

INSPECTION REPORT

Tamworth Manor High School
Mitcham

LEA area: Merton

Unique Reference Number: 102678

Inspection Number: 213601

Headteacher: Ms. S. Williamson

Reporting inspector: Brian Evans
1049

Dates of inspection: 18th – 22nd October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708542

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

© Crown Copyright 1999

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated. Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 and the Education Act 1993, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Community
Age range of students:	12 to 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Wide Way Mitcham Surrey CR4 1BP
Telephone number:	0181 764 5112
Fax number:	0181 764 7655
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Lionel Cartlidge
Date of previous inspection:	November 1994

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Brian Evans, Rgl		Attainment and progress
		The quality of teaching
		Leadership and management
		The efficiency of the school
Pamela Goldsack, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Attendance
		Support, guidance and students' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
Marion Anderson	Physical education	
John Carnaghan	Geography	
	History	
Kathleen Cannon	Information technology	
	Special educational needs	
Joe Edge	Science	
Marie Gibbon	English	The curriculum and assessment
	Drama	
Robert Hartman	Mathematics	
Stuart Johnson	Music	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Donald Jordan	Religious education	Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Julian Nietrzebka	Art	
Mark Sims	English as an additional language	
	Equality of opportunity	
	Areas of learning for travellers' children	
Bill Stoneham	Business Studies	
Pat Swinnerton	Design and technology	

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International

“Bradley”
15 Upper Avenue
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 3XR

01323 646273

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints which are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well
Where the school has weaknesses
How the school has improved since the last inspection
Standards in subjects
Quality of teaching
Other aspects of the school
The parents' views of the school

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school 1 - 3
Key indicators

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by students at the school

Attainment and progress 4 - 13
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 14 - 19
Attendance 20

Quality of education provided

Teaching 21 - 29
The curriculum and assessment 30 - 43
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 44 - 49
Support, guidance and students' welfare 50 - 55
Partnership with parents and the community 56 - 59

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management 60 - 64
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 65 - 68
The efficiency of the school 69 - 73

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science 74 - 116

Other subjects or courses 117 - 190

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence 191 - 193

Data and indicators 194

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- . Monitors, evaluates and supports the overall good quality of teaching and learning so that students make good progress and improve their standards;
- . Headteacher provides very good leadership and has the full support of governors and staff in seeking to raise standards further;
- . Provides very good support for students with English as an additional language so that they quickly achieve good standards in their schoolwork;
- . Has a very good professional development programme enabling teachers to extend their range of strategies in the classroom to support students' attainment and progress;
- . Makes very good provision for students' support, guidance and welfare;
- . Has strong links with the local community and communicates well with parents;
- . Financial planning is good.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Basic writing skills (including sentence construction, spelling and punctuation) and presentation of work is below national expectations for many students;
- II. Boys' standards fall below that of girls by a large margin;
- III. Attendance rates are unsatisfactory and below 90 per cent.

The school has more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of students at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. It is successfully challenging the culture of non-achievement of students of all attainment levels through a major focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. This is having a major impact on students' attainment and progress. Teachers now present work in many different ways. This wider range is effective and teachers have higher expectations of what their students can achieve. Attendance, however, has not improved significantly in spite of strenuous efforts and the use of a continuing range of initiatives by the school in partnership with the education welfare service. Both senior and middle managers now have good expertise in monitoring and evaluation of good practice in classroom teaching and learning. Strategic development planning is good. There has been good progress in improving the quality and range of learning support for students with special educational needs. However, statutory requirements for collective worship are not met.

The school has good strategies and systems in place to continue to raise standards in all curriculum areas and has a good capacity to sustain improvement.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			<i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E
Key Stage 3 test	D	B	
GCSE examinations	E	D	

The attainment of students when entering the school is below the national average. At the end of Year 9 and Year 11 standards are below the national average. In the Year 9 national assessment tests in 1998, the proportions of students reaching the expected levels were close to the national average in English and below the national averages in mathematics and science. In comparison with national results for similar schools (determined by the percentage of free school meals), students' performance was above average for English and close to the average for mathematics and science. Results in 1999 fell below those of 1998 because the profile of attainment for that year's Year 9 students was lower than average. The overall trend between 1996 and 1999, as measured by average levels in national assessment tests, is a rising picture. National comparisons for the end of Key Stage 3 assessments for 1999 were not available at the time of the inspection.

In Years 8 and 9, the standards of the work seen during the inspection were below national expectations in English, mathematics, science, history, geography and religious education. They were in line with national expectations in art, design and technology, drama, information technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. They were above the national expectation in music.

In the 1998 GCSE examinations the proportion of students who achieved five or more GCSE grades A* to C was well below the national average, and below that of students from similar schools. However, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to G in 1998 was close to the national average. Between 1996 and 1998 average GCSE scores per student showed a downward trend whilst the national trend was rising. The 1999 results were a very significant improvement on 1998 and indicates a strong reversal of the downward trend. This improvement results from higher teacher expectations and the intensive monitoring and support which Years 10 and 11 students receive from staff mentors. GCSE results have improved in most subjects in 1999 when compared with 1998.

In 1999 girls outperformed boys in gaining GCSE grades A* to C by more than 10 percentage points in art, design, English Language and literature, French, history, media studies and combined science. The difference in performance was particularly marked in English where girls outperformed boys by 26 percentage points. Boys outperformed girls in single science and music where the numbers of candidates entered were small.

QUALITY OF TEACHING

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 8-9	Good	English, information technology, music, drama, physical education.	In a few modern languages lessons.
Years 10-11	Good	Physical education, religious education, drama, science.	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons; good or better in 63 per cent of lessons, and very good or excellent in 20 per cent. Teaching was unsatisfactory or poor in six per cent of lessons. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teaching was particularly effective in English, information technology, music, drama and physical education but there was good teaching in all subjects.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good: attitudes and behaviour are generally good in classrooms and around the school; students have a good rapport with each other and with adults in the school.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory: however, the school's procedures are rigorous and there has been a small improvement since the last inspection; a minority of students arrive late for school.
Ethos*	Good: there is a positive climate for learning.
Leadership and management	Very good: the headteacher provides very strong leadership which has enabled the school to raise standards in spite of unavoidable staffing changes and difficulties in recruitment; governors give good support to the school and are extending their involvement in the monitoring of the quality of education in the school.
Curriculum	Satisfactory: broad and balanced curriculum; effective provision for students' personal and social education; good partnership with local colleges to prepare for next stage of education and training.
Students with special educational needs	Good: there has been marked improvement in provision for students with special educational needs.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good overall: satisfactory for students' spiritual development and good for students' social, moral and cultural development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory; sufficient staff to meet needs of the curriculum; very good staff development programme; accommodation satisfactory; adequate learning resources.
Value for money	Good: efficiency in managing resources leading to higher standards.

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

• **The parents' views of the school**

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
IV. The school enables good standards of work V. Very approachable for parents VI. Handles complaints well VII. Encourages students to take part in activities outside lessons	VIII. Inconsistent amounts of homework

Inspection evidence supports parents' positive views on the school. The school puts a high priority on all students being given homework appropriate to their age. However, inspectors did find evidence of some variation between curriculum area in the quality and amount of homework set.

• **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

To improve standards further the governors and senior management team need to:

Implement a programme for improving students' basic literacy skills within the context of basic skills quality mark.

(Paragraphs – 8, 79,80,112,140,144,149,152,164)

- ◆. Introduce methodical assessment of students' basic literacy skills during each year.
- ◆. Provide suitable training for all staff on developing students' writing skills.
- ◆. Monitor exactly what writing skills are being taught in curriculum areas so that schemes of work link into the overall learning experience of all students.

Improve boys' performance and narrow the gap in their attainment compared to that of girls.

(Paragraphs – 7,22,80,99,109,123,147,139,186)

- ◆. Use the school's extensive database to build hypotheses on patterns of achievement for all groups of students including ethnic groups, boys and girls and differing attainment levels.
- ◆. Identify areas and aspects of subjects in the curriculum where boys are performing below the national average for boys in similar schools.
- ◆. Monitor whether gender issues are identified in students' targets for improving standards of work.
- ◆. Integrate into existing curriculum area priorities strategies to improve attainment levels for all groups of students.

Continue with all efforts to develop strategies to improve attendance and punctuality.

(Paragraph – 20)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- ◆. Independent learning (127).
- ◆. Teaching staff to use information technology more in their subjects (7, 28,157,183).
- ◆. Inconsistency in setting homework. (27).
- ◆. Develop a unified perspective on assessment in order that all curriculum areas meet the same good standards. (42-43)

Also

- ◆. Continue to seek ways in which a daily act of collective worship can be held for all students. (62)

(A key issue in the last report and a statutory requirement)

.. INTRODUCTION

.. Characteristics of the school

1. Tamworth Manor High School is a 12–16 comprehensive school in the Borough of Merton. It was reorganised in 1990, losing its 13-18 status and becoming a 12-16 comprehensive school. Consultations for further reorganisation are complete and awaiting the Secretary of State's approval. The proposal for Tamworth Manor is that it should become a 11-16 comprehensive school. Currently there are 842 students on roll which is about the same size as most other secondary schools. There are more boys than girls in Years 8, 9 and 10, but in Year 11 the numbers of girls and boys are about the same. Around 199 students (24 per cent) are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. There are 166 students (20 per cent) with English as an additional language, which is high. Around 300 students (35 per cent) are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Over 180 students (21 per cent) are on the register of special educational needs which is above the national average. The percentage of students with statements of special educational needs (5 per cent) is well above the national average.

2. Most students are recruited from local housing estates which have a wide mix of housing and socio-economic characteristics but a significant minority travel in from other boroughs. The overall attainment of students on entry to the school fluctuates from Year 8 to Year 11 but is consistently below the national average for comprehensive schools. Standardised tests show that just over one in five students enter the school with reading ages that are 2 years below their chronological age. The percentage of adults who attended higher education, and the percentage of children in high social class households, are considerably below average nationally in the local wards that the school serves. The percentage of students who continue with education either into a sixth form or into further education courses at Tamworth Manor High School in 1997 and 1998 was 79 per cent. Around 15 per cent go into training or into employment.

3. The school's mission statement is succinct and appropriate: 'To bring about effective learning and maximise the achievements of each of our students and enable them to discover the power of knowledge and acquire the values needed for a worthwhile future.' The main priority identified by governors and staff is to raise achievement. The overall strategy for improving standards is clearly defined in the school's development plan. Its GCSE targets for 2000 are 27.4 per cent for 5 or more GCSE grades A* to C, 93 per cent for GCSE grades A* to G and average GCSE points score per student of 27.

3. Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	114	95	209

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	41	56	40
	Girls	59	51	38
	Total	100	107	78
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	48 (62)	52 (51)	36 (44)
	National	N/A (58)	N/A (60)	N/A (60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	11 (25)	21 (23)	9 (14)
	National	N/A (35)	N/A (36)	N/A (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	47	66	54
	Girls	69	65	65
	Total	116	131	119
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	55 (60)	62 (56)	57 (44)
	National	N/A (62)	N/A (64)	N/A (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	17 (20)	27 (26)	17 (19)
	National	N/A (31)	N/A (37)	N/A (31)

¹

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	88	107	195

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of students achieving standard specified	Boys	24	79	89
	Girls	31	93	96
	Total	55	172	185
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	28 (20)	83 (88)	94 (92)
	National	N/A (44.6)	N/A (89.8)	N/A (95.2)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such students* who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success rate
School	69 (60)	78 (75)
National		N/A

²

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	9.4
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	3.0
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of students (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	127
Permanent	2

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	20
Satisfactory or better	94
Less than satisfactory	6

3. **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

3. **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

3. **Attainment and progress**

4.The attainment of students when entering the school is below the national average. At the end of Year 9 and Year 11 standards are below the national average. In the Year 9 national assessment tests in 1998, the proportions of students reaching the expected levels were close to the national average in English and below the national averages in mathematics and science. In comparison with national results for similar schools (determined by the percentage of free school meals), students' performance was above average for English and close to the average for mathematics and science. Results in 1999 fell below those of 1998 because the profile of attainment for that year's Year 9 students was lower than average. The overall trend between 1996 and 1999, as measured by average levels in national assessment tests, is a rising picture. National comparisons for the end of Key Stage 3 assessments for 1999 were not available at the time of the inspection.

5.In Years 8 and 9, the standards of the work seen during the inspection were below national expectations in English, mathematics, science, history, geography and religious education. They were in line with national expectations in art, design and technology, drama, information technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. They were above the national expectation in music.

