Three unsatisfactory or poor lessons were seen; two of which were unsatisfactory, both in the teaching of modern languages, and one poor in religious education. The weaknesses related to there being insufficient progress of a significant proportion of pupils or poor management of behaviour.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 125 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (5%)	30 (24%)	52 (41%)	34 (27%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

18. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they use this well to extend and support pupils. They show a high level of commitment to ensuring pupils achieve as highly as possible. The school is very inclusive and provision is made to integrate pupils of all ethnic backgrounds, and address any identified difference in learning by boys and girls. Very good relationships are developed with pupils and this ensures pupils participate well in discussion, are confident and appreciate the extensive efforts made by teachers on their behalf. This is

- set against a contextual background outside school that is not always helpful to study. Behaviour in class as a result, for all but a minority of pupils, is very good.
19. Homework is satisfactory but there is inconsistency in the quality, especially in the provision of work that is matched to the pupils' attainment. The provision for homework is unsatisfactory in ICT and religious education, where many opportunities are lost.
 20. Marking is inconsistent between departments. Good practice is found in English, where teachers give clear targets and guidance on how to improve, whereas in history and science there is considerable inconsistency in practice in Years 7 to 9, and in ICT marking is infrequent and not related well enough to National Curriculum levels.
 21. The quality of teaching in music is excellent in Years 10 and 11. The level of professional competence and the inspirational style is generating tremendous enthusiasm and commitment by pupils.
 22. The school makes good provision for the teaching of the exceptionally large number of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN). Because of this, SEN pupils achieve as well as others in their lessons; in some cases, where they are particularly well supported, they achieve better. Support teachers and teacher assistants (TAs), are valued by pupils, parents and staff alike. They know pupils with SEN very well and provide sensitive and effective support in mainstream lessons, as well as in the few lessons in which they are withdrawn to the support department. The focus of support is on the unusually large number of pupils with statements of SEN. These pupils are taught and supported very well, enabling them to be effectively included in all school educational and social activities. Support teachers and TAs also give good general support to all pupils in lessons. All support staff work well with class teachers, sometimes planning activities and approaches with them. They keep their own records of pupils' achievements and make an effective contribution to the annual reports on SEN pupils. Of particular note is the sensitive and dedicated support given to those pupils with more complex and profound needs. The school is to be praised as a whole, for the way staff support and include these pupils. The school is almost fully accessible to pupils in wheelchairs and they are fully included in all curriculum areas.
 23. Provision for SEN is good in most subjects and is very good in physical education, where every pupil is fully included in lessons, in part through the very good support of SEN teachers and TAs, and in part because of the very good understanding that the staff have of the particular needs of those pupils. However, not every subject is currently adapting teaching methods and resources to meet the specific needs of SEN pupils; as a result, opportunities to more fully include those pupils are missed.
 24. Procedures for assessment of pupil work are satisfactory. Assessment data is used generally well by departments to set targets and monitor progress in Years 10 and 11 but the use of assessment is inconsistent in Years 7 to 9. In particular, the quality of marking varies within departments. Constructive marking is found in English but it not well used in other subjects, for example science, history and art and design. Marking is generally regular but teachers fail to state sufficiently clearly how pupils can improve and pupils are not always aware of their grade levels. The marking policy is being reviewed and old and new systems exist. The school has a rich amount of data on pupil attainment starting with national test data and cognitive abilities tests (CATS) in Year 7, but it is not yet being fully exploited to develop learning.

The curriculum

The breadth of curricular opportunities is satisfactory at both key stages. Extra-curricular and enrichment activities are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Extra-curricular activities are extensive and all pupils have access to them.
- The school provides an impressive and very well attended programme of out of school hours learning.
- There is a lack of vocational courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The business mentoring arrangements provide a rich source of support and guidance to those pupils who are in the scheme.
- The music curriculum is outstanding and well geared to meet the needs of pupils.
- Time allocated to religious education in Years 7, 8 and 9 is below that required by the locally agreed syllabus, and therefore does not meet statutory requirements.
- Good provision is made for gifted and talented pupils.
- Accommodation for drama is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

25. The breadth of curricular opportunities is satisfactory at both key stages and pupils achieve well in the majority of subjects offered. All pupils study a GCSE in religious education and one of a range of ICT courses in Years 10 and 11 but there is insufficient development of ICT across the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by a very good range of enrichment activities, which support pupils' learning and achievement. Extra-curricular activities are extensive and all pupils have access to them. These activities include clubs, activities and teams across all subjects, except religious education where additional opportunities for enhancing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject are limited. The school also provides an extensive and very well attended programme of out of school hours learning, particularly examination revision classes. Extra-curricular activities are more restricted in drama because of the lack of suitable accommodation to put on large-scale productions.
26. There are only a limited number of vocational courses for pupils to follow in Years 10 and 11 and as such the school does not provide a structured vocational pathway for those pupils for whom the traditional GCSE subjects may not be appropriate. However, the business mentoring arrangements provide a rich source of support and guidance to pupils in developing their personal skills, their awareness of the world of work and preparation for it. This is an integral part of the school's work related learning activities which, for the majority of pupils, compensates for the school not engaging in a formal work experience for all.
27. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The majority of pupils with SEN are taught in mainstream lessons and therefore benefit from access to the full school curriculum, including the National Curriculum. The special educational needs co-ordinators ensure that very good information on SEN pupils is available before they enter the school in Year 7. Further reading and general testing in the first term ensure that a full and accurate register of SEN pupils is drawn up. This enables targets to be drawn up on individual 'planning sheets', which are agreed with pupils and parents/carers before being passed on to subject staff. There is a weakness in the process of targeting, which lies in the lack of formalised communication between the support department and subject departments. Targets drawn from statements, reviews and other information, are not selected with sufficient care in some cases; furthermore, those targets are not generally adapted to ensure that each department applies its own skills, methods and resources to address the specific needs of the pupils. As a result tracking the progress of SEN pupils lacks rigour and much otherwise helpful data is lost to the support department. Imminent plans to network information from support to subject departments should enable this weakness to be remedied.
28. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is good. It is very good in modern foreign languages, physical education, music and art. It is only satisfactory in science and history, where extension work is not as effectively provided for those who are designated as gifted in those subjects. There are particular strengths in certain subject areas. In music, the curriculum is outstanding and the many musical groups and activities are very well attended and appreciated by pupils and parents. Singing is particularly strong and the various school choirs perform to

the very highest level. All pupils are able to study a second European language and the higher attaining pupils are able to take a language GCSE in Year 9. There is

extensive use of poetry workshops in English. Geography fieldwork is particularly stimulating for able pupils and in art the curriculum embraces many varied aspects of the subject. In physical education, all current Year 10 pupils are engaged in the Junior Sports Leader Award.

