

INSPECTION REPORT

THE MEADOWS SCHOOL

Spennymoor

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 131905

Head teacher: George Harris

Reporting inspector: Noreen Buckingham
16722

Dates of inspection: 9th - 11th June 2003

Inspection number: 249433

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Whitworth Lane Spennymoor County Durham
Postcode:	DL16 7QW
Telephone number:	01388 811178
Fax number:	01388 814050
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs L Laird
Date of previous inspection:	April 2001

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
161722	Noreen Buckingham	Registered inspector	French	What sort of school is it?
			Citizenship/PHSE	The school's results and achievements.
			Education Inclusion	How well are pupils taught?
				How well is the school led and managed?
13462	Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
				How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23549	Helen Eadington	Team inspector	English	Curriculum and other learning opportunities
			Music	
			Special Educational Needs	
10760	Pip Clark	Team inspector	Science	
			Geography	
			History	
21397	Ingrid Bradbury	Team inspector	Mathematics	
			Information and communications technology	
			Religious education	
15600	Colin Richardson	Team inspector	Art and design	
			Design and technology	
			Physical education	

The inspection contractor was:

Eclipse Education (UK) Limited
14 Enterprise House
Kingsway
Team Valley
Gateshead
NE11 0SR

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Meadows is a community day special school for secondary aged boys and girls aged between 11 and 16 years who have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. A few have additional learning problems. Currently there are 45 pupils on roll of whom 38 are boys and 7 girls. Two girls are dual registered and attend part time. All have statements of special educational needs and 13 pupils are appropriately disapplied from the National Curriculum and standard assessment tests. Pupils' attainment on entry is below what would normally be expected for their age due to their disrupted pattern of education because of non-attendance or exclusion from mainstream school. Thirty-four pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is very high (75 per cent). There is a high level of exclusions but this is decreasing. Pupils come from a wide geographical area and there are no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school operates an extended day on 3 days each week from 3pm until 6pm which give pupils opportunities to experience a wide range of activities such as, ski-ing, bowling and go-karting.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Meadows is becoming an effective school and has a number of strengths. Leadership and management by the head teacher are good and he has a clear vision for the future development of the school. He is supported well by an able deputy and other staff with responsibilities. Along with the governors they share a determined commitment to succeed and build on good practice. Teaching and learning are good and as a result pupils achieve well in most subjects. The school improvement plan identifies well chosen priorities which guide future development giving the school a firm base from which to move forward. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management are good and all staff undertake their responsibilities well.
- Assessment procedures are good and the information is used well to support pupils' learning.
- Teaching is good overall and pupils learn well as a result.
- Teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants is very good. The expertise of learning support assistants is used very well, which supports pupils' learning
- The professional development programme for all staff is very good.
- The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities which enrich pupils' experiences.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development well.

What could be improved

- Provision for design and technology and physical education so that they meet statutory requirements.
- Risk assessments for subjects.
- Specific aspects of pupils' personal development, particularly in relation to smoking.
- Opportunities for more external accreditation
- Attendance, behaviour and the number of exclusions.
- Evaluation of the impact of spending on raising pupils' achievements

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 2001 and it has improved well since then. It has successfully tackled those key issues over which it had control but issues relating to major building improvements which impact on the design and technology and physical education curricula remain. Nevertheless, it has made good improvement in some other areas of its work. In order for this to happen staff have worked very hard. The school has been awarded the Artsmark Silver and the Sportsmark for this. Links with a number of other countries have been made, notably Kenya, Latvia, Belgium and Finland. The school has been involved in a successful Radio 4 broadcast entitled ‘ Excluded’ helped by a writer in residence.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors’ judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	By Year 11	Key	
Speaking and listening	B	very good	A
Reading	B	Good	B
Writing	B	Satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	Unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	B	Poor	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B		

Pupils achieve well and make good progress overall in relation to their prior learning targets. They know their individual behavioural targets well and most make good progress towards achieving them in lessons. Whole school targets have been set to improve pupils achievements in both key stages in English and mathematics and for all pupils in Year 11 to gain at least one Certificate of Achievement and for 50 percent of pupils to gain Certificate of Achievement in English, mathematics and science. Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics and satisfactory progress in science. The ‘writer in residence’ has had a significant impact on the good development of pupils’ speaking, listening and writing skills because of the interest of the pupils in the projects they have done. Pupils who attend well make very good progress in some areas of their learning. Generally pupils make good progress in personal, social and health education and this can be seen in their improved attitudes towards school and learning. Because teaching is good overall pupils achieve well in other subjects. They make very good progress in music, art and physical education which supports the schools’ Artsmark Silver and Sportsmark awards. There is no discernible difference between the achievements of boys and girls.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most pupils say they like coming to school and participate in the wide range of opportunities they are offered. There are some occasions when pupils' anti-social behaviour can impact on their attitude to learning but they can also be very co-operative in activities they enjoy.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory because of the high number of exclusions. Pupils' behaviour can be variable and whilst they can be very well behaved, good humoured and polite, at other times they are rude and disruptive. At college and on work related learning placements their behaviour is good.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Older pupils can discuss how the influence of the school has improved their behaviour so that they are able to form good relationships with adults and to a lesser extent, other pupils. Their personal skills are developed via work placements and structured personal and social education lessons. Pupils have limited opportunities to take initiative and develop responsibilities.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory when compared with national figures but largely in line with similar schools. There are several pupils whose attendance is poor and coupled with the high rate of exclusions, absences remain high. However attendance is slowly improving year on year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good

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

Teaching overall is good and as a result pupils learn well and make good progress in relation to their prior achievements. Teaching in English and mathematics is consistently good with some very good features and in science and personal, social and health education it is satisfactory and occasionally good. Literacy and numeracy skills are well supported across the curriculum because in every lesson 'key words' are prominently displayed and many opportunities are exploited to use pupils' numeracy skills, for example, changing pounds into euros in a French lesson. Pupils often enter school with low levels of communication skills and the 'writer in residence' has helped to develop more understanding about communication and literacy skills and pupils have responded very well. In the most effective lessons, planning is detailed and pupils are given clear explanations about what they are expected to achieve. In these lessons any disruptions are quickly and efficiently managed so that no time is wasted and pupils get on with their work. Often a lively task starts the lesson and catches pupils' interest so there is a positive start and the resources are used to maintain this interest. Pupils work hard and learn well making good progress. Teachers and learning support assistants work very well together to support pupils' learning. When teaching is not effective this is usually because behaviour is not well managed. More time is then spent on this than on teaching and consequently pupils don't learn. Sometimes the activities do not challenge pupils and they become bored and lose interest. Formal homework tasks are rarely set and a more proactive approach would help pupils who are studying for externally accredited examinations.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers pupils a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which is enriched by a wide range of appropriate activities in the extended day time. However, the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in relation to some aspects of design and technology and physical education due to lack of appropriate facilities. Work related learning is a good feature of pupils' education and prepares them well for leaving school. However there are not enough opportunities for pupils to gain external accreditation.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development is good. Pupils now have many more opportunities in these areas, especially in the development of social skills during the breakfast club, extended day activities and in planned opportunities in lessons. Links with a number of other countries and through areas of the curriculum have made pupils more aware of multi-cultural issues. Some specific aspects of their moral development need further development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Assessment procedures are good and the information gathered is used well to inform teachers' planning and pupils' individual targets. The school has good systems in place to support pupils care and welfare. Child protection procedures are secure.

The school works very hard to build positive relationships with parents and this has been successful in that parents have positive views of the school and appreciate how it works with them. Most parents feel comfortable when visiting the school and consider it welcomes them. Risk assessments have not been undertaken in curriculum areas, especially practical subjects. The personal support and guidance given to pupils is good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Good. The leadership and management by the head teacher are good and his vision for the future development of the school is clear and is shared by all staff. All staff are committed to the school and to pupils and as a result there is a positive ethos and in which pupils are encouraged to learn.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governors fulfil their statutory duties well. Most are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and work well with the senior management team to improve what is already in place. They view the school positively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is establishing good systems for monitoring its performance. Teaching and learning and pupils work are regularly monitored and all staff is involved in this process. More needs to be done to evaluate the effect of spending on raising pupils' achievements. Assessment procedures are good and used effectively to guide the curriculum.
The strategic use of	Good. The schools' main resource is its staff and they are very well deployed. Very good use is made of the expertise of learning support

resources	assistants. Specific grants are used well and governors apply of the principles of best value well.
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The school has a sufficient number of qualified teachers and learning support staff to meet the needs of the pupils and the curriculum it offers. The expertise of the learning support assistants is very well used to support teaching and learning. Resources are satisfactory overall but very good in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and good in English, mathematics and science. The accommodation is satisfactory overall but restricts the teaching of some aspects of design and technology and physical education. Improvements have been made since the last inspection in terms of the library, study areas and the art and design facilities.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved

Only four parent questionnaires were returned and seven parents attended the parents meeting. All had positive views of what the school does. Only two areas were identified as concerns and those parents who attended the parents meeting did not want their children to be given homework because it wouldn't get done and inspectors agree with this view after talking to pupils. Homework is given if pupils request it but is not set on a regular basis. Bearing in mind the nature of the pupils attending the school it is not too surprising that some pupils do not like school. Inspectors found that only a minority of pupils said they didn't like school but they did enjoy the activities. Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 Although boys and girls are admitted to the school at different points in their school lives their attainment generally is below, and sometimes well below, what would normally be expected for pupils of their age. This is because their attendance at school has been disrupted due to their emotional and behavioural problems. Many have had bad experiences at previous schools but usually settle quickly into the routines of the school. It is therefore inappropriate to compare their attainment with national standards. Both boys and girls generally achieve well and make good progress overall in relation to their prior learning.