6.In the 1998 GCSE examinations the proportion of students who achieved five or more GCSE grades A* to C was well below the national average, and below that of students from similar schools. However, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to G in 1998 was close to the national average. Between 1996 and 1998 average GCSE scores per student showed a downward trend whilst the national trend was rising. The 1999 results were a very significant improvement on 1998 and indicates a strong reversal of the downward trend. This improvement results from higher teacher expectations and the intensive monitoring and support which Years 10 and 11 students receive from staff mentors. GCSE results have improved in most subjects in 1999 when compared with 1998.

7.In 1999 girls outperformed boys in gaining GCSE grades A* to C by more than 10 percentage points in art, design, English Language and literature, French, history, media studies and combined science. The difference in performance was particularly marked in English where girls outperformed boys by 26 percentage points. Boys outperformed girls in single science and music where the numbers of candidates entered were small.

8.From work seen and lessons observed during the inspection, students make good progress. Progress in English is good in Years 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Students have a positive approach to English. Speaking and listening skills are in line with national expectations but reading and writing skills are below the national expectation. Research skills are satisfactory though some students' understanding of the skills required in efficient information retrieval is unsatisfactory. Many lower-attaining students use a limited range of reading strategies and read hesitantly. Writing skills, particularly of boys, are below national expectations because there is no coordinated school approach to developing basic skills in sentence construction, spelling and punctuation. Good opportunities are provided in media studies and modern foreign languages for students to extend their literacy skills. In other subjects as, for example in history and geography, there is insufficient emphasis on developing students' vocabulary through extended writing.

9.Students with English as an additional language make good progress. Good guidance is provided for class teachers who have additional language students in their teaching groups.

10. Progress in mathematics and science is satisfactory in Years 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In both subjects the improved progress in Years 10 and 11 since the last inspection is mainly due to teachers preparing students more effectively for the GCSE examinations. Progress in Years 8 and 9 in science is unsatisfactory when the work set for students is too easy. Teachers are addressing concerns that boys are making relatively slower progress than girls and where there is evidence of underachievement by students. Standards of numeracy and mental number skills in mathematics are satisfactory and improving. Students apply their mathematical skills satisfactorily in other subjects.

11. In design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages progress is satisfactory in all years. In art and religious education it is satisfactory in Years 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Progress is good for drama, physical education and business studies students.

12. Students make good progress in information technology lessons and their skills are applied in a number of other curriculum areas. Students are given good opportunities to make further progress in developing their information technology skills in mathematics and music but overall students' progress is hindered because these skills are not integrated into all schemes of work. For example, there are insufficient opportunities for students to access software in design and technology and none in modern foreign languages.

13. There has been a marked improvement in most areas of the school's special educational needs provision since the last inspection. There continues to be a significant number of students entering the school with poor basic skills but most students with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress. The special needs register identifies 184 students as having a wide range of needs. In Years 8 and 9 a significant number of the students have settled back into mainstream schooling after periods of exclusion or attendance at special schools. They work towards academic targets with varying degrees of success, improving their basic literacy and numeracy skills. This impacts favourably on their learning in other curriculum areas so that all students with special educational needs are entered for Certificates of Achievement and take at least one GCSE examination. Behaviour targets are identified well and promote improved attendance and punctuality. Most students make good progress in their personal and social development.

13. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

14. Students have a positive attitude toward their work. They concentrate well and work carefully. Students co-operate effectively with each other either in groups or in pairs and share ideas and equipment well. For example, students in Year 11 successfully discussed Macbeth in small groups and were able to reach useful conclusions about the text. Students' positive attitudes towards learning are also illustrated by their high levels of participation in extra-curricular clubs and sports.

15. Behaviour is good overall. There is no evidence of graffiti or vandalism and the school functions as an orderly community. Students are lively but friendly as they move around the school between lessons and at mid-day. Students support the behaviour policy and respond well to the school's system of rewards and sanctions. Those interviewed indicated that there is a little bullying but it is dealt with effectively when it occurs. None was observed during the inspection. There is a small number, mainly boys, who misbehave.

16. Relationships among students and between adults and students are good. Students listen carefully in whole school assemblies and in a Year 10 assembly they expressed support when their friends were awarded certificates for hard work. The paired reading scheme between Year 9 and Year 11 students is working effectively to further improve good

relationships. Students from a neighbouring special school enjoy their participation in drama lessons.

17. Personal development is satisfactory. Students display good social skills. Students set targets for themselves during the planned academic tutorial sessions but these are not always specific enough to support progress well. Outside the classroom students assume responsibility well as, for example when they are on duty in the school foyer. However, in the classroom there are fewer opportunities for students to display initiative or to take on responsibility are limited.

18. Most students are well motivated, have good self-esteem and show interest and enthusiasm in their lessons and are happy to discuss their work and take pride in their achievements. Relationships between ethnic groups are good. Students are listened to, feel valued and are treated with respect. Boys and girls are treated equally. The school keeps detailed records on racist incidents and on issues giving cause for concern. Incidents of racial and sexual harassment are monitored. A senior member of staff maintains an accurate log of all incidents and these are quantified and analysed fortnightly.

19. There have been large number of fixed exclusions for one or two days and two permanent exclusions during the last reporting year. Exclusions are high but falling. The school monitors permanent and fixed exclusions by ethnicity and gender. More boys than girls are excluded but the proportion of ethnic minority groups excluded is not significantly different from those of other students.

19. **Attendance**

20. Attendance continues to be unsatisfactory and has not improved since the last inspection. The overall attendance rate for the last reporting year is 87.6 per cent and this is significantly lower than the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence is 3 per cent and this is also well above the national figure. The attendance rate of Year 8 students is 90 per cent. Attendance is recorded on a computerised system and registers are kept to a high standard. Good attendance is properly rewarded by certificates. A significant number of students arrive late on a regular basis. In many cases there are delays in public transport. Students are aware of the sanctions in place for accumulated late arrivals. The school is working hard to improve attendance and has a good relationship with the education welfare officer who visits weekly. Some persistent non-attenders are from other boroughs. The school provides good support for students who have long-term absences because of illness. Unsatisfactory attendance and continual lateness has a negative effect on attainment and progress.

20. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

20. **Teaching**

21. The quality of teaching is good. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons, good or better in 63 per cent of lessons, and very good or excellent in 20 per cent. Teaching was unsatisfactory or poor in six per cent of lessons. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teaching is particularly effective in English, information technology, music, drama and physical education but there is good teaching in all subjects.

22. Teachers' knowledge and understanding about their subjects is good. They use their expertise and experiences to make their teaching stimulating and interesting. Teachers of information technology have a secure knowledge and understanding of computer software. However, in a few lessons, teaching strategies were not based on a sound knowledge and understanding of the needs of low attainers. In such lessons, there is little evidence of the use of writing frames, vocabulary banks or specialised resources and strategies.

23. Teachers' expectations are good. In many lessons the high expectations the teachers have are clearly shared with students. Many teachers use effective revision techniques to lead into new work and round off lessons with a summary of what has been studied, as well as a taste of what lies ahead. This structure is applied almost uniformly, and it adds clarity on what teachers expect from their students.

24. Lesson planning and the use of time and resources are sound and linked to the well-written schemes of work. For example in mathematics and art, lessons are structured so that short challenging tasks ensure a brisk pace to the lesson and end with a brief well-devised revision session. In physical education lessons ample time is allowed for explanation, students' planning, activity and evaluation of performance. In a few lessons, for example in history and geography, the pace of students' work slackens towards the end of lessons and the commitment and work-rate of students falters.

25. Teachers' organisation and selection of activities and teaching styles are good in the majority of lessons. A significant strength in the teaching of music is that the work set gives scope for students of all attainment levels to achieve well. In other subjects unsatisfactory or poor teaching was seen on a very few occasions during the inspection and was mainly associated with unsatisfactory classroom management.

26. The overall quality and use of day-to-day assessment is good in all years and a significant improvement since the last inspection. In drama very good use is made of assessment data in planning students' learning. In mathematics and science assessments systems are uniformly good and focus on improving students' attainment. In all subjects there are good examples of assessment helping students to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. The progress of students with English as an additional language is monitored well through good assessment routines.

27. The quality of homework is satisfactory though parents' comments on occasional inconsistency in its setting are supported by inspectors' observations during the inspection. Some homework set does not provide sufficient extension work for the higher-attainer as for example in design and technology when the work set is to finish work begun in lessons. In such cases many students are sometimes left with little or no work to complete at home.

28. Teachers in mathematics, science and English make good use of information technology in their subjects and this represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. In music, keyboards are linked to computers to aid composition. However, many teachers provide insufficient opportunities for students to develop their information technology skills.

29. The teaching of students with special educational needs is satisfactory but varies in quality. Individual and small group lessons are taught satisfactorily by support teachers and are sometimes very good. Support staff are positive, using humour to encourage, and set high but realistic expectations. Their records of students' progress inform subsequent sessions. There are very good examples of teachers meeting an individual's specific educational need. For example, in art a visually impaired student achieves a high standard of work using a computer graphics package based on shape and colour. Teachers in information technology lessons simplify effectively the text of examination coursework to encourage poor readers. In-class support for students with special needs is effective in modern languages, music and textiles, but is unsatisfactory in a minority of lessons when the support assistant takes a passive role.

29. The curriculum and assessment

30. The curriculum is of good quality, broadly based and relevant in all years. It provides equally well for boys and girls of all standards of attainment and those with special educational needs. The school has made improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection. Although the time allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11 remains inadequate, provision in Years 8 and 9 is satisfactory and the recent appointment of a specialist teacher in the subject enables the school to plan for further development of the provision.

31. The school has recently reviewed its arrangements and improved its option choices in Year 10. In response to a survey and discussions with students the school has widened the arts and humanities choices in order to maintain a balance between subject options and introduced business studies. It is now possible for students in Year 10 to choose two 'arts' subjects. Schemes of work in geography and design and technology are now satisfactory and there have been improvements in the scheme of work for design and technology.

32. The curriculum options in Years 10 and 11 exceed minimum statutory requirements with a well balanced range of GCSE and vocational courses on offer. Students are given a very detailed booklet which provides curriculum guidelines for all subjects which helps them to make informed choices. There are good alternative vocational courses in Key Stage 4. These include the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) courses in Leisure and Tourism and Health and Social Care, the Basic Certificate of Food Hygiene and certificates of achievement in science, design and technology and in information technology.

33. The school makes good provision for informing students of its expectations for coursework in Years 10 and 11. Students are given a detailed booklet outlining arrangements in different subjects and they receive advice and support in tutor groups to help them develop their organisational skills. There are clearly displayed notices in curriculum areas to remind students of approaching deadlines.

34. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum for Years 8 and 9 are met. The curriculum time available for music in Year 9, where course units alternate with drama, is below the national average. The curriculum provision is enhanced by the addition of taster courses in Italian and German in Year 8 and by drama in Years 8 and 9.

35. There is a comprehensive and good programme for students' personal development which covers effectively areas such as health education, sex education and drugs misuse. Students are given opportunities to consider social and moral issues through well planned discussion and activities. Standards of teaching and learning are good and there are useful links with areas of work in religious education, science and drama.

36. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum for the students with special needs offers accredited award schemes such as Awards Scheme Accreditation Developmental Network (ASDAN), essential life skills and careers training. Assessment procedures are good, with weekly meetings between the special educational needs adviser and support staff review student progress and discuss teaching strategies. Individual education plans are well written and comprehensive, accurately reflecting the recommendations of annual reviews and identified needs. Currently updated at least twice a year, and sometimes more frequently, they provide an effective record of the students' progress over time. Copies are held in the staff room, and teaching and support staff have copies of the students' individual targets.

37. Students are entered for GCSE in their home language if they have reached a sufficient level of literacy. The library stocks a small number of bilingual phrase books. The school challenges stereotypical choices at GCSE through counselling and consequently for example boys are well represented in food technology and girls in resistant materials.

38. The school plans a good induction programme for students at the beginning of Year 8 but there remains some variability in the links with middle schools. The school prepares students in Year 11 well for the next stages in their education. The school organises very successful workshops for parents and students to learn about available courses and students and parents visit colleges on open evenings. Students in Year 10 benefit from work experience and all staff are involved in monitoring. Senior staff at the school have regular contact with providers of education after Year 11. The proportion of students continuing in education is in line with the national averages.

39. The school offers a good range of extra curricular activities including a good selection of sporting activities. Around 40 per cent of students and a significant number of staff in addition to physical education teachers, are involved in these activities which represent a good range of team and individual participation. During the week of the inspection a number of lunch time and after school activities were observed including drama and music rehearsals for a Christmas production and scrabble, information and communications technology club and art clubs. English, mathematics and science organise useful post-school sessions to support students' learning.

39.