29. Careers education is good with the recently appointed, enthusiastic head of department making a real difference to provision. Pupils have good access to the careers room, there are very good links with the Connexions service, former pupils are used effectively to offer advice and there is a formal structure for delivery of careers topics across all years.
30. The match of teachers and support teachers to the curriculum is good. In half of the departments the staffing is very good with strong heads of departments who are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and well qualified. In music the strengths of the staffing are a major factor in the success of the department. In art, the staff who can teach all aspects of the subject includes two practising artists. In citizenship there is very good leadership, which organises very well the delivery of the subject by all of the staff. Several departments are less well staffed, but nevertheless, satisfactory. Staff may be mainly non-specialist, as in RE or, as in information and communication technology, a team which is cohesive and well managed but who are all unqualified.
31. The quality of accommodation is good. Many of the buildings are new and departments are housed in suites of rooms. Every effort has been made to ensure pupils can access all the areas. The buildings are clean and well cared for. A number of departments have rooms that are small for the number of pupils using them. More space is needed for physically handicapped pupils in the Learning Support Centre. Drama accommodation is unsatisfactory and affects learning opportunities.
32. Resources in the school are good in most areas. The library is welcoming and attractive, with a good range of books. Interactive whiteboards support learning. While the school is well provided with computers, a number of departments have difficulty accessing rooms to ensure the ICT requirements for their subject are met, for example, modern foreign languages, art, mathematics and history. Data logging equipment is inadequate in science.
33. All statutory curriculum requirements are in place apart from in religious education since insufficient time is allocated to the teaching of religious education in Years 7 to 9 to cover the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The school does not have a daily act of collective worship (or its equivalent). The school regularly reviews the curriculum and in the most recent review in 2003 it has identified several key areas for development, including literacy and the use of ICT across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares for its pupils very well and ensures their health and safety. It provides very high levels of support, advice and guidance, which are firmly based on the monitoring of progress. The school has taken satisfactory steps to seek the views of pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Proper child protection measures are in place and the school has close and very effective relations with outside agencies.
- The school is kept very clean and proper health and safety procedures are firmly in place.
- The school is very inclusive, and staff provide very strong support, advice and guidance to pupils from many diverse backgrounds.
- Pupils willingly accept the opportunities offered to take on extra responsibility.

Commentary

34. Child protection practices are kept up-to-date and in line with those laid down by the Local Education Authority. Staff are kept abreast of developments and new staff are trained soon after arrival. The school's relations with outside agencies are very good. Pupils and staff work in a safe and healthy environment, which is kept clean and litter free. The school has a good system for maintaining and reviewing health and safety practices, but has not appointed a link governor in this area. All risks have been properly assessed. Medical arrangements are appropriate and the premises are very well supervised with the senior management team heavily involved at all times. All equipment is regularly tested and fire drills are carried out each term. Access to the Internet is strictly controlled. The school has already taken action on one or two minor health and safety points raised.
35. Pupils are highly valued, whatever their background. Pupils and parents are very satisfied with the induction arrangements and the many ways in which the school promotes pupils' personal and academic development. Form tutors and senior pastoral staff remain with pupils throughout their school career, so know them well. There is always at least one member of staff, often several, with whom pupils can develop a trusting relationship. Pupils consider that teachers treat them fairly and help underperformers and those who have difficulty in conforming. They can also obtain confidential help and advice from the school's full-time counsellor. Close monitoring of pupils' progress includes the simple, but effective, day-sheet system for Years 7 to 9 and the twice-yearly tutor review meetings. These meetings enable pupils, parents and tutors to discuss and agree targets for academic work and to set goals for pupils' personal development. For pupils wishing to improve their examination results staff go out of their way to provide extensive out-of-hours support. Parents and pupils really appreciate this help. The strength of support results in pupils being generally confident and happy.
36. A particular strength of the school is the mentoring support. A full-time learning mentor on the staff helps pupils who are underachieving, and former pupils give additional academic support to nominated older pupils. Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from the help and advice given by City institutions and the school was the first to gain the National Mentoring Award.
37. The school consults pupils to a limited extent, but many pupils would like to see everyone included. The school actively promotes healthy eating and a variety of food is available in the canteen.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are good. Those with the local community and primary schools within the Education Action Zone are outstanding.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The large majority of parental response to the questionnaire was positive.
- The school has a warm and welcoming approach to parents.
- Links with the local community are extensive, very varied and hugely valuable to pupils.
- Links with other schools and colleges are very effective.

Commentary

38. The quality of information is satisfactory overall, though with several good features. The prospectus meets statutory requirements, though is deliberately rather thin. However, it is supported by an informative and useful website. The governors' annual report to parents is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. There is a good weekly newsletter, which keeps most parents in touch with school activities, as it is partly produced in the main community languages. Parents also receive other helpful information including a homework guide and curriculum information. The annual reports on pupils, currently under review, meet

statutory requirements, but are inadequate in that they do not set out what pupils know, can do and understand after a whole year's study. The school may consult some parents formally on occasions, but it does not yet seek the views of all parents as a body. However, there is extensive informal contact and staff are regularly available for consultation. Parents are happy that the school deals very effectively with concerns and complaints.

39. Parents' contribution to their children's learning at school and at home is generally weak. Support for homework is variable and for school work, though good initially, tails off after Year 7. There has been no friends' and parents' association over the last two years, though a handful of parents support the school's sports activities and attendance at performances and the school's social events is high.
40. Links with the community are a major strength. The school works closely with professionals in the local education authority and has exceptionally strong links with local organisations and businesses. Staff, particularly the headteacher, make frequent visits round the locality and have gained the confidence of community leaders.
41. Pupils benefit substantially from the school's huge range of cultural and arts connections. These include extensive support from a large number of commercial and professional firms, particularly in the City, the on-site Education Action Zone, the Guildhall School of Music, the Barbican Centre and art projects with famous galleries and artists in residence. The school takes part in many external sporting competitions and is pre-eminent in at least two: table tennis and pentathlon. Important visitors, both national and international, do much to boost the school's self-confidence. Close contacts with a local paper ensure the school receives extensive favourable coverage within the community. Pupils' sense of service to others is enhanced by sponsoring charities and by giving of their own time to support the local community.
42. Very good links with the local further education college have enabled a group of SEN pupils to undertake practical vocational courses in building skills. It is expected that these courses will develop further in future years.
43. Transfer arrangements for pupils moving from the four local primary schools within the Education Action Zone are excellent. Pupils from these schools benefit from linked departments jointly planning the curriculum between Years 5 to 8, early help in modern foreign languages, extra-curricular activities and mentoring of Year 6 pupils by those in Year 10. Before they arrive at Morpeth, all these primary pupils are thoroughly familiar with the school, as they already have made multiple visits. However, these benefits are not available to the new pupils from the 20+ other feeder primary schools. Here the school does all that can be reasonably expected. There is a successful, but embryonic, partnership with two neighbouring secondary schools, whereby Morpeth provides sixth form classes in art, music and drama. Even though the school does not have a sixth form itself, it has put in place arrangements to make potential university pupils and their families more aware of the benefits of tertiary education. The school provides considerable help to pupils moving on to college or sixth form, but many transfer outside the borough. It has a fine record for contributing to teacher training.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is very good. Governance is good overall and provides a good level of support.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership of the headteacher provides a clear drive to raise standards achieved at the end of Year 11.
- Staff with whole-school responsibilities provide very good leadership of their own areas but also work very effectively as a team.

- Governors provide very good support and critical friendship to the school.
- The commitment to ensuring all pupils are included is very strong.
- Financial management is very good.
- The use of assessment data to evaluate the curriculum and track pupils' achievement needs further development.

