

INSPECTION REPORT

PONTEFRACT CARLETON HIGH SCHOOL

Green Lane, Carleton, PONTEFRACT, WF8
3NW.

LEA area: Wakefield

Unique reference number: 108279

Headteacher: Robert Foreman

Reporting inspector: Michael Miller
17556

Dates of inspection: 28th April to 1st May 2003

Inspection number: 252027

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 (Years 7 to 11)
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Green Lane
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Pontefract
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Neil Bowmer

Date of previous inspection: 13th November 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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17556	Michael Miller	Registered inspector	Vocational and other courses	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? The efficiency of the school. School improvement and effectiveness.
14214	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion and equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development. Attendance. The pupils' personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30046	Ross Parker	Team inspector	English and literacy	
30576	Peter Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics and numeracy	
30596	Jack Brown	Team inspector	Science	
2866	Bob Battey	Team inspector	Art and design	
18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team inspector	Design and technology	Educational guidance and assessment.
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Geography. Special educational needs English as an additional language	
8070	Joe Haves	Team inspector	History Citizenship	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
32196	Maggie Fenwick	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	The school's links with the community.
32280	Alison Hutcheson	Team inspector	Modern languages	
31701	Graeme Rudland	Team inspector	Music	
13217	Malcolm Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education	
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education.	The pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Pontefract Carleton High School is a community comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16 (Years 7 to 11). It is about the same size as most other secondary schools. There are 1064 pupils on roll, 529 boys and 535 girls. The school is about the same size as it was at the time of the previous inspection. It is currently over-subscribed because it is popular with parents. Some parents choose to send their children to the school from outside its local catchment area. Most pupils live on local council estates and walk to school, or on private developments in the South Pontefract area, and travel to school by bus or car. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below average. Standards on entry in 2002 were well below average for English and below average in mathematics in science. Almost all the pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils from other ethnic groups, or whose mother tongue is not, or believed not to be, English is low. Employment patterns in the area have changed over recent years and the unemployment rate is now just higher than the national average. At nearly 16 per cent, the proportion of pupils registered for free school meals is average. Some 7 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is well below average. At 2 per cent the proportion of pupils having full statements of special educational need is below average. Although the percentage of pupils on the register has been relatively steady over the past few years, the number with statements is declining.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and rapidly improving school because of its determination to succeed well in all that it does. It has high expectations of its pupils, who show loyalty to the school and are enthusiastic about the changes and improvements which have been achieved since the previous inspection. Standards overall are average and pupils' achievement is good. Teaching and learning are good. Leadership and management are very good. The school's commitment to further improvement and its capacity to succeed in this are very good. The school is effective and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, together with the very good support of the school's key staff and governing body, has enabled the good improvement since the previous inspection.
- The very good quality of the school's development planning has led to school improvement.
- The school's very good working relationships promote the good quality of learning for the pupils.
- The good provision for the pupils' personal development leads to good attitudes and behaviour.
- The good quality of teaching and learning throughout the school, and the very good provision for activities outside lessons, result in the pupils' interest in their life at the school.
- The very good levels of collective responsibility within the school community have led to an ethos of self-evaluation, a clear perception of pupils' needs, and the capacity to improve further.

What could be improved

- Standards in national tests and examinations are not yet high enough.
- The development of learning and teaching policy, and the strategies to ensure its implementation, in order to further enhance the learning opportunities of all groups of pupils.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to link pastoral and academic information and share this on a more regular basis with staff.
- Textbook resources to further support pupils' independent learning, and ICT resources to enable the full implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy¹.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS PREVIOUS INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 2000, when it was judged to have serious weaknesses. Since then, there has been good improvement. Leadership and management are now very good. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. The quality of teaching is good. Curriculum provision is satisfactory and statutory requirements are met. The school's accommodation is good and previous

¹ The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools, in particular in English and mathematics, but also by ensuring that all subject departments contribute to the development of pupils' understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy. For more information please go to the Government's Department for Education and Skills web-site: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3

health and safety issues have been resolved. The school is taking determined action to improve standards. The governors' annual report to parents meets statutory requirements. As a consequence of these improvements, the school no longer has serious weaknesses. However, requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	D

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In 2002, the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 were average when compared with all schools nationally, and on the basis of the pupils' prior attainment in Year 6. However, compared with similar schools they were above average. This represented satisfactory progress for pupils in English and mathematics, and good progress in science. Over the past five years, the school's trend for improvement has been above the national trend for pupils by the end of Year 9. In the current Year 9, standards are above average in drama, science and physical education. They are average in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, history, modern languages and citizenship. They are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. They are below average in geography, art and music. Achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT. It is satisfactory in English, mathematics, geography, modern languages, art, music and citizenship. It is good in drama, design and technology, religious education, history and physical education. Achievement is very good in science.

In 2002, pupils' attainment in GCSE/GNVQ examinations was below average when compared with all schools nationally and similar schools. Results were average compared with the pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 9. The trend for improvement since the previous inspection has been in line with that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at A* to C was below average when compared with all schools nationally, with similar schools, and on the basis of the pupils' prior attainment. However, the numbers gaining five or more, and one or more, A* to G passes were above average when compared with all schools, but well above average compared with similar schools and the pupils' prior attainment. This represents some very good achievement and progress, particularly for lower attaining Year 11 pupils. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average in science, music and in physical education. They are average in English, drama, ICT, design and technology, geography, citizenship, business education and in sociology. They are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Attainment is below average in mathematics, history, modern languages and art. Achievement is satisfactory in English, mathematics, ICT, history, modern languages, art and in business education. It is good in drama, science, design and technology, religious education, geography, music, physical education, citizenship and in sociology.

Standards of literacy are average overall by Years 9 and 11. Standards of numeracy across the school are average. This is a clear improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils with special educational needs achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment, and they make good progress towards their individual targets. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make very good progress both in learning English and in their subjects. Pupils who have been identified as being gifted or talented make satisfactory progress overall, but their progress is inconsistent across departments. The school sets itself realistic but increasingly challenging targets for improvement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and taking part in the activities provided.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons, and at other times. A small minority misbehave and can adversely affect the learning of others.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils develop into mature and sensible young people. Working relationships between the pupils themselves, and their teachers, are very good.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory for the last reporting year. This is largely because the poor attendance of a handful of pupils had a significant impact on the overall level of attendance. However, attendance has much improved in the current year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	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 and learning are good. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning were good or better in two-thirds of the lessons seen, with one-third of lessons being very good or excellent. In Years 10 and 11, they were good or better in three-quarters of lessons, with one-third being very good or excellent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in 3 per cent of lessons, involving classes in ICT, Spanish and mathematics. Examples of excellent teaching and learning were seen in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course, physical education and religious education. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are satisfactory in ICT, geography and modern languages. They are good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, religious education, history, art, music and citizenship. Learning is good in physical education because the teaching is very good. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are satisfactory in ICT and modern languages. They are good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography, art, citizenship, business education and sociology. Learning and teaching are very good in religious education, music and physical education. The teaching of literacy and numeracy are good. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs, and the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language, is good. Teaching for pupils who are gifted or talented is inconsistent across subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. All statutory requirements are now met. However, the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has not yet been fully implemented. The range of subject opportunities, and their relevance to meet the needs of the pupils is good. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is very good. The range of extra-curricular opportunities is very good, and a strength of the school. There is a good range of work related experiences for pupils. Partnership and community links are good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The special educational needs department has particular strengths in its educational support assistants and the support given to pupils when withdrawn from lessons. There are areas for improvement in the school's implementation of the Code of Practice for special educational needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The few pupils with English as an additional language are making very good progress, but are 'looked after' by the special educational needs co-ordinator. The school lacks a more logical and coherent plan and a co-ordinator for pupils with English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils are helped to develop into confident and mature young people. This has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. Provision for moral and social development is very good. Opportunities for cultural development are good and those for spiritual development are satisfactory. However, the school does not yet monitor the success of its provision.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good provision. Pupils are well looked after and receive good personal support and guidance. Child protection procedures are good. Procedures for promoting good behaviour, and for eliminating bullying, are very effective.

The school's procedures for assessment	Good. The school has made good progress in developing its assessment policy and systems. However, it does not have the technology to link pastoral and academic information and share this on a more regular basis with staff.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. Links between home and school are effective. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. However, too many parents book holidays during school time and this interrupts their children's education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. There is excellent leadership from the headteacher, who is very well supported by his senior management team. Together with the governing body, they have a very clear vision for the educational direction of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governing body's role in shaping the direction of the school is very good because they have a very good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. However, they have not yet ensured that the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school has good strategies for the monitoring and evaluation of its performance. The monitoring of teaching has brought about significant improvements since the previous inspection and the school is well poised for further improvements through the monitoring of learning for all groups of pupils.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school is managing its resources well within the constraints of a deficit budget. This was a serious problem for the school at the time of the previous inspection, but the deficit is gradually being repaid through an agreed programme with the local authority. Principles of best value are well applied.
The school's staffing, accommodation and learning resources.	Good overall. All departments are sufficiently staffed by suitably qualified teachers, which enables the school to teach the national curriculum. Significant improvements have been made to the school's accommodation since the previous inspection, and it is used well. Resources are satisfactory. However, the current deficit budget places restrictions on provision, particularly for the development of ICT across all subjects of the curriculum.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has high expectations of their children and, as a consequence, they make good progress. Teaching is good and their children like school. The school helps their children to become mature and responsible. Parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems. The school is well led and managed. Their children get the right amount of homework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way in which the school works with parents. The information provided to parents about their children's progress. The behaviour of the pupils. The range of activities offered to their children outside of lessons.

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views, but finds no cause for their concerns. The school makes every effort to work co-operatively with parents, but not all parents become as involved in the work of the school as it would wish. The school provides good quality information about the pupils' progress. The behaviour of pupils has much improved. The range of activities offered outside of lessons is very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements²

1. As a result of the previous inspection in November 2000, the school was judged to have serious weaknesses. This was because it was not as effective as it should have been. Standards in many subjects were not high enough and pupils' achievements consequently not good enough. Since then, the school has worked very hard, and with great determination, to put these matters right. Overall, the commitment of staff and pupils to secure further improvement, and their capacity to succeed in this, are very good. The key criticisms, which led to the school being placed in serious weaknesses, no longer apply. Overall, the standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors have risen and are now average in most subjects, in line with national expectations. Pupils' achievement is now good. The school has high expectations of itself and its pupils, and would be the first to admit that there remains room for improvement. During the time since the previous inspection, the school has undertaken a great deal of searching self-analysis. As a result, it has a very clear understanding as to how it can help its pupils to do better. For example, it has identified areas of boys' underachievement and is taking direct action to raise attainment³. This includes working with primary schools in Year 6 in order to identify and support potential underachieving boys even before their arrival at the start of Year 7.
2. Although there is a difference between the targets set by the local authority and the school itself, the school's targets are realistic. Over the past two years, in particular, the school's use of performance data has sharpened, and its systems for analysing this for target setting purposes improved. For example, although the school's GCSE points' score⁴ target for 2003 is lower than in 2002, if it reaches this target the performance of the current Year 11 pupils will be shown to be well above average compared with their prior attainment⁵ at the end of Year 9. In this respect, the school's targets are becoming increasingly challenging, along with the school's confidence in achieving them. Members of the senior management team analyse the school's results well and have a good understanding of the importance of target setting in helping to raise standards.
3. In 2002, the school just exceeded its GCSE points score target. It met its target for grades A* to G, but fell below its agreed target for A* to C passes. One good reason for this is the school's open and inclusive policy in encouraging all pupils, of all abilities, to enter for the GCSE examinations. This is part of the school's approach in enabling all pupils to achieve well and reach their potential. Consequently, the proportion of Year 11 pupils entered for GCSE examinations was higher than the national average in most subjects. These included, art and design, biology, business studies, chemistry, single science, dance, design and technology, drama, English language and literature, child development, information technology, mathematics, music, physics, Spanish and statistics. In some cases, the percentage entered was double, and even quadruple, the national average. Whilst this non-selective approach is very good in encouraging

² Achievement refers to the progress pupils make in terms of where they started when they entered the school. Thus, good achievement does not necessarily mean that standards are above average, but that pupils do well and make better than expected progress.

³ Attainment refers to the standards pupils achieve compared with national averages.

⁴ Points scores are calculated at GCSE according to the grades attained. For example, there are eight points for an A*, seven for an A, 6 for a B etc. These points are then averaged out for individual pupils and the school as a whole.

⁵ Prior attainment: this compares the standards reached by pupils at the end of a key stage in their education and involves an evaluation as to whether pupils attained better or worse than expected. Consequently, standards in tests and teacher assessments for pupils in Year 9 are compared with those in Year 6, the pupils' final year in primary school. Similarly, standards in GCSE examinations in Year 11 are compared with the pupils' performance at the end of Year 9.

potential lower attaining pupils to gain passes at GCSE, it inevitably affects the overall A* to C figures against national benchmarks.

Years 7 to 9

4. When pupils arrive at the school at the start of Year 7, their overall standards are well below average. In the recent past, the school has had difficulty in accurately assessing the attainment of pupils on entry due to the large number of primary schools from which the pupils transfer at age 11 years. Full and accurate data has not always been available to the school in the past. The school has perceived that attainment on entry has been falling in relation to national, if not local, standards. However, recent improvements in data provision by the local education authority this year, now give the school accurate figures based on pupils' performance in national tests and teacher assessments at the end of Year 6. For example, this shows that whilst the attainment on entry of pupils in the current Year 9 was below the national average, that for the current Year 7 is well below. The school recognises the importance of the use of accurate performance data to help set targets and raise standards. Because of this, the school has bought into alternative nationally recognised testing systems this year in order to help assess and predict its pupils' levels of attainment and potential.
5. Results for the national tests of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were average overall when compared with all schools nationally. On the basis of the pupils' prior attainment in Year 6, they were also average, but compared with similar schools⁶ they were above average. Whilst overall this represented satisfactory progress for pupils in English and mathematics between Years 7 to 9, it represented good progress in science. Pupils are now attaining higher standards in English, mathematics and science than at the time of the previous inspection, when low standards were a factor in placing the school in serious weaknesses. The level of improvement in science has been particularly good.
6. Teacher assessments of pupils were closer to the national average than the actual test results. Whilst inspection evidence showed teachers understand national curriculum levels well and assessment by teachers is becoming increasingly accurate, the school is still working on helping pupils to develop examination techniques. There is some very good practice in science, where test and teacher assessment results were very close. English is now developing similarly very good systems. However, in mathematics teachers' practice is too inconsistent and requires improvement.
7. Over the past five years, the school's trend for improvement has been above the national trend overall for pupils by the end of Year 9. Standards have been rising and, in 2002 on the basis of the pupils' points score⁷, the gap between school and national performance was closed to less than a point. However, girls attained higher than boys overall in all core subjects⁸. Although this difference reflects the national picture, the school is working hard to identify, and redress, any potential underachievement by boys. This work is being successful because of the improved use and analysis of performance data by the school, particularly new information now available on all pupils when they start at the school in Year 7. Potential underachievement is also being tackled through the gradual introduction of, for example, accelerated learning programmes. Whole school planning shows a good awareness of the issue of boys' underachievement. The school's improved results reflect the positive impact its initiatives are now having on raising boys' achievement. Nevertheless, the issue has yet to fully permeate the

⁶ Results are also compared not only nationally but with those obtained by students in similar schools; this includes those with a similar uptake of free school meals.