40. Good provision is made for careers and guidance, with a well-planned and documented programme being administered by two very enthusiastic and committed teachers. Careers education and guidance commences in Year 8 and is offered in all years as part of the school's 'Learning for Life' programme. The course covers very well a variety of issues including key skills, self-awareness, making choices and preparing for life beyond GCSEs, whether in the world of work or in further education. A common theme running through the programme is a desire to raise students' expectations and this objective is in accord with the school's own goals. The programme is interesting and varied and includes a number of speakers and past students who act as role models. Parental involvement has increased and specialist information evenings have been included. The response from parents has been heartening. The programme also includes good provision for advising students of the opportunities open to them at the end of Year 11. The work experience programme is organised well.

41. The provision for the small number of traveller students in the school is good. The school has a welcoming environment for traveller students. There is good in-class support to facilitate integration and students are set good targets and make good progress. Support teachers work closely with mainstream teachers to foster good working relationships. Issues to do with correct uniform and kit are handled sensitively. Office staff act speedily on administrative arrangements to ensure any delay in readmitting students is kept to a minimum. Good links are established with middle schools to ensure smooth transition to secondary school.

42. Whole school systems for assessing and monitoring students' progress are good. Since the last inspection the school has improved its systems for establishing a clear picture of the pattern of students' attainment on a year by year basis. Each curriculum area is regularly reviewed and monitored by senior management, test and GCSE results are analysed and targets reviewed. The assessment policy provides clear guidance. The previous inspection identified weaknesses in assessment procedures in geography and design and technology. There are now good systems in place for geography and new improved systems in place for Years 8 and 9 in design and technology. There are good systems of record keeping and marking in a number of curriculum areas and the priority now is to develop a unified perspective in order that all curriculum areas meet the same good standards. Further training is required for staff in the use of electronic data bases. The school has a good homework policy.

43. The school makes satisfactory use of assessment data. Students are increasingly aware of the National Curriculum and GCSE levels at which they are working and the school uses national tests to judge students' attainment at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11.

Assessment information is used effectively in science and mathematics to group students and to transfer them between groups according to their progress. Some curriculum areas are developing effective procedures to involve students in the assessment of their own work but this is not yet a consistent practice. When work is assessed, teachers do not always make clear what is needed to make further progress. There is some provision for setting targets for students to achieve during academic tutoring but these targets are often too general and insufficiently focussed on the students' particular stage of development. There is inconsistent use in some curriculum areas of targets on individual education plans for students with special educational needs. A number of curriculum areas have compiled a portfolio of exemplars at various National Curriculum levels to assist moderation though this is not yet in place in all areas.

43. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

44. The overall provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

45. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. It is supported in curriculum areas and assemblies but the school does not hold a daily act of collective worship for all students. However, the assemblies which are held normally include spiritual and moral themes and there are opportunities for quiet reflection. Students are reminded that this time for reflection is an opportunity for each individual to pray or consider the theme in the context of their own beliefs. Students are orderly and attentive in assemblies. In two assemblies on human rights students were invited to consider how they might help to create an environment in which there is less fear, hate and suffering and consider how everyone can work together to tackle racism.

46. In religious education the teachings and beliefs of the world's main religions are studied and during the week of the inspection topics covered included the teachings of the main religions regarding divorce, funeral rites with particular regard to Sikhism and the story of Good Friday. The music curriculum area contributes through assembly music and through the study of the music of the great composers.

47. Provision for students' moral development is good. In English students discuss old age, disability, moral choices, relationships and read and discuss texts such as 'Of Mice and Men', 'An Inspector calls' and 'A View from the Bridge'. Drama too offers such opportunities and, in science, the scientific method is essentially a search for truth; business studies is concerned with issues such as advertising, marketing and employment. Many modern language texts and stories are concerned with positive values and care for property and equipment is particularly important in areas such as music and design technology.

48. Provision for students' social development is good. Teachers provide good role models. Opportunities for group work are frequent across many subject areas and in a very wide range of extra-curricular activities. The student journal sets out responsibilities for students and adults and personal development is encouraged through target setting. The school council enables students to raise effectively issues of concern with teachers. Sporting activities are very extensive and well supported and the intensive training course for students preparing to be ball boys or girls at the Wimbledon championships has an impact on a much larger section of the student population than simply those who are finally selected to take part. Other well-supported extra-curricular activities include the school band, vocal groups, keyboard and ensemble groups, the Christmas music and drama production, the Easter concert, several subject related clubs and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. There is a community day and an industry day each year and an 'Interactive' week involves Years 8 and 9 students in a choice of activities from workshops, camping, visits to galleries, a fishing course, horse riding, mountain biking and water sports.

49. Provision for students' cultural development is good. The music curriculum includes the study of the music of China, India, Africa, Indonesia, Black American and Gujarati music, the history of Western European music. Students learn about other cultures in foreign language courses and these include regular exchanges with Italy and France. The English GCSE course includes the study of poems from other cultures; the library has a display on slavery and a range of fiction from other cultures but there are no non-European foreign language books. The art curriculum area during the inspection had a range of work on display around the school including a display of painting based on Islamic designs and another display of work based on the paintings of the Russian abstract expressionist, Kandinsky. Other student experiences include a lunchtime club for Years 8 to 10 and lunchtime debates. Students learn about the different religious traditions in religious education and the foods and ethnic textile designs of different nations in technology. However, there is an absence of signs, displays and notices which reflect the home language of students. There are relatively few mother tongue and bilingual books in the library. Papers, journals and magazines do not reflect the ethnic mix of the school.

49.

Support, guidance and students' welfare

50. Provision for the support, guidance and students' welfare is very good and has improved significantly since the last inspection.

51. Arrangements for monitoring academic and personal development are good. Students are well known to teachers as individuals and the school works very hard to enable all students to take advantage of the educational and career opportunities available. Form tutors monitor homework regularly and help students set their personal academic targets during academic tutorials. The school makes very good use of agencies from the local authority to provide work experience and opportunities for students who have difficulty making progress within the national curriculum. Students are able to communicate with adults in an atmosphere of trust. The commitment to ensure that all students moves forward successfully to either further education or employment is a strength of the school. The school maintains good links with a wide range of outside support agencies.

52. The procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline are very good. The behaviour and anti-bullying policies are specific and well known to students and members of staff. Rewards and sanctions are fair and are applied consistently. The school has high expectations of behaviour and recognises that there are some students who have difficulty conforming to the rules. Effective procedures are in place to support teachers when sanctions are unsuccessful in correcting misbehaviour. Students who need to 'cool off' are withdrawn from lessons and assigned to an in-house supervision room. Respect for each other and awareness of the dangers of bullying are taught regularly in the personal and social education programme

53. Procedures for monitoring and supporting attendance are very good. The attendance policy is specific and there is careful monitoring of attendance by form tutors, the heads of each year group, the education welfare officer and integrated support services. There are certificates for students with excellent attendance awarded each term. Students who are regularly late are assigned detention. Parents are reminded about the importance of prompt, regular attendance. Students and parents are discouraged from taking holidays during term.

54. Very good procedures are in place for child protection. Guidelines regarding child protection are reviewed regularly with the staff. The school maintains good links with appropriate support agencies. Students are taught the importance of personal safety in personal, social and health education lessons. The school nurse visits each week and provides a good 'drop in' service for students.

55.Procedures for promoting students' well being, health and safety are very good. There is a number of staff trained in first aid and students who become ill at school sympathetically cared for in the medical room. The health needs of students that have been identified by their parents are well known and procedures for treating students with asthma or other conditions are in place. Fire drills take place routinely. Since the last inspection the statutory role of governors regarding health and safety has increased. The school has moved forward in this respect and governors take part in risk assessments that are carefully documented and up to date.

55. Partnership with parents and the community

56.Overall, the school enjoys a good partnership with parents and the community and this has been maintained since the last inspection.

57.The quality of information provided for parents is good. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are informative and meet statutory requirements. Students' end of year reports for Years 8, 9, and 10 are detailed and clearly inform parents about their children's strengths and weaknesses in all subjects of the national curriculum. Parents of students in Year 11 are appropriately informed of progress and attainment through test results and the Record of Achievement. There is an annual meeting for parents to discuss progress with either the form tutor or subject teachers. Parents appreciate the information provided in the regular newsletters.

58.Parental involvement in their children's learning is good. Parents provide practical support through the Tamworth Manor Association. Volunteers on the committee organise fundraising events during the year and helped to finance the school mini-bus and extra resources for the library. The activities of Year 8 parents' group are aimed to help them provide additional support for learning at home. Parents are supportive of their children's education and make regular use of the students' journal to check that homework is completed and messages are relayed to teachers. There is good communication between parents of students with special educational needs and the teaching staff. This has a positive impact on the progress set in individual education plans. Home links are further developed through positive liaison between the coordinator and the educational psychologist. External advisers visit the school regularly in support of those students with difficulties such as hearing or vision impairment.

59.The school has sound links with the community. Students taking part in work experience have a wide range of employers available through an agency contracted by the local authority. Year 9 students are introduced to representatives from the business world at the annual Industry Day.

59. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

59. Leadership and management

60.Leadership and management in the school is good and has a significant influence on the rising overall standards in the school. The headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear educational direction for the school. She is well supported by her senior management team. There is a good ethos for teaching and learning. The implementation of an effective system of monitoring, support and evaluation of classroom practice is having a positive impact on students' progress in all years. This has been achieved in the difficult context of an extensive debate on re-organisation of the borough's education provision and difficulties in recruitment of staff. The headteacher and senior management team cope well with these additional pressures.

61.The senior management team and most heads of curriculum areas monitor teaching well and are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their teams. Senior staff provide effective line management and participate in middle management reviews. Developments in the curriculum are good and assessed carefully by senior managers and since the last inspection adjustments have been made to increase choice and relevance for students within the curriculum.

62.The governing body plays a productive role in the development of the school and has a good, effective committee structure. Members of the governing body provide good links with local businesses. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents meet statutory requirements. However, the school does not hold a daily act of collective worship for all students which is a statutory requirement. This was a key issue in the last inspection.

63.Progress on the key issues identified in the last inspection report has been good, and strategies are in place for it to continue. The school development plan is simple and clear and monitored well by the senior management team. The plan sets out clear priorities for 1999/2000 which seek to raise achievement through improving the quality of teaching and learning and the targets and success criteria are specific and are expressed as measurable outcomes. Curriculum areas' policies and planning are very good. Reviews and the monitoring of teaching inform future planning, which is linked to the school development plan. The school's mission statement and main aims are broadly reflected in the daily atmosphere at school. The aim of a safe and caring community is reflected in the high quality of pastoral care and is appreciated by students and parents.

64.There is a good detailed equal opportunities policy led by a senior member of staff. It is being reviewed to ensure that equal opportunity issues are reflected in all other policies. There is good representation of ethnic minority staff at senior and middle management level.

64. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

65.The number, qualifications and experience of the teaching staff are well matched to the curriculum offered at the school. The balance between experienced teachers and those more recently trained is good. Staffing levels for students with special educational needs are good, with five qualified teachers and 12 classroom assistants, all of whom are effectively deployed and well matched to their specific tasks. Teaching staff have received training on integrating into their lesson planning targets identified in the individual education plans of students with special educational needs. Further training on their use as classroom working documents is planned. The number of support staff is adequate for the needs of the school and they have appropriate qualifications and experience.

66.The school has very good policies for staff development. The focus on developing good classroom practice and on improving students' learning is effective and contributing towards higher standards. There is a good induction programme for newly qualified teachers. Teaching is regularly monitored and the school has recently completed an appraisal cycle. The school received its renewed accreditation for an Investors in People award in 1998 and confirms the strong framework of professional development for both teaching and non-teaching staff. In-service training is linked to the school development plan; whole school training days offer a good range of courses on cross-curricular issues and these are supported by a large number of out of school specialist courses. All support staff are included in this provision.

67.The school's accommodation is generally satisfactory. Improvements have been made since the last inspection in the design and technology areas, the addition of two temporary classrooms, a meeting room for parents and offices for year coordinators. When resources become available the school enhances the learning environment by carpeting and refurbishing of teaching areas. There is a need for further improvement of the design and technology accommodation and size of the main music room is inadequate for the teaching of large

classes. The general maintenance of the school site is good and the statues and provision of planted areas contribute to a pleasant school environment. However, given the rise in the number of students on roll, the school canteen is too small to allow students to enjoy lunch in a sociable manner.

68. Overall the provision of resources for learning is satisfactory. There is good provision for physical education, music and information technology but the learning resources for religious education are unsatisfactory. There are insufficient texts in business studies, geography and art. The learning resource centre is very attractive and provides a pleasant environment for study. It is well equipped with six computer workstations for the use of students. The last inspection reported that many of the books were out of date. These have now been removed and the quality of the stock is generally satisfactory. However the provision in mathematics, foreign languages, design technology and business studies is unsatisfactory and there is a general need for more stock offering a wider range of reading.