Commentary

44. Within the very good quality of leadership and management of the school overall, the vision, drive and personal leadership of the headteacher are excellent. The high level of commitment by the senior staff is a major factor in the very good achievement of many pupils, despite the barrier to learning that often exists in the social and economic circumstances outside school. The headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers all have a high profile around school and in the immediate locality so that the pupils, parents, staff and local community have considerable respect for their leadership.
45. A very strong feature of the leadership team is the example set in focusing on not only pupils' achievement but also on the support for pupils when many are subject to barriers to learning through their social and economic circumstances outside school. The school is highly inclusive and provides equally for pupils of all backgrounds, ethnicity and individual needs. Teamwork, in the school as a whole and also in departments, results in excellent relationships, mutual support, shared expertise and the creation of a very pleasant environment in which to work.
46. The quality of management overall is very good. In departments there is some variation in experience and expertise, but shared good practice and commitment to whole-school initiatives contribute markedly to development. The school has a clear direction that reflects the needs of pupils and the community that it serves, and strategic planning towards agreed goals is very good. A particular feature has been the exceptional involvement of partners in the business community and the relationships with other schools and institutions.
47. Senior staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Curriculum management overall is very good and decisions are taken with considerable thought as to the most appropriate provision for the Morpeth pupils, together with the expectations of parents. For example, the school, unusually, does not offer work experience, having evaluated its effectiveness in previous years, but pupils benefit from very well established community and business links.
48. Performance data, examination and test results are monitored and information provided by the LEA enables evaluation of the curriculum and achievement of different groups of pupils, for example those with different ethnic backgrounds. However, the use of the data to track pupils' performance throughout the school and to set targets is an area for further development.
49. Governance of the school is good. Governors provide very good support and challenge to the school and through regular meetings they question carefully proposals for change, monitor the budget very closely, and discuss performance in public examinations. Some governors contribute directly to the mentoring arrangements and others meet with members of staff in particular areas such as science. There is scope for much more involvement in the curriculum areas although time is at a premium. Governors, nevertheless, are provided with detailed information on events in school and have thereby a good understanding of the strengths of the school and as a group are involved in planning development and improvements. They bring a high level of professional expertise, which results in well-informed discussion.
50. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities with the exception of two issues. Firstly, the governing body has not ensured that the school provides a daily act of collective worship. The school is multi-ethnic in character and governors have decided that it is inappropriate to provide worship of a Christian nature. After careful consideration they have also decided it is

not in the best interest of pupils to consult with parents on application for any alternative approach. Secondly, the school has not ensured that the time allocated to religious education in Years 7 to 9 is sufficient for the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus to be met.

51. The leadership of the SEN support department is very good. Leadership is shared between two experienced and knowledgeable special needs co-ordinators, whose overlapping roles enable them to communicate effectively and fully share the task of managing the department and its very large support staff. The management of the department is good. Very good records are generated and kept in an orderly and accessible way in personal files. The communication between the support and subject departments is good, but lacks the rigour of a formal link that would sharpen up target setting and ensure that subject teachers play their full role as SEN teachers, in line with the Code of Practice guidelines. There are strong and effective links between the support department and parents/carers. Very good use is made of an appropriate range of outside support agencies. Where appropriate, the school sets up special assemblies to prepare its pupils for the reception of pupils with more profound and complex special needs. This ensures that those pupils are quickly and effectively included in the normalisation process. This is done very sensitively and it is clear from observation that the school as a whole benefits from the inclusion initiative, of which it is justly proud.
52. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is well led and managed and is well established at departmental level. The school identifies gifted pupils from primary school data, such as CAT scores and SATs results. Subject departments are then asked to further identify gifted or talented pupils from observation and further testing within their subject areas, enabling a full register of gifted and talented pupils to be formed in the first few weeks from entry to the school. The modern foreign language department has been particularly good at picking up linguistic talents early in Year 7 and has taken the initiative in commencing GCSE European languages studies in Year 9, with GCSE examinations being taken a year early or even earlier. Other departments are showing an interest in this initiative. The local authority initiative, 'challenge in the classroom', is currently identifying good practice in the teaching of gifted and talented pupils in three subject areas, modern foreign languages, drama and English, with a view to cascading good practice through other subject departments.
53. Performance management is now fully in place and into the third cycle. The systems are standard and the school judges that target setting is effective in raising the standards of teaching. There is good support for continuing professional development. Whole-staff development continues to have a focus upon teaching and learning. Training is well planned, some of it in collaboration with other schools. The school sometimes buys in places on courses which meet identified school development plan aims and invites staff to be involved. Induction of staff new to teaching is very good. There are eleven such staff at present, involving different tracks into teaching: newly qualified teachers, graduate trainees and overseas trained teachers. In all areas the school has very good arrangements in place and the new staff are being well supported by their respective departments. They themselves are very positive about the support that they receive. The school has had problems filling middle management posts but recognises that this is a part of a national problem. Nevertheless, the school sees this difficulty as a barrier to further raising achievement in certain curriculum areas.
54. The school has very good approaches to financial management, one reason for the improvements noted in this report. The surplus in the school's accounts has increased over a period of several years of careful management. It is committed to improve the accommodation in drama and physical education, and to provide more dining space for pupils. A notable feature is the provision of funds to enhance and enrich pupils' experience through trips, visits, extra-curricular activities and community links. The principles of best value are applied very well to management activities. The school provides good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	5,669,209
Total expenditure	5,771,522
Expenditure per pupil	4,920

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	769,660
Balance carried forward to the next	667,347

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning lead to very good pupil achievement by Year 11.
- Very good marking, assessment and target-setting give pupils very clear guidance on how to improve.
- Very good leadership and management result in consistently good teaching and learning and improving standards.
- Below average standards of writing have rightly been identified as an area for improvement.

Commentary

55. Standards in English are below average. Although standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 are improving they were well below average in 2003. Standards seen are better. Results in GCSE English and English literature examinations are below the national average, but standards seen indicate improvement and are closer to average. Standards of literacy of pupils on entry are well below average. Pupils make gradual progress in Years 7 and 8, where a strong foundation is laid, then improve rapidly through Years 9, 10 and 11. By Years 10 and 11 pupils speak clearly and confidently and read independently with growing understanding. However, although pupils' writing increases in accuracy, ambition and complexity, many average and low attaining pupils who are learning English as an additional language still have an insecure grasp of grammatical structures and idiom.
56. Pupils' achievement based on prior attainment is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. There are no noticeable differences in achievement between boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language are well supported and achieve as well as other pupils. Until last year very few pupils attained above average levels in national tests in Year 9, or the highest grades at GCSE. Higher attaining pupils are now being supported and challenged appropriately and are achieving well.
57. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are very well planned and structured with a very good balance of activities and range of learning styles. Teachers model ways of reading and writing very effectively. Teaching is very closely related to assessment criteria and pupils are given frequent guidance on how to improve. Teachers question pupils skilfully and ensure that all pupils actively participate. The support given to low attaining pupils, pupils with SEN and EAL by support teachers and teaching assistants is very good. Texts chosen and other resources are frequently stimulating and challenging, and teachers convey an infectious enthusiasm for the subject. Pupil groupings generally ensure that differing needs are met. However, there are occasions, for example with the Year 7 literacy groups, when teaching could be further refined to meet individual needs. In some Year 9 classes higher attaining pupils could be encouraged to work at a faster pace, or more independently.

58. The leadership and management of English are very good. There is a very good improvement plan based on identified need, which is already taking effect, for example in developing pupils' writing skills. Samples of pupils' work and the quality of teaching and learning are regularly checked to ensure consistency of standards and marking. A team of well qualified English teachers work closely together to develop schemes of work and resources.
59. There are very good examples of curriculum enrichment. Pupils with reading difficulties are well supported outside lessons and there are good opportunities for examination revision and support. Community links are very good. The English department benefits from an outside poet in residence and joint projects with the Barbican Centre. Pupils, stimulated by workshops and visiting poets, have produced some excellent poetry.
60. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Although standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 declined, there is clear evidence of measures taken to improve pupils' writing beginning to make an impact. Reading resources in the school library are much improved, as are opportunities to use ICT in English.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. Pupils' English language and literacy skills are well below average in Years 7 to 9 and below average in Years 10 and 11. The poorly developed writing skills of some average and low attaining pupils limits standards in most subjects in Years 7 to 9, but improve markedly in Years 10 and 11. Standards of reading, speaking and listening are much better, although in mathematics pupils' inability to verbalise concepts and problems restricts progress.
62. There is good leadership and management of literacy. The literacy co-ordinator is a member of the senior management team and there has been some effective in-service training for all teachers in literacy development. There is an effective improvement plan and the school has identified the need to continue to develop pupils' writing skills across the curriculum. At present monitoring of literacy is only partly effective, but the appointment of two learning co-ordinators is intended to improve this aspect.