⁷ Average points scores are also calculated for Year 9 tests. Level 5 is worth 33 points. A pupil achieving Level 5 in all three subjects would therefore have an average points score of 33.0. The national average points score in 2002 was 33.6.

⁸ The National Curriculum core subjects are: English, mathematics and science.

planning and reviews of all subject departments and this, together with improved provision for gifted or talented pupils, is part of the next stage for school development.

8. In English, in 2002, when compared with all schools nationally, the percentage of Year 9 pupils gaining the expected Level 5 and above was below average, but average for the higher Level 6 and above. When average points scores are taken into account the results were average. When compared with the pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6, results were well below average for Level 5 and above, but average for Level 6 and above. When compared with similar schools, the 2002 results in English were below average for Level 5 but above average for pupils gaining Level 6. Teacher assessments were close to the national average for pupils attaining Level 5 and at the average for Level 6. Overall, analysis shows these results represented satisfactory progress for the pupils concerned, particularly those with lower prior attainment. Overall, Year 9 pupils in 2002 attained better in English than in mathematics, but not so well as in science.
9. The mathematics results in 2002 were the lowest of the core subjects when compared with all schools nationally. Results were well below the national average for the pupils' attainment at Level 5 and above. They were below average for Level 6 or above, and on the basis of the pupils' average points score. When compared with the pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6, results were also well below average for Level 5 and above, and below average for Level 6 and above. When compared with similar schools results remain well below average for Level 5 but are average for Level 6. Overall, the progress of pupils in the subject was slower than expected. This is because the overall rate of improvement in mathematics has been lower than in English or science. Teacher assessments of the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 and above were much higher than the actual test results, but were much closer for Level 6 and above. Whilst standards by the end of Year 9 are showing an upward trend for improvement, the department's focus on improvement is not yet as advanced as in other subjects.
10. The improvement in science results, since the previous inspection, has been a success story for the school. Results in national tests for science in 2002 were average, when compared with all schools nationally for pupils attaining the expected Level 5 and above, and on the basis of their average points score. Results were above average nationally for pupils reaching Level 6 and above. Whilst below average on the basis of the pupils' prior attainment for those gaining Level 5, results were well above average for pupils reaching Level 6. When compared with similar schools, results were average for Level 5 and well above average for Level 6. Overall, this represented good progress for the pupils concerned who are now in Year 10.
11. Teacher assessments in 2002 for the foundation subjects⁹ show levels of attainment for pupils achieving Level 5 or above which were well below average in history and in music. Levels of attainment were below average in geography, information and communication technology (ICT) and in art. They were below, but closer to the average in design and technology, and in modern languages. They were rated as average in physical education. Girls attained better than boys in history and in music. Boys attained better in geography and in physical education. There was no significant difference in boys' and girls' attainment in the other subjects.
12. Standards in work and lessons seen during the inspection are average overall. Levels of attainment for pupils currently in Year 9 are above average in drama, science and in physical education. Standards are average in English, mathematics, ICT, design and

⁹ The National Curriculum foundation subjects are: art; design and technology; geography; history; ICT; modern languages; music and physical education. In addition, religious education is taught to the requirements of a locally agreed syllabus.

technology, history, modern languages and in citizenship. They are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. They are below average in geography, art and in music. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. Achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT. It is satisfactory in English, mathematics, geography, modern languages, art, music and in citizenship. It is good in drama, design and technology, religious education, history and in physical education. Achievement is very good in science.

Years 10 and 11

13. In 2002, the school's total points' score¹⁰ for GCSE/GNVQ examination courses was below average when compared with all schools nationally, and with similar schools. However, these results are average compared with the pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 9. On the basis of GCSE points' scores, the school's rate and trend for improvement over the past five years have been below those seen nationally. However, this national comparison includes part of the period, which led up to the school being placed in serious weaknesses at the previous inspection. Since then, improvement has been upward, in line with the national trend. This represents sound progress for the pupils concerned over the past two years, and confirms that the school is becoming increasingly successful in minimising any potential underachievement by its pupils. For example, during the inspection Year 11 pupils were in their final week before taking examination study leave. Some good and very good revision practice was seen in lessons, particularly in personal, social, health and citizenship education. Here, pupils were being given valuable advice as to how to revise and ways in which they could maximise potential marks through examination techniques.
14. Nevertheless, the school is by no means complacent and recognises that standards at A* to C level require further improvement and there are yet insufficient passes at the higher A* and A grades. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C was below the average when compared with all schools nationally, similar schools, and on the basis of the pupils' prior attainment. However, the numbers gaining five or more, and one or more, A* to G passes were above average when compared with all schools nationally. They were well above average compared with similar schools and the standards gained by the pupils two years previously, at the end of Year 9. This represents some very good achievement and progress, particularly for lower attaining Year 11 pupils in the 2002 GCSE examinations. It further reflects the success of the school's policy in encouraging all pupils to enter for GCSE examinations.
15. GCSE results for pupils gaining an A* to C pass in summer 2002 were significantly below average in a range of subjects including art and design, science, design and technology, English language and literature, French, history, information technology, mathematics and in Spanish. However, they were significantly above average in statistics. Overall results were above average for A* to C passes in the combined science single award examination, child development, physical education and in statistics. All pupils entered for the examination gained an A* to G pass in biology, chemistry, dance, drama, English literature, information technology, physical education and in physics. Compared with other subjects they took at the same time in 2002, pupils achieved particularly well in biology, single science, drama and in physical education. However, pupils did not achieve as well in art and design, French, history, mathematics or Spanish. Nevertheless, higher attaining pupils achieved particularly well in biology and in child development, where a higher than national average percentage gained the highest A* or A passes.

¹⁰ GCSE results: In 2002 nationally, 51.2 per cent of students attained five or more grades A* to C, 86.8 per cent attained five or more grades A* to G and 94.6 per cent attained one or more grades A* to G. The average total points score was 34.6 (calculated by eight points for A*, seven for A, etc).

16. Standards in work and lessons seen during the inspection are average overall. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 11 is above average in science, music and in physical education. It is average in English, drama, ICT, design and technology, geography, citizenship, business education and in sociology. Standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Attainment is below average in mathematics, history, modern languages and in art. Achievement is good overall for pupils in Years 10 and 11. It is satisfactory in English, mathematics, ICT, history, modern languages, art and in business education. It is good in drama, science, design and technology, religious education, geography, music, physical education, citizenship and in sociology. No unsatisfactory achievement was seen for any subject in Years 10 and 11, and this is again a reflection of the way in which the school has improved since it was placed in serious weaknesses at the previous inspection.

Standards in literacy

17. Standards of literacy are average overall in Years 9 and 11, though oral skills develop more quickly in the early years and writing skills are initially insecure at the start of Year 7. A significant proportion of pupils who come to the school having reached national expectations in Year 6 have some difficulty maintaining those standards in Year 7. However, they write highly structured pieces confidently and competently to a recognised formula with high levels of accuracy. Pupils have not yet reached the stage where they can apply these skills in new situations, or when working independently. Nevertheless, they steadily become more secure and increasing numbers are now exceeding national expectations at the end of Years 9 and 11. Oral skills develop quickly once pupils get used to the school and their new teachers. They become more confident as the influence of their drama lessons takes effect, so that by the end of Year 7 pupils can use discussion as an effective way of exploring and extending their understanding. This in turn is helping most pupils to become more independent readers who are consequently able to appreciate a wide range of texts.

Standards in numeracy

18. Standards of numeracy across the school are average. This is a clear improvement since the previous inspection. The best standards are seen in science where pupils use a wide range of graphs effectively. The most able pupils in Year 11 use scatter graphs to make conclusions about the relationship between two scientific quantities. Graph work in geography and history is also of a standard clearly in line with the pupils' ability in the subjects. In design and technology good use is made of co-ordinates by pupils in Year 8 to produce high quality computer aided designs. Standards in mathematics are now average throughout the school, even though the overall mathematical standards of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are below the national average.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs

19. Pupils with special educational needs achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment, and they make good progress towards their individual targets. A small number of pupils in Years 7 to 9 speak English as an additional language. They are very well supported by subject teachers, and by educational support assistants. Consequently, they make very good progress both in learning English and in their subjects. Pupils who have been identified as being gifted or talented make satisfactory progress overall, but it is inconsistent across departments. Some subjects such as English, physical education, music and aspects of design and technology have identified

these pupils and are making good provision for them. Other departments have yet to identify what provision they will make.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Pupils' attitudes to school and the standard of their behaviour were unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. Both attitudes and behaviour have improved markedly over the intervening two years and are now good. The overwhelming majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, enjoy coming to school and arrive in a positive frame of mind. They are keen to do their best and speak highly of the staff. Pupils are very loyal towards their school. They are especially proud of the many ways in which they feel it has improved since the previous inspection. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good, and are based upon mutual trust and respect. During the school year preceding the inspection, pupils' attendance was below the national average but there are signs that rigorous monitoring procedures are bringing about significant improvements. The number of unauthorised absences is around one third of the national average. Pupils usually arrive in good time for their lessons and this helps them to make the most of their time at school.
21. Teachers at this school lead by example. They share a wholehearted commitment to their pupils and really want them to do well. This positive 'can do' attitude is clearly having a positive effect. Although some pupils are slow to contribute during lessons, most of them are very willing 'to have a go'. Pupils are increasingly keen to seize opportunities, and this enterprising attitude helps them to make good progress in their work. Pupils enjoy the many extra-curricular activities which are provided, and say they are keen to try more.
22. Over the past two years, the school has comprehensively reviewed its system of sanctions and rewards. This has brought about a significant improvement in the standard of pupils' behaviour, which is now good. There is a much greater emphasis on rewarding good behaviour and every opportunity is taken to recognise pupils who have done well. Because the behaviour of a significant minority of pupils was a factor in placing the school in serious weaknesses following the previous inspection, teachers are now resolute when dealing with those who let themselves, and the school down. Consequently, the number of fixed period exclusions is above the national average. The number of permanent exclusions, however, is similar to other schools. This stance is proving to be very effective and pupils know exactly where they stand. They appreciate being praised for doing well and, during discussions with inspectors, pupils of all ages say their teachers are firm, but very fair. They are very proud of the way behaviour has improved over the last two years and pupils and their parents agree that bullying is very rare. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 behave especially well. In a few lessons, however, some pupils are unsettled and noisy, often exasperating their more committed classmates. This usually happens when the teacher has set work which is too easy, or because pupils are unsure of what they are supposed to be doing, or why. The school monitors the behaviour of individual pupils and the impact it has upon their exam success. Between lessons and when in large groups, such as assemblies or at lunch time, boys and girls can be relied upon to behave very sensibly.
23. Pupils say that the school is a friendly place, and inspectors shared this perception. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, work well together in groups, sharing materials and ideas. They respect each other's beliefs and express their opinions without fear of ridicule. Pupils conform to the school's expectation that racist or sexist behaviour and language will not be tolerated, and the result is a lively but very harmonious community. This is a testament to the very successful policy for social and educational inclusion.

24. The school carefully plans the way in which it fosters pupils' personal development. Pupils respond very well and develop into mature and sensible young people, and their moral and social development is very good. The revised system of rewards and sanctions is popular and it forms the lynchpin of everyday life. As they get older, pupils sharply distinguish between right and wrong and are able to make reasoned and responsible decisions on moral dilemmas. In response to a concerted effort by their teachers, pupils' self-esteem and confidence grow steadily. Most of the pupils work very constructively in class, participate in sports teams and on other school activities. There are well-established councils for the upper and lower schools and these provide pupils with a 'voice' in the running of the school. Through this forum, pupils have influenced several important areas of school life, for example, they suggested setting up a Community Links Group in order to increase the level of contact they have with the local community. Pupils are aware of each other's needs and provide very good moral and practical support for each other at times of need. For example, pupils are investigating setting up a system of peer counselling so that pupils who have a particular problem have someone to whom they can speak.
25. Pupils' cultural development is good. They learn about their own culture and increasingly appreciate the diversity of other ways of life and traditions. Within religious education, they study the main religions of the world. Pupils develop an ability to appreciate and understand their own culture, as well as the values and beliefs of others. Pupils' spiritual awareness is satisfactory. As they move through the school, they learn to understand intangible concepts such as the value of friendship and, through the performing arts, develop their expressive and creative abilities.
26. Overall, attendance during the year preceding the inspection was unsatisfactory because it was just below the national average. Although attendance in Years 7 to 9 was satisfactory, the level dropped markedly as pupils moved through Years 10 and 11. A small number of pupils in Year 11 had very poor attendance and this had a huge impact upon the overall year group and school average. In order to tighten monitoring procedures, the school has recruited an attendance officer and she liaises very closely with the education welfare officer. As a result of their hard work and tenacity, attendance in Year 11 during the current school year has risen by over 10 per cent. Very good teamwork has brought about significant improvements in the attendance of pupils in both Years 10 and 11 and attendance in both years is now above 90 per cent. This is a dramatic improvement and the attendance of these pupils is now the same as that of their younger schoolmates. Consequently, attendance in the current academic year is satisfactory. Nevertheless, although the school discourages the taking of a term time holiday, a substantial number of parents continue to take their children out during the school year. In some classes, one in five of the pupils loses time in this way and this means they miss out on work which is undertaken by the rest of their class.

Pupils with special educational needs

27. Pupils with special educational needs behave well in and around the school. The school has developed very good procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour, which enable these pupils to make good progress where their targets involve improvements in behaviour.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

28. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall throughout the school. Examples of excellent teaching and learning were seen in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, citizenship (including personal, social, and health education) and in

physical education. Other notable examples of very good or excellent teaching or learning were seen in religious education. Unlike at the previous inspection, no poor teaching or learning was seen. However, four lessons were seen where there was some unsatisfactory learning and teaching, two in information and communication technology (ICT), one in Spanish and one in mathematics. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning were good or better in nearly two-thirds of the lessons seen, with one-third of lessons being very good or excellent. In Years 10 and 11, they were good or better in three-quarters of lessons, with just over one-third being very good or excellent.

29. At the time of the previous inspection, weaknesses in some teaching, and consequently pupils' learning, were a contributory factor in placing the school in serious weaknesses. Because of this, strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning have been at the heart of the school's improvement planning. The weaknesses identified by the previous inspection have been faced squarely. Senior management and the governing body have taken firm action to ensure improvements have been made. The results are to be seen in the overall good quality of teaching observed during the inspection. Nonetheless, the school is aware of the need to continually improve the quality of its teaching in order to underpin pupils' learning better, and to improve standards and achievement further. This is recognised in the school's current improvement plan, which is very well focused on raising standards, the development of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, raising the achievement of boys, and further developing the independent learning skills of all pupils.
30. The headteacher has instigated an effective programme of lesson observations through which he regularly monitors the work of all teachers. This programme is well supported through the monitoring of departments and the school's line management system. Discussions arising out of lesson observations are regularly held between the teachers concerned and members of the leadership group. The outcomes of monitoring are properly agreed, recorded and targets for development set. There has therefore been close monitoring of teaching and learning by the school's leadership team. Such monitoring has been supported and augmented well by local education authority advisors. The school's systems for the monitoring and improvement of teaching and learning have therefore been systematic and rigorous.
31. Overall, the monitoring of teaching and learning is now good. However, the school recognises there are areas where improvements are still to be made. For example, the monitoring of the work of the mathematics department, particularly during a difficult period involving staff absence, has not been tight enough in recent months. Nevertheless, the school knows where its key strengths in teaching and learning lie. The next stage in its development is the establishment of more formal systems for the sharing and dissemination of good practice across all subjects and departments. Heads of department have an important role to play in this. The monitoring of teaching and learning by senior management has focused well the professionalism of the teaching staff. The strategic management role of heads of department, in the monitoring of teaching through performance management, is being well developed. However, the role of subject leaders in the monitoring of learning, through lesson observations, has yet to be fully established. Nonetheless, the school is now building on strengths rather than weaknesses. A particular area for further improvement relates to the evolution of strategies to support the learning of all groups of pupils, including those who are gifted or talented. The school is also working on teaching and learning strategies to meet the needs of the small minority of pupils who are disengaged from learning. In addition, the school has yet to consolidate the hard work undertaken over the past two years, and the lessons learnt through its improvement planning, in a formal whole school learning and teaching policy. This is not only in order to underpin its success, but also to provide an agreed platform and guidance for common approaches to improvement in the future.