2 Whole school targets have been set to improve pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science. Targets on pupils' individual education plans (IEP) are challenging and are reviewed regularly. Pupils have an input into their targets and the school is beginning to introduce ways of helping pupils to know how they can improve and reach their targets successfully. Individual behaviour plans are referred to regularly in lessons and pupils know exactly what they have to do to reach the required standard. Standards of achievement overall have improved since the last inspection.

3 When pupils with additional special needs, such as learning difficulties and speech and language problems, attend school regularly, they achieve well and make good progress over time. This is due to the effective way in which the school identifies their needs and regularly reviews their progress. Clear learning and behaviour targets, and the well-focussed support they receive in lessons, also have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

4 Pupils' achievements in English are good and they make good and often very good progress across all aspects of their work. Speaking and listening skills develop well as one result of improvements in their behaviour and their understanding that they should listen to others and take turns in responding. In lessons when behaviour is well managed, pupils' confidence in taking part in discussions increases. This was very evident in their recent Radio 4 programme entitled ' Excluded'. Many pupils can read fluently and they can discuss aspects of the wide range of texts they are introduced to. They are given opportunities to read aloud and do so with maturity. Many pupils borrow books from the school library to read at home which demonstrates their growing interest in literature. The regular input from a 'writer in residence' has significantly enhanced pupils' writing skills and they have produced a school newspaper and a book of poems. Pupils are helped in their writing by writing frames and mind maps which help them plan their work and older pupils become familiar with the conventions of writing letters of application and filling in forms ready for when they leave school.

5 Achievements in mathematics are good because the subject is well planned and well taught. The National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive impact on pupils' learning because it has given a structure to the way mathematics is organised and taught. Pupils are able to manipulate numbers, work out simple algebraic problems and use percentages and fractions. They are given experience of a wide range of mathematical concepts. By the time pupils are ready to leave school many are working towards gaining the Certificate of Achievement and covering the appropriate syllabus. Pupils whose attendance is sporadic find the work more difficult but nevertheless make sound progress.

6 In science pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall but some pupils achieve well. The youngest pupils learn about the structure of the human body, they can make a simple electrical circuit and carry out simple investigations. As they move through the school pupils work towards externally accredited awards and consider environmental issues which links in well with their personal, social and health lessons. Because the subject is well taught, pupils achieve well and they can participate in practical work. The involvement of pupils in setting their own targets helps with their own understanding of how they can improve their own learning with help from the teacher.

7 In information and communication technology (ICT) pupils make satisfactory progress. Improvements in the level of equipment have had a positive impact on pupils' learning. They regularly use 'Successmaker' and 'Expresso' which supports the curriculum and pupils' learning. Pupils can access the school's network and the Internet to find the information they need. They make good use of graphics and the digital camera to include photographs in their work. They understand simple control systems and by Year 11 most are using the computer to process some work and know how to produce a presentation on the screen using a dedicated programme.

8 Pupils achieve well and make good progress in religious education. Teaching is consistently good and pupils learn well. They learn about four major faiths, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism and understand the significant beliefs of each one. They know about rites of passage and celebrations. By the time pupils reach Year 11 they follow the syllabus for an ASDAN module about 'Beliefs and Values'. They are encouraged to learn from religion and consider both religious and cultural views of the world.

9 In other subjects of the curriculum achievements range from satisfactory to good but pupils make very good progress in music, art and physical education. This is because teachers have secure subject knowledge, behaviour is well managed and pupils are presented with interesting and challenging activities. Teaching is enthusiastic and lively and motivates pupils who want to do well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10 Overall pupils have satisfactory attitudes to school. In discussion with pupils, most readily admit to liking school and the activities and opportunities that are offered. As one Year 8 pupil said, 'you feel wanted and they don't kick you out.' Pupils participate well in lessons they find interesting and challenging, for example, in a religious education lesson where Year 7 pupils had to identify a mosque and describe what happened in them, pupils were very interested in researching the subject and behaved well. They worked independently to find out the information they needed and ignored the one pupil in the class who occasionally shouted out and demanded extra attention. Occasionally pupils desire to impress each other with anti-social behaviour can impact on their attitude to learning. In a Year 10 science lesson pupils watching a video on 'Gasp for Breath', shouted to each other 'Give us a fag', swore, swung on their chairs and were generally very excited and knowledgeable on the folklore of smoking. For example 'you don't smoke the last bit, that's what kills you'. In a music lesson, pupils creating an atmospheric music background to a horror film they were creating, achieved an impressive standard of concentration, were considerate to each other in their use of headphones and worked extremely well together.

11 Pupil's behaviour across the school can be unpredictable both to staff and often to themselves. Coupled with the high number of exclusions behaviour is unsatisfactory overall. However, during the course of the inspection, their behaviour in lessons and around the school was generally good, and they were polite and good humoured to staff and visitors. Pupils test the limits of the social acceptability of their behaviour and the evidence of the exclusion file records that staff have been subject to unprovoked physical attacks. However, pupils observed on college and work

experience placements were very well behaved. There are points of the day such as break and lunch times when pupils find it particularly difficult to manage their behaviour, but the school provides good opportunities for pupils to join in with different activities and there are fewer opportunities for inappropriate behaviour. During the previous school year there were 77 fixed period exclusions but no pupils were permanently excluded. This was high for fixed period exclusions and although the number of fixed period exclusions has almost halved this year. Approximately 65 per cent of the fixed period exclusions are for violent, unprovoked assaults on staff and 40 per cent of the pupils in the school have received a fixed period exclusion. However the majority of these pupils have only been excluded for one incident and no girls have been excluded this year. Where pupil's very challenging and disruptive behaviour does not permit them to participate and integrate in all lessons the school makes alternative curriculum arrangements or work related learning activities.

12 When considered as a whole, pupil's personal development and the relationships they form, mainly with staff, are satisfactory. Many pupils have learned to ignore the more extreme behaviours of some of their peers which may disrupt lessons and just get on with what they are doing. Very few pupils are expected to get themselves to their work experience placements independently, as travel arrangements make this a difficult issue. The sports activities offered at break times enable pupils to interact socially, and most accept decision against them good naturedly. In discussion with a group of Year 10 pupils, they were able to review their own personal development maturely. 'If I had the chance, I would love to start again at year 7' one pupil said, 'I'd make sure I worked harder and didn't get so angry and react badly to situations.' Year 10 pupils on a college course were very careful and safe in their handling of mechanical tools when stripping down a cylinder head. A Year 11 pupil in a work experience placement in a café, was polite and pleasant to customers and well regarded by her 'employers'. At lunchtime, pupils eat their meals in a relaxed manner, and appear to enjoy the opportunity to talk to staff and each other.

13 Attendance overall is unsatisfactory and in the reported year for the inspection, unauthorised absences were well above average for a school of this type. It is however improving each year and has improved since the previous inspection when it was judged as poor. There are a significant number of pupils with very poor attendance records, and in the previous year, and this year, a number of pupils refused to attend at all. In the current school year, 14 per cent of the authorised absence rate in school is directly attributable to exclusions. It is difficult to judge the punctuality of pupils because until the time of the inspection, this information was not recorded in registers, as many pupils are late due to transport difficulties and not personally responsible for this.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14 The quality of teaching across the school is good with some very good teaching in a number of subjects, notably English, mathematics, art, music and physical education. In music and art specialist teachers are used whose secure subject knowledge is a significant feature of the very good teaching. Very good relationships between adults and pupils are also a key feature of teaching although teachers have to be aware of the relationships between pupils and often seat pupils accordingly.

15 When teaching is very good pupils are given very clear explanations of what is expected of them, the learning objectives and key vocabulary are displayed and lessons often start with a lively task which catches pupils' interest and the lesson starts on a positive note. Resources are well chosen to motivate pupils and strategies used continue to maintain their attention. In addition there are often very good cross-curricular links to other subjects, for example music. In a very good art and design lesson different types of music were used to inspire pupils to express their feelings in their clay work. Pupils were also encouraged to think of very good descriptive words for their feelings which supported their literacy skills. In music lessons the enthusiastic and lively manner of the teacher regularly challenged

pupils to make choices and improve their work and they responded very positively to this approach. Music was also very successfully used in an imaginative way in an English lesson to introduce imagery and additionally supported pupils' spiritual development.

16 Pupils remain on task when a range of good resources support the lesson objectives, for example, in a religious education lesson where pupils used the internet, books and some artefacts to find information about mosques. In a physical education lesson the teachers' own expertise and skills were used to very good effect to demonstrate to pupils how to throw a discus. This encouraged pupils to try hard to succeed.

17 Planning is a good feature of most lessons. Across the school lessons are organised in a consistent way so that pupils are clear about the learning objectives, the tasks they are going to do and they are given key words which help them to remember the main points of the lesson. Teachers give clear explanations and individual targets are identified in some lessons. Whilst all pupils are aware of their own behavioural targets they are not so confident about their learning targets. However many do understand what they need to do to improve their learning, for example, by improving their reading and working hard. In some lessons the very good use of questions helps pupils to consolidate their learning and allows teachers to assess what pupils have learned and understood.

18 Literacy and numeracy skills are well supported in many lessons. Key words are highlighted in the majority of lessons and some teachers, for example, in science, give pupils regular spelling tests for subject specific language.

19 The particular expertise of learning support assistants is used very well to support teaching and learning. Examples of this were seen in music, design and technology, French and Personal, Social and Health Education and citizenship when they take the lead in lessons. In all areas however, they work alongside teachers in a very constructive way and because they know the pupils very well and have very good relationships with them, can make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. The high level of training they have received has improved and extended their understanding of these pupils and how to manage them effectively.

20 All staff make every effort to ensure that pupils with additional special educational needs are fully involved in discussions and activities. Questions and prompts are well matched to different abilities and this effectively supports pupils' learning. Many tasks are adapted to meet pupils' varied needs although this is not consistent between subjects. Staff are skilled at encouraging pupils with particular difficulties to try to overcome problems themselves before stepping in with help.