68. The efficiency of the school

69. Financial planning is good. Governors are well-briefed with regular financial information. There is a sound annual planning cycle for the school development plan. Subject and pastoral priorities are linked to the school plan. They are effectively costed against available budgets, and spending priorities for resources and professional development are established in relation to the school improvement plan. The school is prudent in preparing for a rising roll and possible reorganisation into a larger school. Its projected carry-over sum is reasonable. The recent audit report gave rise to a small number of minor recommendations which the school has addressed satisfactorily.

70. Income and expenditure per student are close to the national average. Financial control in the school is good. The finance manager is very effective in administering the budget and keeping track of spending by budget-holders. Routine management and administration are efficient. Good records are kept of all the ancillary accounts, such as those for the school fund, transport and educational visits. There is a three-year budget forecast to guide future planning.

71. Budget control and allocation for students with special educational needs, which were issues in the previous inspection, are satisfactory. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory overall. A governor, with responsibility for special educational needs, reports back to parents in the governors annual report, and the department fully meets statutory requirements. Under the recently appointed co-ordinator, the learning support area is strong. Although still in its early stages of reorganisation and development, the learning support area has made a very good beginning.

72. Overall, efficiency is good. The school makes good use of teaching and support staff across all faculties and good use is made of the available resources of books, equipment and other materials. The available accommodation is used as effectively as possible for the delivery of the curriculum. Curriculum areas prioritise their spending well on resources and staff training in their development plans which in turn have to link with the school development plan. This is leading to steadily increasing efficiency in the use of resources.

73. The school has made very significant advances since the last inspection, with improved financial planning, better links between faculties and the planning cycle, and the implementation of initiatives to evaluate the effects of spending on educational standards achieved. The success of the senior management team's initiative on monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning is leading to good student progress and a significant improvement in standards. In the context of the good progress being made by most students and improving attainment levels, the school provides good value for money.

73. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

73. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

73. English

74. Attainment by the end of Years 9 and 11 is below the national average. Since the last inspection national assessment test results indicate that there has been some fluctuation in levels of attainment. In the 1998 national assessment tests at the end of Year 9, 62 per cent of students achieved level 5 and above, close to the national average (64 per cent) and above average for similar schools. The proportion of students achieving level 6 and above (25 per cent) was below the national average. Girls' attainment was significantly higher than boys'. These results were higher than those in mathematics and science. The 1999 results were lower than those of 1998: 46 per cent of students attained level 5 and above and 11 per cent of students, level 6 and above. A significant increase in the number of students with special educational needs has contributed to this fall in standards and these results were in line with expectations based on standardised test scores on entry to the school. In 1999 the gap between boys and girls, while still significant, is less than in 1998.

75. In 1998, 33 per cent of students, and in 1999, 30 per cent of students, attained grades A* to C in their GCSE examinations compared with the 1998 national average (53 per cent). Whilst the difference between boys' and girls' levels of attainment was very great in 1998, this narrowed significantly in 1999. The percentage of students attaining grades A* to G has remained close to the national average since the last inspection. Nearly all students have been entered for GCSE English literature for the last two years. In 1998 the percentage of students achieving grades A* to G (99 per cent) was close to the national average while the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C (33 per cent) was well below the national average (58 per cent). Results in 1999 show a slight improvement in the number of students achieving grades A* to C with proportions rising to 38 per cent.

76. In media studies the students' attainment is above the national average (52 per cent) with 68 per cent of students attaining grades A*-C and 100 per cent obtaining grades A*-G. The difference between boys' and girls' attainment has narrowed. Overall this represents an improvement since the last inspection when students' attainment was close to the national average.

77. Speaking and listening skills are in line with national expectations and are the strongest element in students' English attainment. Most students answer questions readily in class and present brief opinions and ideas with confidence. In group work students negotiate and discuss their work together and there are regular opportunities for students to speak to the class about their work. In their work on Macbeth students in Year 11 presented interesting ideas on the production of one of the witches' scenes. In informal discussion there is often a lively exchange of ideas but only a few higher-attaining students are able to extend discussion in detail or present an argument without the close support of a script. Some students have an awareness of a more formal range of vocabulary but its use is more variable with average and lower-attaining students. The school's previous inspection report noted that many students used a limited vocabulary in discussion which is often insufficiently developed to express their ideas. This continues to be the case. Media studies provides students with good opportunities to explore a variety of communication skills and to develop their abilities to negotiate and discuss their work with each other. In science, students' ability to discuss their work is effectively used to assess the knowledge and skills of students, whose written skills are weaker. Drama provides many very good opportunities for students of all abilities to develop their skills in speaking and listening.

78.Overall, standards in reading are below average. Students are willing to read aloud and a few higher-attaining students and some average students, do so with expression. Lower-attaining students read hesitantly and use their knowledge of phonics to establish meaning. In class students read a range of texts which is generally appropriate for their age group but in their personal and general reading only a few students are reading at an appropriate level. Year 9 students are able to discuss and write about events in their books and to make simple observations about characters and their relationships. A few students show some understanding of meanings beyond the literal and how language can be used for effect. In Year 10 students compile thoughtful comments about characters in their reading of the play 'A View from the Bridge' and a minority of students show an effective involvement in their reading, such as in the response of some Year 11 students to the characters in 'Of Mice and Men'. Most students need considerable support to develop ideas and opinions in any depth or detail. Most students in Years 8 and 9 use the library on a planned basis as part of their English studies but a few students' understanding of the skills required in efficient information retrieval is unsatisfactory.

79.Most students' skills in writing are below average. In Year 9 students' writing from the previous year shows a satisfactory range and some extended writing of a good length. In the best work there is a sound range of vocabulary and expression with accurate use of mainly simple sentence structures and some awareness of paragraphing. However most students' writing uses a mainly familiar, and sometimes lively, range of vocabulary. Different forms of writing such as letter writing and diary writing are appropriately organised but development of sustained ideas is limited. Standards of accuracy are variable particularly in the use of basic punctuation. Lower-attaining students usually express their ideas coherently, using a mainly oral tone. Levels of accuracy of spelling and punctuation are often poor.

80.By the end of Year 11 higher-attaining students are effectively adapting their language and its tone for specific purposes. In the work of students from the previous year script writing based on reading 'View from the Bridge' and its accompanying rationale illustrated this well. The majority of students however express their ideas using a range of simple sentence structures and mostly familiar vocabulary. They do not have the technical understanding or range of vocabulary to write critically about texts at any length and some fail to organise their work logically, despite evidence of drafting.

81.Standards of presentation are satisfactory but vary in quality in all years. Most students write neatly and legibly with a sound awareness of appropriate presentation. A significant minority, mainly boys, produce written work which indicates a lack of pride in their work and poor hand writing skills. Students' work in media studies makes effective use of a variety of presentation skills.

82.When students enter the school in Year 8 standardised tests show that standards in English are generally well below average and only a few attain at the highest levels. A comparison of national assessment test results at the end of Year 9 with standardised test scores on entry to the school indicates that students make good progress. A comparison between the end of Year 9 performance in 1997 and GCSE results in 1999 indicates that students make satisfactory progress during their examination courses. The rate of progress of both boys and girls in this group is similar and indicates a narrowing of the gap between the attainment of boys and girls from the previous year.

83.Progress of students in Years 8 and 9 is good and in Years 10 and 11 it is satisfactory. While there was some good progress seen in lessons in Years 10 and 11, good progress over time is not so observable. Students with special educational needs make generally sound progress and when activities are clearly linked to their levels of achievement their progress is good. Students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress in their media studies course as a result of an interesting and effectively structured programme of study.

84. Some students' progress is adversely affected by the difficulties the school has recently experienced in recruiting supply staff.

85. The response of nearly all students in lessons, including those who have special educational needs, is good. In almost all lessons there are good relationships and students feel comfortable and confident in their surroundings. The majority of students are interested and involved in their work and respond positively to opportunities to express opinions and ideas. They work productively in small groups even when unsupervised.

86. The quality of teaching in English is good. The strengths of the curriculum area are the infectious interest and enthusiasm of teachers in their subject and the quality of relationships in the classroom. Teachers know their students well and are sensitive to students' needs, including those with special educational needs. Teaching was good or very good in nearly two thirds of the lessons seen and very good in more than a third of lessons seen. Teachers use a range of interesting activities to motivate and provide variety in all years. However, in a few lessons where the pace was not sufficiently demanding, students, mainly boys, were not so productive and did not always complete their work. Students generally complete homework promptly.

87. The goals for students' learning and the stages in students' skills development are not sufficiently clear and this has an adverse effect on teachers' lesson planning for all ability groups and for students' progress. However, an effective use of literacy techniques in Year 8 is enabling teachers to have a clearer focus on the development of students' basic skills. There are good systems in place for monitoring students' progress and for teachers' record keeping. Most teachers provide a good level of informal assessment during the lesson and ensure that students are aware and involved with their own progress. Marking in students' books provides good recognition of students' achievements and identifies areas for improvement. In the best practice these comments included strategies for development. Students progressed best in those very good lessons where teachers maintained a productive demanding pace and had high, consistent expectations for students' achievement.

88. Management of the subjects is good and there is good teamwork. Clear subject planning is being developed and where this process has been completed, it has a positive effect on teaching and students' progress. The process is not yet complete in some units of work for Years 10 and 11 and in the focus on writing in Years 8 and 9. Resources are now satisfactory including those in the library which provides a useful range of traditional and modern fiction. The range of fiction celebrating the cultural diversity of the school and the range of modern poetry for Years 8 and 9 is more limited.

88. **Literacy**

89. There are good opportunities for students of all attainment levels to develop their listening, speaking and reading skills in most subjects. Media studies provides good opportunities for students to extend their awareness of how language is used as a tool of communication while modern languages provide students with opportunities to consider language in formal and informal registers and in science students are encouraged to write clearly and precisely. However, students' writing skills and presentation of work are often weak and have an adverse impact on their overall attainment. In English there are spelling, punctuation and technical inaccuracies in writing for a significant minority of students. Literacy weakness hinders attainment and progress for many science, geography and history students, particularly when extended pieces of writing are required.

89. **English as an additional language**

90. Provision for English as an additional language is good. The school has good access to the local authority's first language assessments and the translation service. There are 128 students on the English as an additional language register of whom eleven require intensive support. All students make good progress through the five stages of English language acquisition. Good guidance is available for teachers who do not have specialist support in their teaching groups for students with additional language needs. A priority for the school has been to raise achievement of students with English as an additional language in Year 11. Sound referral forms are used to assess students' fluency in their home language and level of attainment in numeracy.

91. Good communications with curriculum areas are developed through regular attendance at curriculum meetings on a rota basis. The deputy head with responsibility for equal opportunities also has responsibility for the oversight of English as an additional language. Support for students in class is efficiently rotated across curriculum areas. Useful workshops are held once a week for beginners in English. Suitable targets are set for individual groups of students.

92. Effective strategies are in place to integrate new arrivals. Arrangements are made for the admission of new students. All members of staff are fully briefed on details such as the pronunciation of new students' names. New arrivals are given a good beginners' pack to take into lessons. A good system is in place to pair new students with a student who speaks the same home language. The support timetable is reviewed regularly to take account of new arrivals.

93. The resource base for English as an additional language is shared with learning support. Major festivals are recognised through displays including material in students' home language. A small number of bilingual phrase books are available in the library. Interpreters are available for Key Stage 3 assessments and for admission interviews. A useful bank of translated letters in a range of home languages is available which enables the school to communicate effectively with parents who do not speak English at home.

93. **Mathematics**

94. Standards in mathematics at the end of Years 9 and 11 are below average. In the 1998 national assessment tests, 51 per cent of students reached level 5 and above, which is below the national average (60 per cent), and 23 per cent reached level 6 and above, which is also below the national average (36 per cent). These results were broadly in line with the average for students from similar schools, but they were a significant improvement on those for 1997, which were 39 per cent for level 5 and above and 18 per cent for level six and above. The 1999 results (52 per cent at level 5 and above and an improving average level) show that the upward trend in standards for both boys and girls since the last inspection.

95. Year 8 students can draw accurate enlargements of shapes on squared paper and lower-attaining students can extend simple number patterns, giving mathematical reasons for their answers. Higher-attaining Year 9 students accurately draw polygons and explain their properties clearly and with confidence. Lower-attaining students in the same year group carry out a statistical investigation involving the comparison of tabloid and broadsheet newspapers.

96. By the end of Year 11, students attain GCSE grades that are below the national average, but since the last inspection standards have risen. The proportion of students achieving GCSE A* to C grades rose to 31 per cent in 1998. Average GCSE point scores per student have risen over the past three years. The proportion of students (93 per cent) achieving a GCSE grade is close to the national average. Average GCSE scores, although below the national average, are rising steadily. For two of the last three years the average GCSE point score for girls has been significantly greater than that for boys. The standards in work seen during the inspection

confirm the steady increase in attainment.