32. The whole school community, from governors through senior management, teachers, support staff and administrative staff, has been clearly determined to work together in order to create an improved climate for learning within the school. Their approach is firmly focused on raising achievement and the pupils' self-value and self-esteem. The pupils themselves, when interviewed during the inspection, commented very positively on this climate for learning. Older pupils, in particular, were appreciative of the improvements and changes made since the previous inspection.
33. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in ICT, geography and in modern languages. They are good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, religious education, history, art, music and in citizenship. Learning is good in physical education because the teaching is very good. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are satisfactory in ICT and in modern languages. They are good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography, art, citizenship, business education and in sociology. Learning and teaching are very good in religious education, music and in physical education.
34. Where unsatisfactory teaching and learning took place this was due to:-
- A limited range of teaching strategies, including insufficient explanation of lesson objectives.
 - The pace of lessons not sufficiently well matched to the rate of learning of the pupils.
 - An insufficient range of work to meet the learning needs of all groups of pupils.
 - Insufficient variety and challenge, particularly for higher attaining and gifted or talented pupils.
 - Limited opportunities for the pupils to become sufficiently involved in lessons, for example through discussion.
35. Nevertheless, some major strengths characterise the good or better teaching. These strengths reflect well the improvements made since the previous inspection, and the response of the teachers to the continuing development of strategies to underpin and support pupils' learning. They include, for example:-
- High expectations of the pupils, supported by good monitoring of their learning and progress to ensure they achieve well.
 - Good lesson planning, which resulted in lesson aims and objectives being clearly communicated and shared with the pupils.
 - Very good classroom and behaviour management, resulting in well organised lessons so that pupils were clear about their learning.
 - Lessons had a good pace, so that pupils' interest was maintained and they were well motivated.
 - Teachers had secure subject knowledge and understanding, and their infectious enthusiasm inspired the pupils.
 - High levels of challenge, which encouraged pupils to think for themselves and developed well their independent learning skills.
 - Very well focused and open questioning styles, which helped pupils to review their learning and teachers to effectively assess the pupils' level of understanding.
 - The creative use of resources, and demonstrations, which added interest to the pupils' learning.
 - A good focus on the personal, as well as academic, development of the pupils.
 - Very good working relationships between pupils and their teachers.

The teaching of literacy across the subjects of the curriculum

36. The teaching of literacy is good overall. Training as part of the National Literacy Strategy has raised teachers' awareness of the importance of literacy to all forms of learning. Most teachers now offer chances for pupils to practice using new vocabulary. There are good opportunities for pupils to talk about their understanding, and to write in a variety of ways, which help them to get clearer ideas. This is especially well developed in science lessons. There is specialist support now for pupils whose literacy falls just below expectations, as well as the established support for those with more severe needs. Within English lessons there is a strong emphasis on studying the way language works, and the way in which writers use it. Pupils enjoy this and work hard at it because teachers present it effectively.

The teaching of numeracy across the subjects of the curriculum

37. Overall, the teaching of numeracy is good. The teaching of numeracy is consistently good in mathematics, where teachers use a wide range of activities, including games to sharpen pupils' mental skills at the start and end of lessons. The teaching of numeracy is good in science, geography, design and technology, physical education, art and history. In these areas clear thinking goes into ensuring that numeracy skills, particularly the use of co-ordinates and interpretation of graphs are developed and used to enhance learning in the subjects.

The teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) across the subjects of the curriculum

38. The introduction of the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy¹¹ has just started in the school, and has yet to be fully implemented. Nevertheless, it is gradually having an increasing impact in improving standards of teaching and learning in Years 7 and 8. However, teachers require further training relating to the assessment of ICT within their own specialist subjects. This is in order that the school is able to assess more accurately pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9, and to properly evaluate pupils' achievement in ICT. The teaching of ICT through all subjects of the curriculum is further hampered by insufficient access to computer and other ICT resources.

The teaching of pupils with special educational needs

39. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Individual education plans, for those pupils to whom they apply, are good and contain suitably specific targets. They also contain suggested teaching strategies to enable teachers to focus more successfully on pupils' individual needs. There is good teamwork between teachers and educational support assistants. Where pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn from lessons for extra tuition, teaching is very good. Educational support assistants provide very effective and caring support for pupils with special educational needs. This is an important factor in the good progress made by these pupils.
40. Teaching for the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very good. They are well supported in lessons and both their English, and their learning in subjects, is improving quickly as a result. A good example of the level of support

¹¹ The National Key Stage 3 Strategy aims to raise the standards achieved by 11 to 14-year-olds by transforming approaches to teaching and learning. It supports five curricular strands: English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), and teaching and learning in the foundation subjects. In its first year, the English and mathematics strands, with literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, were introduced. Other strands, including ICT and science, followed from September 2002.

provided for pupils who speak English as an additional language was seen during the inspection where one pupil needed help with her work. The pupil concerned went to the learning support area where an educational support assistant offered help. As the work required some more technical assistance from the science department, this was readily provided and the problem was solved. This is a good example of the support and help, which teachers provide for all pupils.

41. Teaching for pupils identified as gifted or talented is inconsistent across subjects. In some, such as physical education, there is good provision. In others, such as mathematics, geography and information and communication technology, there is insufficient recognition of their needs or work provided at an appropriately high level.

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

42. The school's curriculum has improved significantly since the previous inspection, when aspects of it were judged to be unsatisfactory. These improvements make a positive contribution to raising standards. All statutory requirements are now met. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory overall, with several good features. For example, in science all pupils follow the 'double science' award in Years 10 and 11. In art there are good opportunities in all areas of study, in music a wide range of instrumental work takes place and in physical education pupils study a wide range of disciplines including gymnastics and dance.
43. The overall quality of the school's curriculum, and its relevance to the pupils, is good. A significant reason for this is the timetabling arrangements, based upon a ten-day rotation of fifty one-hour lessons. This provides greater flexibility to develop new subject areas and provide sufficient time for each. For example, lesson time for information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education is now satisfactory throughout the school. The timetable ensures there is sufficient time for core subjects such as mathematics and English. In foundation subjects, it enables history and geography to be taught for three hours per fortnight and provides good opportunities to improve the vocational curriculum and broaden pupils' personal development. The governing body monitors the curriculum effectively.
44. In Years 7 to 9, national curriculum subjects are all allocated sufficient time. However, there is insufficient time for a second modern language. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is good. Opportunities for the study of citizenship are very good. This is because the subject has been carefully audited to identify a wide range of opportunities, which are found in personal, social, health and citizenship education, and other subject schemes of work. In Years 10 and 11, the core curriculum is fully in place. In addition, there are compulsory elements in design and technology, ICT, religious education, physical education, and in personal, social, health and citizenship education. Remaining subjects are offered through a three-block option programme. These arrangements give sound access for all pupils to wider opportunities for learning.
45. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good, and a strength of the school. Sport is substantially represented. For example, in the autumn term, five major team sports are available. There is a range of clubs in place operating at lunchtime and after school. These include art, keyboard and technology. Pupils have further opportunities to extend their language skills through debating and improve their knowledge of French. The school is particularly strong in performing arts. In addition to individual music tuition, a wind band and choir proves very popular with pupils. In drama, ambitious productions are undertaken, a recent one being 'Bugsy Malone.' A range of visits takes

place, for example, theatre trips and residential visits to Hadrian's Wall, France and Spain. Ski trips are also undertaken each year. The library provides very good opportunities for pupils to pursue personal study and use information technology facilities. A homework club operates there three times per week. Extra-curricular activities are well supported by pupils, with good take-up rates being evident. Many staff give considerable amounts of time and energy to ensure this very good overall provision is available to all.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs

46. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language have equality of access to all areas of the school's activities and to the same curriculum as other pupils. Where decisions are made to take pupils from classes for extra tuition, this is done in accordance with the Code of Practice¹² for Special Educational Needs.

Personal, social and health education

47. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. The programme has been comprehensively revised since the previous inspection. A team of specialist teachers now teaches a very carefully planned and comprehensive programme. Modules include aspects of personal safety, such as 'stranger danger' in Years 7 and 8 and move on to units such as revision skills and financial capability in Years 10 and 11. Statutory requirements for drug, health, sex and relationship education are met. Responsibility to others is well fostered through the citizenship programme. Pupils' personal development is fostered through frequent self-assessment of their work and they identify their own targets for improvement.

Careers education

48. The two weeks' work experience undertaken in Year 10 is very good preparation for life after pupils leave school. Because of the school's good links with the community, most of the pupils manage to find their own work experience placements. However, relatively few visitors come into school in order to speak directly with the pupils and this restricts the extent to which they can broaden their experience of society at large. Because the careers education and guidance programme is effective it ensures that pupils receive the well-informed and impartial advice they need to make their option choices at the end of Years 9 and 11. The programme is taught through personal, social and health education lessons and starts with the youngest pupils in Year 7. They are encouraged to consider what they would like to do when they are older and they receive specific help at appropriate stages. For example, Year 9 pupils receive good advice when considering their potential GCSE options for the following year, and when identifying routes they could follow when they leave school. One-to-one interviews with the careers advisor are available to all pupils and those with special educational needs are particularly well supported.

The work related curriculum

49. The school provides a good range of work-related experiences. In Years 10 and 11, the new course in hairdressing has developed links with the local college of further education, and is proving successful and motivating the pupils. The business studies course, information and communication technology and design and technology

¹² Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities, duties and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help and support to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

contribute well to the pupils understanding of the world of work. The two-week work experience for all pupils in Year 10 is very successful and they use this experience to contribute to their work in lessons and to support coursework. Other subjects have good links with business, in particular design and technology. In geography, pupils visit industrial museums and physical education works closely with local sports clubs. The school is part of a local consortium to expand the range of vocational education courses. The careers advice and guidance is good and a range of visits from companies and other agencies support pupils' knowledge of opportunities outside of school. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 have careers interviews with the careers adviser to support their choices at the end of Year 11.

50. There are strong links with partner organisations and the local community. These are reported on separately in paragraphs 88 to 91. The school's work with its feeder primary schools is extensive. Its open evening encourages prospective pupils to see a whole range of activities, provided by the current pupils at the school. There are plans to develop further subject links with feeder schools in order to support progression into Year 7. A number of staff visit the primary schools on a regular basis, and a special matinee performance of the school production and a new intake concert is held for Year 6 pupils. Good links have been established with the local college of further education and sixth form college, and these help the provision of link courses. The school prepares the pupils well for the next stage of education, and is already making creative plans to expand the links with post-16 education and to enhance the curriculum offered.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

51. Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school recognises the importance of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and its impact on pupils' progress, attitudes and achievement. There are several references to these aspects of pupils' personal development in the school's documentation, especially with regard to behaviour, equal opportunities and bullying. The personal, social, health, and citizenship education programme is an important part of the school's teaching of spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities. It is co-ordinated and taught by a specialist team. Whole school planning is in the early stages of development and the audit of departmental contributions has yet to be completed. However, a planning group is now actively considering spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues across the school. Their work is intended to lead to a more systematic planned and co-ordinated approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout all subjects. This is a good approach in terms of a developing shared policy for the planning, teaching, monitoring and evaluation of this aspect of the curriculum. The religious education syllabus provides very good opportunities in these areas, and there are valuable examples of opportunities for reflection and discussion of spiritual and moral issues. The excellent displays in the library and around the school are constant reminders to pupils about these important areas of personal development.
52. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory overall. However, the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met. Assemblies take place twice each week, for each year group. Assemblies rarely constitute worship and, although one assembly did provide a short opportunity for reflection, there is inconsistency. Tutor time is occasionally used for spiritual development through the use of a structured 'Thought for the Week' programme. There is some evidence of planning in departments for spiritual development, but this is inconsistent and lacks structure. The personal, social, health and citizenship education programme contributes to this area, especially in providing opportunities for pupils to develop attitudes, explore feelings and develop insights and self-awareness. In some, but not all, subjects opportunities for the spiritual

development of pupils were seen. For example, the religious education curriculum makes a very good contribution. Pupils are encouraged to consider and respond to questions about the meaning and purpose of life. In English, teachers increase pupils' understanding of literary texts and link some to religious themes, thus enabling pupils to express empathy and compassion for others in their writing. In art and design, pupils are required to draw upon their own attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of the world in their studies of great artists. However, opportunities to enhance this aspect of pupils' personal development are missed in other subjects.

53. Opportunities for moral development are very good. These are targeted largely through the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme. Topics such as attitudes to bullying, sex education, drugs awareness, globalisation, and equal opportunities, all provide a sound curriculum for discussion and the development of attitudes and values. Teaching styles which allow pupils to express their views, explore moral dilemmas and form judgements were evident in personal, social, health and citizenship education, and in religious education. The school has clear expectations that pupils will know right from wrong and pupils respond very well when they are corrected. The headteacher and staff are excellent role models for pupils. Assemblies contribute well in this area. The current theme of 'We all need each other' explores a range of moral principles and values. Several subjects contribute well in providing opportunities for moral development. In religious education, pupils are able to respond to aspects of morality using their knowledge of religious and ethical issues. In physical education, there is a clear awareness of the importance of playing by the rules. In English, pupils became increasingly aware of making moral judgements through consideration of literary texts and poetry. Several other subjects such as art and design, science, geography, history and music all provide opportunities for pupils to develop moral attitudes and values.
54. The school's approach to the social development of its pupils is very good. It provides many opportunities for them to take responsibility and develop social understanding. The personal, social, health and citizenship education programme again contributes well in this area, in terms of specific work on issues such as friendship, self-esteem, life changes, rights and responsibilities, healthy environment, citizenship, and sex education. All of these make a valuable contribution to developing pupils' attitudes and fostering independent thinking. In addition, lunchtime clubs and sporting activities help to develop skills of social interaction. The school council enables pupils to develop their communication skills and make important contributions to the life of the school. Work experience gives significant opportunities for older pupils to develop self-confidence and social skills. Most subjects contribute towards social development. For example, pupils work well together and they are encouraged and enabled to express their views in paired work, group work and general discussion. In physical education, visits to other schools provide good opportunities for pupils to develop social skills and relationships.
55. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. There are good opportunities for pupils to be involved in activities which extend their cultural development. The school's curriculum does provide some opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of the variety of different cultures and traditions which exist in this country. There are aspects of religious education which make a significant contribution, especially in terms of the study of different religions and the cultures which support them. The school's curriculum in personal, social, health and citizenship education provides further good opportunities. For example, in topics such as respecting others, individual differences, tolerance and discrimination. However, positive planning in all areas of the curriculum in order to prepare pupils for life in multicultural Britain requires further development although positive steps have been taken to focus on the multicultural dimension in Year 7. The wide range of well-supported trips and visits to theatres and museums, together

with visits to France, all provide opportunities for pupils to develop cultural awareness. Some subjects do make a significant contribution to the cultural development of pupils. For example, in art the study of artists from other cultures forms an important part of the curriculum.