Modern foreign languages

French, Spanish and Bengali

Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement in French and Bengali is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and behave well.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and writing.
- Provision for higher attaining pupils and extra-curricular opportunities are very good.
- The department is well led and managed and works effectively as a team.
- The department has good links with the community.
- Assessment is not always used effectively in planning for the progress of all pupils in lessons especially for lower attaining pupils and pupils with special needs.
- Opportunities in lessons for pupils to use the languages themselves are limited.

Commentary

63. Overall standards in work seen are well below average. Standards have remained broadly constant since the last inspection report. In GCSE examinations and tests at the end of Year 9 standards overall are well below average. In GCSE examinations, in 2003, the proportion of candidates achieving grades A*-C was well below average in Bengali and in Spanish, and

below average in French. Overall there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs achieve well in GCSE examinations, and particularly in Bengali where all pupils achieve at least a pass grade. Overall this represents satisfactory achievement in relation to prior attainment.

64. In the work seen standards are well below average overall. Achievement overall is satisfactory. Pupils write short accounts and letters. They take part in short dialogues successfully and identify the main points from short texts. However, in order to do this, the vast majority are dependent upon models and written notes. In Bengali the majority are fairly confident in speaking and responding but in Spanish and French the majority of pupils lack confidence in speaking and responding spontaneously and independently. Average and higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of grammar in French and Spanish and apply grammar rules accurately in their work. In Bengali and French standards in reading and writing skills are below average but this represents good achievement in relation to prior attainment. The use of the foreign language in class discussion has improved since last inspection.
65. Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are very positive and behaviour is good. The majority have good relationships with their teachers and are concerned to do well. They settle quickly, listen attentively and concentrate on tasks set. However, in a minority of lessons, where control and management are poor, pupils are poorly behaved and set out to disrupt learning. Pupils respond well to the opportunity to take part in games and work in small groups. They respond particularly well to problem solving activities, for example in developing reading techniques in Spanish. In Bengali, pupils display high levels of motivation and concentration when working independently on reading and writing activities. They occasionally become restless and lose concentration when they are not directly involved in activities or find tasks too difficult.
66. Extracurricular opportunities for pupils are very good. Higher attaining pupils achieve well as a result of extra provision outside lessons and extension work within lessons. The department uses assessment information well to identify gifted linguists and makes it possible for them to take GCSE examinations early so that they can take a second language in Years 10 and 11. Pupils also benefit from well-established trips and exchanges to France and Spain and from frequent contact with native speakers in all three languages. In addition to this effective links have been created with schools and colleges to broaden pupils' experience, for example in teaching small groups of pupils in primary schools. Another feature is that former pupils provide extra support for current pupils in lessons.
67. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge; they use the languages being learned effectively and often exclusively in their lessons; pupils benefit from very good role models and this, combined with effective questioning, allows pupils to respond successfully and is very effective in developing pupils' listening and speaking skills. However, opportunities for pupils to use the languages themselves informally or to give and gather information are frequently limited to rehearsal or whole-class activities; this leads to a lack of confidence in using the languages spontaneously or in realistic situations. In French and Spanish when too many new phrases are introduced at once pupils have difficulty in remembering them and using them themselves. Insufficient practice orally before encountering the written form of new language adversely affects pronunciation and inhibits pupils' confidence in speaking. Inappropriate emphasis on the written form of language and grammatical accuracy inhibits average and lower attaining pupils.
68. Presentations are clear so that pupils rapidly understand and use the new language themselves. Teachers use resources and time well, for example to develop reading skills in Spanish in preparation for examinations and to clarify patterns in the languages. Assessment information is used well, for example to plan for the progress of higher attaining pupils and to enable pupils to work at an appropriate level and pace in Bengali lessons. However, the progress of lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs is slowed because

the difficulties they encounter in accessing materials or following explanations are not taken sufficiently into account.

69. Behaviour management is good in the majority of lessons and relationships are good. Teachers make good use of starters and plenaries so that pupils settle quickly and consolidate learning. Objectives are routinely shared with pupils and in the more effective lessons are often used as an opportunity for developing reading skills.
70. Links with the community are good, and have improved since the last inspection. Effective and imaginative links have been developed with the business community and primary schools and this is having a positive impact upon attitudes and standards. Past pupils act as language assistants and there is an exchange link with a school in France. A large number of Year 10 and Year 11 pupils are given conversation practice by a major City institution in support of their French and Spanish GCSEs. Year 9 pupils give pupils in the feeder primary schools a good start in learning languages by introducing them to both these languages.
71. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses and has a clear view of the way forward. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last report. Assessment information is used effectively to identify gifted linguists and underachievement and appropriate action is taken. The department works effectively as a team, clear policies are consistently applied and there is effective and regular monitoring and development of teaching and learning. Teachers in training and teachers new to the school are well supported. However, action taken to address the weaknesses in teaching in Bengali has been slow and this continues to have a negative impact on the learning and attitudes of a significant number of pupils in this subject. There is still scope for further development of the use of assessment to provide appropriate support for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. The uneven distribution of lessons on the two-week timetable slows progress over time.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good, responsible for the very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Teaching is very good, so pupils achieve very well.
- The use of assessment in the management of the department is very good, identifying any underachievement and taking appropriate action.
- Computers are not used enough in the teaching of mathematics.

Commentary

72. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 performance was well below the average of all schools, and well below the average of similar schools, based on pupils' previous performance in the Year 6 tests. Performance is rising above national trend, seen in the statistical comparison in performance with similar schools based on the large number of pupils with free school meals – well above average - similar to science, and better than English. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. In the 2003 GCSE at the end of Year 11 standards were average for the number of pupils with grades A*-C. Boys' performance was better than the girls'. Overall, mathematics was one of the best performing subjects in the school. A good feature of these results is the number of pupils earning a grade, above the average for all schools. There has been a very good

improvement in the standard of mathematics at the end of Year 11 since the last inspection.

Nearly two-thirds of the pupils attend extra classes in their own time and are entered for GCSE statistics, results overall below average.