97. Lower-attaining students in Year 10 generate equivalent fractions in order to help them add or subtract fractions. In Year 11, a group of similar attainment is competent at substituting number into various formulae. Year 10 students of average attainment recall the squares of numbers up to 15 and their corresponding square roots. They use these to find square roots of numbers such as 45 by trial and improvement in a systematic manner and to a given accuracy. Higher-attaining Year 11 students confidently manipulate various algebraic expressions.

98. On entry to the school in Year 8, students' level of mathematical attainment is below the national average. Students maintain their levels of attainment to the end of Year 9, making satisfactory progress in Years 8 to 9 across all aspects of mathematics. Progress is underpinned by good teaching.

99. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is good. The reason for this is the greater attention given to external examinations which gives the teaching greater focus. Girls make more progress than boys. The curriculum area head is very aware of these gender disparities and is devising strategies to address them. The attainment and progress of students from ethnic groups is generally in line with the national picture.

100. Support for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Teachers are supported in some lessons by classroom assistants. There is close collaboration between classroom assistants and teachers. For example, in a Year 9 group, the learning support assistant who is assigned to a statemented student also assists with other students in the group who have special educational needs. This not only helps these students but also gives the statemented student a degree of independence – an efficient use of support time. Teachers are aware of the individual students' special educational needs and special care is taken over the introduction of new vocabulary. In a Year 9 lower-attaining set which has over half the students with special educational needs, students are asked to write new words onto card and to fix these on the board. The teacher then makes reference to the words in the display if they arise in discussion and in the final recap at the end of the lesson. Mathematics targets identified on individual education plans are clear and present the right degree of challenge. During Year 8 there is a helpful 'buddy' system in operation – students in the two lowest sets are each assigned a teacher who will help them with homework or any other problems relating to mathematics and meet once a week.

101. Attitudes to learning are satisfactory in Years 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Behaviour is satisfactory and students usually listen attentively. In one or two lessons, progress suffers when concentration flags in a 60-minute period. Relationships are good and students are able to work effectively in pairs when required. Overall, students have a positive attitude to mathematics.

102. The quality of teaching is good. It is satisfactory in Years 8 and 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. The teaching observed is always at least satisfactory, is good or better in 60 per cent of lessons, and very good in over 10 per cent of lessons. Teachers have positive relations with the students. The good teaching is supported by the very good schemes of work used by the curriculum area. These contain much useful information such as learning objectives, teaching approaches, keywords and vocabulary, assessment and references to numeracy. The scheme of work is seen as a living document – to be added to and adapted in the light of classroom experience. It is planned to revise the schemes of work each year or so. The schemes of work have improved greatly since the last inspection. Information technology features in the scheme of work and each Year 8 group studies an information technology module involving handling data. The faculty makes good use of the school's central computer facilities for this. It also makes use of its collection of software which is on the school's network. Both these features of information technology use in mathematics are an improvement on the last

inspection.

103. Teaching strengths are illustrated by a Year 10 set lesson on trial and improvement. The lesson begins with a brisk mental arithmetic session based on the previous lesson. The lesson's objectives are then made clear to students. A skilful question and answer session establishes what trial and improvement means – with special attention to vocabulary. A series of short challenging tasks are then set with an emphasis on the time required to finish each segment followed by a final plenary session in which progress is reviewed and appropriate homework set. The final minutes involve some difficult mental mathematics based on the addition and subtraction of squares and square roots. In a lesson for lower-attaining Year 8 students, a problem about travelling directions used documentary resources such as London Underground maps and the teacher played a classical piece of music on a cassette player in order to establish an acceptable student conversation level – an effective and novel technique.

104. Teachers ensure that all students are involved in question and answer sessions. Students are generally mature enough not to worry about making mistakes. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is good, as is their planning. Teachers support students' progress by having a consistent approach to setting out work. Management of students is good, leading to good standards of discipline and an effective use of lesson time. Relevant homework is set regularly. It is marked, usually with constructive comments.

105. Good assessment systems are in place. In response to negative comments from the last inspection teachers' assessment records now focus on attainment rather than solely on effort and progress. There are regular end-of-unit assessments, about once every six or seven weeks. The quality of the assessment material and the recording methods are good, teachers use this assessment information in their lesson planning. However, the assessment information could be made more effective if greater use was made of information technology, which would allow individual students, sets, ability groups or ethnic groups to be monitored and tracked far more easily and effectively than at present.

106. Curriculum leadership is good. There is a clear commitment to raising standards. Relationships are good and the faculty functions as a team. There is a good mix of experience, age, gender and ethnicity amongst teaching staff.

106. **Numeracy**

107. Standards of numeracy and mental number skills satisfactory and improving. Most mathematics lessons, throughout the school, now begin or end with a short mental mathematics test or activity. Supporting activities are a feature of the scheme of work for Years 8 and 9. This builds on students' previous experience of the National Numeracy Project. Progress is monitored using materials from the national Basic Skills Course. This assessment involves a degree of self-assessment and students are awarded certificates for each of the four stages. Students apply their mathematical skills in other subjects with a measure of success. In religious education, Year 9 students arrange events in the Sikh calendar in the correct chronological order. The continuation of geometric patterns in Islamic art is encountered in art lessons. In business studies, students can successfully undertake surveys, displaying the data in an appropriate format. They also read and interpret tables and graphs competently. The measurement of quantities feature in design technology, as do time plans, bar charts and calculations involving percentages. In a Year 10 information technology project, students showed a firm grasp of rounding numbers in context when constructing a spreadsheet to change different currencies. A Year 9 middle-attaining science set's progress was impeded by poor knowledge of decimal notation and arithmetic involved in reading of voltmeter scales. However in Years 10 and 11, higher-attaining groups are able to use formulae with confidence and to draw sketch graphs to illustrate radioactive decay and half-lives.

107. Science

108. By the end of Years 9 and 11 attainment is below the national average. In the national assessment tests in 1998, 44 per cent of Year 9 students gained level 5 and above. This is below the national average (56 per cent). In the same tests 14 per cent of Year 9 students gained

level 6 and above. Again this is below the national average (14 per cent). Overall test results for Year 9 in 1998 were broadly in line with the average results at schools with students from similar backgrounds. In 1998 the overall test results in science were below those achieved in English and close to those achieved in mathematics. Over the three years 1996 to 1998 overall test results at the end of Year 9 were below average, compared to results from all schools across the country. However, the trend in average levels at the school is consistently upward compared to the national trend over that period. In 1999 the end-of-Year 9 test results, overall, were lower than

in 1998; for example, in 1999 37 per cent gained level 5 and above. The results for boys and girls are close in the 1999 tests, and closer than they were in 1998.

109. In 1998 23 per cent of students achieved GCSE A* to C grades. This is well below the national average of 48 per cent. In the same year the per cent of students achieving A* to G grades, 98%, was very close to the national average. The school consistently enters more students for GCSE than the national average. In 1998 four students, from those not achieving GCSE, achieved pass grades in the Certificate of Achievement in science. Overall the school's GCSE results for 1999 are significantly better, with 33 per cent achieving A* to C grades, 95 per cent achieving A* to G grades, and seven pass grades for the Certificate. Boys achieve significantly fewer A* to C grades than girls at GCSE. For example, in 1998 21 per cent of boys achieved A* to C grades compared to 25 per cent of girls. By 1999 both boys and girls achieved better but girls improved more for A* to C grades: 28 per cent for boys against 37 per cent for girls. Achievement in science is skewed at GCSE because a significantly larger proportion take the single award than double award, compared to the national picture. The achievement of A* to C grades amongst boys and girls is inconsistent between the single and double Award. For example, the improvement for boys comparing 1998 to 1999 is only for single award: boys achieved less well in double award.

110. Standards of attainment seen in lessons and in students' work samples during the inspection confirm recent test and examination results. Attainment in Year 9 is below average for most and few reach high levels. In Year 11 significant numbers of students reach high levels but the proportion doing so remains below average.

111. Standards of attainment are similar across all aspects of science. Year 8 understand how filter paper works and use technical terms correctly, such as dissolve, solvent, and separate. They observe reasonably accurately and, with help, keep a sound record of results. A top set in Year 9 understood key points about sound, such as how frequency differs from amplitude, and related decibel levels correctly to sounds in real situations. A low-attaining set in Year 10, with help, constructed word equations for chemical reactions using cards which gave them the names of the reactants, though recall and confidence were not secure. Examples of high attainment include coursework on scientific investigation completed by Year 11 where relevant science is understood very well, so much so that students use it expertly to identify the key factors to use to predict outcomes, and then to give reasoned arguments to explain and evaluate their results.

112. Number and graphical skills in science are sometimes weak in Years 8 and 9 but good in Years 10 and 11. For example, Year 9 measured voltages but were hindered by inaccuracies in placing decimal points, writing 70 instead of 0.70. At best Year 11 students interpret graphs expertly. Literacy weaknesses are hampering progress for many students during in Years 8 and 9. Often students attain well as they speak about science but then cannot write what well they know. Information technology is beginning to be used in science though mostly limited to

linking sensors, such as for temperature, to computers in order to make graphs.

113. Progress is satisfactory overall, good in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory during Years 8 and 9. The strength across Years 10 and 11 is that specific teachers create very good and even excellent progress, whilst others generate satisfactory improvement. The variations in progress during Years 8 and 9 are wide, from excellent to unsatisfactory, but in most lessons progress is satisfactory. During Years 8 and 9 the higher-attainers make progress when teachers choose their strategies wisely to suit all students in the class. For example, higher-attaining students in a Year 9 lesson were led to think with remarkable precision whilst lower-attaining students were directed how to use age-appropriate technical terms accurately, and the wise use of oral work enabled students with literacy-related special educational needs to understand as well as their class mates. Unsatisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 is when the work set is too easy, yet even so students are not given sufficient direction about the main points they should learn. In Years 10 and 11 both higher and low-attaining students make very good progress when teachers set up specific approaches and expertly motivate both those who already expect to do well, and those who have begun to feel they are failing. For example, in recent years boys have made significantly weaker progress than girls. The introduction of a boys only set in Year 10 has led to them making good progress. They remember important details, think rather than guess as they answer questions, and are beginning to feel confident that they can do well. Overall the progress of students with special educational needs is good, both in science and in meeting targets in their individual education plans in science lessons. Students with English as an additional language make good progress based on expert and effective personalised support.

114. Students' responses are satisfactory overall with some weaknesses in Years 8 and 9 and some excellent and very good learning in Years 10 and 11. In Years 8 and 9 there are a few examples of disruptive behaviour. In Years 10 and 11 students behave well and have positive attitudes, such as listening attentively and being able to switch between tasks quickly and calmly. These students work safely and present their work well, and cooperate well with teachers and with other students when they work in groups. The best responses in Years 10 and 11 are exceptional because some students, especially higher-attaining students, are mature learners. They work independently on difficult tasks and their questions are probing about the science and reflective about social and moral issues. Most students in Years 10 and 11 are co-operative and interested, behaving reasonably and working with satisfactory care and concentration.

115. Teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory in Years 8 and 9 and good in years 10 and 11. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of science. Most teachers have very high expectations. These teachers enable effective learning, sometimes to an exceptional extent. They plan well and use very good strategies to obtain progress. Where expectations are less good the methods and organisation of lessons are looser and planning is just adequate. These differences are also found for teachers' capacity to motivate and control classes, varying from excellent to unsatisfactory. Assessment systems are uniformly good, and most teachers use assessment effectively. Useful homework is set regularly, completion is enforced and marking is mostly good.

116. Management is good and the school is well placed to improve standards. At present attainment and progress is in line with that at the time of the previous inspection. Systems for monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are much better than the systems reported by the previous inspection. Professional development is used well, for example, to improve the teaching of students with special educational needs. Resources and accommodation are adequate and a start is being made to use information and communications technology sufficiently. The curriculum is well planned. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and in Key Stage 4 good.

116. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

116. Art

117. By the end of Year 9 attainment is in line with national expectations and by the end of Year 11 GCSE standards are above national averages. In Year 9 students work effectively in a variety of media in both two and three dimensions. Year 8 students produce good designs based on Islamic patterns and build shapes using found objects, paper and glue. They have sound skills in creating collages but standards in observational drawing vary more though overall they are in line with expectations. Most students have an understanding of 'Surrealism' and can develop a design based on the work of Salvador Dali. In Years 8 and 9 students generally make satisfactory progress. Year 9 students make sound progress in developing an understanding of colour theory while developing portraits based on the work of the Fauves.