21 When teaching is less effective it is usually because behaviour is not well managed or teachers are inconsistent about their expectations of pupils. Sometimes pupils become confrontational and unco-operative and have to leave the classroom. At other times there is a constant low level of disruption which slows down the pace of the lesson and generally inhibits learning for everyone. In these situations more time is spent on dealing with behavioural issues than on teaching. In other lessons the level of challenge in the tasks is too low and pupils finish the work quickly and then expect rewards, but their learning is limited because the task has been too easy and no extension work was prepared. Sometimes in these situations praise is given indiscriminately in order to please the pupils and try to keep them on task but it doesn't support their learning.

22 No formal homework is given unless pupils request it, but they can and do take books home from the library and time is available during the extended day to follow up any work. It means that parents are reliant on finding out for themselves or from twice yearly reports what their child is learning in school and they have very little input into their child's education.

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

23 Although the quality and range of learning opportunities has improved well since the previous inspection, the curriculum is still unsatisfactory overall. Not all elements of design and technology and physical education are taught and therefore statutory requirements are not met. The omissions in these subjects are largely due to limitations in the school's accommodation. The curriculum now includes a modern foreign language and music for all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and an appropriate proportion of time is allocated to science. These areas have all improved since the last inspection. Good quality policies and schemes of work are in place for all subjects, and good opportunities are provided to meet the interests and needs of all pupils. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science, together with personal, social and health education, are successfully taught. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is systematic and effective and pupils' learning in these basic skills is reinforced in subjects across the curriculum. The information communication technology programme 'Successmaker' continues to contribute well towards the development of basic skills. By the time they are 16 years old pupils have made good progress in all aspects of English, in mathematics and in personal, social and health education, and in meeting their personal targets in these areas, set at annual review meetings.

24 The school has a clear and comprehensive policy on equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory rights and practices. Although there are pupils of both sexes, with a wide range of ability and many additional special educational needs, all have equal opportunities of access to the curriculum and the facilities available. For those pupils who attend regularly there are no significant variations between the progress of girls and boys, or by different groups. Particular learning difficulties are recognised and monitored by the special educational needs co-ordinator. When appropriate pupils receive additional support in lessons, and tasks are frequently modified to match the needs of pupils of different abilities although this is not always carried out consistently. Pupils with dyspraxia benefit from regular help from a learning support assistant with expertise in this area.

25 Links with other schools in the neighbourhood are developing and are promoted mainly through sporting activities and work in art and design and design and technology. A school consultant is currently investigating ways of raising funding to increase inclusion opportunities through joint projects involving citizenship and the arts, and activities which will promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is aware that inclusion is an area for further development. There are good links with Bishop Auckland College and other training providers such as Sunderland YMCA and NACRO, and pupils benefit from participating in a range of 'taster' courses including bricklaying, catering and motor vehicle maintenance.

26 The provision for careers education and work experience is good, and successfully complements the other learning opportunities offered to pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11. The careers education programme is wide ranging and enables pupils to discuss a wide range of very relevant topics preparing them well for the next stage of their life. These opportunities have a very positive impact on pupils' ability to learn and to make choices about their futures. The school is supported by the local Connexions service and most pupils derive pleasure and increased self-confidence from their work experience placements. Links with the local community are good and support work experience placements. The school's range of accreditation has been extended since the previous inspection and but needs to be further extended. The school is aware of the need to ensure that all pupils, including higher-attainers, have opportunities to demonstrate how well they can achieve.

27 The curriculum is enriched by a wide and varied programme of visits, visitors and activities all of which enhance pupils' learning and personal development. An extended day is offered three times each week when, behaviour permitting, pupils can join in activities as diverse as Laser Quest, golf, a visit to the National Glass Centre and horse riding. Other visits to the Centre for Life and Hamsterly Forest raise their awareness of environmental issues and these are further promoted through opportunities for exploring the natural world through rock climbing, mountain biking and water sports. Residential visits to Westgate in County Durham and to France help pupils' social development and give them further opportunities of taking responsibility for themselves. Pupils cycle along a disused railway line, visit the local park and leisure centre. Many of these opportunities appeal to their interests and have made pupils aware of leisure activities that they did not appreciate they would enjoy pursuing. The curriculum for sex education and the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse are supported by visits from the school nurse, the police and the local drugs education service. Other recent visitors to the school have included a writer in residence who has made a significant contribution towards increasing pupils' learning, confidence and enjoyment in writing, particularly in relation to poetry and drama.

28 The school makes good provision for the pupils' personal development overall. The ethos of the school is positive and the staff work hard to keep the atmosphere calm and orderly. This is an improvement since the time of the previous inspection when it was unsatisfactory overall.

29 The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good, a very good improvement since the previous inspection. Good opportunities are taken in lessons for pupils to reflect on their feelings and what they would change. For example, in a religious education lesson when the pupils were learning about the Buddhist festival of Loy Kratong, they floated candles in water, supported by paper flowers that they had made, and were given the opportunity to think about the things they wanted and things they regret. They took the opportunity seriously and were quiet and thoughtful. In other lessons, the spiritual aspects of the pupil's work is planned for well, such as, in music, pupils listened to the music and etched their feelings in clay. The music, which was sometimes scary or jarring, was depicted in the marks they made. In science, the pupils are positively encouraged to be curious in the physical processes of life and in English there are well-planned opportunities for the pupils to reflect, such as where music helped the pupils think about the images they wanted to use. All staff and pupils meet together at the end of the day to celebrate the day's successes. The atmosphere is very positive and everyone applauds the pupil chosen as 'Star of the Day'. This has a positive impact on the pupils' self-esteem as well as an opportunity to meet together as a school.

30 The provision for the pupils' moral development is satisfactory, and staff provide good role models. Pupils do know right from wrong, and are clear about what constitutes acceptable behaviour. Pupils' moral development is supported well by the behaviour policy and the staff assessment of individual pupils' behaviour. These assessments help pupils to identify patterns in their personal development and changes in their academic progress. Opportunities are planned for in lessons to support the pupils' moral development. For example, in science pupils appreciate the importance of real evidence. A small number of pupils are allowed to smoke at specified times during the school day in an allocated area under supervision, this present situation is unsatisfactory. The school has a clear policy, which indicates regular discouragement by the supervising teacher and regular reminders of the school rules of SSCCH (Smoking, Swearing, Chewing, Coats and Hats). In science, there are specific lessons – 'Gasping for Breath' to discourage pupils from smoking. The school and Health Education Promotion Service are working together towards zero tolerance of smoking in the school.

31 Pupils' social development is good overall which is a very good improvement since the previous inspection when it was unsatisfactory. Breakfast club makes a good contribution to the start of the school day and in developing pupils' social skills, giving them the opportunity to sit with their

peers and staff in a relaxed atmosphere. Lunchtimes are well organised, pupils sit in small groups with members of staff and make a choice about what they want to eat from what is available. Where tutor times are used well, they support opportunities for discussion and social interaction, as well as setting the tone for the day and this has a positive effect on the pupils' attitudes. The relationships between the pupils and the staff are good overall and have a positive impact on the pupils' social development. In lessons, pupils are encouraged to work in small groups; such as, in music and to listen to each other perform. Pupils are encouraged to be aware of others and support such causes as 'Red Nose Day' and 'Operation Christmas Child'.

32 Provision for cultural development is good, a good improvement since the previous inspection because there are now more opportunities for the pupils to learn about different cultures as well as Britain as a multi-cultural society. The school provides a good range of texts in the library to promote multicultural awareness. Religious education helps pupils to understand different religions and beliefs and there are opportunities for the pupils to learn about famous people from other cultures such as Martin Luther King. In discussions about creation, the pupils learn about the stories of different cultures, for example, the Aborigines of Australia and the Dream Time and in art and design the pupils make shields based on Native North Americans. The school has made provision for links with several European countries through the Comenius Project to promote the pupils understanding of different societies. The close link with Kenya through the camera exchange and a Kenyan school, includes an exchange of photographs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33 Procedures for child protection in the school are good and in line with the area child protection services. All staff in school have received basic training in child protection procedures. The school has also ensured that visiting staff, such as the anti-bullying organiser, is sensitive to child protection issues, and knows the named person for child protection. The school has good links to the area child protection agency, access service, looked after children team and the education welfare service. They regularly involved in case conferences and in working with relevant agencies and professionals where there are concerns about pupils and their families or placements. Pupils said in discussions that they felt safe in school. The school benefits from regular liaison with the educational psychology, learning support, speech and language therapists and educational development services who advise on particular aspects of pupils' learning.

34 Health and safety procedures follow the local education authority guidelines and the school has adopted its policy, which is satisfactory, and a number of staff have received appropriate training in first aid. Care plans for pupils on medication are in draft form awaiting governor's approval. Risk assessments have been completed for nearly all outside activities, Where possible, outside agencies complete these for them, for example on work experience placements. However, there are no recorded checks of site inspections or formal routes of notification for health and safety concerns within the school. Risk assessments for all areas of curriculum have not been completed and there were, for example, some areas of concern over practise in design and technology. Regular fire drills are held for pupils, but the siting of fire extinguishers should be reviewed so that they cannot be tampered with. Despite the school receiving a Healthy School award it does permit pupils of under 16 years old to smoke outside at lunchtime and at break times. This is under supervision and as a result of the school's review of anti-smoking and anti-bullying procedures. Although pupils have to meet specific guidelines, which includes the permission of their parents or carers, this practice does not support the concept of promoting health education for pupils, or follow national guidelines on health education by encouraging under age smoking. However the school is working with the health education worker who audits the Healthy Schools Promotion, to train a Smoking Cessation adviser and to eventually ban any smoking on the school premises by pupils. Until then, the school takes the view that it is safer to be able to control smoking in a localised zone, which is supervised. A number of

science lessons during the course of the inspection were graphically anti-smoking and very clearly indicated the dangers of smoking to pupils.