73. Standards seen in the inspection reflect these results. The achievement of pupils in Year 9 is satisfactory because the teaching is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained at the well below average levels seen in Year 7, despite the continuing rising trend. Basic mathematical work is consolidated thoroughly. The achievement of pupils in Year 11 is very good because the teaching is very good. Standards rise from the well below average levels in Year 9 to match the average of all schools, through better arrangements in the composition of classes, and the use of highly experienced staff. Standards are enhanced by the school's links with the community. Queen Mary College, for example, has worked with pupils on the use of codes. Standards of literacy are average, although pupils have difficulty with the comprehension of problems. Standards in ICT are average. Use of computers is limited because the equipment is not always available. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls, pupils with special needs, those whose first language is not English, gifted and talented pupils and the wide range of different ethnic pupils. The achievement of pupils has improved since the last inspection.
74. Teaching and learning are good overall. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Lessons pick up work slowly from Year 7. The groupings of pupils for teaching purposes make difficulties for the less experienced teachers. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. There is a significant element of excellent teaching from the senior staff in the school, mainly in Years 10 and 11. Together with more effective groupings of pupils for teaching purposes the effect is a rapid rise in standards in these two years, building on the sound consolidation of number work seen in Year 9. The strength of the teaching lies in the subject expertise of the teachers, the planning of lessons and the engagement of pupils in their work. The teachers have a consistent approach, implementing the National Numeracy Strategy appropriately in all lessons. The department has begun to use its two computer controlled boards for teaching purposes, a resource in need of further development. External community resources are used well. For example, past pupils help develop current pupils by mentoring their progress in mathematics. Teaching has improved well since the last inspection.
75. Leadership and management are very good. The management of the department since the last inspection has coped with severe staffing difficulties very well. Current staffing arrangements are very good. Leadership has fostered a very good team approach to the teaching. The monitoring of the department's work is very good, especially the monitoring of teaching and the very good use of assessment to check on the achievement of pupils. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. Pupils' competence in mathematics is average across the curriculum. Their understanding and application of mathematics are generally satisfactory in other subjects. In science and geography, where mathematics is most widely used, pupils demonstrate a range of skills in using graphs, charts and equations. Though an agreed whole-school policy is not in place, the mathematics department has mapped opportunities for the more consistent use of mathematical concepts and for reinforcing knowledge and skills. For example, pupils develop satisfactorily: spatial concepts in perspective drawings in art, estimates of measurement in PE and the use of spreadsheets in ICT.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Teachers make insufficient use of ICT.
- The monitoring of teaching is underdeveloped.
- The marking of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 is inconsistent.
- A committed team of teachers has the capacity to raise standards.

Commentary

77. Standards achieved in the 2003 test results at the end of Year 9 were well below average compared with the national averages. This represents satisfactory achievement because this group of pupils entered the school with very low attainment. In comparison with similar schools the results are well above average. Standards achieved in the double award GCSE science examination were broadly in line with national averages. These results represent good achievement when compared to the starting point of this group of pupils at the beginning of Year 10.
78. In work seen, standards in Year 9 were average, higher than recent test results. Throughout Years 7 to 9 pupils make satisfactory progress. Lesson objectives are shared with the pupils and lessons are well structured. Relevant starter activities encourage the active involvement of pupils and provide a stimulus for the main learning activities. The ends of lessons are well used to consolidate and review pupils' understanding. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate increasing skills in practical investigations, as shown by a Year 7 class plotting magnetic fields and Year 8 pupils investigating the key structures of the flower.
79. Standards in Year 11 are average and achievement across Years 10 and 11 is good. Pupils enjoy the variety of practical activities and handle equipment competently, though the investigative skills of prediction and evaluation are less well developed. Some pupils find it difficult to recall previous learning and encounter problems with the understanding of more demanding topics. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make satisfactory progress. The pace of learning of higher attaining pupils is restricted by the progress of other pupils within the teaching group. There is a need to focus on providing more extension work and challenge for these able pupils.
80. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers are well qualified and have secure subject knowledge. They plan lessons well and include a variety of activities that retain pupil interest and involvement. They ask probing questions which are framed to support pupils' language development. This encourages pupils to think for themselves, use their initiative and apply their understanding of science. Relationships are good because pupils are treated with respect and their contributions are encouraged and valued. Written work in all years is well presented and accurate. Homework is regularly set but there are inconsistencies in marking in Years 7 to 9 that do not always inform pupils how to improve their work. Good use is made of pupil assessment data in Years 10 and 11 to identify underachieving pupils and target them for additional support. The recently acquired interactive whiteboards add a new dimension to learning, but the lack of computers and use of outdated data logging equipment affects learning opportunities. This has a negative impact upon standards.
81. Leadership and management are good. The acting head of department has established and effectively leads a young, relatively inexperienced team of teachers who work well together following a period of staffing turnover. Planning is good and departmental priorities integrate closely with the school development plan. Strategies for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching within the department are underdeveloped. Accommodation and resources are

good, but the flooring and worktops in all laboratories need attention. The department is well supported by capable and committed technicians. Improvements since the last inspection have been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall standards are below average but improving.
- Teaching is good on the GNVQ and business communications courses.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Tasks planned are not always well matched to pupils' attainment.
- ICT equipment has significantly increased but it is not used enough in some subjects.

Commentary

82. Standards by the end of Year 9 are well below average, reflecting satisfactory achievement from pupils' attainment on entry to the school. In 2003 teachers' assessments accurately indicated that not all national curriculum requirements were fully met. Skills in measurement and control and data logging were underdeveloped. Standards by the end of Year 11 were below average in 2003. Half of pupils in Year 11 gained a level one key skills award, below a pass grade at GCSE. Those also taking the GNVQ option gained grades matching national expectations. The other half of Year 11 took business and communication studies (BCS), a successful course where results were well above average, with twelve pupils gaining an A* grade, and nearly all passed.
83. Current pupils gain competence in a variety of computer applications including desktop publishing, PowerPoint presentations, Internet research, databases and spreadsheets but in other subjects do not practise enough ICT skills for the future. In some subjects, national curriculum requirements are not yet fully met. By the end of Year 11, although standards are below average overall, they are improving due to recent increases in ICT equipment, including interactive whiteboards, and timetabled ICT lessons for all pupils. Gifted and talented pupils readily help others, and pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly when given extra support. By the end of Year 11, the achievement of pupils on GNVQ and BCS courses is good, and that of pupils only taking the key skills course (half of the year group) is satisfactory.
84. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and good in Years 10 and 11 for GNVQ and BCS pupils. In Years 7 to 9 teachers are beginning to use new materials from recent national initiatives flexibly to meet the needs of most pupils, but some tasks set in the large Year 7 to 9 classes do not match pupils' abilities. Marking is infrequent, and unrelated to national curriculum levels, although recent improvements in tracking pupils' progress are evident. GNVQ and BCS pupils are given constructive targets. Good links are made with the community. For example, pupils in both benefit from attending the LEA City Learning Centre. Pupils in all years show good attitudes to their work, and treat equipment safely.
85. The school has significantly increased computers to reach the national average, through recent national funding. The co-ordinator leads and manages her team of unqualified but enthusiastic teachers very well, providing good stability and respected role models to pupils. Technical support is very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Targets are to improve standards and use and assess ICT more in other subjects.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

86. Recent improvements help pupils in Years 10 and 11 to largely receive their national curriculum ICT entitlement. Some subjects, like English and music make very good use of ICT to fulfil requirements of programmes of study, and the use in design and technology has improved considerably since last inspection. Very good practice is seen in business education. Use is insufficient in science, mathematics, art and humanities subjects, often because there are insufficient computers readily available. Pupils use computers at school to research the Internet quickly and safely. Many enthusiastically use computer rooms at school during the lunch break, and at least three quarters have home computers. Staff are starting to use their laptops to record pupils' progress, and some use interactive whiteboards and projection equipment well. Some subject staff, particularly in science and geography need more training.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards need to be raised further for GCSE pupils.
- Marking needs to be more consistent and use more supportive comments to motivate pupils and ensure work is always completed.
- The provision for fieldwork is very good for Years 10 and 11 and enriches pupils' understanding of their work.
- More work suited to pupils' needs is required by pupils in each class to improve learning.
- More use of ICT is required to develop pupils' skills.