56. Since the previous inspection, the school has a greater awareness of the need to develop a systematic approach to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All four aspects have improved significantly and plans are in place to enhance further these important features of pupils' personal development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

57. The previous inspection found that the school provided satisfactory care. This has improved over the last two years and the quality of care is now good. This support helps pupils to concentrate on their work and encourages them to make the most of their time at school. Form tutors and heads of year remain with their year group as they move from Years 7 to 11. This continuity places them in a good position to monitor pupils' personal development, and they do so very well. There are good links with contributory primary schools and Year 7 pupils feel they were well prepared for the move to secondary school. Routine health and safety and child protection procedures are in place and members of staff are fully aware of their responsibilities.
58. Members of staff at this school are united by a sense of common purpose. They are deeply committed to the welfare of their pupils and they work very hard to ensure that the pupils' personal and academic needs are met. For example, pupils in Year 11 who are not doing as well as they should, receive individual mentoring from senior teachers and the pupils involved say they find this very helpful.
59. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. Working relationships between pupils and members of staff are very good and teachers are sensitive to pupils' 'ups and downs'. Each week tutors review pupils' personal planners, which include records of their behaviour, attendance and punctuality. As well as encouraging a basic work ethic, this monitoring helps tutors to spot any personal problems and deal with them at an early stage. Pupils record all their merit marks and personal targets in their personal planners. These are checked regularly and pupils' accomplishments are included in their records of achievement and on the newly introduced behaviour database'. Teachers use this computerised system to record several aspects of pupils' personal development. This provides tutors and heads of year with instant access to the pastoral records of each pupil and enables them to monitor how each individual is getting along and the role they are playing in the day-to-day life of the school.
60. Because of the school's overhaul of its approach to behaviour management, pupils are now well guided in helping them to know exactly what is, and what is not, acceptable. The emphasis is now very much more on the positive and the implementation of the revised procedures is proving to be not only exceptionally effective, but is also very popular with the pupils. The school has struck a delicate balance between recognising all the praise-worthy things which pupils do, whilst taking a firm line against those who misbehave or disturb others. During discussion with inspectors, pupils applaud the school's positive stance and feel the procedures are firm but fair. Procedures for dealing with bullying or other anti-social behaviour are also very effective and pupils who are at risk of exclusion are very well supported in the learning support centre. Governors keep a close eye on pupils' behaviour and receive feedback each term on the number of exclusions and the underlying reasons.

61. The school regards good attendance as a high priority and regularly emphasises its importance to pupils and their parents. The lack of an electronic system of registration, however, makes this process very time consuming and this imposes restrictions on the range of analyses that can be undertaken. In order to ease the administrative burden and to keep closer tabs on the attendance of particular individuals, an attendance officer has been recruited. As a result of this appointment, all unexplained absences are followed up by a phone call on the first day. In addition, this perseverance has reduced the level of unauthorised absence to one quarter of the national average.

Pupils with special educational needs

62. There are good procedures in place for identifying pupils with special educational needs. Arrangements for tracking attainment and progress for pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are good. These supply consistent data for reviews where necessary and for setting new targets. This contributes well to raising standards.

Assessment

63. Overall procedures and the use of assessment to support and guide pupils are good. Since the previous inspection both the previous and current assessment managers have worked to refine and improve the ways in which the school gathers and uses its assessment information. The school has a very good policy in place, which provides a clear rational and very good guidance on the use of assessment to set short, medium and long-term targets across all departments. The collection and analysis of assessment data are well established and teacher assessment against national curriculum expectations is now secure.
64. The school uses information about how well pupils have performed before they came to the school to guide its planning and grouping of pupils, and to ensure that pupils' likely levels of achievement are identified. This information together with data from school and national tests is provided to all departments on a regular basis. To strengthen further its ability to ensure the needs of all pupils are properly met, it is introducing further testing at the start of Year 7 to establish a clear baseline across all subjects. In geography, for example, testing at the start of Year 7 enables the department to match work more closely to pupils' levels of understanding and experience on entry to the school.
65. The school uses its assessment information effectively to report progress annually to parents in terms of national curriculum levels. The lack of an integrated computer based assessment system weakens the overall use of information to support pupils. This is because the current paper based system does not easily link pastoral support, through the form tutors and heads of year, with academic information. The school is proposing to change to a computer-based system to improve the efficiency and regularity with which information can be exchanged and therefore improve this aspect of its monitoring and support.
66. Assessment is very effectively used in English, physical education, science and music to monitor and guide pupils. In English the use of regular written evaluative comments and guidance on what and how to improve is excellent, and very much appreciated by pupils. Similarly, in music, very good procedures and the regularity of assessment are very effective in guiding and supporting pupils' progress. The regularity of testing and assessment in science and physical education has a very positive impact upon standards and levels of achievement in these areas.

67. The quality of monitoring and support provided across the curriculum is good overall, but shows some variation in procedures and the use of assessment across departments. In information and communication technology it is unsatisfactory, because pupils do not receive regular information about their progress against national curriculum levels. In mathematics although satisfactory overall the regularity and use of assessment are inconsistent between different teaching groups.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

68. Links between home and school are effective. This school is working hard to raise the standard of pupils' work and is keen to increase the extent to which parents are involved in their children's education. Most of the parents who expressed a view are positive about the school and there is general agreement that this school is improving rapidly. Parents are particularly pleased with the high expectations the school has for their children and the approachability of the headteacher and other members of staff. Parents support their children well and the parent teacher association organises regular fund-raising and social events. However, despite strong discouragement from the school, a significant minority of parents still book family holidays during the school term. This inevitably means that their children miss out on the work undertaken by the rest of the class and the school is very concerned that this may well place them at a disadvantage in the future.
69. As part of the inspection process, parents were asked to complete a questionnaire. Although around only one-fifth of the forms was returned, analysis of parents' responses shows they are pleased with many aspects of the school's work. Parents attending the pre-inspection meeting agreed with these positive views. There are, however, various areas that cause concern. These are, the range of extra-curricular activities, the quality of information provided about their child's progress and the extent to which the school works with parents. Inspectors do not support these concerns. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good and pupils' annual reports provide plenty of useful information about how their children are getting on. Furthermore, a senior teacher oversees the reports of each tutor group and he or she ensures they are clearly written and include all the information they should. Around one-fifth of parents are concerned about the behaviour of some of the pupils. Inspectors agree that a minority of pupils occasionally misbehave and this can impinge upon the progress of the rest of the class. Parents can be reassured, however, that teachers manage these pupils well and the overwhelming majority of pupils are nearly always well behaved.

Pupils with special educational needs

70. There are good formal and informal contacts with parents of pupils who have special educational needs. Parents and pupils are involved in the review process in line with the 2001 Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs. The school has good links with local authority services, both for pupils with special educational needs and for those speaking English as an additional language. This helps to extend and improve overall provision.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

The school's senior management

71. The leadership and management of the school are very good, overall. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and has been recognised by governors, colleagues, parents and pupils alike as having played a key role in turning the school around and remedying its serious weaknesses. In this task, the school's leadership group and the governing body have very well, and loyally, supported him. Together, they have provided exceptionally clear direction for the school. Consequently, the quality and appropriateness of the school's development planning are very good and the aims and values of the school are being well met through its life and work. The action taken by the school to meet its targets has been good. Through its improvement planning, the school is becoming increasingly successful in raising standards, teaching and learning. The school is outward as well as inward looking and is increasingly improving the quality and range of its links with the local community, other educational establishments, and with parents. The combined approach of the school's leadership group is ensuring that the shared commitment of the staff, and their capacity to drive forward change and development is very good.

The school's middle management

72. The leadership and middle management skills of heads of department are good overall. Leadership is very good in English, science, design and technology, physical education and in personal, social, health and citizenship education. It is good in drama, religious education, history, geography, modern languages, art and in music. Leadership is satisfactory in mathematics, but the management of the subject has been unsatisfactory over recent months in the absence of the head of department. Leadership of ICT is satisfactory, but management is unsatisfactory because the monitoring of the department and ICT provision across the curriculum are insufficiently well developed. Management is sound in history, where there is currently an acting head of department. It is good in drama, religious education, geography, modern languages, art and in music. It is very good in English, science, design and technology, physical education and in personal, social, health and citizenship education. Areas for development in the strategic role of heads of department now involve the sharing and development of good practice relating to learning and teaching, and the development of the role of heads of department in the monitoring of pupils' learning through classroom observations.

The school's governing body

73. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities very well. Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes to the governing body, and the way it operates and carries out its duties. These changes have significantly improved the way in which it acts as a 'critical friend' to the school as well as holding it properly to account. The governing body's effectiveness in fulfilling its statutory duties is, however, only satisfactory. This is because it has not ensured that the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is met. However, the very high level of the governors' commitment to the school and its pupils is indisputable. Their role in shaping the direction of the school is very good, because their understanding of its strengths and weaknesses is also very good. This results from the governing body being provided with high quality information to enable it to fulfil its role. The governors and headteacher set themselves increasingly challenging, but ultimately achievable targets.

Special educational needs

74. There are a good number of well-trained educational support assistants for pupils with special educational needs. The deployment of educational support assistants is sufficiently flexible to gain maximum benefit from the hours available. The learning support area has been considerably improved since the previous inspection and the accommodation now provides good areas to improve learning and raise standards. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has shown very good management in developing procedures and systems for special educational needs. The school's overall leadership of provision for special educational needs is satisfactory. There are still areas of the 2002 Code of Practice, which need attention, particularly in the identification and roles of key teachers and the wider management role of the special educational needs co-ordinator. Statutory requirements for special educational needs are fully met.
75. The small numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language are managed at present in the learning support area. As numbers increase, as expected, the school has yet to develop contingency planning for this eventuality. Although satisfactory, the management of provision for gifted or talented pupils has yet to be extended to provide consistent provision across all departments. For example, although the gifted or talented are identified in the physical education department, this is not always the case in other subjects. There is, as yet, insufficient planning for these pupils, and the provision of appropriate work during lessons, in order to ensure their needs are met more fully.

Educational and social inclusion

76. The school is strongly committed to the provision for equal opportunity and social inclusion. Incoming Year 7 pupils are well prepared for their move to secondary education and they receive a warm welcome. The school is successful in recognising and promoting respect for a wide range of cultural and religious customs and this is reflected in a high level of tolerance and understanding. The small number of pupils who have English as an additional language are very well included in all areas of school life. There is, however, no member of staff who has formal responsibility for looking after these pupils.
77. The school has a systematic and rigorous approach for identifying and supporting pupils with a wide range of needs, be they emotional or educational. The school has not yet, however, developed a wider range of teaching and learning styles, which will support the minority of pupils who are disaffected or disengaged. Teachers plan their work carefully, and there are effective systems for tracking the standard of pupils' work and their progress. The school analyses exam and test results by gender and ethnicity and uses effectively the data obtained. Pupils who find learning difficult are well supported and they make good progress.

The school's resources: *Staffing*

78. All departments are sufficiently well staffed by appropriately qualified teachers, which enables them to teach the school's curriculum. Newly appointed staff to the school and newly qualified teachers, are well looked after in terms of their support and training. For both teaching staff and teaching assistants, performance management arrangements are properly in place, and clearly linked to the school's priorities for improvement. However, support staff appraisal is not part of this process. Staff training is an integral and effective part of the school's development planning and the majority of staff has taken part in some professional training outside school during the past year. Monitoring

of teaching and staff development is effective as part of the schools' drive to raise standards.

The school's resources: *Accommodation*

79. The overall quality of the school accommodation is good, and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. Since the previous inspection, there has been a very good improvement. Supported by very good management, prudent use of finance and clearly discerned priorities the school has very effectively overcome nearly all the issues identified by the previous inspection. The exception is the provision for geography, which is still in cramped and unsatisfactory accommodation. The school has a relevant priority to improve this accommodation in the near future. Accommodation is now very good for physical education, design and technology, and history. It is now good for science, art and design, music, modern foreign languages, personal, social and health education and special educational needs. It is satisfactory for English, mathematics, citizenship, religious education, information and communication technology and drama.
80. Classrooms and corridors are generally well decorated. Teachers ensure bright and uplifting teaching rooms for their pupils. Pupils' work is celebrated by good displays around the school. For example, in the newly occupied and refurbished art and design area there are good displays of the pupils' recent two-dimensional and three-dimensional work. The rolling programme for site and building development is managing very well the declining structure of the building with the replacement of walls, windows and other parts of the building fabric as finance allows. The site manager and team take pride in their work and maintain the school premises to a good state of cleanliness. This makes a significant contribution to the positive ethos¹³ of the school. Pupils treat their school with respect and consequently there is limited litter and no signs of damage or graffiti.

The school's resources: *Resources for learning*

81. There has been considerable improvement in the provision of learning resources since the previous inspection. Several departments, including English, geography, religious education, physical education and special educational needs, are well resourced and all other departments have satisfactory provision. The library is very well organised and administered and pupils receive very good support from the librarian. Because of this, the library is well used by pupils, particularly at break and lunchtimes, and this is very supportive of their personal development. However, there are still some restrictions on pupils' use of textbooks at home. This is because, in some subjects, the number and range of textbooks available is insufficient or too small. The school's deficit budget makes it difficult to extend the range of information and communication technology (ICT) and the number of computers is still low in comparison with other schools and the national average. Many departments find access to ICT difficult during lesson time.

The efficiency of the school

82. At the time of the previous inspection, the school had a serious budget deficit. It was subsequently shown this was because the school's finances were not being managed effectively enough. Rapid action was taken relating to this and, although the school is still in deficit, the deficit is being well managed and gradually reduced as part of an agreed programme with the local authority. The school's latest audit report, in March 2003, recognised good and improving financial management. There are now good reporting arrangements between the school and the governing body. Financial systems

¹³ In this context 'ethos' refers to the characteristic spirit or attitudes of the school as a community.

are well administered. The auditors commended the headteacher and governors for their implementation of the action plan from the previous audit in 2001. The report concluded that there were now no inadequacies or areas for concern. The school has already taken action on all the minor areas for improvement identified by the auditors in their latest report.

83. Because of good financial management, the school makes good strategic use of its limited resources. The school's budget properly reflects the educational priorities stated in its improvement planning. Grants for specific purposes are well used. The school is clear about the costs of its developments and there are logical links between its planning and spending. The bursar maintains full records of the school's income and expenditure. These are properly maintained and readily to hand. Regular reports are made available to the head teacher and governing body. The head teacher and governors are therefore in a good position to plan the allocation of funds and resources to support the school's priorities. Heads of department are provided with regular monthly budget statements to inform them of their spending and to make them accountable. Overall, the principles of best value are being well applied.
84. Nevertheless, the school is currently restricted in its development because of the deficit budget. The use of new technology in administration is unsatisfactory because the school cannot yet afford to bring its systems sufficiently up-to-date. An important example of this is that registers are still completed and analysed manually, rather than being computerised. Performance data on pupils is effectively maintained and analysed by a member of the school's leadership group. However, the sharing of this data is limited by the fact that the school's computer network is restricted for administration purposes. Such limitations are a matter of concern, and some justifiable frustration, for the school itself. However, in spite of such problems, the management of the school has done well in fulfilling its responsibilities, and taking the necessary action to bring the school out of serious weaknesses, in the face of a deficit budget.