118. By Year 11, GCSE students work at above average standards and make good progress. Standards are generally average in Year 10 but improve to be above average by the end of Year 11. In Years 10 and 11 students sustain a personal study from conception to completion; for example, developing work based on a theme of 'Jungle' through collecting information, completing drawn studies and producing a final piece of work. Students can make good choices about which media they wish to use and have above average skills in using a variety of media including paint, pencil, pastel, collage and three dimensional construction. They make effective use of their sketch pads as a way to conduct research. Students have a sound understanding of the work of a range of artists. Their constructional drawing skills are weaker.

119. Students' responses to learning is satisfactory. In Year 8 students apply themselves to their work and get along with each other very well. In Year 9 students' responses are more variable. Most students work hard but a minority of boys are not well-motivated and are reluctant to take responsibility. In Years 10 and 11 most GCSE students work with concentration and can sustain a study from the beginning to the end. Year 11 students work hard showing sensitivity and an ability to evaluate their own performance.

120. Art teaching is satisfactory in Years 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well managed and organised. Students are supported by good discussion and demonstration and a sound use is made of learning resources. Some aspects of teaching are weaker, for example some work is too teacher-directed and some students are not effectively monitored. Where the teaching is good the aims of the lesson are made clear to students and individual discussion makes students understand the concepts and skills required. There is a good use of display and the lesson has an 'end' that makes students understand what has happened and been learnt. The use of assessment in art to report and monitor progress is good in all years and for students with special educational needs.

121. The art curriculum is satisfactory. This enables students to experience the use of different media in both three and two dimensions and also learn about the work of different artists. The curriculum is enriched by art clubs after school. Opportunities for students to learn about art through visits and links to the community are limited. Year 10 visit galleries as part of their project work but Years 8 and 9 have limited opportunities. The management of art is satisfactory and there is a very good use of display within the art curriculum area and throughout the school. This is effective in celebrating student achievement. Resources for art are adequate although students' learning could be better supported with additional books, card collections, topic boxes and collections of objects as a stimulus for observational drawing. Specialist facilities for work in ceramics are not used. Information technology is underdeveloped but is used well to support students with special educational needs. Since the last inspection standards fell for a few years but are now showing significant improvement.

121. Design and technology

122. In both key stages attainment is below national expectations. By the end of Year 9 attainment is lower in resistant materials than in food, textiles and control technology where it is closer to that expected nationally. Drawing skills are well below national expectations. Students are not good at explaining the development of their ideas. Practical work is of a higher standard and some good examples exist in textiles in Year 8 with the mini-cushion project which uses the natural world to stimulate some original and colourful designs incorporating the use of fabric paints, fabric, hand and machine stitching. Batch baking in Year 9 food technology illustrates how students are able to plan their tasks and work together in teams effectively to produce a consistent product. In control technology, students use their knowledge of circuits and plastic as a material to design and make logo boxes, which display an individual identity.

123. In 1998 the overall results in the short GCSE courses were well below the national average and below student performance in their other subjects. Results were better in food and textiles than in resistant materials. Results in 1999 improved in resistant materials but fell below those of 1998 in food. Results in textiles were below national average but in line with students' levels of attainment. There were no GCSE A* to C grades in either food or textiles. Boys performed significantly better than girls in resistant materials whilst girls performed significantly better in food and textiles.

124. Students enter the school with below average attainment in design and technology. Many of them lack experience in one or more materials and have underdeveloped practical skills. All students including those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Years 8 and 9. They make good progress acquiring and practising new practical skills like soldering and using the sewing machine. They handle a range of tools and materials safely and with increasing confidence. Progress is slower in the development of knowledge and understanding and in the communication of ideas to a wider audience using graphic and information technology skills.

125. Progress is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Strategies have been put in place to raise attainment. These include changing from short to full courses which are being examined for the first time this year. Students have been made more aware of the criteria for the award of marks. Closer links are being built up with parents in order to achieve deadlines for the completion of homework and the submission of coursework. Projects undertaken early in Year 10 such as the shoe design brief are under tight teacher control in order to instil a good understanding of the process of designing and making before students are allowed more scope to demonstrate individuality. Currently, students lack some of the necessary skills to do well. Some students do not recognise the importance of employing the correct sequence to the various stages in a design task. Although task analysis has improved on previous years' work, research skills which were criticised in the last report are still unsatisfactory and there is an over reliance on the use of catalogue cut outs. In resistant materials particularly students are not sufficiently familiar with the practice of modifying and developing their design proposals as work progresses. Some progress has been made in the quality of drawing and sketching but standards are below average. Many students do not annotate their designs. Standards of presentation vary with levels of attainment and student commitment. Insufficient use is made of information technology to support learning; for example, in food studies technology opportunities are missed when writing letters, compiling graphs and designing leaflets. Students with their own personal computers do use them to enhance their work when doing homework. A good feature is the display of good work which are being put up in the curriculum area and around the school in order to raise student expectations.

126. Key factors in the improved progress of all students recently has been the appointment of new staff in resistant materials and improved curriculum planning. Previously, this was fragmented and insufficient to promote progress. Students are also made aware of their progress and set targets for improvement. Students with special educational needs are well supported at all levels and make satisfactory progress. Teachers now have a unified approach

to teaching the curriculum in whatever area they are working so that students gain a better insight into using a technological approach.

127. Students have a good attitude to their work and they behave well. They tend, however, to rely heavily on the teacher for help in their work and many find it difficult to work on their own. Relationships are good.

128. Teaching is satisfactory with some good and some very good lessons taking place. Examples of the best teaching were seen in control, food and textiles. All teachers are knowledgeable about their aspect of the subject. Where teaching is good the teacher has clear aims, which are communicated to the class, skills are well taught, and the lesson moves at a brisk pace with some type of evaluation at the end. Where lessons are less good there is a ragged start with students drifting in at intervals continuing with work begun in the previous lesson without any real sense of urgency and tending to drift off task at the first opportunity. The management of students and resources is good. Homework is set regularly but it is sometimes not sufficiently challenging for the higher-attaining students when it consists of the completion of classroom tasks.

129. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and well understood by students. Students receive good informal feedback in lessons on progress and attainment. Assessment at GCSE is linked well to examination board criteria and reported clearly to parents.

130. Since the last inspection the accommodation has been upgraded and improved in food and now provides a pleasant safe working environment. Improvements are currently taking place in resistant materials and health and safety issues have been resolved. New workbenches have been purchased and the restocking of the workshop with tools is underway. At present the technology curriculum does not have its own technician although some support is provided from the science technician. Students in Years 10 and 11 are not provided with their own textbook although class sets exist in all areas. This has an impact on standards and makes private study and examination revision more difficult.

131. At present there is no overall curriculum head to organise and provide support and guidance. The senior management team give good support including an evaluation and monitoring exercise designed to identify areas of strength and weakness and to move the curriculum area forward. Teachers work well together on a daily basis providing help and support particularly to new colleagues.

131.

Drama

132. Drama is taught to all students in Year 8 as a separate lesson in the timetable. In Year 9 drama is taught as part of a performance arts programme with music. GCSE drama is an option in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results have improved steadily since the last inspection and in 1999 all students who were entered for the GCSE examination obtained A*-C grades well above the 1998 national average of 67 per cent. Since the last inspection girls have continued to have higher grades than boys but the gap has narrowed.

133. There were no opportunities to observe drama in Year 9 during the week of the inspection but observations in Year 8 and Year 10 indicate that attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Students are able to work effectively in groups and have a good awareness of the different perspectives of work on a stage for their age. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is well above average. Improvisation and role-play skills are well developed and students have a very good understanding of a range of theatrical techniques. They are able to discuss their work in a variety of written and oral forms and to make clear and often perceptive observations about their own work. Their understanding is enhanced by their ability to observe and make comparisons with television and theatrical presentations. This was clearly evident in a Year 10 lesson where students were discussing and developing techniques used on stage

and on television to portray physical fights. Students' coursework for GCSE showed a good range of experiences and good opportunities to reflect on their improvisation work.

134. Students enter the school in Year 8 with very little experience of the subject and make good progress to achieve average standards in Year 9. This progress is particularly evident in the development of their confidence and self-discipline and in their awareness of dramatic conventions and techniques. In Years 10 and 11 students make very good progress.

135. They increase the breadth and depth of their experiences through careful exploration of the dramatic and emotional possibilities of a range of situations. They are increasingly able to combine these experiences well with their growing understanding of theatrical techniques and production skills. Students with special educational needs are fully integrated into the group. They make very good progress in developing confidence, skills and motivation through a well-constructed and supportive programme of study.

136. Students of all attainment levels and in all classes respond very well in drama. Good habits of concentration and consideration for others are established early in Year 8. All students are very interested and well motivated. They respond very well to their teacher and to each other and regard each others' contributions with respect. The very good quality of their response was evident in a Year 8 lesson when students from a local special school were very effectively included in role play and lesson activities. An indication of students' appreciation of the experiences offered in drama is shown in the marked increase in the number of students taking the subject in Years 10 and 11.

137. The quality of teaching in the subject is very good. The high quality specialist knowledge of the teacher is reflected in carefully detailed plans for lessons which link effectively with a well-planned scheme of work for Years 8 and 9 and with the GCSE syllabus for Years 10 and 11. A very good feature of the curriculum offered to students are the opportunities to use their drama skills to enhance delivery of social themes in a number of middle schools in the area. Very good use is made of both the teacher's and students' assessments to enhance understanding and to outline the next stages in development. There are high and very consistent expectations of students' responses and achievements and a good emphasis on key skills. Very good use is made of time, both within the lessons and within the restrictions of time imposed by the structure of the school curriculum in Year 9. The very good relationships in classes are productively focused on students' progress and achievement and students have opportunities to appraise and reflect as well as to perform. There is an atmosphere of confidence and respect in all classes and students' interests and energies are effectively channelled into their work.

138. Good use is made of the limited specialist accommodation and a good range of practical and technical resources is being developed. Book resources are satisfactory. There are regular whole school productions in which all who wish to, can be included and there are productive and effective links with the music curriculum area. The curriculum is enhanced by visiting theatre groups, workshop performances and by students' participation in such events as their public performance at the Polka Theatre.

138. **Geography**

139. By the end of Years 9 and 11 attainment is below national expectations. GCSE examination standards in 1998 were well below the national average. The 1999 GCSE grades represent an improvement over 1998 but cannot be compared with the national data, which was not published at the time of the inspection. There has been an improving trend in the average GCSE grades of students between 1997 and 1999. Girls' attainment in 1998 GCSE examinations was better than that of boys': the difference is in line with national averages. However, the gap in achievement between boys and girls varies from year to year because of the differing attainment levels of students opting for the subject.

140. In work seen, the attainment of Year 8 and 9 students is below national expectations. In a Year 9 lesson some knew the factors that control population growth but only a minority of students knew the location of the individual countries that they were studying. Students have a weak knowledge of place. Student attainment in Years 10 and 11 is below expectations. Year 11 students have a weak recall of work undertaken in Year 10; they have some factual knowledge but many lack the skills to link information to, for example, test hypotheses and develop understanding. Standards of literacy are low and this has a negative impact on students' attainment. Presentation of work and standards of handwriting are unsatisfactory.

141. Students enter the school weak in key skills such as map reading. Progress in Years 8 and 9 is satisfactory but there are considerable variations due to inconsistencies in teaching. In particular, students' motivation and work rate varies in relation to the quality of teaching. When work is carefully matched to students' aptitudes, progress for the whole class is significantly better; on other occasions lower-attainers find considerable difficulties coping with work and so tend to switch off. In a few lessons higher-attainers are often insufficiently challenged.

142. In Years 10 and 11 students' progress is satisfactory but there are variations between good and unsatisfactory and again the quality of teaching is an important factor. Where lessons are purposeful with good pace, students' responses are positive and teachers' good focus on the requirements of the GCSE examination enabled all students to make good progress. In contrast, a Year 11 group made unsatisfactory progress in preparing for coursework on acid rain. They were poorly motivated but the lack of pace, uninteresting teacher delivery and tasks not matched to students' attainment levels meant that progress was unsatisfactory.

143. Students' responses to geography are satisfactory; they are usually interested in the subject and start lessons with good concentration and satisfactory application to their tasks. A minority of boys behave unsatisfactorily. The quality of teaching is a strong factor in student response, most students lack skills as independent learners and depend on teachers to do much of their work in lessons. They work well in pairs and small groups. The commitment and work-rate of many students falters towards the end of lessons.