Commentary

87. Pupils come to the school with levels of attainment, which are well below average. By the end of Year 9 pupils' work in books shows below average attainment. Pupils have progressed and therefore achievement is good. Standards in GCSE in 2003 were well below average. However, in work seen in current Year 11 books and in the coursework for examination, attainment is below average and achievement is therefore good.
88. Teaching is good overall. The best teaching was seen in Year 11 revision lessons. The lessons incorporated study skills with a variety of other activities. These included good teacher questioning designed to encourage recall and a very good variety of resources, which were used to stimulate pupils and to encourage them to use their various case studies. Support for pupils with special needs is good and there is usually additional work provided for more able pupils. Pupils with low ability need more supportive materials as they find some work difficult to understand, are slow to start and rarely able to complete their work. All low ability pupils and some pupils who do not require language support need more literacy support and more variation in tasks provided. All lessons challenge pupils and are well planned to ensure time is well used. Pupils are responsive in lessons and work well together. Classroom seating plans encourage good attitudes to study and relationships between pupils and teachers are good. The provision of enquiry work and varied field visits for all pupils provides good opportunities for independent learning. In addition, provision for creative writing and other tasks such as posters and settlement and contour models, provides very good learning opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9. There is a need for more use of ICT for research and for the development of geographical skills.

89. Leadership of the department is good. There are good assessment procedures and basic self-assessment has been introduced for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is monitored regularly and the department reviews its work annually. Management is satisfactory. Schemes of work need a consistent format. They also need to include work for the development of key skills with more clarity and emphasis. Assessment data is currently underused in all years for monitoring pupils' achievement. Improvement since 1997 has been good. Teaching is now mostly good, pupils' concentration has improved, and resources and fieldwork are much improved. Improvement is still needed in schemes of work and in the use of ICT.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An increasing range and variety of teaching methods in Years 7 to 9 cause widespread pupil engagement in the learning process.
- The quality of teaching is underpinned by the genuine commitment of teachers to the welfare of their pupils.
- Monitoring of pupil progress in Years 7 to 9 is hampered by unreliable and inconsistent methods of teacher assessment.
- Effective liaison work with feeder primaries, combined with an emphasis on literacy in Years 7 to 9, compensates for pupil attainment on entry, which is well below the national average.

Commentary

90. The standard of work seen by the end of Year 9 is below the national average. This represents good achievement, since pupil attainment on entry to Year 7 is well below average. Pupils produce increasingly well-structured causal accounts as they develop literacy skills but they lack a basic understanding of the nature and status of historical sources.
91. By the end of Year 11, the standard of work observed is in line with national expectations. This is despite a disappointing GCSE A*-C pass rate of 39 per cent in 2003, which was well below the national average. This was untypical, given pass rates of over 50 per cent in the previous two years, and can be explained by significant staff changes just before the 2003 examination. Pupils show good subject knowledge. They have developed a range of enquiry skills that enable them, for example, to offer carefully observed interpretations of political cartoons. However, attempts at source evaluation are hampered by a tendency to neglect wider contextual issues when assessing the reliability or usefulness of sources for an enquiry.
92. Pupils of differing ability make good progress. Those with SEN and EAL are provided with appropriate materials and enjoy effective in-class support. Similarly, the ablest pupils are provided with extension activities, though not all take advantage of the facility offered. Lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9, who are occasionally discouraged by class reading tasks that are too difficult, make less rapid progress.
93. The quality of teaching is good in both key stages. Overall, teachers demonstrate a sound knowledge of their subject and extensive classroom management skills. Levels of pupil engagement are impressively high, partly because of the pace and relevance of teaching but also in response to the time freely given by teachers to support pupils' learning outside of normal school hours. A particular strength is the increasing range of teaching strategies being employed, deriving in part from involvement with the London Challenge, a city-wide scheme for disseminating good teaching practice. This is supported by a clear focus on literacy development, particularly in Years 7 to 9. However, the impact of teaching on pupil achievement in Years 7 to 9 is undermined by inconsistent assessment practice. Assessment

tasks are unclear in their objectives and the diagnostic quality of marking is variable, so that some pupils are less sure than others about what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve the standard of their work.

94. The department is well led and well managed. The head of department provides good subject leadership and recovery is well in hand from disruption caused by staff changes last year. Effective management is underpinned by an evaluative, self-critical culture and collaborative working practices, reflected in the range of strategies already in place to reverse last year's fall in GCSE A*-C results.
95. Improvement has occurred since the last inspection in the range of teaching methods and in quality of resources and accommodation. However, little progress has been made in the provision of an effective scheme of assessment in Years 7 to 9.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use very good subject knowledge to involve everyone in lively discussions and so pupils learn to respect each other's opinions and religious beliefs.
- Schemes of work and detailed lesson plans are the basis of effective teaching, particularly in the many classes taught by non-specialists.
- Insufficient lesson time is a barrier to pupils' achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9, and in all years assessment is not helping their progress enough.
- Lesson tasks are varied so that the learning needs of all pupils are catered for.
- Pupils' learning experiences are not enriched by the use of ICT or community resources.

Commentary

96. GCSE results were well below the national average in 2003 and well above average in 2002. All pupils follow either the long or the short course.
97. When pupils enter the school standards are well below average. Lesson observations and work scrutiny showed present standards in Year 9 to be well below average. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the main beliefs and practices of the major world religions but are not skilled in using it to consider issues or common human experiences. Listening skills are good and pupils' tolerance for the views of others is excellent. Pupils find it difficult to write full descriptions or explanations. Present standards in Year 11 are below average.
98. Although achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 is satisfactory, it is held back because there is not enough lesson time to enable the locally agreed syllabus to be covered. The school is not therefore meeting statutory requirements. Pupils achieve well during the GCSE courses. They make particular progress in writing full answers and in presenting arguments with reference to beliefs. This was very evident in a Year 11 revision lesson on Islamic worship and celebration. Throughout the school, the gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, achieve as well as other pupils. There is no difference in the achievement of pupils from the different ethnic groups.
99. Overall, teaching and learning are both good. All lessons are planned thoroughly. The most effective teaching was seen in Year 7 lessons where brisk pace kept pupils busy and attentive, skilful questioning encouraged an exchange of views on sacred places, and then different information cards enabled all pupils to enjoy identifying features of a Christian church

and locating them on a plan. Teaching does not make enough provision for pupils to use ICT for learning; neither does it involve pupils in visiting local places of worship or hearing talks from representatives of faiths within the community.

100. Leadership of the department is good. It inspires a team of six non-specialist teachers of religious education to make their teaching effective. Priorities for development are clearly established and carried out. For example, schemes of work have been thoroughly revised, giving valuable help to the non-specialist teachers. Tenacious leadership has preserved the status of the subject despite staff problems. Management of the department is satisfactory. The setting and marking of homework are not done consistently throughout the department. Assessment is not used to set targets for pupils to improve their work and neither is it used to monitor the progress of different groups.
101. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. The overall trend has been for GCSE results to improve despite the drop in standards in 2003, which was a time of syllabus change and staffing difficulties. The department now has sufficient textbooks and the monitoring of teaching has been recently introduced.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils are included well in lesson activities and their positive attitudes to their work and good behaviour contribute to their learning.
- Pupils' design skills are good throughout the department.
- Pupils are not clear about how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- Computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) usage by pupils is not well established.
- There is very little in the design and technology curriculum for higher attainers or pupils seeking a vocational bias.

Commentary

102. GCSE results in 2003 for design and technology were well below the national results. In 2002, results were similar. Girls' attainment is higher than boys'. Girls' results show examination performance in design and technology to be better than in other subjects of the curriculum that they study. 2003 examination results showed boys performed less well in design and technology than in other subjects they take.
103. By the end of Year 9, standards of work are below the levels expected nationally. However, pupils' achievement in relation to their standard when they enter the school is satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy design and technology. Over time, through working with a range of materials, they make satisfactory gains in knowledge and understanding, particularly in designing. The majority of pupils have writing skills that are satisfactory and enable them to convey their ideas or evaluate their work. However, short responses are often given to teacher questions. Higher attaining pupils complete tasks well with some independence and extended writing is evident throughout their work. Lower attaining pupils do not always pay enough attention to detail, for example, spelling errors left in work. Some files are thin, indicating little work completed. Pupils with special educational needs produce similar work to others because they are well supported by support staff. ICT skills are satisfactory and well used in lessons.