Value for money

85. Overall, the school is providing a good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Pupils' attitudes towards school, and their behaviour, are good. Pupils' personal development, and working relationships between pupils and teachers, is very good. Standards are now average, and improving. The pupils start from a well below average base of attainment in Year 7, and they achieve well as they move through the school. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The school's unit costs per pupil are just above average in comparison with national figures. Good progress has been made on the key issues from the previous inspection. The commitment of the school to improve further, and its capacity to succeed in this are very good. Consequently, the inspection team finds that the school is currently showing good levels of effectiveness and is providing overall good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

86. **In order to secure further improvement, and to build on the school's very good commitment and determination to succeed in this, the governors, head teacher and senior management should take further action to: -**

[1] Raise standards in national tests, assessments and public examinations, and strengthen and enhance the work currently being undertaken to achieve this through the school's well focused development planning, by: -

- Building on the existing good work of the school's leadership team in their monitoring of the work of departments, especially the quality of learning and teaching:
- ensuring all heads of department are enabled to have more efficient access to performance data on pupils, through the use of new technology. This is in order to enable them properly to analyse and use this information to help set targets for their department and all groups of pupils:
- enhancing the good practice amongst departments aimed at improving pupils' strategies for the retention of learning, and the revision of work for test and examination purposes:
- developing the school's provision for pupils identified as gifted or talented, particularly relating to extension and enhancement work through all subjects of the curriculum:
- strengthening the school's monitoring of the work of the mathematics and ICT departments in order to raise pupils' standards and achievement.

[See Paragraphs: 3; 4; 6; 7; 9; 13; 14; 19; 31; 38; 41; 67; 72; 84; 109; 116; 128; 129; 130; 140; 162; 168; 170 and 173]

[2] Develop a whole school learning and teaching policy, and the strategies to ensure its implementation in order to:-

- (a) Consolidate the school's hard work undertaken over the past two years:
- by drawing together the threads of the good work being undertaken through the school's improvement, and other related, planning;
 - by providing an agreed platform and guidance document as the basis for common approaches to improvement in the future;
 - in order to provide whole school guidance for all teachers when undertaking the monitoring of learning through lesson observations.
- (b) Extend the range of opportunities available to gifted or talented pupils within lessons by:
- analysing schemes of work and lesson plans to identify opportunities for gifted or talented pupils to attain at higher levels than others in the class;
 - surveying gifted or talented pupils to identify where they feel they are being challenged in order to extend, and develop further, good practice;
 - observing lessons to identify and share existing good practice relating to gifted or talented pupils ;
 - sampling the work of gifted or talented pupils in order to ensure the effectiveness of the school's strategies for improving their learning, standards and achievement.
- (c) To extend the range of teaching and learning styles to develop further the school's strategies for meeting the needs of the small minority of pupils who are disengaged from learning by:
- identifying targets and approaches (for teachers as well as pupils) within individual lessons, which relate directly to engagement and participation as well as academic achievement;

- developing greater consistency in the use of open questioning styles where there is no wrong answer, to build pupils' self-esteem;
- increasing the proportion of each lesson when pupils are actively participating;
- promoting active listening strategies so pupils know what to do when others are speaking, and do not feel excluded;
- increasing the number of situations where pupils' opinion is important rather than what they know or can do.

[See Paragraphs: 19; 28; 29; 31; 34; 35; 41; 72; 77; 92; 95; 99; 109; 112; 114; 118; 130; 144; 147; 149; 151; 153; 155 and 177]

[3] Develop the school's use of information and communication technology (ICT) in order to:-

- Link pastoral and academic information and share this on a more regular basis with staff;
- strengthen and make the school's administrative systems more efficient.

[See Paragraphs: 61; 65; 84 and 99]

[4] Make further improvements in the school's resources for learning, as finances allow, in order to:-

- Improve textbook resources for to support pupils further in their development as independent learners;
- improve ICT resources to enable all subjects of the curriculum to make their required contribution to the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 strategy.

[See Paragraphs: 38; 81; 117; 119; 123; 128; 133; 134; 139; 145; 147; 150; 153; 157; 166; 169; 170; 177; 193 and 198]

87. In addition to the main areas for improvement, the governors, head teacher and senior management should consider the following subsidiary issues: -

- Ensure that the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is met fully.
[See Paragraphs: 52 and 73]
- The development of formal contingency planning for the reception and intake of pupils whose mother tongue is not, or believed not to be, English, and the appointment of a co-ordinator for pupils with English as an additional language.
[See Paragraphs: 75 and 76]
- Develop further the good provision for pupils with special educational needs by ensuring that the full requirements of 2002 Code of Practice, particularly in the identification and roles of key teachers and the wider management role of the special educational needs co-ordinator, are implemented.
[See Paragraphs: 74]
- Develop opportunities to enable all pupils in Years 7 to 9 to study a second modern language.
[See Paragraphs: 44; 170 and 172]

THE SCHOOL'S LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY

88. Overall, the quality of the school's links with the community is **good**.

Strengths:-

- The vision and future planning of the school is encouraging links with the community.
- There is good adult education provision.
- There is a wide range of activities provided for the community.

Areas for Improvement:-

- The monitoring of the impact of community links on the school's curriculum.

Commentary:-

89. There are good links with the community and the school, in its vision and future planning, it is looking to encourage and develop further links with local industry and the local community. The provision of adult education at the school is good and it provides a wide range of courses, from recreational activities to examination classes, with some staff at the school teaching on these courses. A range of organisations, youth service, cubs and scouts, hire the school premises for their activities and the school continues to promote its use. The school manages this provision well and ensures that courses are provided which support the needs of the community, and enables the community to use the school's facilities. However, the school is not yet effectively enough monitoring the success of its provision, or the extent of the supportive impact of community links on the school's established curriculum.
90. There is a good range of community links and the citizenship programme has developed a community links group which, for example, undertakes visits to a residential home and has run a litter campaign. Local sports teams collaborate with the physical education department to coach pupils in the school and develop their sports skills. There are many performances and concerts held which the community attends, both within the school and in the local area. The school has held a concert at a local hospice, taken part in a music festival and been involved in drama workshops at the local colleges of further education. Boys from Year 11 have played in their rock band to support the police crime awareness project. The religious education department, to support work in Years 7 to 9, uses the local church and visits are made to other places of worship for courses in Years 10 and 11. The design and technology department, for example, works closely with a local company on the computer design of clocks. A local electricity company provides support for staff training and visits for pupils. The careers department invites a range of business and educational institutions in to the school to talk to pupils about their future careers.
91. The school works closely with their feeder primary schools and holds an open evening to introduce pupils to the school. A number of staff visit the primary schools on a regular basis and a special matinee performance of the school production and a new intake concert is held for new pupils. The school also ensures that parents of existing pupils receive regular information about their children and school events.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	157
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	70

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	43	54	46	4	0	0
Percentage	6	27	35	29	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 to Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1064
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	165

Special educational needs	Y7 to Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	17
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	68

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	29

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.5 ¹⁴
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.2

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

¹⁴ These attendance rates for 2001-02 were below the national average during the last reporting year. However, attendance for the current year is much improved. See paragraph 26.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	117	104	221

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58	65	82
	Girls	68	58	61
	Total	126	123	143
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	57 (50)	56 (60)	65 (65)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29 (20)	38 (32)	37 (30)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58	70	78
	Girls	71	68	63
	Total	129	138	141
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (62)	66 (67)	64 (64)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (28)	40 (32)	39 (25)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	103	103	206

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	24	91	99
	Girls	49	102	103
	Total	73	193	202
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	35 (42)	94 (93)	98 (97)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	34.3 (33.7)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	N/a. (N/a.)
	National	N/a. (N/a.)

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	1047	109	3
White – Irish			
White – any other White background	2		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2		
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian	3		
Mixed – any other mixed background	6		
Asian or Asian British - Indian			
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1		
Black or Black British – African			
Black or Black British – any other Black background			
Chinese			
Any other ethnic group			
No ethnic group recorded			

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 to Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	60.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5

Education support staff: Y7 to Y11

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	476

Deployment of teachers: Y7 to Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 to Y11

Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	21.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001 - 02
	£
Total income	2997251
Total expenditure	2977502
Expenditure per pupil	2757
Balance brought forward from previous year	-217404
Balance carried forward to next year	+19749 ¹⁵

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

¹⁵ The school had a credit balance at the time the required forms were completed for the inspection. When the balance brought forward from the previous year is taken into account, this means the school has a current deficit budget of £197,655 overall. However, this is being properly managed and is being gradually reduced by agreement with the local authority. See paragraph 88.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate: 18.89%

Number of questionnaires sent out	1064
Number of questionnaires returned	201

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	55	10	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	47	9	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	51	15	6	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	60	15	4	0
The teaching is good.	31	56	8	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	47	23	3	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	42	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	46	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	22	49	23	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	33	52	9	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	58	7	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	52	10	3	8

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

ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION

(a) ENGLISH

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

<p>Strengths:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good teaching, particularly the way in which teachers promote productivity and a serious interest in language. • The very good provision for pupils' personal development enhances their interest in the subject. • The procedures for assessing and reporting on pupils' work are very effective. • The direction and leadership by the head of department are very good.
<p>Areas for Improvement:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a wider range of teaching techniques to meet the needs of all individuals, including those who lack motivation, and those who are particularly gifted. • The identification and sharing of the best teaching practice, particularly strategies for increasing the pupils' participation and independent learning. • The improvement of systems for the assessment of pupils' short-term learning gains.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in English:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	Average	Below average
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Average	Average
These standards are attained because:-		
Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
The quality of teaching is:	Good	Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good	Good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Very good	Very good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Very good	N/a.
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Good	Good
Other contributory factors:-		
The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:		Very good
The leadership of the subject is:		Very good
The management of the subject is:		Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:		Good

Commentary:

93. In the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9, the proportion of pupils reaching expected standards was average when compared with all schools nationally, and with similar schools. This maintained a five-year trend of improvement, which exceeded the national trend. Overall, the standards attained by pupils in English were better than in mathematics, though below those in science.

94. In the 2002 GCSE English examinations at the end of Year 11 the proportion of pupils gaining an A* to C grade was just below the national average. However, a higher proportion of pupils than average gained a grade A* to G. Results in English literature were similar, and pupils attained better results overall in English than they did in mathematics or science.
95. The majority of pupils achieve well by Years 9 and 11. However, external test results in Years 9 and 11 are undermined by a small group of pupils who are currently not motivated by the school's emphasis on achievement. These pupils are capable of reaching national expectations but do not work effectively. In Years 7 to 9, there is a wide discrepancy between the quality of writing which average pupils can achieve with help, and the writing they do on their own. For example, when supported, one Year 7 pupil produced a well planned and accurate essay arguing about different ways of keeping good order in a school. The pupil's next, but independent, piece was a, poorly structured, ungrammatical, and inaccurate passage describing a character from the novel which the class was reading. However, most pupils steadily develop a more secure mastery of written skills as they progress through the school. The most competent pupils progress well, and the number reaching the higher standards by the end of Years 9 and 11 continues to increase. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs make good progress. The two pupils whose mother tongue is not English are progressing very well. Boys have not achieved as well as girls in national tests up to 2002, but work seen during the inspection shows that boys and girls work equally hard, and learn equally well in lessons.
96. Oral skills are average, and are improving. By the end of the current Year 8, pupils' oral skills are better than their writing, so even the least competent can express complex ideas effectively. They often rely on more colloquial, or informal, ways of expressing their ideas, but are confident, and listen well. This is because teachers provide very good opportunities to consider social, moral and cultural issues, and pupils are really keen to discuss them. For example, pupils in the lowest Year 8 set were discussing a poem about coming to terms with the death of a parent. The language and the ideas were very challenging. Both boys and girls enjoyed exploring these aspects, and could use appropriate technical terms to discuss the effect of the language.
97. Reading skills are average but are frequently developing in the same way as pupils' oral skills. This is because teachers increasingly use discussion alongside a range of other stimulating techniques promoted by the National Literacy Strategy. These approaches help less confident readers to understand the content of the texts they read, as well as the techniques the writers use. Additional 'Catch-up'¹⁶ sessions for those who have fallen behind in Year 6, as well as a range of reading activities, supported by the very good library facilities, are having a good impact. The good progress made by the more competent pupils was seen in a Year 11 lesson. Pupils rapidly absorbed the initial impressions from a poem by Walt Whitman, and began to make comparisons with attitudes in a play by Arthur Miller. This showed how they had grasped the social, cultural, and moral issues involved in the American Civil War and the 'American Dream'
98. Teaching is good. Pupils enjoy their lessons and, consequently, learning and achievement are well supported. Teachers manage their classes well and build positive working relationships with the pupils, which is reflected in the pupils' very good attitudes. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, particularly when teaching Years 10 and 11. In some of the best lessons seen, they used techniques promoted by the National Literacy Strategy. These helped them to maintain a rapid pace and ensured that pupils were active and participating rather than just listening. They used

¹⁶ The school itself uses the term 'Catch-up' for these additional support sessions.

questioning really well, prompting pupils to explore and develop their thinking. They had high expectations for all pupils and encouraged independence in learning. The procedure for assessing completed assignments is exemplary, so pupils are very clear about how well they are doing, and what should be their next target. However, there is insufficient assessment of the short-term gains in learning made by pupils in each lesson.

99. The department's new approaches to teaching and assessment are features of the good improvement since the previous inspection. However, there is scope for continued improvement. This is because not all teachers use the most effective teaching methods, nor do they all have suitable access to ICT facilities in order to support the development of assessment systems. The difficulty in recruiting a permanent full time teacher has slowed the pace of learning for some pupils. The curriculum is not yet fully adapted to reflect the best practice of the National Literacy Strategy. Work to meet the needs of particularly gifted pupils, and those who lack motivation, is at an early stage. However, the head of department has been very effective in dealing with the problems identified by the previous inspection. The wide range of additional improvements, including the extensive extra-curricular study support, has been successful in raising standards.

The National Key Stage 3 Strategy: Literacy across the curriculum

100. The school's initial response to the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been good. The school was involved as a pilot school, but key members of staff were already aware of the principles involved before that time. Following an audit of the school's needs, and whole staff training, there is a range of good practice across individual departments, particularly within science. Priorities from the strategy, such as the way lessons are planned, have been adopted within whole school and departmental development plans for the current year. Additional 'Catch-up' sessions have been provided for pupils who had fallen behind by the end of Year 6, as well as summer schools to avoid loss of momentum in the longer break. The English department has run a project to bridge the gap between primary and secondary school, and mentors have been provided for pupils who are underachieving in Year 8.
101. Within the English department, the underlying principles of the strategy have been adopted. This is influencing the way lessons are planned. In the best lessons, it also influences teaching. Consequently, the pace of learning is quicker and more sustained, and pupils become more independent in their learning. A sound start has been made adapting schemes of work to make sure they include all the best practice identified within the strategy. The head of department is also monitoring teaching carefully to ensure all pupils have equal chance to benefit from this good practice. A specialist literacy consultant has given good support, helping to develop materials and adapt the scheme of work.
102. Over recent months, there has been some loss of momentum because the school has been asked to respond to other priorities, and the school recognises there is still scope for further development in most subject areas.

(b) DRAMA

103. Overall, the quality of provision in drama is **good**.

Strengths:-

- The good commitment and skill of the teaching team enables them to meet a wide range of pupils' needs.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The subject provides very good extra-curricular opportunities.