35 The personal support and guidance offered to pupils is good. Pupils are with the same staff all the time, and this means that they know pupils very well and are able to build up good working relationships which underpin their work with pupils. The school's Star of the Day award recognises and rewards social and behavioural achievements, as well as academic achievements. This allows every pupil to be recognised for the effort they have made to achieve personal targets and goals. The system is understood and accepted by pupils and provides an opportunity for the whole school to meet together in an orderly and quiet way giving a calm end to the day. The extended day provision respects pupil's individual choices offering pupils the opportunity to budget for the range of visits open to them, socialise as part of a larger group, plan future activities, or sit quietly watching television or a video. All pupils have the opportunity to attend a breakfast club before the start of school and pupils have access to drinking water in their lessons. Girls have had the opportunity to experience 'living babies' to look after and take care of at home as part of their personal, social and health education programme.

36 Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are good overall. Pupils are greeted arriving at school, which proves very useful, if pupils attempt to abscond before morning registration. Arrangements are in place to phone a pupil's home or carer to check on their absence, although this does not happen until the first morning break. Visits to each lesson by the designated team leader do however keep a very close check on individual pupil attendance and track any pupil's absences. The school has established links with a specific education welfare officer who makes contact with social workers in pupil's home area and the school has appointed an attendance officer to monitor and promote attendance. Procedures for marking registers were inconsistent at the start of the inspection, but rapidly came in line with statutory requirements once procedural requirements were explained. Pupils are rewarded for improved and consistent attendance and classes vie with each other in attendance ratings. Home visits are made to the families of any pupils who are not regular attenders, and this is judged to have had a beneficial effect for a few pupils in promoting improved attendance.

37 Procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour are good as are those to eliminate bullying and oppressive behaviour. However the school acknowledges that there is still much work to be done in this area if behaviour overall is to improve. Detailed records are kept of any incident, major or minor. These are linked to exclusion records, behaviour assessments, to setting targets for pupils' behaviour and to make risk assessments on behavioural grounds. The school's team leaders keep a brief behaviour log for each lesson of the day. All staff has received training in Team Teach methods of restraint and on each occasion where positive handling strategies are used, the restraint incident is recorded. The school is open in acknowledging that bullying does take place and is working with the anti-bullying officer to eliminate these incidents. All behaviour and bullying incidents are monitored, and this information is used to ensure that individual pupils who are victims of bullying are identified and given appropriate support. The education authority's anti-bullying worker structures circle times, and counselling sessions, to support the school's measures to eliminate oppressive and offensive behaviour and language.

38 The school has continued to build on the good systems for assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress that were in place at the time of the last inspection. The well-developed Assessment Management System, which gives several staff responsibility for specialist areas, is effective in ensuring that the good assessment procedures, based on 'Assessment for Learning' are used consistently across all subjects of the curriculum. The database, introduced just before the last inspection, is now well established and the progress of each pupil can be tracked from their initial entry until they leave school, with attainment levels referenced to National Curriculum levels. The

information available from the database provides teachers with a clear picture of an individual pupil's progress both within a subject and across all subjects so that strengths and weaknesses can be easily identified and the teachers provided with information to guide curriculum planning.

39 Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are good; they are produced for all subjects and reviewed regularly. IEPs are discussed at the Annual Reviews and parents are kept fully informed of the updated plans. The IEPs contain appropriate targets which are set in discussion with the pupils and the school is now introducing 'success criteria' to help pupils know when their targets have been reached and what the next stage will be. Pupils are well involved in monitoring their own achievement and progress. Reading and number levels are assessed at least annually, in addition to other tests and procedures are also used effectively, particularly to support literacy and numeracy, such as 'Successmaker' and Spear.

40 The school meets statutory requirements in the organisation of Annual and Transition Reviews. All relevant people are invited, including the pupils themselves, and every effort is made to ensure the parents are able to attend. If not, the school make sure that parents are kept well informed about their child's progress and achievements throughout the year, if necessary by a home visit. The school reports to parents three times a year, once at the end of the Autumn Term with an 'interim report', at the time of the Annual Review and an end of year report. Through the Annual Reviews a few pupils are appropriately disapplied from aspects of the National Curriculum with alternative arrangements being organised. For example one boy in Year 9 attends 'Motormax' while arrangements are made to ensure he continues with work in literacy and numeracy.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41 Parents' views of the school are positive. Despite only a very few parents attending the pre-inspection parent's meeting, most are very supportive of the school's teaching of their children and the school's efforts to promote pupils personal development and the help they are given to become mature and sensible. Parents feel that their children make good progress in the school and there is the perception that the school has had a calming effect on them. Generally parents appreciate how staff deal with pupils and the positive encouragement and feedback that they give to their children. They feel that this helps them to like school and has increased their children's self esteem.

42 Information to parents is very good. Parents are contacted very quickly if their child has been in trouble, and the school explains all behavioural procedures and targets very carefully. The school sends out regular newsletters and contacts parents by telephone or makes home visits when it feels that information would be better explained face to face, than in a written report. The school works hard to keep in touch with parents, and a home liaison worker makes a rota of home visits. These are a regular feature of school life and timetabled to coincide with the extended school day. Home visits are accompanied by all the academic and personal documentation linked to each pupil, IEPs, behavioural assessments and 'anecdotal', which are reports of good or bad incidents in the day to day life of pupils in school. 'Parents are very interested to read what their children have been doing in school and are often amazed at the amount of work that their children have completed.' A member of staff said when discussing the home visits. 'It can sometimes take up to two hours, just to go through the information I have taken out to each pupil's home.' Pupils too, generally approve of the home visits and the fact that their parents have evidence of the work they do 'it's a good idea so your mam can see the good stuff you do, and not just hear about what you've done wrong.'

43 Statutory annual review meetings are very well organised and parents are always invited although only a minority find it possible to attend. Parents are kept well informed about their children's

targets and progress, however the reports prepared for annual review meetings are very detailed which can make it difficult to extract information from them easily.

44 The effectiveness of the school's links with parents, despite the schools very best efforts, is satisfactory. Because of the long distances many pupils have to travel to come to school, there are no parents involved in the school on a day-to-day basis, parents are encouraged to come into school to help manage their children's behaviour if this is felt to be useful, and this offer has occasionally been taken up. Few parents attend any of the school events and attendance at reviews is generally linked to the school's actions to arrange transport for parents and carers. Annual reviews have even been held in pupil's homes if there is no other practical alternative to getting parents into school. The school has put parents in touch with the local education authorities' Parent Partnership service, but this has mainly been used to support parents on their initial visit to the school.

45 Parents contribute very little to their children's education out of school. No homework is set and parents said that their children would not do it and on the whole parents do not consider that neither they or their children want homework. Many parents live a considerable distance from school and social organisations such as a Parent Teacher Association are impractical to arrange and not asked for by parents. The school parents views, for example, through its annual parent questionnaire. Parents are aware that the school permits their children to smoke under supervision, but are pragmatic about this issue, for example, saying 'if he couldn't smoke at the specified times in the school day, he would leave the premises or not come to school at all.'

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46 Since the previous inspection the head teacher, deputy head and the governors have worked very hard to successfully tackle the key issues and have moved the school on. This is a testimony to the whole staffs' commitment to the school and its pupils. Led by the head teacher and deputy head, staff have developed a strong team spirit and unstintingly give their time and effort for the benefit of the pupils. The schools' aim of putting pupils first is successfully met and can be seen in the constructive relationships between staff and pupils and in the school's positive ethos in which pupils are treated with respect. The head teacher promotes a collegiate style of management which creates a democratic ethos within the staff in that everyone is included in the decision making process and feel ownership of what is decided resulting in all staff feeling valued. Leadership and management are now good.

47 All staff carry out their particular responsibilities well and have a shared commitment to succeed and their aim to give pupils a good quality education underpins most of the work they do. They are fully involved in auditing their subject and submit an action plan which is costed and linked to the school improvement plan (SIP). The SIP now covers five years and gives a long term strategic view for the direction of the school. This plan is supplemented by a detailed annual plan, which is closely checked for progress by the senior management team who report to the governing body. Governors who would be better informed if they took a more proactive role in the monitoring process.

48 Since the last inspection the school has extended its procedures for monitoring teaching and learning. The system now in place means that the senior management team has a regular programme for observing teaching, which has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching because of written feedback and identified areas for improvement. All planning, both medium and short term, is regularly monitored against agreed criteria and the findings discussed with staff. Pupils work is also scrutinised and matched against medium term plans. Peer monitoring has been introduced and is a measure of the increased confidence of teachers that they find this helpful and constructive. Annually questionnaires

are given to parents, pupils, staff and governors to identify their views of the school and any action needed is incorporated into the school improvement plan.

49 The governors strongly support the school and are committed to moving the school forward. The chair of governors has a high presence in the school and together with the vice chair in particular, has been fully involved in monitoring the action plan relating to the previous inspection and they have a clear view of the future direction of the school. As a whole the governing body rely on reports from the head teacher about the achievements of the school, although a recently appointed governor makes weekly visits to classrooms to help, which is giving her a very useful insight into how the school operates on a daily basis. However, no written report is made which would be helpful to other governors who are unable to do this, for example, examining how particular policies are carried out in practice especially those related to personal development and health and safety. Individual subject co-ordinators report to the full governing body on a rota basis, which has made a significant difference to their understanding of the curriculum. Governors understand the principles of best value and compare important aspects of their school with others, attendance and exclusions are monitored and tenders are requested for major items of expenditure. Since the last inspection their role as a 'critical friend' in terms of questioning reports and decisions has developed well.

50 The day-to-day administration of the school is good and office staff ensure that daily procedures are carried out efficiently adding to the smooth running of the school. Financial systems are sound and control over the budget is secure. Systems for ordering goods and checking invoices are well established and office staff have had appropriate training in the computer systems used. The local education authority has not undertaken an audit of the schools financial systems to verify strengths and weaknesses. The chair of the finance committee works closely with the head teacher and office staff to monitor spending, and findings are reported to the full governing body. However setting criteria to monitor the effectiveness of large spending decisions on raising pupils' achievements would build on and further enhance current practice.