104. In Year 11 most pupils are currently working below national standards; however, this represents satisfactory achievement over time. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are developing a satisfactory understanding of the design process and making skills are average. Higher attaining pupils produce work of a very high standard with detailed research, good techniques of drawing and thorough well-written evaluation containing technical vocabulary. There are good examples of the majority of pupils using ICT to support their learning.
105. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Learning is satisfactory across the board in response to careful planning and teachers' secure knowledge of their subject. A strength of the department is the way that teachers group pupils within a lesson so as to create mixed gender and ability groups; this is helping to break down social barriers and aid learning. Pupils' individual needs are well known to the teachers who work in effective partnership with support staff to develop pupils' skills. Homework is well used in some Year 7 to 9 lessons to consolidate learning. Sometimes, where the pace is too slow, insufficient learning takes place in the lesson particularly by boys. Assessment does not give pupils precise targets for improvement.
106. The department is satisfactorily led and managed. The team ethos is committed to improvement of pupils' standards of work. Teaching is regularly monitored. Syllabuses are under review to ensure that programmes of study are in line with recent National Curriculum changes.
107. The school has made satisfactory progress in design and technology since the last inspection, particularly in the provision and use of ICT, which was unsatisfactory at the last inspection. GCSE courses that offer a vocational bias or challenge the higher attaining pupils are not established.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to achieve to a high standard and gain GCSE grades in line with national averages and higher than almost every other subject in the school.
- The positive attitudes and very good behaviour of pupils in Years 10 and 11 leads to a settled working atmosphere in which all pupils can achieve to their potential.
- The head of department gives very good leadership to a strong team of teachers, ensuring the maintenance of high standards.
- There is no photographic studio area that would enable the subject to build further on its growing success; its development is also hindered by the lack of computers and digital software.
- There are very good links between the department and local businesses, which bring in improved resources and additional teaching skills.

Commentary

108. This is a very successful, very well led department that maintains high standards. GCSE examination results have been amongst the best in the school over several years, being broadly in line with national averages in 2003, and improving.
109. Pupils, who have special educational needs, including those who are talented in art, achieve to their potential because they are well known and appropriately supported and challenged. Low level challenging behaviour from a few boys in Years 8 and 9 is effectively dealt with over time.

Drawing skills are very effectively developed from Year 7, at which point the majority of pupils have had little formal art education; by the end of Year 9 they are achieving very well across a wide range of media, at standards that are moving towards national averages.

110. The quality of teaching is very good overall and consistently very good in Years 10 and 11, where the teachers' very good command of their subject and their enthusiasm and commitment lead to very good learning and high achievement in those years. Photography is an emerging strength within the art curriculum and pupils' technical darkroom skills and their camera handling skills are very effectively promoted on the course. There are restrictions on further development in photography; firstly the lack of studio space that can develop lighting, layout and presentational skills, secondly the lack of computers and appropriate software to enable pupils to explore the innovative field of digital photography and art. Teachers insist on good behaviour and pupils respond with positive attitudes towards their work and generally very good behaviour, building a purposeful, productive and enjoyable climate for learning in the classrooms.
111. Leadership and management of the department are very good and have steered the department to good improvement since the previous inspection. The head of department is committed, enthusiastic, experienced and well informed, and is a very good role model for colleagues and pupils alike. He leads a strong team of teachers who work flexibly across the curriculum and who work very well together in raising standards within the department. The department work is monitored effectively, leading to an annual review. Performance data is supplied to the department, but is not yet used to full effect in analysing the performance of different groups of pupils and reviewing the impact of the curriculum on those groups. There are very good links with local businesses, leading to a higher profile of pupils' art work in the community, through some very successful exhibitions of their work. Pupils' work is displayed at the offices of a major City solicitor and they benefit considerably from an artist in residence and from the school's partnerships and training links with national and local galleries.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some excellent teaching and learning result in above average standards of physical performance and very good pupil achievement.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very positive.
- The subject makes a very significant contribution to pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Some unsatisfactory accommodation is unsuitable for large teaching groups and limits opportunities for large-scale performances.

Commentary

112. Standards in drama are above average. Only one lesson was observed in Years 7 to 9 where the standards were average. Standards in GCSE examinations are in line with national averages. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Pupils at all levels of attainment demonstrate high standards of physical performance skills and an above average ability to discuss and evaluate characters and roles. Lower standards of literacy restrict attainment in examinations. The achievement of all pupils - boys and girls, low and high attainers and those with SEN or EAL is very good.
113. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In two Year 10 lessons it was excellent. Lessons are very well prepared and structured. Teachers have very high expectations and pupils rise to the challenge. Pupils have received a very good foundation so that they are able to draw on a wide range of drama techniques and strategies when performing and when

evaluating each other's work. They are very supportive of each other and very appreciative of the efforts of their peers. Teachers use questions and pupils in role very skilfully and sensitively which results in full pupil participation and a very mature understanding of concepts, group psychology and dynamics.

114. Leadership and management of drama are very good. The team of well-qualified and experienced teachers work together very well to maintain consistent standards. There is a very good development plan based on identified need, which includes the development of pupils' literacy skills. This is already making an impact. Improvement since the last inspection is good.
115. The subject makes a very significant contribution to pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are good links with citizenship and very good opportunities outside lessons to visit theatres and drama workshops. For example, drama pupils benefit greatly from undertaking projects with the National Theatre and the Barbican Centre. The department works well with partner schools and, for example, contributes teaching on GCE Advanced level courses for them. One weakness for drama is that some accommodation is unsuitable for large groups of pupils. The present accommodation also limits opportunities for large-scale productions.

Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of this outstanding department are excellent.
- GCSE results are significantly above the national average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall and excellent in Years 10 and 11.
- The links with the community are exceptionally strong and very much enhance the provision.
- Over 200 pupils take advantage of the excellent facilities for instrumental tuition.
- The school ensembles perform at an unusually high standard.

Commentary

116. For the second time in the last three years the performance of pupils in GCSE in 2003 was significantly above the national average. Standards in the present Year 11 show that this is being maintained. Pupils have excellent aural awareness, which is supported by equally excellent knowledge and some pupils show very good keyboard skills. Musical composition activity in Year 10 shows pupils to be exceptionally able in maintaining a consistent and interesting style. The number of pupils pursuing music to GCSE is currently rising very significantly.
117. Pupils' achievement across Years 7 to 9 is very good. They enter at a standard well below average but by Year 9 they all make very good progress. They can read rhythm notation very competently and can keep together well when playing as a group. In a project about blues melody many showed unusual ability in improvisation and in another class the development of singing tone was very striking.
118. Teaching and learning are very good overall and in Year 11 are excellent. The teaching is always characterised by excellent professional competence and subject knowledge. The whole style encourages and engages the pupils, whose attitudes and behaviour are very good and who respond by showing strong commitment and effort. The teaching is consistent in having high expectations of what the pupils will achieve and the pupils' own acquisition of skills and knowledge, which they readily display, is excellent. The teachers themselves produce much of the excellent lesson material. The course project booklets are substantial, informative and practical and there is much very purposeful display, which enhances the teaching spaces.

These spaces are, however, small for the large size of class groups. Circulation space is practically non-existent and the organisation of lessons requires some ingenuity. Lessons are very well planned; there are very good starters to the sessions and pupils' work is recorded as a matter of course, using cable links to the excellent new recording studio. The use of appropriate information technology is well established.