Areas for Improvement:-

- The working conditions for classes outside the specialist studio.
- Wider opportunities for pupils to experience productions by other groups.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in drama:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	N/a.	Average
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Above average	Average
These standards are attained because:-		
Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Good	Good
The quality of teaching is:	Good	Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good	Good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Very good	Very good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Good	N/a.
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Very good	Very good
Other contributory factors:-		
The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:		Very good
The leadership of the subject is:		Good
The management of the subject is:		Good
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:		Maintained

Commentary:-

104. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average overall for grades A* to C. However, pupils' achievement was generally better in drama than in their other subjects. All pupils entered in 2002 gained an A* to G pass. Nearly twice the national average percentage of Year 11 pupils was entered for the subject in 2002. The highest attainers, including those with particular talents, achieve very well, and the proportion gaining higher A* and A passes was amongst the highest for the school.

105. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are highly committed to the subject, and the quality of their practical work is clearly reflected in their written portfolios. These record, very comprehensively, the skills which they have learned. Pupils show an excellent grasp of dramatic techniques, and have the ability to adapt these to reflect highly personal interpretation of some challenging themes. A sketch depicting a quest undertaken by unlikely travelling companions became, for one group of girls, the final journey for an individual and her cancer. Such responses are outcomes of a curriculum, which provides very good opportunities to consider social, and moral issues, and seeks inspiration from a range of cultures. This has a strong influence on pupils' personal and spiritual development. Behind these presentations is broad ranging research from

sources as various as Aesop, C.S. Lewis and Pink Floyd. Following these presentations comes thorough and honest evaluations, which in turn lead to a greater understanding by the pupils of the dramatic techniques they have applied.

106. The subject gives very good scope for collaboration and personal responsibility. However, the group work involved in examination assessment means that pupils with high potential are sometimes at risk from the poor attendance of others in the class. Nevertheless, these less committed, and other lower attaining pupils, also gain a great deal from the subject. Portfolio evidence shows how low attaining pupils are able to participate and to enjoy the subject. They gain a good grasp of the techniques involved, as well as considerable personal confidence. In both of these aspects, pupils benefit from good teaching. There is a well-established tradition of trust, independent work, and responsibility. Teachers mark written work supportively, and intervene sensitively to raise standards in performance.
107. Standards of work seen in Year 7 were above expectations, particularly the pupils' confidence and oral skills. The good teaching here was characterised by well-timed interventions to move pupils forward and help them make progress. Questioning was good, prompting pupils to think further, and the support assistant, who worked effectively with a lower attaining group, was able to deploy the same style of questioning.
108. The drama department makes a very strong contribution to the pupils' experiences outside lessons. For example, the department mounts three productions each year, and involves large numbers of pupils. Drama uses the income from its school productions to maintain high quality resources. However, there are not the expected numbers of trips or visits to the theatre or to see other productions outside the school. The department's principal working space is a specialist studio, which has excellent facilities. However, because the subject is a popular option in Years 10 and 11, many younger groups, in Years 7 to 9, are taught in less adequate accommodation where lack of space, and the possibility of interruption, undermine pupils' progress.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths:-

- Standards in Year 9 are improving.
- The extent of the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive impact in widening the range of teaching styles and improved standards of numeracy.
- A significant proportion of teaching and learning is very good or excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics are good.

Areas for Improvement:-

- GCSE results, which have been below the national average in recent years.
- The unsatisfactory teaching by a minority of teachers over a sustained period of time.
- The more regular marking of work in order to motivate and support pupils.
- The evaluation of pupils' progress and the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning have been unsatisfactory.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in mathematics:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	Below average	Below average
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Average	Below average
These standards are attained because:-		
Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
The quality of teaching is:	Good	Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good	Good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Good	Good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Good	N/a.
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Other contributory factors:-		
The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:		Satisfactory
The leadership of the subject is:		Satisfactory
The management of the subject is:		Unsatisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:		Unsatisfactory

Commentary:-

110. Pupils enter the school with standards, which are below the national average in mathematics. By the end of Year 9, standards are close to the national average, although still slightly below. By the end of Year 11, standards are below the national average. Teaching seen during the inspection week was good, overall, and pupils are now making good progress. However, pupils' progress and achievement is, as yet, only satisfactory overall. This is because there have been significant staff absences, and difficulties in staffing the department, particularly over the previous two terms, which have affected pupils' attainment and progress. This was clearly evident in the standard of work in the pupils' exercise books and their perceptions of their own learning.
111. Results in National Curriculum tests in 2002 for pupils at the end of Year 9 were below the national average. They were in line with those in similar schools, but below average based on the pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 6. Overall, the 2002 test results in mathematics were below those gained by the pupils in science or English. Improvement in national tests since the previous inspection has not been as marked in mathematics as in the other two core subjects. In 2002, the proportion of pupils at the end of Year 11 obtaining A* to C grades in GCSE examinations was below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to G grades was close to, but slightly below, the average. The percentage of the year group entered for the examination was slightly above average. However, whilst Year 11 pupils in 2001 made unsatisfactory progress in their last two years at the school, the 2002 Year 11 group made satisfactory progress when taking into account the standards they had attained by the end of Year 9. In the statistics examination, the results for those entered have been well above the national average at grades A* to C in 2001 and 2002, and in line with the national average for A* to G. The proportion of Year 11 pupils entered for statistics in 2002 was three times the national average.
112. Standards seen in lessons for pupils in Year 9 are better than indicated by the school's previous test results. Overall, they are almost in line with the national average, but there are significant variations depending on the quality of individual teachers. Some

high attaining pupils work at standards expected of them, and even beyond. For example, they extend their knowledge of side lengths in triangles to three-dimensional work using straws and pipe cleaners as a visual aid to very demanding work. The teacher's enthusiasm and planning were evident and the references to GCSE grades motivated the class. However, other higher attaining pupils, in a different class, had been falling behind over a period of time and simply covered the basics of the same topic. Overall, standards of numeracy are average. This is a clear improvement since the previous inspection, when they were under-developed.

113. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress. However, their lessons have been interrupted by staff absences, and some teaching has been no more than satisfactory. Nevertheless, good help from educational support assistants, and the small numbers in lower ability classes, together with good attitudes to learning have helped make achievement good. The progress of both the pupils with English as an additional language is consistently good, because teachers check regularly on their progress in lessons and other pupils show good personal skills in lending support.
114. Overall, the standards attained by the current Year 11 show an improvement over those gained in examination results in recent years. However, as a year group, they are still below average. The pupils' progress has been affected by the department's staffing difficulties. Nevertheless, their achievement remains satisfactory overall, and their progress during lessons is currently good. For example, pupils of above average ability in one class have made consistently good progress since Year 9. They are working at GCSE grades in the range B or C and show confidence and a good knowledge of algebra. However, pupils in a parallel class have had a variety of teachers over a considerable period of time. Whilst now working well with their regular teacher, their progress is only satisfactory. Both classes of the most able pupils are making no more than satisfactory progress. Their learning has not been interrupted as much as that of other pupils, but a significant proportion of these higher attaining pupils do not have the secure knowledge expected of pupils of their level of ability. In particular, the most gifted pupils within the two top classes have not been challenged as rigorously as they should. They have therefore made less progress than normally expected as insufficient extension or enhancement work has been provided. Most pupils with special needs make good progress, but the average and below average make satisfactory progress.
115. Overall, teaching seen during the inspection was good, and is improving as staffing difficulties are gradually resolved. Teaching was often very good or excellent. The best teaching is characterised by the ideals of the National Numeracy Strategy in all year groups, such as the use of resources to motivate and help pupils visualise concepts, by an emphasis on key words and a clear focus on challenging learning objectives. Teaching by non-specialists in lower ability groups in Year 7 is exceptionally good because of their skills of timing and their warmth for these pupils. Teachers, including supply teachers, work hard for their pupils. Regular teachers seen during the week have very good relationships with pupils, know their levels well and set high expectations. As a result, pupils are now learning well. They persevere well and co-operate exceptionally well in the very good lessons where they are required to work in pairs. They demonstrate good or better attitudes in most lessons. Attitudes to mathematics and behaviour are always at least satisfactory. Even in the one unsatisfactory lesson, where the supply teacher misinterpreted the mood of the class, they remained positive with a desire to learn. One pupil showed exceptional social skills in mediating in this situation. However, evidence from exercise books and pupils' perceptions of learning, show clearly that, because of the staffing problems, teaching in the recent past has not been nearly so effective in ensuring good or at times even satisfactory progress for their pupils. Books were often not marked and insufficient

written work was done. In these instances, previous work was sometimes incomplete and untidy.

116. The head of department has been in post two years. She is an exceptionally talented teacher who has given clear direction in using the National Numeracy Strategy effectively and made a sound start in managing the department. However, she has only just recently returned after a lengthy absence that lasted almost two terms. In her absence, the department has not been managed effectively enough. The line management systems have been unsatisfactory because they did not ensure consistently satisfactory teaching and learning were taking place by all teachers and pupils. Consequently, standards of attainment deteriorated markedly in some classes. The school and department are now gradually resolving these problems.
117. Whilst many traditional resources are used effectively in lessons, there are insufficient textbooks for pupils to take home, and therefore support their independent learning. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology even though it is referred to in schemes of work, and the department does not yet meet statutory requirements for this. Accommodation is suitably suited, but walls are thin, occasionally leading to distraction. Most rooms need blinds so that overhead transparencies can be effectively used, and to prevent classrooms becoming too hot. Extra-curricular lessons are provided near examination times. However, there is no provision for a regular club or the opportunity for the gifted pupils to enter for challenges. The gifted pupils, however, are given the chance to enter for the GCSE statistics examination. Overall, whilst there are many promising features in the department, events have meant that it has made insufficient progress since the previous inspection.

The National Key Stage 3 Strategy: Numeracy across the curriculum

118. Overall, the effectiveness of the school's strategies for the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is good. However, there is no official whole school policy for the teaching of numeracy, and no tracking of the extent to which it takes place. A major factor in causing the improvement in this area is the extent to which high quality starter and plenary activities sharpen pupils' mental thinking in mathematics. This is good practice in line with the National Numeracy Strategy. There was also a successful whole school training day held in the previous school year, which has helped subjects like science, geography, design and technology, physical education, history and art focus successfully on how to enhance standards in their subjects by developing the pupils' numeracy skills.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:-

- Teaching is consistently good.
- Very good leadership ensures the department is focussed on teaching and learning.
- Very effective use is made of assessment to monitor progress and to set individual targets for pupils.
- Practical investigations are used to underpin learning of scientific principles.
- Very good working relationships give pupils the confidence to both answer and ask questions.

Areas for Improvement:-

- The use of computers and information and communication technology to enhance teaching and learning.
- The use of scientific method in short as well as in long investigations.
- The marking of pupils' class books does not give them enough help or guidance.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in science:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	Average	Below average
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Above average	Average

These standards are attained because:-

Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Very good	Good
The quality of teaching is:	Good	Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good	Good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Good	Good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Very good	Good
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Very good	Good
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Very good	N/a
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Other contributory factors:-

The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:	Good
The leadership of the subject is:	Very good
The management of the subject is:	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:	Very good

Commentary:-

120. In 2002, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were average, but well above average when compared to similar schools. Pupils achieve better results than could be expected from their prior attainment. Results show a marked improvement from the previous report and are moving upwards faster than the national trend. Attainment in science is better than in mathematics or English. Teachers' assessments are now accurate. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls.

121. The evidence from the inspection is that standards have continued to rise. Pupils are currently achieving above average standards by the end of Year 9. The improvement is due to the very good leadership and management by the head of department, who has focussed the department on good quality teaching and learning. New teaching schemes have been developed and a very good system of assessment and target setting clearly motivates pupils to achieve well. Pupils also benefit from other changes

made since the previous inspection. Accommodation and resources have been greatly improved and an integrated programme of homework, booster classes and a revision programme all ensure that pupils are fully prepared for external tests. By the end of Year 9, high attainers explain the reactivity of metals, write balanced equations, and attain the highest levels. Pupils with special educational needs describe what makes a fair test and explain the properties of solids, liquids and gases in terms of particles. Practical skills are good and have improved since the previous report. Pupils make good use of their oral and writing skills in discussions and in making their own observations and conclusions. All pupils make very good progress from a low starting point.

122. In 2002, results in GCSE were below average overall. They were well below average for A* to C passes in the combined science double award examination, but the percentage gaining A* to G was in line with the national average. In the combined science single award examination, whilst no pupils gained a higher A* or A pass, those obtaining an A* to C or A* to G was twice the national average. Pupils taking the single science examination gained, on average, over half a grade higher than in their other GCSE examinations. The proportion of Year 11 pupils taking the single award science examination was over four times the national average. In the chemistry examination, results at A* to C were close to the average and all pupils entered gained an A* to G pass.
123. The evidence from the inspection shows that standards are currently in line with expectations and continuing to improve. The improvement is mainly due to positive leadership and members of the department taking on individual and collective responsibility for improvement. For example, unsatisfactory courses have been replaced by a new double award course and individual teachers have produced new teaching schemes for the department. The current Year 11 pupils are the first group to take the new course and are beginning to benefit from a similar range of changes as provided for Years 7 to 9. Practical investigations underpin the learning of scientific principles. There are high expectations of all pupils. For example, a group of Year 10 pupils were observed being extended beyond normal GCSE levels in their understanding of electric motors. Pupils with special educational needs show a good understanding of scientific method and produce coursework of good standard. There are no weaknesses in the curriculum, but computers are not used often enough to enhance teaching and learning. Pupils rarely use ICT on an individual basis as there is a shortage of electronic sensors and access to a suite of computers is difficult. Literacy and numeracy skills are used effectively to express understanding and interpret results. All pupils make good progress.
124. Teaching is good. This is an improvement from the previous inspection. Good working relationships between teachers and pupils provide pupils with the confidence to ask questions and join in discussions. Lesson planning is consistently good. Learning objectives are shared with pupils and this immediately gets them involved in their own learning. Lessons have a variety of learning activities, move at a smart pace and have a final check that learning has taken place. In consequence, pupils are involved, interested and learning is good. These strengths were fully demonstrated in an excellent Year 9 lesson. Learning objectives were quickly explained and pupils were immediately engrossed in a group discussion. Changes of activity, like practical work, reporting to the whole class, frequent checks of understanding and a final lively quiz ensured that pupils really enjoyed their learning. In the few lessons deemed to be less good, the introductory activity was more passive, the pace was slow, pupils had little say in determining their own investigations and consequently there was less interest and learning was satisfactory rather than good.

125. Coursework is marked to a high standard and much helpful advice is given. Class books are regularly marked, but mainly with ticks and little help or guidance is given. There is little planning in lessons for pupils of different abilities, but teachers work very hard in lessons to ensure all pupils cope with the work and that they are being productive. Pupils take a pride in their work and willingly set themselves demanding targets. They get on well with each other and are willing to take on responsibility for their own work and safety. Pupils enjoy their work and many Year 11 pupils express a wish to continue their studies in science.
126. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has fostered a good team spirit and a commitment to producing high standards through focussing on teaching and learning. All the issues for the department listed in the previous report have been tackled. Consequently, positive changes have been made in the monitoring of teaching, planning of lessons, assessment, teaching schemes, resources, accommodation and health and safety. The three hard working technicians very well support the emphasis on practical work. Areas for further improvement have been identified and agreed within the department.