51 The numbers, experience and qualifications of teachers and learning support assistants match the needs of pupils and demands of the curriculum very well. All staff have job descriptions so they know exactly what is expected of them. There is clear guidance for new members of staff and a very strong emphasis on the continuing professional development of all staff. For example, the role of the middle manager, a key issue in the last inspection, is now being developed. Performance management systems have been securely established and include learning support assistants. The school places great emphasis on teachers and learning support assistants working as a team with the latter being given training and curriculum responsibilities. The success of this practice was evident during the period of the inspection with the learning support assistants having an effective input into teaching.

52 The building is in good order and has recently been rewired. It is light, airy, pleasantly decorated and generally makes a positive contribution to the pupils' learning environment. The accommodation has been improved since the previous inspection by the provision of a computer suite, small study areas off the library, an all-weather Astroturf area for games and a small multi-gym for fitness training. Although the school provides satisfactory, and in some areas good accommodation for most curriculum areas, it still does not have specialist accommodation for design and technology and physical education which limits the range of activities which can be taught. This affects pupils' learning as pupils are unable to work in metal, the food technology area is not large enough to accommodate whole classes and in physical education pupils are unable to have dance and gymnastic activities. This results in statutory requirements in these subject not being met.

53 Resources for learning are satisfactory overall apart from information and communication technology where they are very good and in art and design, design and technology and physical

education they continue to be unsatisfactory. However the school has gone some way to compensate for this by allocating significant funding for an all weather pitch and multi-gym.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54 In order to build on the recent improvements the head teacher, governors and staff should now:

- (1) Improve the provision for design and technology and physical education so that they meet statutory requirements, (21)
- (2) undertake risk assessments across subjects of the curriculum particularly within practical subjects, (32,47,83)
- (3) Decrease the occasions when pupils are allowed to smoke on the school premises by continuing to give them access to appropriate information and to a health education worker, (11,28,32)
- (4) Increase the opportunities for pupils to gain externally accredited examinations, (24)
- (5) Improve attendance and behaviour and decrease the number of exclusions, (11,13,19,35,55,69,87,95)
- (6) Evaluate the impact of major spending decisions on raising pupils' achievements. (48)

55 In addition to the above key issues the head teacher, governors and staff may also consider:

- Adopting a more proactive approach to homework to support pupils studying for examinations (20)

2001-2002 results

2 pupils gained Entry Level Certificate of Achievement in English

121 AQA Unit Awards were gained in English, mathematics, French, art and design and design and technology.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	55
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	47

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	19	16	16	4	0	0
Percentage	0	35	29	29	7	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	45
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	34

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	15.1%

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	4.9%

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	45	77	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5
Average class size	7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	324

Financial year	2002-2003
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	£
Total income	648341
Total expenditure	654438
Expenditure per pupil	14873
Balance brought forward from previous year	18330

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Balance carried forward to next year	-6097
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Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	45
Number of questionnaires returned	5

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	20	0	20	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	40	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	20	0	0	40
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	20	0	20	20
The teaching is good.	100	0	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	80	20	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	100	0	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	20	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	80	20	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	100	0	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	80	20	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	80	0	0	0	20

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

ENGLISH

56 The provision for English is very good and has improved from the good quality identified during the previous inspection. Although the standard of pupils' work is below that expected nationally for their ages, pupils of all abilities who attend regularly, achieve well and make good, and often very good, progress in the majority of lessons and over time. This is because teaching is almost always very good. The co-ordinator and other teachers of English have very good subject knowledge, plan very effectively and use a wide variety of work and resources to interest and encourage pupils. The support pupils receive from learning support assistants is of very high quality and makes a significant contribution to their progress. Disruptive behaviour is usually managed firmly and calmly. The subject is very well managed and the principles of the National Literacy Strategy have been very effectively incorporated into planning so that, for instance, most lessons start with a short briskly paced introductory activity that settles pupils well to their work. Very occasionally time is wasted when pupils are insufficiently focussed at the beginning of the lesson and the subsequent restless behaviour restricts the learning of the whole group. Assessment procedures and record keeping are very thorough, and information from assessment is well used in identifying the literacy targets in pupils' individual education plans. 'Successmaker', an information and communication technology programme, is effectively used to reinforce and extend pupils' learning. An appropriately strong emphasis is placed on grammar, spelling and the presentation of work. Literacy development is reinforced in many subject areas, and across the curriculum key subject words are displayed and are used in both oral and written work. Consequently, pupils' understanding and their confidence during discussion are promoted in all subjects.

57 Pupils across the age range make good, and often very good, progress in developing speaking and listening skills. As they move through the school they begin to appreciate the idea of turn taking and the need to listen to others. This is frequently evident in their classroom behaviour as most develop an understanding of when it is appropriate to interject and when it is necessary to remain quiet and listen. However, not all pupils apply this understanding consistently and a significant minority still call out inappropriately at times or make silly comments. Their confidence in speaking for an audience is effectively promoted by the many well managed class discussions, and by their recent participation in a school based Radio 4 programme, 'Excluded'. Pupils worked with a writer in residence, and with school staff, to describe and demonstrate their work and feelings during an intensive week during which they wrote and discussed poetry in lessons in English and many other subjects.

58 Pupils make good, and often very good, progress in reading. By the end of Year 9 they all use a range of cueing systems to work out unfamiliar words and many read fluently and with expression. They discuss texts, predict possible outcomes and comment on characters and events. During their time in the school pupils are introduced to a wide range of texts that include 'Dracula', Shakespearean plays, World War 1 poetry and more modern works such as 'Cider with Rosie'. Pupils benefit from the many opportunities they are given to read aloud and most are willing to do so, even when their skills are limited. This promotes their confidence and fluency well. By the end of Year 11 most pupils use reference books to support their learning in subjects across the curriculum. Reading development is very well promoted by the attractive and well-organised library, which has been significantly improved since the previous inspection. Pupils of all abilities enjoy stories and borrow library books for home reading.

59 Pupils produce a wide range of writing and make good, and often very good, progress as they move through the school. By the end of Year 9 they write in a range of styles and often use their

imagination well when putting ideas on paper. Although many are initially reluctant to write, the use of writing frames and mind maps for planning their work enables them to develop their ideas, and draft and refine their work. During the inspection pupils' creativity and use of imagery was effectively encouraged through music, played by the part time music teacher, to support their understanding of 'Pandora's Box', the focus text of the lesson. Pupils understand a range of grammatical features including homophones and synonyms, and they learn to make their writing more interesting by using subordinate clauses. During Years 10 and 11 teachers prepare pupils well for the next stage of their lives. Consequently they become familiar with the language and conventions required for form filling and letter writing, which enables them to complete applications successfully. Pupils make good progress in writing accounts and instructions for a variety of audiences, and throughout the school they take pride in presenting their writing with the use of information and communication technology, and seeing their work on display.

60 All aspects of English in the school have been significantly enhanced by regular input from the writer in residence. Pupils who formerly showed little interest in reading or writing now say they enjoy the subject more. In addition to 'Excluded', they have produced a school newspaper, a drama script, 'Dr McDeath', and a collection of high quality poems, 'Rhyming Riddles and Dizzy Diddles'. This includes poetry in a very wide range of styles including a gangster rap, acrostic valentines and a blessing for a new baby. The poetry shows a level of perception and sensitivity not always apparent in other aspects of pupils' work. Visits to the theatre and to a regional newspaper, links with Northern Arts and participation in 'world days' for books and poetry, have further enriched provision for the subject. English makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

MATHEMATICS

61 The school's provision for mathematics is good for all pupils and by the end of Years 9 and 11, the pupils make good progress in mathematics because of the consistently good teaching, good planning, and links to individual targets. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection when it was unsatisfactory. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well to support the structure of teaching and has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. The pupils are able to take award-bearing courses, such as the Certificate of Achievement and the more able pupils at the end of this Year 9 will work towards GCSE over the next 2 years. Pupils' progress is supported well using 'Successmaker'; this computer program enables pupils to work on individual programmes to develop numeracy and mathematical skills. This also records the pupils' good progress over time.

62 By the end of Year 9 pupils have made good progress because they are able to multiply using three digits and work out simple algebraic problems, such as 'de x h = de' ($45 \times 1 = 45$). They are able to work in fractions and percentages finding out for example, 30 percent of an amount. In completing multiplication, they remember that 7×7 is a square number. They are able to measure angles accurately on a line and from a point and can identify and draw different types of triangle, such as scalene, isosceles and equilateral, and know that angles can be obtuse, acute and reflex. When measuring the area of a rectangle they know that the answer should be in square centimetres. The pupils in their interpretation of graphs make good progress; they understand probability and create a scatter graph from data they have collected. Some pupils, especially when they have a high rate of absence, have less work, but when they are in school, the work is of good quality and they make good progress in their knowledge and understanding.

63 Good progress continues and by the end of Year 11, the pupils are able to work out more complex algebraic equations, such as 'p + q + r' when 'p = 99, q = 101 and r = 100. Work for the Certificate of Achievement shows they are able to work out mathematical problems, analyse a table

showing temperature; add, subtract, multiply and divide a long series of numbers using a calculator competently and solve money management problems. They use calendars to work out different dates and apply this to holiday bookings, working out the total cost of a holiday, including hotels and surcharges is a realistic exercise to help their understanding of the application of mathematics. They develop their skills in interpreting data accurately using frequency tables, line graphs, work out the median, and are able to use a computer program to create a three-dimensional pie chart. Pupils are able to draw lines of symmetry and create a symmetrical design. Those pupils who have been absent more frequently find it more difficult to identify the mathematics required to complete a task, find writing about mathematical relationships in words more difficult and are less confident in working with very large numbers. They are able to use folds to show a line of symmetry but are less secure in their understanding of planes of symmetry.