119. The department is led with a very clear vision as to what can be achieved and managed excellently. The music department's links with the community are exceptionally strong. Over 200 pupils are involved in an extensive weekly programme of instrumental and vocal lessons, which are tutored by an excellent team, many of whom have links with the Guildhall School of Music. Through the facility of the Education Action Zone some of these teachers work in the local primary schools and the coming together of these primary pupils with musicians of Morpeth School at the Barbican is a major annual community event. The school's band and choir work with tutors of exceptional professional experience and perform to an unusually high standard. Since the previous inspection, the improvements noted then have gained such momentum that the department has been transformed into an outstanding feature, which in so many of its parts is a model of what it is possible to achieve.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been a very significant improvement in GCSE results in 2003.
- The department provides an extensive range of open-access extra-curricular activities.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The very effective school sports co-ordinator programme ensures excellent primary schools' liaison.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory with no on-site fields or GCSE classroom for theory lessons.

Commentary

120. There has been a very significant improvement in GCSE results in 2003 with 54 per cent, around the national average, achieving grades A*-C compared with 21 per cent and 26 per cent in the previous two years. This represents good achievement. Current pupils are performing at a similar standard and achieving well also. By the end of Year 9 pupils are attaining at the level expected nationally and this too represents good achievement. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers. School teams have achieved notable success at local and national level, particularly in football and table tennis where, in the latter, the school is rated among the best in the country. The very effective school sports co-ordinator programme provides a means of working with the local primary schools in preparing pupils for physical education at the school.
121. Teaching and learning are good overall, with particular strengths observed in Years 10 and 11. For example, in a very good practical Year 10 lesson on health related fitness and in a very good Year 11 GCSE theory lesson, the teacher was very well prepared, delivered the lessons authoritatively and in a stimulating manner ensuring all pupils made very good progress. In good Year 7 lessons on hurdles and javelin, clear explanations and demonstrations enabled pupils to develop their personal skills in these athletics events. In all lessons teachers set high expectations in terms of performance, participation and behaviour. Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. For example in a Year 9 athletics lesson, a pupil using a wheelchair participated in the warm-up, worked on a range of appropriately modified activities and clearly enjoyed the lesson.

122. Lessons however could benefit further by teachers ensuring that the relevant teaching points are explicit and clearly linked to learning outcomes. Whilst gifted and talented pupils are very well catered for, more could be made of them in lessons to lead and demonstrate. Feedback on pupils' GCSE theory work, which does not show the same depth of application and knowledge as the practical work, has insufficient guidance to pupils on what is missing or what is required of them to improve. The department assesses pupils' performance well and in Years 7, 8 and 9 this is clearly linked to the demands of the national curriculum. However, there is currently no initial assessment of pupils' PE attainment on entry to use as a measure of achievement over time. The department has access to a vast range of data on pupils but this is currently not in a format of most use for lesson and curriculum planning.
123. Although the curriculum is broad, those pupils who do not participate in extra-curricular activities or follow the GCSE course do not have the recommended time of two hours per week. An extensive range of open-access extra-curricular activities, clubs and teams is provided, which are well attended and much appreciated by pupils and parents. Pupils in both the physical education department and the feeder primaries benefit substantially from the joint development work co-ordinated from Morpeth, particularly in football and table tennis. The Education Action Zone helps with football coaching. All current Year 10 pupils are involved in the Junior Sports Leader Award. The multi-discipline 'panathlon' event provides many pupils of all abilities with opportunities to represent the school and achieve sporting success.
124. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, the school having no on-site fields and no dedicated classroom for the teaching of GCSE theory. However, good use is made of the three internal halls and local sports stadium for football and athletics.
125. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The recently appointed head of department has made an excellent start, developing a well-structured programme to deliver the curriculum and is a good role model for staff and pupils. The development plan for the subject, whilst extensive and clearly linked to the school's priorities, does not provide sufficiently explicit criteria to assess the effectiveness of proposals. The use of ICT in the subject is underdeveloped and this is of particular concern for pupils studying the GCSE. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

126. ICT is taught through a **business and communication education course** and a second course currently leading to a **vocational GNVQ qualification** in ICT. Provision in these courses has been described under the ICT section. Business education was also sampled. One lesson was seen in the vocational course offered in Years 10 and 11 and samples of work analysed. Standards are found to be broadly average and this represents very good achievement from a low base. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and the subject is well organised and managed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP

127. Citizenship was inspected in full and provision for PSHE was sampled. The school attaches high importance to citizenship. However, it was possible, because of timetable constraints, to observe only four citizenship lessons in Year 7, and none in other years.
128. The **PSHE** programme is firmly established, well organised and well resourced. In Years 7 to 9 it consists mainly of citizenship but in Years 10 and 11 more prominence is accorded to sex and relationships education, drugs education, careers advice, revision skills and general organisation for life beyond school.

129. Teaching in Year 7 is for the most part enthusiastic and well informed and pupils are actively involved in class discussion. They respond well to small group discussion activities, show good attitudes to learning and make clear knowledge gains over the course of well organised lessons. Where teaching is less enthusiastic, key words and phrases are not explained and lower attaining pupils find it difficult to engage with learning activities.
130. The PSHE programme is very well led and well managed. In a relatively short time and with close senior management team support, the co-ordinator has planned, resourced and implemented a complete teaching programme. This includes an impressive range of community action projects, theatre and PE initiatives and regular contributions to a Tower Hamlets pupil citizenship forum. It is this emphasis on practical community engagement and responsible political activity that appeals so much to Year 9 pupils and ensures the success of the programme as a whole.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All appropriate structures for this relatively new National Curriculum subject are in place including policy, scheme of work, assessment and reporting procedures and development plan.
- Teaching is good and opportunities for pupils to engage in responsible community action are very impressive in number, range and variety.
- Citizenship is well established as the major part within the PSHE programme but reference through curriculum subjects is uneven.
- Citizenship is well highlighted across the school, with numerous well-organised displays, each featuring the school's citizenship logo.

Commentary

131. Standards observed in Year 7 are in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement, given the modest extent of familiarity with the subject on entry to the school. Pupils in Year 7 show good knowledge of political parties and electoral processes and can identify the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of government. They can discuss, analyse and evaluate alternative options, sometimes with the help of the teacher or learning support assistant, and can form appropriate judgements. Through direct participation in community action and responsible political activity, pupils learn how to improve the local environment, explore political relationships through drama, conduct mock trials, develop an understanding of cultural diversity and become Junior Sports Leaders. Scrutiny of pupils' written work, in Years 7 to 9 and throughout Years 10 and 11, shows that standards, as in Year 7, are at least in line with national expectations.
132. Teaching is generally good, well informed and well resourced. Good practice is characterised by sound exposition and productive small group discussion, leading to a lively exchange of views. This format enables most pupils to participate in the learning process and levels of engagement are high. However, teacher knowledge is variable and this can directly affect pupil attitudes to the subject. For example, the success of a lesson can depend on the ability of the teacher to explain the term 'proportional representation'. An innovative form of assessment has been devised at Years 7 to 9, in which pupils assess their own performance on each syllabus module in negotiation with their teacher, allowing end of year judgements to be made about whether pupils are working 'towards', 'at', or 'beyond' national expectations. This system, together with progress files already in use, provides a framework for school-based accreditation at Years 10 and 11.

133. The subject is energetically led and efficiently managed. The citizenship co-ordinator has a clear view of how she wishes the subject to develop and has established structures and procedures that will enable this to happen. The range of opportunities for direct community action and responsible political activity is outstanding and pupils rate this very highly. However, teaching of citizenship through curriculum subjects is at best uneven and PSHE form tutors display differing states of readiness to deliver the whole programme of study.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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