144. Teaching in Years 8 and 9 is satisfactory. It is good when expectations of students are high and they are often well questioned to check and reinforce understanding. In such lessons students are well managed to stay on task. There are weaknesses in other lessons where the pace of learning is too slow and teaching does not motivate the students. In such lessons progress suffers because teachers have insufficient strategies to manage students' behaviour and work is not matched to meet the needs of all attainment levels. A good Year 8 lesson on industry in Japan typified the strengths of some teaching. The teacher managed students' behaviour with quiet assurance and was very courteous; he had high expectations, the lesson was well planned to allow learning to build with a range of activities so that progress was good. However, writing was the predominant activity and a few lower-attainers needed resources better adapted to their learning needs. Teaching of Year 10 and 11 students is also satisfactory but follows a similar pattern; teachers show good subject knowledge and maintain good focus on the demands of the GCSE examination. Good and very good teaching displays subtlety in student management and clarity of exposition. Many lessons in all years expect the students to undertake extensive writing and, given the weaknesses in literacy for many students, this style poses them difficulties and slows progress. Marking of students' books is satisfactory.

145. The use of information technology in the teaching of geography is satisfactory and the curriculum area has provided a resource base on the school network that students can use. Satisfactory assessment procedures are in place and assessment is used to improve students' attainment.

146. Since the last inspection attainment has remained below expectations in both key stages and management of the subject is unsatisfactory. There have been some improvements in teaching, but lessons still lack challenge and pace. Students of geography undertake too little fieldwork and this hinders their progress. Curriculum and assessment weaknesses have been effectively addressed and geography is now taught by specialist teachers.

146. **History**

147. Attainment by the end of Years 9 and 11 is below national expectations. Students' grades in the 1998 GCSE examinations were well below national averages, 30 per cent of students gained A* to C grades compared with the national average for all secondary schools of 58 per cent. The 1999 school figure rose to 32 per cent. Girls' performance was considerably better than that of boys in 1998 and the difference is above national averages. This gap closed considerably in 1999. GCSE performance over the past three years has improved. Considerable changes in staffing over the last two academic years account for some of the weaknesses in students' attainment.

148. Attainment in Years 8 and 9 is below national expectations. A Year 9 group studying working conditions in the 19th century had some recall of work in an earlier lesson and knew some of the dangers faced in mines but displayed only limited knowledge of the broad historical context of this period. In work seen, the attainment of students in Years 10 and 11 is below national averages; recall can be satisfactory but most students lack the higher levels of ability to be able to link historical facts to develop sophisticated conclusions. For example, students from a Year 11 class, studying the fall of the Weimar republic in inter-war Germany, had adequate recall of recent lessons but had difficulties coping with the standard GCSE text. The low standards of literacy of most students, particularly their limited vocabulary, hampers levels of attainment and progress.

149. Progress in Years 8 and 9 is satisfactory. Careful planning by the teacher, effective consolidation of earlier learning and a clear focus on learning objectives are positive factors in a number of lessons but where pace and expectations of students are low, progress is unsatisfactory. For example in a Year 8 lesson students learned something of the nature of Puritanism but unenthusiastic teaching and lack of adaptation of resources for lower attaining students meant that progress was unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 progress is also satisfactory but with fewer weaknesses. Fundamental to this is the focus that teachers maintain on the demands of the GCSE examination. A Year 10 class engaged in coursework on the Tower of London had an appropriate degree of challenge and showed motivation. In some lessons lower-attainers struggle to understand the work and so drift off the task set for them.

150. Students of all ages enjoy history and respond well. Most display interest in the topics studied. The behaviour and concentration of students is often good but their response is strongly dependent on the quality of teaching. They are usually keen to answer questions and work well in pairs and small groups. A Year 8 class, working on health and hygiene in the 15th century, showed strong involvement and were keen to answer questions. With a good variety of short activities to maintain interest they showed concentration and worked at good rate. The concentration of some students weakened in the last 15 minutes of the hour-long session.

151. Teaching of Year 8 and 9 students is satisfactory. Lessons are typified by good planning and teacher knowledge. However, most lessons had too little adaptation of work to meet all students' learning needs, so that students of average attainment generally progress satisfactorily but a minority of higher and lower-attainers are either insufficiently stretched or find the work too difficult. Other aspects of teaching have variations. Teachers can work at a good pace, but there are instances where the pace can falter to the detriment of progress. A good Year 9 lesson on dangers in 19th century industry mines exemplified both strengths and

weaknesses. The teaching of the whole class was lively and interesting, students were well managed and there was an interesting range of activities for the students to undertake. However, the work set is not always linked to a challenging timescale for completion or matched to students' attainment levels.

152. Teaching of Years 10 and 11 is also satisfactory and there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching than in Years 8 and 9. Teachers have satisfactory subject expertise, relate well to individual students and maintain focus on examination requirements. Expectations of students on occasions are low and some teachers fail to adequately address the issue of maintaining student interest throughout the whole lesson. Students do not receive sufficient support in improving their reading and writing skills, and for example are not encouraged to keep glossaries of historical vocabulary. There are few key words displayed in classrooms.

153. Management of the subject is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. Appropriate and accurate assessment procedures are in place and have improved since the last inspection and has had a positive effect on student progress. Students of history undertake only one field trip throughout their four years in school and this has an adverse impact on attainment and progress. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress though at times insufficient emphasis is given to targets in individual education plans. Recent stability in staffing has, however, led to a significant improvement in students' attainment.

153. **Information technology**

154. Students enter the school with below average computer skills and few have computers at home. By the end of Year 9, attainment is close to that expected nationally. Students understand the basics of computing and can identify and name component parts. They use computers and peripheral hardware with confidence, and competently log-on to networks, open new files and save their work. They develop word processing skills, changing font styles and sizes, and using spellcheckers. They amend databases and spreadsheets, using input formulae accurately. In music, they use musical keyboards linked to computers to aid composition, and high quality recording facilities to edit and record their work. By the end of Year 11 attainment is near to the national average. Students extend their word processing skills to include desk-top publishing, producing posters with clip-art designs or with digitised images to enhance various assignments, such as diet and meal planning in food technology. They use a computerised loom and scanner to enhance their textile studies. In science, they use data-logging techniques to record the photosynthesis of pondweed, and there is evidence of students' personal development in using the Internet for research and sending internal e-mails.

155. In both key stages, the students make good progress. The students enjoy using computers. They respond well, showing respect for staff and each other. They listen to and follow instructions, treating equipment with care and taking pride in their work. They collaborate on occasions, such as when changing spreadsheet currencies or rounding up figures. They happily discuss their work and show a clear understanding of their task. All students complete theory homework. In Years 10 and 11, students are provided with commercially produced homework and reference books, and these are well maintained by students. In interviews, many students spoke enthusiastically of the school's extra-curricular computer clubs for homework and research.

156. Teaching in discrete information technology lessons is good and with a third that are very good and has a good impact on students' progress. Teachers have secure knowledge and deal efficiently with minor technical problems. Lessons are well planned and organised and work is matched to the students' attainment levels. For lower-attaining students, worksheets and support materials are adapted to meet specific learning difficulties. Lessons are lively and well-paced, and support literacy and numeracy skills, for example, by letter writing or

amending and extracting data from spreadsheets.

157. Homework is regularly set and marked in accordance with school policy. Ongoing day to day assessment informs lesson planning. Wall displays in computer areas celebrate the students' achievements, which promotes their social well-being. In other subject areas, and where the teachers are confident in the use of computers, information technology enhances and consolidates learning. It is used well in music for composition work and in art to support a student with special educational needs. However, students' information technology skills are not well integrated into the schemes of work of all curriculum areas.

158. Discrete lessons, which are once a week in Years 8 and 9 and once a fortnight in Years 10 and 11, are complemented by skills application in some subjects as, for example business studies, and the programme of study meets statutory requirements. Policies and long term plans are linked to the school development plan, and match National Curriculum requirements. Assessment procedures inform curriculum planning. Although there is no technician, the subject coordinator monitors resources and equipment across the site. Staff training is ongoing, and all have received Internet training. In addition to three computer suites, computer clusters are located in science, technology and the careers curriculum areas, with an open resources cluster within the school library. The ratio of computers to students is satisfactory. The provision of software and peripheral hardware to support computer aided learning across all subject areas is good overall, with further planning for modern languages and an integrated services digital network line currently being installed.

159. Information technology is efficiently managed, and has significantly improved since the last inspection.

159. **Modern foreign languages**

160. Overall, by the end of Years 9 and 11 attainment is close to national expectations. Students study French for two lessons a week in the first term of Year 8 and in a third lesson follow taster courses in German and Italian for half a term each. They subsequently choose which language to study for GCSE. No students currently choose to take two languages. No student in Years 9 or 10 takes German. Italian is growing in popularity.

161. Teacher assessments in Year 9 show that standards have improved over the last three years. Girls' attainment in Years 8 to 11 is higher than that of boys' but the gap is closing. The proportion of students' achieving A* to C grades in GCSE French has risen from well below average (13 per cent) in 1994 to 30 per cent in 1998 and close to the national average (40 per cent) in 1999. The percentage achieving A* to G grades have been above the national average. Grades in GCSE Italian were below the national average in 1998 but also showed a broadly rising trend between 1994 to 1998. All candidates in Italian achieved at least an A* to G grade in 1999 with 25 per cent achieving A* to C grades. German results were consistently below the national average.

162. Students generally listen and respond well to the foreign languages. These are used for all aspects of lessons: occasional French or Italian reprimands earn swift compliance. Year 9 students grasped information about daily routine from authentic French recordings with little repetition. Year 11 students showed a reasonable grasp of German vocabulary following a recording about booking accommodation.

163. Speaking skills have improved since the last inspection but remain below national expectations. Year 9 students talk about Italian food and drink and show improving accents. They were, like a Year 9 French class on daily routine, generally unambiguous. However many Year 11 students are hesitant speakers and, for example higher attainers need prompts to talk about a recent journey in Italian. One Year 11 French class of lower-attainers speak very little during a lesson. Few students are secure in adapting and substituting language.

164. Reading skills are sound, but there is no scheme of reading for pleasure to help development. One Year 9 class needed English support to tackle work on verbs, but another handled dictionaries well to find information for themselves. By Year 11 students coped well with facsimile Italian magazine articles about travel. In Year 9 higher-attainers begin to write in tenses other than the present tense and in short paragraphs rather than in simple sentence structures. There are good examples of extended writing in a few Year 11 coursework folders. Although containing some inaccuracies an account in French of the life of Louis Pasteur for example was generally unambiguous. Middle and lower-attainers rarely write at length and do not confidently use tenses outside the present. The quality of written work in German is unsatisfactory and below that shown by students in French and Italian.

165. Progress is satisfactory in all years. Most students build up knowledge steadily. Assessments from feeder schools confirm that students begin Year 8 increasingly familiar with language-learning skills. The school analyses performance to ensure that all students make equal progress regardless of gender and ethnic origins. Students with special needs make satisfactory progress towards suitable targets and are supported well by a French-speaking support assistant working in partnership with the class teacher.

166. Students' attitudes and behaviour are almost always positive and are characterised by good relationships. They work well together in pairs and groups. As at the last inspection there is still some underachievement. It is not widespread but largely confined to middle and lower attaining students in a few French and German classes. It is directly linked to instances of unsatisfactory teaching.

167. Teaching was satisfactory in over two thirds of lessons seen, and good in almost half. The teachers speak the languages well. Good planning has increased opportunities for speaking, pair and group work, songs and games which were limited at the time of the last inspection. All skills are usually addressed. Suitable homework reinforces classwork. However in roughly a quarter of lessons teachers did not stretch students sufficiently, used English excessively and slow pace made students restless or occasionally disruptive. The school has already identified these shortcomings in its monitoring programme and is taking steps to address them.

168. Management of the subject is good. Assessment procedures are good and are being refined in a new system of profiles to track attainment and progress. Day to day marking is variable: the school policy is used and some teachers supplement it by focused supportive comments and targets but much more work needs to be done to monitor progress in the four skills. In the better lessons the foreign languages are clearly the languages of the classroom, and teachers expect them to be used. Work is matched to students' ability, grammar is integrated and students learn something of the culture of the foreign countries. Support clubs meet after school. Accommodation and resources remain satisfactory. Four new computers are shortly to be installed. There are good opportunities for visits to France and Italy which have a positive impact on students' attainment.

168. **Music**

169. By the end of Years 9 and 11 standards are above national expectations. By the end of Year 9 students use keyboards with facility and have experience of staff and graphic notation. Many have started to use fingering techniques for melody playing. Ensemble playing is effective; groups play well together with a good sense of rhythm. They maintain independent parts in class performances, for example, Year 9 classes performed a piece which involved five parts and accompaniment, using different rhythms. Boys and girls perform equally well as do students of different ethnic origin. Students of differing prior attainment achieve appropriately without significant differences. In Years 10 and 11, GCSE results have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now above the national average. The students have greater keyboard fluency and in addition to melodies are able to use chords and their

inversions. The level of improvisation is good and composition standards are above average, showing originality and feeling for style, particularly in the popular idiom. Music reading skills are limited and most composition is done by ear and then notated by computer.