64 Mathematics is taught well throughout the school and pupils' learning is also good. The brisk start to the lessons and clear explanations of the targets helps the pupils settle down to work well. They respond well to the class teachers' very positive attitudes. Pupils work very hard, for example, in a Year 7 lesson, encouraged by the teacher, pupils gain confidence in doubling numbers. In another good lesson observed during the inspection, Year 8 pupils were helped to concentrate by the brisk pace of the lesson and recall multiplication facts. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils and motivate them well. The clear start to the lessons, including the class teacher's explanations of the lesson objective and success criteria, helps the pupils to want to get the answers right. The teachers use time well in the lessons, for example, in a Year 9 lesson, sufficient time was allocated to the task, the pupils understood that the time was limited and they did not waste it. Pupils work neatly and the good marking by the teachers gives them encouragement and indicates how they can improve. Planning for lessons is good and pupils work is assessed against the attainment targets in the National Curriculum, all pupils have their individual mathematics targets in their books or files so that they can refer to them. Teachers plan for pupils to have a good range of practical activities, such as, in Year 7, pupils using nets to create cubes and learning to look at the net to predict which nets would work. Very good questioning by the class teacher at the end of the lesson helped the pupils to consolidate their learning about nets and three-dimensional shapes.

65 Pupils generally behave well in lessons, but when they find control difficult, teachers deal with incidents calmly and quietly, always allowing pupils a way back into the lesson. The good mixture of mental mathematics, practical work and plenary maintains pupils' interest. For example, in one very good lesson observed in Year 11, the quick fire multiplication questions gained pupils' attention immediately; the resources for planning and costing a holiday were all ready and included a good range of brochures, supported by a well-organised worksheet. This enabled the pupils to work well and the discussion in the plenary session helped the class teacher to track any problems where pupils may need additional help. The encouragement given by the teachers for pupils to work in groups or pairs makes a positive contribution to developing social interaction and turn taking.

66 The leadership and management of the subject are good which is a good improvement since the last inspection. Long term planning is now good and linked securely to the National Curriculum, as are medium and short term plan. The well written subject policy and scheme of work is reflected in the teaching and learning and there is a good development plan to support the subject over time. The use of resources for the subject is good and there is an appropriate range of resources available. ICT is used through 'Successmaker' and Maths Alive but more such programs would further extend support for the subject and enable pupils to further develop their skills.

SCIENCE

67 Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in science. This is because of the improvement in the quality of teaching that is never less than satisfactory, often good and occasionally very good; the establishment of good long and medium term plans; the development of appropriate schemes of work to meet the needs of the particular pupils; the introduction of the Key Stage 3 strategy for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and external accreditation for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

68 Pupils' achievements and progress in science are satisfactory overall and are good for some pupils. For others their work is adversely affected, at times by disruptive behaviour and disinterest and for some by inconsistent attendance. The good assessment procedures in science, the effective procedures for monitoring academic progress and the increasing involvement of pupils in their own target setting are all helping the teacher identify individual difficulties and plan appropriate intervention either for the whole class or for an individual.

69 By the end of year 9, as a result of good teaching and an appropriate curriculum, the majority of pupils understand the principles of scientific investigation and can carry out their own simple experiments observing, recording results and drawing conclusions. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils are able to investigate what happens when calcium is added to water, record their results and reach the conclusion that a chemical reaction caused a rise in water temperature. They know the basic structure of the human body and have an awareness of the issues of inheritance and natural selection in the animal kingdom. They can make a simple electric circuit, know that electricity is produced in a Power Station and can identify everyday usage of electricity as relevant to their own lives. Literacy and numeracy skills are well supported with regular spelling tests for new and technical vocabulary associated with particular topics.

70 In Years 10 and 11 pupils complete modules for the OCR Entry Level Certificate. They can demonstrate an increasing understanding of the properties of materials and can classify everyday objects by the material used. For example, they are able to identify the many different materials used in the manufacture of a car and have discussed environmental issues such as the importance of recycling and the relevance to world trade of using materials such as ivory with its impact on the elephant population. Science links well with the personal, health and social education course by relating the continuing study of human biology to pupils' own lives such as the damage caused to lungs by smoking. This is a topic that invokes very mixed reactions for instance, in one lesson, a pupil commented 'well I'd considered giving up smoking and I'll try harder' whereas in another lesson there was a comment 'you just don't smoke the last bit 'cos that's what kills you'.

71 Lessons are well planned and the teacher's firm but friendly approach provides a calm atmosphere with frequent praise and encouragement to help raise pupils' confidence. The very good teamwork and high expectations for pupils' individual effort and appropriate behaviour results in most pupils listening, taking part and making good progress. Occasionally bad behaviour has an impact on the progress of an individual but as far as possible, the work is completed away from the laboratory supervised by another member of staff. Resources are used well including the newly installed interactive whiteboard and lessons are taught at a good pace with a variety of activities both written and practical which helps to keep pupils interested and involved. It is more difficult to keep pupils attention when the balance of time is towards writing or watching a demonstration rather than their being actively involved.

72 The subject is well managed and has shown significant improvement since the last inspection with a strong commitment on the part of the co-ordinator to move the subject on further. The planning and schemes of work, which have been adapted from national guidelines, are now firmly in place and appropriate for the needs of the particular pupils. The introduction of external accreditation gives a focus for pupils in Years 10 and 11, which may need to be extended in the future, and the plan to

introduce AQA Units for pupils lower down the school should have further beneficial effects. Assessment procedures are very good and include a pre-topic quiz to determine the level of prior knowledge and an end of module test to assess progress and achievement. The accommodation is adequate to teach the present curriculum but would not be suitable if GCSE was introduced.

ART AND DESIGN

73 Pupils' achievements and progress in art and design are very good throughout the school. Many pupils are attaining at national expectations. Five pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 are studying for the GCSE in art and design with the remainder achieving unit awards in the AQA certificate. In Year 9 a group of five pupils are working towards AQA certificates, and of these, three will be studying for the GCSE in 2004. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection when achievements were judged to be sound and progress satisfactory. This good improvement has also been recognised by the recent award of the Artsmark Silver award to the school. That the pupils are making very good progress is due to the quality of teaching, lesson planning, very good support staff and the efforts of the subject's co-ordinator.

74 The breadth of the National Curriculum programmes of study provided to the pupils has also improved. Lack of working in clay and the study of the style of famous artists was a weakness noted in the previous inspection and this has been addressed with pupils studying the works of famous artists such as Picasso and Braque and working in air drying clay. However accommodation and resource issues still limit the depth of the provision because there are still no facilities for throwing and glazing three dimensional clay models and the accommodation still prevents pupils from producing work of any size.

75 By Year 9 pupils have studied still life painting from realism to cubism and have produced pencilled interpretations of them. They have studied how to produce line drawings of buildings, to draw them from different elevations and to produce a stencil for fabric design. Pupils by Year 11 have produced water colour paintings in the styles of Monet and Van Gogh and Seurat's 'painting of a tree' and glass painting using acrylic paints.

76 Teaching is consistently very good. A part time teacher took all lessons, in the absence of the subject teacher. Lessons were well prepared, made interesting and very good relationships with the pupils motivated and enabled them to learn. In a Year 10 lesson, jointly led by the peripatetic music teacher, music of varying styles and tempo was played and pupils had to express their personal feelings about the mood of the music by etching it into clay tablets. The end results showed maturity and pupils were able to explain their work. In particular one said 'the man cannot see even though the sun is out' after listening to a harsh and threatening piece of music. In all lessons it was noted that the teacher and support staff work very effectively together as a team enhancing the learning opportunities for their pupils.

77 The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Although the co-ordinator was absent during the period of the inspection, analysis of planning, both short and medium term, and of the subject audit and development plan, shows the amount of dedicated work that has been done and that the co-ordinator has a very good vision for the future development of the subject. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and are based upon the QCA scheme of work and the AQA units. Resources for the subject are satisfactory for what is currently taught.

CITIZENSHIP

78 Citizenship and PSHE are closely linked and are taught by a team of staff who have specific areas of responsibility and the subjects are well organised with links with other subjects clearly identified. Pupils are encouraged to plan their work carefully and make a simple assessment of what they have learned at the end of modules. The schemes of work are planned to take account of the widest range of topics and visits and visitors are used well to emphasise particular themes. No lessons were observed in citizenship but evidence from pupils' files, discussion with some pupils and teachers planning would suggest that pupils are making at least satisfactory progress. The good scheme of work is giving pupils useful insights into issues around them and in the wider world and also gives them opportunities to work for an externally accredited award. They have learned what it takes to be an informed citizen and begin to understand the democratic process and their part in it. They understand the need for rules and what happens when they are broken. A visit from a prison officer made a lasting impression on some pupils when discussing life in jail. Topical issues such as the Firefighters strike enables them to think about rights and responsibilities in society and themes such as Human Rights are considered.

79 PSHE is both explicit and implicit within the structure of the school day and the impact shows in many pupils' growing understanding of their own actions and problems. As soon as pupils arrive they are welcomed by a member of staff which gives a positive start to the day and the breakfast club gives pupils a chance to relax and chat in a quiet atmosphere giving them a calm beginning and opportunities to develop social skills. Daily morning tutorial sessions and the whole school meeting at the end of the day further support pupils' understanding of others' strengths and weaknesses especially when pupils are rewarded for good work and personal effort. Some pupils have the opportunity to join a Circle Time session in which they understand the confidentiality rules and adhere to them. In these sessions pupils are able to discuss any concern they may have, for example bullying, and try and sort it out within the group. They find this time very helpful and it supports their understanding of others problems developing an empathy with each other.