The National Key Stage 3 Strategy: Science across the curriculum

127. The department has been part of the national pilot scheme so most areas are well advanced. Standards are above average. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy strand for science is being well managed and is having a positive effect on making science interesting and enjoyable as well as raising standards. Teachers apply the recommended strategies well and pupils' learning is good. Lesson planning is good with all lessons following a similar format. Lessons have a similar structure of an introductory activity, a development stage and a final check of learning. A variety of learning activities have been developed and regular meetings are used to spread good practice and discuss further developments. Assessment is used effectively to assist the planning of the curriculum and set targets for pupils. Teachers are supportive towards the aims of the strategy and are aware of their training needs in order for them to develop as teachers. Liaison with primary schools is an on-going development and is focussing on enabling pupils to make a fast start to their secondary education. Liaison with other departments for teaching related topics is developing.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:-

- Very good monitoring and evaluation of the subject have supported the very good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Teaching and learning in art are good.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject, behave very well and work with interest and concentration.
- Opportunities for pupils to be involved in the life and work of the department are very good.
- The art curriculum is good, well planned and is starting to improve standards.
- Leadership, management and the capacity to succeed in further improvement are good.

Areas for Improvement:-

- Standards in tests and national examinations.
- Pupils' basic skills and techniques, particularly in Year 7, in order to improve standards.
- The use of assessment to help pupils improve the quality of their work.
- The provision of information and communication technology software for image development.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in art and design:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	Below average	Well below average
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Below average	Below average
These standards are attained because:-		
Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
The quality of teaching is:	Good	Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good	Good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Very good	Very good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Good	N/a.
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Other contributory factors:-		
The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:		Very good
The leadership of the subject is:		Good
The management of the subject is:		Good
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:		Very good

Commentary:-

129. Pupils enter the school at well below average levels of attainment. Attainment is below the national average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. In the 2001 and 2002 GCSE examinations attainment was well below average. In 2002 pass rates for A* to C, A* to G and the higher A* and A grades were well below average. Since the previous inspection, GCSE attainments have been well below average. Due to the very thorough monitoring and evaluation of the subject, the good teaching and the recently adopted scheme of work in Years 7 to 9, standards are now starting to rise across the school. However, they are not yet high enough. Nevertheless, as a result of the department's very good efforts to raise boys' attainment there is now no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

130. Inspection evidence indicates that good planning and good assessment procedures guide pupils' work and progress. The shared targets with pupils, supported by relevant resources, are helping pupils to become more aware of their own standards. However, they are not given sufficient information about the skills, techniques and knowledge they need to further their progress, and this particularly affects pupils who have special educational needs. For example, pupils in a Year 11 lesson showed a satisfactory level of research to influence their work through their investigations of the styles of chosen artists. Here their progress is satisfactory. However, the pupils' achievements were limited because of a lack of the necessary skills and techniques to improve their standards of presentation. Furthermore, there is, as yet, insufficient recognition of the additional learning needs of pupils who are gifted or talented, although they make satisfactory progress overall. Teachers keep general records of the pupils' progress over time. However, teachers' records do not contain sufficient evidence of the skills and techniques targets individual pupils require in order to further improve their standards. Other lessons produced further examples of pupils lacking in skill and techniques they would normally be expected to have acquired at an earlier stage. In Year 9, standards are below average because the pupils lack confidence with drawing techniques. In Year 7 many pupils have not yet gained a secure knowledge of colour mixing with some mixing a dark colour first and then trying to add a lighter colour instead of the other way round. The work of some pupils is also being affected because they do not wash out their brushes between colour changes.
131. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, with some examples of very good teaching. In a Year 10 lesson, very good teaching, supported by very thorough evaluation of the progress of individuals, meant that the pupils made a very good analysis of the techniques involved in drawing a boy on a bicycle. Responding very well to the high level of challenge they made a good attempt to portray speed, motion and dynamics in their life pencil drawing. Here, overall, they attained average standards. Good use is made of literacy skills through, for example, the use of specialist vocabulary. Pupils use computers well to research and record information about artists. The use of numeracy is satisfactory where estimation and measurement are applied.
132. Teachers manage their lessons very well, which has a good effect on the high levels of pupils' intellectual, and creative effort and their very good levels of interest, concentration and independence. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, show very good attitudes to their work. They are attentive, settle down quickly to their tasks, and work with very good levels of enthusiasm, interest and motivation. All pupils are very well enabled to take part in the work provided by the art department.
133. The leadership and management of the subject are now good and this has contributed to the very good improvement since the previous inspection. No unsatisfactory teaching or learning were seen. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are much improved and those with special educational needs are clearly identified. The work provided for the pupils is now well matched to the needs of the pupils. Assessment procedures are good, supported by clear, progressively developed criteria. There is a good focus on cultural aspects and the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The complete refurbishment of the accommodation has provided a good suite of three rooms for the teaching of the subject and the storage of resources is now satisfactory. However, there are insufficient computing resources for image development and modification work.

CITIZENSHIP

134. Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **good**.

<p>Strengths:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good overall provision for the subject, which meets National Curriculum requirements effectively. • The good contribution made by citizenship to the pupils' personal development. • The good leadership of the citizenship co-ordinator, and the support of senior staff.
<p>Areas for Improvement:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment procedures for citizenship are insufficiently developed. • Pupils have insufficient access to information and communication technology within the subject.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in citizenship:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	N/a	N/a
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Average	Average
These standards are attained because:-		
Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Satisfactory	Good
The quality of teaching is:	Good	Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good	Good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Good	Good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Good	N/a.
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Other contributory factors:-		
The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:		Good
The leadership of the subject is:		Good
The management of the subject is:		Good
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:		N/a

Commentary:-

135. By Year 9, pupils develop a clear understanding of community. They recognise the notion and existence of community at different levels within school, in the locality, nationally and internationally. They know that individuals contribute through work, leisure and in forming relationships. This is because pupils are given good opportunities to develop their ideas in discussion, which helps develop their inter-personal skills effectively. Pupils listen carefully to one another and make useful contributions in debate. In a lesson where pupils reviewed their own contributions within the local community, they discussed their support of local charities. This helped to satisfactorily develop their skills of self-evaluation and provided good opportunities to consider their understanding of responsible citizenship. In further work within geography, pupils worked collaboratively to research and plan a presentation. In history, pupils considered teenage life in Nazi Germany and compared it with their own experiences. This enabled them to offer informed and valid comments upon freedom of choice.

136. By Year 11, pupils deepen their knowledge of social and family responsibility. They consider well the responsibilities of family life and investigate financial services in

respect of house and car purchase. Pupils gain good insights into budget planning and they recognise some costs in living independently. In further work, pupils in Year 11, considered how best to prepare for future examinations. This involved them in a useful exercise to evaluate their own learning styles. Through skilful teaching, pupils investigated strategies for recalling information and then completed exercises to help them develop self-belief. They demonstrated very good commitment to achieving successful examination results and gained in confidence through the activities pursued in the lesson. In other work, pupils gained good insights into political systems and their impact upon society. This helped them form judgements on their preferences between different cultural values.

137. The overall good standard of teaching and learning throughout the school is enabled because teachers are well supported by the citizenship curriculum and the guidance it provides. In addition, lessons are carefully planned and in the most successful ones good levels of debate ensure all pupils contribute. For example, in Year 7, the enthusiastic approach leads to lively discussions upon differing roles within the school. Good use is made of the school's recent production of 'Bugsy Malone' to investigate the role of the school as a community. In Year 10, careful planning and skilful questioning create a positive rapport in which pupils rapidly learn about the financial obligations resulting from parenthood. Such work creates good opportunities for the pupils to investigate the life styles and choices they face as young adults.
138. There are a number of strengths in the overall provision for citizenship, which has enabled this new subject to achieve a significant place within the school curriculum. The programme of study is incorporated with the existing personal, social and health education course. A team of specialist teachers now teaches the subject. The school has completed a thorough audit of further citizenship provision within subjects. This now informs schemes of work effectively. The wide-ranging extra-curricular provision provides many opportunities to promote citizenship, for example, through community links. There are a number of good opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility, for example, through the School Council and significant numbers of pupils support local and national charities. The citizenship curriculum therefore makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and provides good opportunities to promote a range of inter-personal skills.
139. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator has worked hard to ensure a rich and varied curriculum is in place. The careful monitoring of the provision by a senior member of staff helps to ensure all pupils and staff receive effective support in the subject. This underpins the good learning. However, the school is aware of the need to make greater use of information and communication technology within citizenship, and to continue its review of assessment procedures.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

<p>Strengths:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist teaching and working relationships between teachers and pupils are good. • Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. • Standards in computer-aided design are above average. • The pupils' achievement in graphics, particularly that by girls, is good • Specialist accommodation is good.
<p>Areas for Improvement:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of higher grades in public examinations. • The achievement of boys, especially in resistant materials • Resources to support pupils' independent learning. • The more consistent sharing and monitoring of the good practice across all areas of the department.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in design and technology:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	Average	Below average
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Average	Average

These standards are attained because:-

Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Good	Good
The quality of teaching is:	Good	Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good	Good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Very good	Very good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Good	N/a.
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Good	Satisfactory

Other contributory factors:-

The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:	Very good
The leadership of the subject is:	Very good
The management of the subject is:	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:	Good

Commentary:-

141. Standards of work seen are average by Years 9 and 11, although pupils' standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are well below average for designing and making. All pupils study design and technology and develop sound practical skills and knowledge using a range of materials including food and textiles. Standards in public examinations are rising. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection.

142. Teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2002 indicate standards are average for both boys and girls. The strength is the breadth of materials and processes pupils experience and particularly their knowledge and understanding of computer aided design and manufacture. However, opportunities to develop knowledge of structures and practical skills with metal are limited. Overall, the achievement of boys and girls is good as a result of the good teaching. The balance between designing and making,

criticised at the previous inspection, has improved. Pupils make good use of their numeracy skills, for example to measure materials, weigh ingredients, analyse data and create complex computer imagery. Teachers provide task sheets and support materials, which guide pupils and, for example, promote independence in the use of computer aided design software. Regular opportunities to work in pairs and groups make a very good contribution to personal and social development. Attitudes are very good overall and support good learning. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because tasks have a clear structure and teachers give good individual support. Gifted and talented pupils extend their computer design skills very effectively and support other pupils as mentors. The shortage of computers requires pupils to share equipment and they do this very well. Clear assessment sheets inform pupils about their standards and progress, which helps them improve. However, assessment is not yet used effectively enough to check and confirm the knowledge and understanding which underpins practical work.

143. Standards overall in the 2002 public examinations were below the national average for the higher A* to C grades for boys and girls. Standards were considerably higher in graphics than in food and resistant materials. Girls achieved better than boys for the higher grades. The school enters all pupils for the GCSE examination, a much higher proportion than is the case nationally. The overall pass rate for A* to G grades for boys and girls was above the national average in 2002. Pupils' average point score represents satisfactory achievement overall in relation to their other subjects. Girls' standards in graphics and food have shown improvement each year for the past three years. The underachievement of boys in resistant materials has been a focus for improvement this year.
144. Current coursework marks in Year 11 indicate good achievement and improvement in standards for both food and resistant materials groups. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work. For example, very good relationships and enthusiastic group work characterised revision lessons in food technology. In graphics, knowledge of computer-aided design from Year 9 helps pupils to make good progress and attain high standards by the end of Year 11. However, a small but significant minority of pupils attend irregularly and this has an adverse effect upon standards and the completion of coursework. In food technology, pupils make good use of computers to analyse, investigate and present information. The development and presentation of design ideas and research are weak in resistant materials because pupils make limited use of computer-aided design and freehand drawing skills are underdeveloped.
145. Teaching is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection as a result of the national initiative on teaching in foundation subjects, the department's own monitoring and evaluation of its work and the involvement of external advisory staff from the local authority. Teachers set clear learning targets which are well supported through the good use of resources to help pupils learn. In a small minority of lessons the impact of demonstration and discussion at the beginning of lessons are lost because links to practical work are not made clear. In contrast, inspirational teaching in a Year 8 lesson introducing computer-aided design raised pupils' awareness and expectations through excellent class discussion and questioning. Teaching built upon this with a short practical activity and, as a result, pupils were highly motivated and involved in their learning. The need to share computers and the lack of textbooks for use at home restrict the development of independent learning skills.
146. Leadership and management of the department are very good. A strong team spirit exists with a commitment to improvement and the raising of standards. The location of accommodation in one teaching block supports a more integrated approach to designing and making within the department. Considerable work by teachers and the

technician has improved the environment and displays are used well to enhance all areas and celebrate and support good work.

GEOGRAPHY

147. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:-

- Pupils' standards have been raised since the previous inspection.
- The quality of teaching has considerably improved.
- The behaviour and attitudes of pupils are much improved.
- The department's scheme of work, which is now in place, is very good.
- The contribution made to the pupils' literacy and numeracy development is good.

Areas for Improvement:-

- Teaching methods to ensure all pupils reach good standards, but especially high attaining pupils.
- The unsatisfactory quality of accommodation for the department.
- The range of teaching strategies in Years 7 to 9 to ensure pupils have opportunities for research, interpretation and investigation.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the subject.
- The number of pupils who study geography for GCSE.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in geography:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	Below average	Average
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Below average	Average
These standards are attained because:-		
Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Satisfactory	Good
The quality of teaching is:	Satisfactory	Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Satisfactory	Good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Good	Good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Satisfactory	Good
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Satisfactory	Good
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Very good	N/a.
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Other contributory factors:-		
The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:		Good
The leadership of the subject is:		Good
The management of the subject is:		Good
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:		Good

Commentary:-

148. In the 2002 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, attainment was below average.

Only small numbers of pupils opt for geography in Years 10 and 11 and statistical comparisons against national averages for GCSE must be viewed with caution. However, in 2002 seventeen pupils were entered and just under a half passed at A* to C. Although the percentage gaining an A* to G was below average, the proportion gaining a high A grade pass was above average. However, there were no higher A*

passes. There are no significant differences in performance at GCSE between boys and girls, but fewer girls opt to take the subject in Year 10.

149. The department's assessments indicate that attainment is below average on entry. In work seen, pupils' attainment is below average by the end of Year 9 and average by the end of Year 11. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 and achieve well in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs achieve in line with their peers. The small number of pupils in the school who speak English as an additional language are very well supported and make very good progress. Achievement for high attaining pupils is not as good as expected, especially in Years 7 to 9, because pupils have limited opportunities to develop the more advanced geographical skills of investigation and research. Teaching strategies are not sufficiently well developed to allow pupils to identify issues they want to answer and to set up investigations from which they can obtain answers, for example to explain how human and physical influences affect the environment. These are not only the more sophisticated geographical skills, but they are also those that add a great deal of interest for pupils. There are no significant differences in achievement between boys and girls. Standards have risen steadily since the previous report.
150. Geography makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy development. Pupils' work is regularly marked and corrected and they learn a good range of geographical vocabulary. Pupils write in a range of styles such as notes on fieldwork, note taking when watching videos and stories of what they think it would be like to be in a volcanic eruption. Pupils routinely use measurements and draw graphs and tables to present and interpret information. This makes a good contribution to numeracy development. There are difficulties of access to computers and, as a result, the department makes an unsatisfactory contribution to ICT development.
151. The difference in quality of teaching for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and in 10 and 11 is mainly due to the lack of a wider range of teaching strategies for the younger pupils. Where teaching is very good, lessons are carefully planned to provide a high level of challenge and to involve pupils actively in the lesson. This was clearly seen in a Year 9 lesson where pupils were learning to draw from memory the outline map and physical features of the U.S.A. This provided challenging work, which included practical tasks to make pupils think for themselves and work out solutions to problems. A high level of interest and involvement and strong learning resulted. In Years 10 and 11, teachers have good subject knowledge not only of the factual knowledge for examinations, but also of the techniques by which pupils can maximise their marks at GCSE. Good class control was a feature of all the teaching seen, and no time was lost controlling poor behaviour. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils behave well and show good attitudes to work. This is seen, for example, in the care they take over the quality of written work. Relationships in lessons are good. Behaviour and attitudes were often poor at the time of the previous inspection and this has shown a considerable improvement.
152. The leadership and management of the subject are good and have contributed to rising standards and substantial improvements in teaching and in pupils' attitudes. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are consistent procedures in place to track pupils' attainment and progress. The data provided are used well to set targets for pupils and to allow them to make progress. In Years 10 and 11, particularly, GCSE past questions are used effectively to enable pupils to know what level they are at, to set predicted grades and to give advice about how to improve their work. Monitoring and support of teaching have been good and there has been a strong emphasis on improving learning and teaching. The monitoring and support have been significant factors in raising the quality of

teaching and pupils' standards. The scheme of work has been revised extensively and now provides a progressive and consistent course for the pupils. The accommodation for geography remains unsatisfactory. Classrooms are too small to cater for larger groups and the curriculum is restricted because activities such as group work, with a lot of equipment and maps, are not possible.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:-

- The quality of teaching and learning, especially in Years 10 and 11, is good.
- The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 provides good learning opportunities.
- The new accommodation helps to create a positive learning environment.
- The good leadership of the acting head of department is effectively focussed on raising standards.