170. The level of progress has improved since the last inspection in all years. In Years 8 and 9 there is good progress with evidence of continuity from one lesson to another and from year group to year group. Students of differing prior attainment make progress through the use of well-structured materials that allow them to work at different levels. Ensemble skills improve through Years 8 and 9 with the older students becoming more fluent and rhythmically secure when playing independent parts. Students make slower progress in acquiring notation skills and tend to perform mainly by ear or using letter names. In Years 10 and 11 the rate of progress has improved since the last report and is very good. Progress in composition is enhanced through the use of computers and sequencing software. The progress in class ensemble work is noteworthy; there is rapid progression into the use of sequences involving chords and their inversions. A Year 11 class divided in groups of three and produced their own arrangements of a song, working out combinations of melody, chords and bass and including some improvisation. Boys and girls perform equally well and there is no variation on account of ethnicity. Students having specialist instrumental lessons make good progress.

171. Students have a good attitude to the subject, they work hard with good concentration and perseverance. They behave well and have good relationships with each other. This was demonstrated in a Year 8 class where every member sang a solo phrase in turn without embarrassment. There are many instances of effective collaboration in group work. Take up for GCSE is above the national average and extra-curricular activities, such as the annual musical production are well supported. Take-up for instrumental lessons has declined since the introduction of tuition charges.

172. The quality of teaching is good and reflects the teacher's wide knowledge of the subject, showing particular skill in the performance of popular music. This expertise coupled with a charismatic style of teaching helps communication and enthuses the students. Relationships with classes in both key stages are excellent and contribute to good standards of discipline and management of students. The great majority of teaching is linked to practical activities and this contributes to good performance standards, as do the high expectations. A strength of the teaching is the use of tasks that allow students to perform at different levels within the same ensemble so that lower attaining students are fully integrated into the group work. There is also effective use of music technology, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where the students use computers to assist them in composition work. Curriculum areas documentation is very good with clear policies and detailed schemes of work and assessment procedures. There is a need for more focus on continuity of work on notation skills through Years 8 and 9. The inadequate and intermittent allocation of curriculum time for music in Year 9 has an adverse effect in this respect.

173. The accommodation has not been improved since the last inspection and the lack of space in the main room creates organisational difficulties for most lessons; the shape of the room even prevents some students from seeing the whiteboard. However, the curriculum area has created an attractive learning environment, in spite of the lack of space, and standards have not been affected. There is a good ethos, which could be improved even more if the school were able to increase the number of students taking instrumental lessons.

173. **Physical education**

174. By the end of Years 9 and 11, students' attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. By the end of Year 9 in gymnastics, they are able to plan, perform and evaluate basic balancing sequences. They show improving skills in catching and throwing in netball and rugby and stroke play in badminton and they have a good knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the subject. Overall, there is an improving pattern of attainment. By the end of

Year 11, attainment in GCSE examinations is broadly in line with that found nationally. Students show good footwork and hand/eye co-ordination in badminton and the ability to kick and head a football with accuracy and skill. They have a deeper knowledge and understanding of a range of games and health related fitness activities and they perform with confidence. Some are able performers. Those students who participate in extra curricular activities aim for high skills levels.

175. Progress in all years is good and in some instances in Years 10 and 11 very good. In Years 8 and 9, students of all abilities are showing acquisition of skills and application of their knowledge and understanding. They use space effectively in badminton and in rugby, playing in small games, they are becoming team players. Students in Years 10 and 11 are refining their skills in football and badminton, consolidating knowledge and applying it to physical and theoretical activities. They show an understanding of team play and positioning. This is beneficial to those who take part in competition. All students recognise the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

176. Students have positive, well motivated attitudes to physical education. They show interest in all activities and engage quickly in physical tasks. In all years students behave well, they are enthusiastic and responsive, working well together and sustaining concentration throughout the lesson. Relationships are good and students respect the beliefs and feelings of others, especially those from different backgrounds and cultures.

177. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good or very good in the majority of lessons. All teachers have secure understanding and knowledge of games and gymnastics and the theoretical aspects of the GCSE course. They are enthusiastic and energetic and they give students clear explanations and good demonstrations. They use praise and encouragement freely. Lessons are well planned and managed and teachers promote the discipline of physical education through consistency of approach with appropriate expectations of students. The pace of work is brisk and purposeful. Ample time is allowed both for explanation, planning and physical activity. Assessment is satisfactory with verbal feedback given to students. Teachers work successfully to maintain an effective environment conducive to positive learning.

178. The newly appointed head of the curriculum area is providing good leadership and management for a team of experienced, well qualified specialist teachers who work well together and promote the status of physical education in the school. In all years students receive a broad balanced curriculum which meets National Curriculum requirements and which provides equality of opportunity. There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities which is well supported. Students have enjoyed excellent successes particularly in the Panathlon and the regional championships. Over the past four years students have represented Merton as ball boys/girls at Wimbledon. Links with local clubs are good and students benefit from dance workshops and performances given by national and international groups. These provide for social interaction, personal development and celebration of cultural diversity. Assessment procedures are implemented fully, during and at the end of Years 9 and 11. Accommodation is just adequate for curriculum delivery although the indoor spaces have serious limitations. For example, there is only one badminton court in the hall and this is inadequate for class teaching; the large spaces are also used for other school events and examinations, and chairs are stacked round the outside of the hall. All wall areas contain excellent displays. The playing field is adequate, well maintained and marked out. The curriculum area is well resourced.

179. There has been continued improvement since the previous inspection. Assessment procedures are being reviewed because they are not yet fully used for curriculum planning.

179. **Religious education**

180. In work seen attainment levels for the average student by the end of Years 9 and 11 are below those expected by the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Year 8 students were able to recall from a previous lesson that a parable was a story with a meaning and several were able without prompting to show that they knew of Jesus' claim to be the Son of God and that they understood that this was central to the beliefs of Christians. Year 9 students knew that the Guru Granth Sahib is the Sikh holy book. However, scrutiny of exercise books in Years 8 and 9 indicated that, while work was frequently well presented, arguments and alternative viewpoints were much less frequently to be seen.

181. Students' progress in Years 8 and 9 is satisfactory and good in Years 10 and 11. In almost all lessons observed students of all abilities knew and understood what was being studied. Year 8 students were fascinated by the story of the Turin shroud and understood why it is generally regarded as a fake. Year 9 students were all able to match statements about Sikh funerals, to arrange them in chronological order and understand the importance of the Sikh belief in reincarnation in their funeral rites. Year 11 students showed considerable sensitivity when discussing the causes of divorce and differing religious attitudes to divorce. In most lessons observed, boys and girls and students of all attainment levels progressed at a similar rate. In three lessons support staff attached to a particular student were present and all took the opportunity to help other students with their work. The exercise books of most students, including those with special educational needs, showed that work was regularly completed. The exception was the books of lower-attaining students in a class which has had a number of supply teachers since the first week of term.

182. In the great majority of lessons students are well behaved and courteous. They work well together and respected each other and the teacher. They are confident in offering answers and comments and respond positively to frequent praise from teachers. A few boys are disruptive in lessons. Most students remained on task throughout lessons. A Year 8 group was particularly moved by a video of the Crucifixion and events leading up to it.

183. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It was satisfactory or better in nearly all lessons and good or very good in just under half the lessons. Good knowledge of subject and planning, good pace and appropriate teaching strategies, much praise and positive marking were the hallmarks of good lessons. A Year 11 lesson on divorce began with a discussion of the marriages of famous people and the mixture of enjoyment of the whole lesson and sensitivity to the feelings of fellow students affected by divorce was praised by the teacher. There is good support for students with special educational needs. There is extension work for most higher-attaining students. Teaching strategies are now more varied than at the last inspection. However, only one example of the use of the video was seen and none of information technology. Marking is generally positive and constructive.

184. The allocation of only one hour per fortnight in Years 10 and 11 is only half the time recommended in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. This was an issue in the last inspection. No students are withdrawn from religious education. Individual student records are maintained well and inform curriculum planning as do curriculum area end of year tests. Progress of boys and girls is separately monitored, but this is not true of ethnic minority students. All lessons contribute to spiritual and moral development, paired and group work to social development and the study of the teachings and beliefs of the main world religions to cultural development. Good examples of all of these were seen in the week of the inspection.

185.The management of the subject is good. Staff support and in-service training is satisfactory. Display is good, though mainly linked to history. Annual funding for books and materials is insufficient to fund the GCSE short course which will be examined in 2001.

185. **Business studies**

186.Business studies has only been running as a full GCSE subject since September 1999, thus no national comparisons on attainment are possible. Prior to this year, students opting for a business studies course followed a short GCSE course. The attainment of present students in Year 10 is at least average and, in a significant minority of cases, is above average. Many girls are attaining at higher levels than boy.

187.Students are acquiring relevant knowledge and they are able to use appropriate language in the right context and the terms are understood. Their progress is good. For example, Year 10 students understand the concept of market segmentation and apply this term accurately in their work. Year 11 students, following the short GCSE course, showed an understanding of nationalisation and some of the reasons for government intervention in markets, appreciating that such intervention may be related more to cash flow considerations than to the overall health of a particular firm. Students are developing a range of skills, including designing, conducting and recording surveys. All students are able to use computers for a variety of tasks including word processing, data entry and data presentation. When presenting data, students use a range of techniques including pie charts. Other forms of graphs are also used in their written work and the majority of students in their use and application of number are making at least satisfactory progress.

188.Students are not always punctual to lessons and they can be noisy and lively on arrival. However, once the lesson commences they settle quickly and are attentive. They are keen on their work and this is reflected in the popularity of the subject. Behaviour in lessons is very good and students show an ability to work both individually and collaboratively. Good personal relationships exist with evidence of mature conduct between various cohorts of students. Respect is shown for the views of others, for teachers and school property, including a good supply of computers, is treated with care. Many students take pride in their work, act responsibly and they appreciate the firm and consistent codes of behaviour imposed by their teachers.

189.In all lessons teaching was at least good and, in one lesson, it was excellent. Such high quality teaching is making a significant contribution to the students' attainment and progress. Many strengths are evident in the teaching. Staff exert firm, fair and consistent control, they have good subject knowledge and plan well. Lessons are conducted at a suitable pace with the interest and enthusiasm of students being maintained by the setting of a variety of tasks. The use of different strategies within a lesson aids control and is indicative of good time management. Staff show patience in their relationships with students and this too helps to establish an effective learning environment. Another feature of good teaching is that staff have high expectations of all students and they successfully challenge their charges through thoughtful questioning in oral work and by the nature of the written tasks set. There are some areas that could be further developed. In most lessons teachers do not consistently praise the efforts made by students. This is evident both in classroom observations and in a scrutiny of written work. The marking of work is not sufficiently detailed or diagnostic. There are insufficient tasks set which require extended writing.

190.The curriculum area is well managed and suitable plans are being established to ensure that there will be sufficient staffing to cope with the anticipated growth in numbers next year. The present level of resources available to the curriculum area is satisfactory but, with further growth, more textbooks will need to be provided and the resources kept in the school's resource centre improved.

190. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

190. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

191. Before the inspection the registered inspector held a meeting attended by 27 parents and the team considered the responses of 176 parents to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school.

192. Fifteen inspectors spent the equivalent of 46 days in the school, gathering first-hand evidence. 134 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. Further observations were made of form periods, registration times, assemblies, and of a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Discussions were held with students in all classes during the course of lessons, and separate discussions were arranged with some students in order that they could talk about aspects of their work or involvement in school activities. Subject inspectors held planned discussions with all members of middle management. Interviews also took place with the governors, the headteacher, deputy heads and teachers with particular responsibilities. Inspectors analysed the work of high, average and low-attainers and students with special educational needs, from each year group.

193. The previous OFSTED report, action plan, policy documents, schemes of work, development and financial plans and further documentation provided by the school were scrutinised both before, during and after the inspection. Attendance registers, records kept on students, particularly in relation to their attainment on entry and their progress, and the teachers' planning were inspected.

194.DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of students with statements of SEN	Number of students on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals
Y8 – Y11	842	41	184	185

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y8 – Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	49.9
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.9

Education support staff (Y8 – Y11)

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked each week	353

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	76
--	----

Average teaching group size:	KS3	22.9
	KS4	21.9

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/1999
-----------------	-----------

	£
Total Income	2 063 538
Total Expenditure	2 022 571
Expenditure per student	2 464
Balance brought forward from previous year	69 092
Balance carried forward to next year	110 059

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	842
Number of questionnaires returned:	176

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	20	67	9	3	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	30	60	7	2	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	17	55	24	3	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	16	64	11	8	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	27	59	10	3	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	24	58	13	4	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	23	59	13	5	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	19	54	12	11	4
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	18	55	21	4	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	15	55	21	7	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	30	53	13	2	2