80 Only two discrete lessons were observed of PSHE so it is not possible to make secure judgements about the quality of teaching. Analysis of pupils' files, discussions with pupils, evidence from teachers planning and observation of informal sessions shows that pupils are making good progress in accepting the school rules, developing social skills and understanding the impact of their actions on others. In lessons they are reminded of their individual targets, which gives pupils clear indications of what is expected of them and how to behave and also to understand why they sometimes experience failure. Other pupils learn about daily health issues such as the importance of cleaning teeth and older pupils consider the dangers of smoking. PSHE significantly contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development and to their attitudes towards school. Every opportunity is taken to develop these areas of pupils' development and the positive relationships between adults and pupils means that many pupils feel comfortable about discussing concerns with them.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

81 Pupils' achievement and progress in design and technology are sound throughout the school in the aspects of the subject which are taught. This is a similar finding to the previous inspection. Accommodation and resource issues still limit the depth and breadth of the school's provision of the National Curriculum programmes of study because there are no facilities for working in metal; pupils have no experience in computer aided design (CAD); there is insufficient room in the food technology area to accommodate the present class sizes of 9 and 10 pupils and textiles are taught in a shared area. Therefore the subject does not meet statutory requirements.

82 By Year 9 pupils can design a badge incorporating a simple series circuit containing light emitting diodes (LEDs) for eyes and they are aware that processes have inputs and outputs such as

the ingredients (inputs) to make a cake (output). In their learning of textiles they use sewing machines to sew individual patches together to form a cushion.

83 Pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 follow the AQA certificate course and six pupils will achieve a full Certificate of Achievement entry-level award this summer. By Year 11 pupils can design and make a key fobs as part of their compulsory AQA unit, heat and bend acrylics using a vacuum forming machine to produce models they have designed; measure, mark out; saw and join wood and plastics using the appropriate tools with some degree of skill.

84 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In most of the lessons pupils continued working on their individual projects and the teacher circulated giving good support and advice. Good use of questions both assessed what pupils understood and guided their learning. However on several occasions the teachers' expectations were not clearly given and therefore pupils didn't work as well as they could. Good subject knowledge and good relationships with pupils, alongside good additional support from a learning support assistant means that pupils work hard and make satisfactory and occasionally good progress.

85 Analysis of the planning for the subject, both short and medium term, and of the subject audit and development plan, shows that the co-ordinator has a good vision for the future development of the subject and provides good leadership. However management of the subject is unsatisfactory. Some of the large equipment resources for the subject are in a poor state. The mitre saw is blunt, the electric fretsaw does not cut in a straight line and there are frequent problems with the sewing machines causing the pupils frustration and a reluctance, in some instances, to continue working. Although there is a health and safety policy pupils were observed not to be wearing face masks when using the electric sanding machine to smooth down pieces of MDF which created dangerous clouds of dust and the teacher was advised to stop the process. There are no yellow taped safety standing areas for each bench mounted electric resource. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and are based upon the QCA schemes of work and the AQA Record of Achievement scheme.

GEOGRAPHY

86 Since the last inspection the school has withdrawn geography from the Key Stage 4 curriculum and only teaches it to Key Stage 3 pupils. As identified in the last inspection the time allocated to the subject is limited but working within the time available the co-ordinator has developed an appropriate curriculum, pupils make satisfactory progress and their achievements are sometimes good in those areas which are taught.

87 By the end of Year 9 pupils have studied the British Isles, can locate major cities and towns on a map and have compared the physical features of different environments such as their own area and a coastal region. They know how rivers are formed, have been on field trips to trace the course of a river, understand that flooding can occur, the role of a pumping station when water levels rise too high and have discussed some of the implications on the immediate environment. Pupils develop an understanding of the world around them, can identify limestone areas on a map of the British Isles and have visited the local limestone caves to support their learning. They are able to talk about some of the social, environmental and economic problems caused by the closure of the mines in the North East, being able to identify problems such as 'less money, dirty streets, more crime and people moving away to live elsewhere'. In a broader context they study Kenya, a country which has close connections with the school, and can make some comparisons between the environment and the lives of the people who live there with their own lives in Durham. Evidence shows that pupils have discussed the ecological problems created by the destruction of the rainforests and understand about 'fault lines', they can interpret the measurement of earthquakes on the Richter Scale and know how a volcano is formed and what happens inside to cause it to erupt.

88 Although geography is not taught as a subject in Years 10 and 11 the curriculum provided in the environmental studies course includes aspects of the subject and skills such as map reading are relevant in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

89 In the lessons seen teaching was always satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and staff work well together to provide a stimulating learning environment. Staff have high expectations for pupils to think for themselves and draw on their own experiences. The teacher's question and answer technique is good which promotes independent effort and learning. There are times, however, the behaviour management strategies are too flexible, providing opportunities for silly and occasionally cheeky responses that deflect from the focus of the lesson and result in time being wasted re-establishing order and attention.

90 Management of the subject is good. Since the last inspection the subject policy, which was in the early stages of development, has been fully implemented and effective schemes of work have been written. Assessment procedures are good and carefully monitored to inform future planning and the introduction of the 3-part lesson, in line with the Key Stage 3 strategy, is providing a clear structure on which all the lessons are based. The curriculum is enhanced by field trips.

HISTORY

91 Since the last inspection there have been significant changes and history is now only taught in Years 7, 8 and 9. The present co-ordinator has only been in the post since September 2002 but a subject policy, medium term plans and a scheme of work are now in place. The time allocated to history is limited but pupils' achievements and progress in history are overall satisfactory in those areas of the curriculum which are taught.

92 By the end of Year 9 pupils are aware that the past can be divided into fairly distinct periods of time, some of which they have been able to study, and that by dating events from the past they can be put into some sort of order known as 'chronology'. Lessons are taught with enthusiasm and as far as possible circumstances surrounding the events are related to the pupils' own experiences making the historical knowledge easier to understand. For example in one lesson about life and times of the Civil War one boy showed his understanding by saying 'That means I might have to kill my friends'. Learning about 20th century history pupils have an understanding of the effect of the First World War on the lives of ordinary people especially the women and the subsequent rise of the suffragette movement. One boy was able to demonstrate his awareness of the emancipation of women by saying 'before the war they just looked after the houses and the kids'.

93 Teaching is always satisfactory and sometimes good. Lessons are well planned and the atmosphere created by the teachers' enthusiastic, but firm and friendly approach, gives pupils confidence and encourages them to participate and think for themselves. Staff work very well together and relationships are good. However, an analysis of past work indicates there is too great a reliance on worksheets and the pupils have not been able to extend their classroom learning by any visits to the extensive sites of historical interest to be found in the area.

94 The subject is developing well but the programmes of study and schemes of work are to be revised because it has not been possible to complete all the planned topics during this year. The co-ordinator feels this is due to the pupils' slow pace of working and the fact he has had to repeat certain areas of learning when the effective assessment and monitoring procedures identified poor progress and low achievement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

95 The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory and all the equipment is now fully functional, and this is a satisfactory improvement since the time of the previous inspection. The progress made by the pupils is satisfactory over time and teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Many of the classrooms have interactive white boards and network linked computers which support the teaching and learning in ICT across the curriculum and they are well used by the teachers. The school has developed the resources for ICT well, including subscribing to 'Expresso', curriculum content software, which is updated regularly and informs about different areas of the National Curriculum, and this is a useful resource for staff. The use of 'Successmaker' to support the pupils' learning and progress in mathematics, reading and spelling, is good. All teachers have completed the New Opportunities Fund training, consolidating skills and giving them confidence to use ICT in their lessons.

96 By the end of Year 9 pupils have made sound progress; they can use text and graphics with confidence, understand how to access the network and use a news-sheet format in a publishing program. The pupils can use the Internet to find out information, using a search engine to find the information they want. They can use a spreadsheet to enter data and create a data collection for a word processor. The pupils are able to make good use of graphics, change fonts and use a digital camera to put photographs into their work. They understand simple control systems and the use of input, process and output. At the end of Year 11, the pupils work towards an external qualification. They are able to word process with very few errors, use boxes and graphics, but do not use the spellchecker consistently to correct any errors made. They are able to create graphs using a spreadsheet program, type lists accurately and use bullet points and numbers. They are able to create shapes in a drawing program. The pupils know how to produce a presentation on the screen using a dedicated program. They know and can use icons correctly and can create their own icons. Pupils develop an understanding of the health and safety issues connected with the use of a computer.

97 The teaching and learning in the subject are satisfactory overall. When the teaching is satisfactory involvement in the tasks helps pupils to behave satisfactorily and settle to the task. When pupils are asked to give precise instructions to the teacher, for example, in a Year 7 lesson, they sometimes shout out, but when they do complete the task, the teacher praises them and this settles them down. Explaining the learning objectives to the pupils helps them focus on the work they are given and they are less distracted. Learning support staff work well with the pupils helping individuals to learn and maintain their concentration. When teaching is unsatisfactory, the pupils do not learn as well as they could and this has a negative impact on their progress. They do not concentrate well and insufficient guidance is given to them about what is acceptable behaviour. They are not involved in a specific task and lose interest when they do not know what they are going to learn. Occasionally there is insufficient time left for a plenary session to discuss pupils' progress because of the pace of the lesson and this has a negative impact on the progress the pupils make. The marking of pupil's work does not help them to know how to improve or how to correct mistakes and this is unsatisfactory.

98 The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and the resources for the subject are good ensuring all pupils have opportunities to access the computers. The computer suite is well designed and all the machines are easily accessible for the pupils. Most classrooms have computers available for use in different subjects and these are linked to the Internet, which supports the use of computers for research and information finding well having a positive impact on pupils learning. However, the co-ordinator does not have a sufficient overview of the use of ICT in other subjects and therefore little the opportunity to support other teachers and pupils learning. The database available at present is too complex for the pupils to use effectively, so they use a spreadsheet as a simple database. The scheme of work is based on the nationally recommended scheme of work and assessed using the National Curriculum attainment targets.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

99 French was not taught at the time of the last inspection and is currently taught to Key Stage 3 pupils for 50 minutes each week. Only two lessons were observed so it is not possible to make secure judgements about the quality of teaching. Evidence from pupils' files and their responses in lessons demonstrates that they are making satisfactory progress.

100 Most pupils can count confidently up to twelve, know some colours such as, rouge, vert, bleu, blanche and noire and know how to greet someone by saying 'Bonjour' and they also use 'Au revoir' appropriately. The youngest pupils learn about the weather and locate different regions of France. The combination of symbols and French and English words help pupil's understanding and they usually complete the tasks without too much help. The approach is generally practical and pupils learn the names of classroom equipment, how to order snacks in a café and learn about other types of food. They learn a little about French culture but there are few opportunities for pupils to hear native French language speakers and this restricts the development of their listening and speaking skills. Pupils would make better progress, consolidate their skills and improve their confidence if more of the lesson was conducted in French. Written tasks are usually concerned with copying single words or short phrases. Pupils are introduced to an appropriate range of topics, which gives them opportunities to learn

101 Teacher made worksheets are pitched at pupils' levels of understanding of the language but don't give higher attaining pupils any opportunities to extend their skills of writing. Introductory activities are tinged with humour, which gains pupils attention and also assesses what they have remembered from previous lessons. Sometimes too much time is spent on activities which do not

increase pupils' specific language skills, for example, changing pounds into euros and vice versa. Good relationships within the lesson coupled with encouragement and praise usually keeps pupils interested. At intervals during the lesson pupils are reminded about the key vocabulary, which helps pupils complete the task.

102 Leadership and management of French are good and the co-ordinator, although not a subject specialist, has sufficient knowledge to identify appropriate targets to move the subject on. The subject is well organised and covers topics which give pupils a broad base on which to build. Pupils are set two targets each term and these are assessed and useful comments help pupils to understand what they have to do to improve. In addition, pupils are assessed at the end of each module and against National Curriculum levels. More audio-visual aids would increase learning opportunities for pupils and give them opportunities to hear native language speakers. External accreditation is gained through AQA units and gives pupils something to aim for. Annual visits to France are also an incentive for pupils to learn the language.

MUSIC

103 At the time of the previous inspection music was not taught and since September 2002 a specialist teacher has been employed for one day each week. Currently pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 receive music lessons and a small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from individual drum sessions, taken by a learning support assistant with very good expertise in this area. Music is also integrated into a number of lessons in English and art and design. Judgements have been made on the basis of the three class lessons seen, a drum session, pupils' written work and discussion with the subject co-ordinator and the learning support assistant involved. English and art and design lessons involving the use of music were also observed.

104 Overall, pupils achieve well and make very good progress during lessons and over time. This is because teaching is almost always very good and never less than good. Effective planning and preparation ensures that resources are well organised and there is no hold up at the beginning of lessons. Restless behaviour is well managed. The teacher and learning support assistant explain each lesson's learning objectives very well and make clear their high expectations for work and behaviour. Because pupils understand what is expected of them, most tackle their work confidently and maintain attention for commendably long periods. However, when there are insufficient resources for a larger group, a minority of pupils have difficulty waiting their turn and tend to wander and waste time. Pupils are familiar with a range of musical vocabulary and use this appropriately in their discussion and written work. ICT is extremely well used to promote their interest and enthusiasm, and extend their skills in using laptops and a range of software. Modern sequencing software is well used in creating music to accompany pupils' own or commercially produced video recordings. These involve the use of a video camera, drama, art and a range of musical instruments. By the time they are 14 most pupils can operate keyboards independently, and use a synthesiser, ambient effects and layered sound to create specific effects relevant to their pre-recorded 'horror' film, shot in the school grounds. Pupils make good use of a wide range of percussion and other instruments and pay careful attention to timing.

105 The school has made a very good start to introducing music into the curriculum. A good quality policy and scheme of work have been developed and work on assessment procedures is underway. Subject management is very good and both the co-ordinator and the learning support assistant involved, have a high level of subject knowledge and understanding. Their enthusiasm and expertise have raised the profile of music in the school. The subject is used very effectively to promote creativity in English and art and design lessons. All pupils have benefited from a workshop with a rock guitarist, and the recently awarded Artsmark Silver award recognises the quality of the provision for arts subjects, including music, within the school. The school recognises the importance of extending music provision to pupils in Years 10 and 11. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

106 Only two lessons of physical education were observed during the inspection so it is not possible to make secure judgements about the quality of teaching. However coupled with discussions with the teacher and pupils, evidence would suggest that pupils' achievement and progress in athletics and games are very good throughout the school with several pupils attaining at national expectations. This is good improvement since the previous inspection when pupils' progress was judged to be satisfactory. However the range of learning opportunities provided by the school is still too narrow and does not cover the breadth of the National Curriculum programmes of study because of the limitations of the current accommodation. As in the previous inspection pupils are not being offered dance and gymnastic activities and therefore statutory requirements are not met. However the school is making

the best use it can of available accommodation and there has been some improvement in provision, for example, a new all weather Astroturf area has increased the opportunities for games activities and a new multigym is used for fitness activities. The school also offers a good range of outdoor activities which pupils can continue with when they leave school. The improvement in pupils' progress is mainly due to the quality of teaching, planning and enthusiasm that the subject specialist brings, which motivates pupils' learning. This has also been recognised by the school obtaining the Sportsmark award.

107 In Year 8 pupils' techniques of starting and finishing in track activities is very good. They demonstrate their learning of how to gradually rise from a crouch start and to lean forward when finishing a race. The teacher's experience and style greatly helped this learning telling the pupils to start the race like a plane and not to come upright immediately. The pupils show a good competitive spirit when racing, with pupils trying to beat the times of others. The teacher's enthusiasm also inspired the pupils learning of how to hold and throw a discus. Very good practical demonstrations enabled most pupils to grasp the technique of spinning the discus when throwing it to reduce wobbling. Pupils in Year 10 know the importance of warm up exercises. Again the teachers experience and very good relationship with the pupils enabled their learning of the basic skills in shot putting, with, for example, the teacher telling the pupils to put the shot under their chins and give it a cuddle. This very good relationship also helped a pupil overcome a reluctance to take part in the lesson.

108 The teacher's lively approach and subject expertise supports pupils' learning very well and they try hard to meet the high expectations that are set. This very positive approach enthuses the pupils and they show a high level of interest and motivation which results in very good attitudes and they learn well.

109 The co-ordinator provides very good leadership and management and has a very clear vision for the development of the subject. The use of a digital camera and cam recorder to record pupils' efforts and help them to improve their performance is planned for the near future. Contacts with local secondary schools are good with the subject co-ordinator teaching disaffected pupils in other schools. The subject's scheme of work is based upon an adapted QCA scheme and assessment upon National Curriculum level descriptors. Resources for the activities that are taught are satisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

110 The provision made for religious education is good as is the progress made by the pupils, which is a good improvement since the time of the previous inspection. This is because of the enthusiasm of the subject co-ordinator; the scheme of work – linked to the Locally Agreed Syllabus – which is linked to lesson plans. The teaching is consistently good making a positive contribution to the pupils learning. Throughout the school, the subject is taught as Beliefs and Values, for pupils up to Year 9 and in Years 10 and 11, pupils follow the syllabus for the ASDAN module of the same name. This change of name from religious education has had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to the subject and they show a good interest in the topics they study.

111 By the end of Year 9, the pupils understand aspects and the major beliefs of four world religions, Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism. They know the story of Moses and the Prophet Mohammed and know that certain things and places are important to them, a mosque is important to people of the Islamic faith. They know what happens in a mosque and understand the meaning of the word 'sacred'. They are able to discuss the story of Abraham and Isaac and know about rites of passage and celebrations, such as weddings, bar mitzvah and birthdays. Over time, the pupils show an increased understanding of the different religions and the significant belief of each one, including the similarities and differences. At the end of Year 11, the emphasis is that pupils should learn from

religion and are encouraged to consider both religious and cultural views of the world. This is planned for through, for example, work in English on the war poets and is linked to the impact of World War II on Judaism. They know about the moral aspects of the Holocaust and write poetry in response to pictures of a concentration camp. Use in tutorial time of 'The Assembly Year' focuses discussion and reflection for the pupils and they develop an understanding of such things as the Buddhist style of being happy, and acting on the right path through looking at the advice given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

112 Teaching and learning are good overall, which is a good improvement since the previous inspection. The lessons are consistently well planned and because the pupils know what they are expected to learn in each lesson, their attitudes are positive. The very good introduction, in a lesson in Year 7, linking the pupils' personal preference of an important place with the importance of a mosque to a Muslim helped the pupils understand this well. The pupils are encouraged to work independently, finding out from books, video and the Internet more about mosques, the good use of resources captures their interest, and they behave well. The use of key words, such as, 'belief' or 'sacred' as part of the introduction to the lesson help the pupils to focus on the objective of the lesson, which has a positive impact on their learning. Good opportunities created by the teacher for pupils to talk about what they know gives them confidence and they listen to each other well. In a Year 10 lesson about Loy Kraton, the Buddhist festival, the pupils discuss the Buddhist faith and are able to say that Buddhism is the only major religion, as one pupils said, 'they don't have a god'. The teacher created opportunities for the pupils not only to research the festival but to make floating flower candles, which when they were floated, gave the pupils opportunities to consider the good things in their lives and was an excellent opportunity for spiritual development.

113 The leadership and management of the subject are good, the co-ordinator is enthusiastic about creating the right ethos for the subject, and this has a positive impact on the pupils' attitudes and learning. The resources for the subject are good, well organised and thoughtfully used to encourage the pupils' interest. Information and communication technology is used well both by the teacher in presenting the lessons with the use of the interactive white board, but also by the pupils when they use the Internet to research different topics, and this has a positive impact on the pupils interest in the lessons. The scheme of work meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and the planning and assessment of the subject are good supporting the good progress made by pupils.