Areas for Improvement:-

- To raise standards in Year 11, by developing the quality of written work.
- To provide greater access for all pupils to information and communication technology (ICT) and to promote these skills more effectively in the subject.
- To identify gifted or talented pupils in history and make appropriate provision for them.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in history:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	Well below average	Well below average
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Average	Below average

These standards are attained because:-

Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Good	Satisfactory
The quality of teaching is:	Good	Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good	Good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Good	Good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Good	n/a
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Other contributory factors:-

The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:	Good
The leadership of the subject is:	Good
The management of the subject is:	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:	Good

Commentary:-

154. The 2002 teacher assessments in Year 9, placed pupils well below average in comparison with national averages. Girls did better than boys, though their work was still below average. This was a decline in standards compared with 2001. The GCSE examination results for 2002 were also well below average for grades A* to C but just above average for grades A* to G. These results represent a slight improvement in comparison with 2001, but pupils taking history GCSE in 2002 did not do as well as in their other subjects taken at the same time.

155. The current improvements in standards and pupils' achievement, as seen during the inspection, are because of consistently good teaching, improved assessment procedures and a greatly improved learning environment. There is a strong commitment to improve standards. Pupils respond well in their behaviour and attitudes and therefore make good progress in their work. The setting arrangements in Years 8 and 9 help to meet the needs of differing groups of pupils, for example, pupils with special educational needs do well. Gifted or talented pupils only make satisfactory progress because there are not yet sufficient school strategies to meet their needs fully.
156. Pupils complete their tasks conscientiously and are taught effectively. In Year 9, the more able pupils carry out independent research and make good use of the Internet in homework clubs. For example, pupils use original sources and make good use of their empathy skills to write soldiers' diaries. Other ability groups rely more upon teacher direction to produce well-structured written accounts on this theme. Pupils with special educational needs made good progress in identifying key words and phrases to help develop their written work. In Year 8, pupils use evidence effectively to analyse the causes of the English Civil War. In Year 7, they respond well to questioning to discover more about the Norman Conquest.
157. The consistently good teaching is firmly rooted in a secure knowledge base and well planned lessons. Where teaching is very good, enthusiasm and pace promote thinking and learning well. Written and pictorial resources are used effectively and provide good opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning. During the inspection, two temporary teachers contributed effectively to the work of the department.
158. In most lessons, teaching is good and at times better. In an outstanding lesson in Year 11, a vivid picture of women in society was described. This stimulated wide discussion and promoted investigation drawing upon a range of historical skills. This provided good evidence of the challenge, pace and commitment which is helping to raise standards. However, in Year 11, the written work of all but the more able pupils does not yet provide sufficient analysis of issues studied. There is insufficient use of precise language, and this is sometimes evident in discussion when pupils struggle to select the most appropriate subject vocabulary. On occasion, there is insufficient challenge of individual pupils to really think through the issues.
159. In Year 10, standards are improving and are average. The more able pupils produce detailed and evaluative work. Good discussion occurs and pupils contribute well, for example, when considering the plight of refugees. Standards are rising in Years 10 and 11 because the staff are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, actively engaging pupils in learning. All staff are reflective and open to feedback and, because of this, pupils make good gains in their learning over time.
160. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 provides good opportunities for all pupils to improve their historical knowledge and skills. It is enhanced by educational visits, for example, to Hadrian's Wall. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 follows a modern world syllabus and is currently being modified to include a course work element. Assessment procedures are good and all pupils' work is carefully monitored. This ensures all pupils receive good guidance to help them meet their targets for improvement.
161. The acting head of department provides good leadership and possesses sound management skills. She works extremely hard to ensure all pupils gain maximum benefit from the courses provided and is ably supported by all the department's teaching staff. There is a strong commitment to improving standards. The new accommodation

provides a very good learning environment and contains attractive displays of work. It helps promote a positive ethos and this contributes to raising standards. The subject makes a good contribution to all areas of pupils' personal development. It promotes literacy and numeracy effectively and provides good opportunities for all pupils to progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

162. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) as a specialist subject is **satisfactory**. However, provision for ICT across the other subjects of the curriculum is **unsatisfactory**.

<p>Strengths:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachers' good subject knowledge. • The curriculum time now allocated to pupils in Years 7 to 11. • There are good working relationships between pupils and teachers. • The teaching of a good range of software applications.
<p>Areas for Improvement:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standards attained by the pupils by Years 9 and 11. • The monitoring and assessment of standards in both specialist ICT lessons, and through other subjects of the curriculum. • The development of a consistent marking policy across the department. • The co-ordination of the teaching of ICT across the curriculum.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in ICT:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	Below average	Below average
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Below average	Average
These standards are attained because:-		
Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
The quality of teaching is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Good	Good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Insufficient evidence	N/a.
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Other contributory factors:-		
The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:		Good
The leadership of the subject is:		Satisfactory
The management of the subject is:		Unsatisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:		Satisfactory

Commentary:-

163. Standards in the 2002 teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 were below average. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining an A* to C pass was well below average. However, nearly twice the national average proportion of Year 11 pupils was entered for the subject. Although the percentage of pupils gaining higher A* to A grades was low, all those entered gained an A to F pass. This represents good

achievement for the lower attaining pupils and the percentage of those gaining grades D to F was well above average.

164. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with low levels of ICT skills overall. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average overall, but rising. This is because pupils are increasingly improving their ICT skills, knowledge, and understanding of the subject. For example, in Years 7 to 9, the pupils are now confidently using presentations to include graphics, sound and text, and spreadsheets to do calculations. They have a satisfactory understanding of control through work on inputs and outputs. They are developing their skills of finding things out and make satisfactory use of the Internet to research for information and to support assignments. All pupils have good practical skills, competently using the network systems, accessing software and using the menus and functions with ease. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and produce work of an appropriate standard for their capability. There is no significant variation in the work of boys and girls.
165. Most of the younger pupils make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 9 but the more able are not achieving the higher levels. This is because there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining and gifted or talented pupils. Furthermore, in the assignments set for all pupils, their progress is impeded because they are not given sufficient information about the levels for which they should be aiming. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work do not give sufficient information as to what the pupils should do to improve or reach higher levels. However, the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is having a positive effect on improving standards in Years 7 and 8. Nevertheless, as yet, insufficient account has been taken of pupils' low levels of attainment on entry to the school.
166. In Years 10 and 11, the work seen was average but the organisation of classes according to the pupils' ability has provided the opportunity for the more able pupils to work independently and undertake individual research. For example, a Year 10 group had designed their own spreadsheet based on the type of business they were researching and were confidently using formulas to calculate profit margins. These pupils were using a range of software confidently but their work on databases was limited due to the lack of business standard software. In a Year 11 lower ability group, pupils were accessing the Internet, satisfactorily applying the information found to a task and successfully evaluating their work.
167. Teaching and learning are satisfactory across the school, with some good teaching in Years 7 to 9. This is because the teachers have good subject knowledge and good working relationships with the pupils, who are keen to learn. Good use is made of questioning to establish the pupils' understanding and to relate ICT to the world of work. For example, such questioning supported well pupils in Year 7, who were finding things out, reviewing, modifying and evaluating their final piece of work. In Years 7 to 9, the pupils work satisfactorily on a range of topics such as developing a presentation for incoming pupils, producing booklets and undertaking work on control systems. In Year 10 and 11 GCSE coursework, related to a unit on company logos, pupils satisfactorily undertake research, identify problems, produce solutions, and successfully test and evaluate their final proposals. As a result, pupils talk confidently about the work they are undertaking and understand its context in society. Good written feedback is given to pupils in Years 10 and 11 on how to improve their coursework. However, in Years 7 to 9 marking is inconsistent and not always linked to national curriculum levels.
168. The leadership of the department is satisfactory and the head of department has been instrumental in bringing about the main changes and improvements since the previous inspection. However, elements of the management, and line management, of ICT are

unsatisfactory. This is because there has been insufficient monitoring of standards across the teaching groups. There is no consistent marking policy for the department and no co-ordination or monitoring of ICT standards being attained by pupils through their work in other subjects of the curriculum. In this, there has been insufficient progress. However, overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. This is because of the good improvement in the school's provision for specialist ICT lessons for all pupils, as required by the National Curriculum. Furthermore, the levels of hardware, software and technical support have improved. The implementation of the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 strategy, and the setting in Years 9 to 11, is beginning to have a positive impact on standards.

The National Key Stage 3 Strategy: Information and communication technology across the curriculum

169. ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory because departments such as mathematics, geography and religious education are not making their required contribution. However, other departments are using a wide range of software including word processing, desktop publishing, presentations and graphics. There is an increasing use of the Internet for research and modern foreign languages now has links with Spain. Very good use of ICT is made in design and technology, particularly for work in computer aided design and manufacture. In physical education, ICT is used to successfully monitor heart rates, and produce a range of graphs and support coursework. However, insufficient computer resources, and a lack of access to current facilities by the pupils, currently hamper further development in subjects across the school. The school's future plans for this subject are designed to ensure there will be sufficient facilities and resources to support departmental needs, as funding becomes available.

MODERN LANGUAGES

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

<p>Strengths:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The planning of lessons by teachers is well focused. • The extra-curricular activities offered by the department are of good quality. • The direction given by the head of department, in order to raise pupils' attainment, is clear. • The department's coherent programme of study and thorough systems of assessment.
<p>Areas for Improvement:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards in GCSE examinations. • The increased use of the target language by teachers in lessons. • The time allocation for learning a second language to improve pupils' attainment. • The provision of textbooks to support homework and pupils' independent learning.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in modern languages:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	Below average	Well below average
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Average	Below average
These standards are attained because:-		
Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
The quality of teaching is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Very good	N/a.
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Good	Good

Other contributory factors:-

The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:	Satisfactory
The leadership of the subject is:	Good
The management of the subject is:	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:	Satisfactory

Commentary:-

171. In 2002, teacher assessments show that, by the end of Year 9, the proportion of pupils reaching expected standards was below average. However, when compared with their level of attainment on entry in Year 7, pupils' achievement is sound. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C in both French and Spanish GCSE examinations was well below the national average, with a downward trend over the past two years. However, in French the percentage of pupils gaining an A* to G pass was very close to the national average. In Spanish, the A* to G pass rate was below average, but the proportion of Year 11 pupils entered for the examination was over five times the national average. Boys' performance in both French and Spanish was significantly worse than that of girls. Performance overall was significantly worse than in other subjects taken by the pupils at the same time. Staff shortages and absences affected last year's results, nevertheless standards are now improving.

172. Inspection evidence shows that by Year 9, higher attaining pupils in French and Spanish are producing work, which is in line with the national average. Improved standards are the result of focused lesson planning and increased time allocation in their first choice language. These higher ability pupils use past, present and future tenses satisfactorily and express opinions well. Pupils of middle and lower ability use tenses satisfactorily, but with a more restricted number of verbs. Time allocation for the learning of a second language has been reduced and this adversely affects attainment.

173. By the end of Year 11, pupils in upper groups are producing confident and detailed coursework. Many pupils in middle and lower groups meet foundation GCSE course requirements in lessons. However, under examination conditions, pupils learning both French and Spanish find it difficult to remember vocabulary and how to construct sentences, and this affects their examination success. Pupils of all abilities achieve better in the skills of reading and writing than in those of speaking and listening. Higher attaining pupils in Year 10, who have opted to study a language, are attaining significantly better than pupils have in previous years. They use a variety of complex structures and speak the language with confidence. Pupils starting a new language in Year 10, although at a disadvantage, are achieving well.

174. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, and leads to learning which matches individual pupils' capabilities. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, and those with English as a second language progress very well. Teaching is best when teachers share lesson objectives with pupils and teach grammatical structure as well as vocabulary. Well-paced lessons employing games and practical activities result in good learning as in a Year 8 French lesson, where timed tasks motivated pupils well in the writing of their responses, on whiteboards, to quick fire questions. Learning is slow when teachers use English, or give pupils inappropriate exercises, such as copying

vocabulary. Homework supports learning well where teachers' marking is detailed. The range of independent tasks set is limited however, due to a shortage of textbooks. The department provides good opportunities for pupils to use ICT. Questioning is good as it involves all pupils, although teachers do not always challenge them sufficiently to extend their use of language.

175. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory. Boys and girls respond equally well when the foreign language is used throughout lessons and when they are involved in pair work or competitions. However, boys especially lack concentration when the teaching does not challenge or involve them actively. The subject supports the pupils' personal development satisfactorily. Good extra-curricular provision of study visits, revision classes, and clubs for ICT, and gifted or talented pupils, support learning well. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

176. The leadership and management of the department are good, as the head of department has responded well to the need to provide clear direction to raise attainment. All team members work productively together sharing ideas and expertise. The development plan identifies clear goals and is having a positive impact on raising achievement, particularly in Years 7 to 9. New schemes of work provide a coherent programme of study, underpinned by a thorough system of assessment securely linked to National Curriculum levels.

MUSIC

177. Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

Strengths:-

- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- The use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress is outstanding.
- The provision of learning opportunities outside of lessons is very good.
- The variety of effective teaching strategies used within well-planned and structured lessons.

Areas for Improvement:-

- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- The use of information and communication technology to support learning in Years 7 to 9.
- The provision of musical instruments from non-Western cultures.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in music:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	Below average	Below average
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Below average	Above average
These standards are attained, from the very low attainment at the start of Year 7, because:		
Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Satisfactory	Good
The quality of teaching is:	Good	Very Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good	Very Good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Good	Very Good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Good	Very Good
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Very Good	N/a
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Good	Good

Other contributory factors:-

The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:	Very Good
The leadership of the subject is:	Good
The management of the subject is:	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:	Very Good

Commentary:-

178. Standards at the start of Year 7 are very low. By the end of Year 9, pupils have made satisfactory progress but standards are still below average. In lessons seen, progress was good because of recent improvements in the quality of teaching. Pupils undertaking the GCSE course attain standards similar to their other subjects. The proportions of pupils achieving grades A* to C and A* to G in 2002 were below the national average. Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils taking GCSE has risen substantially and is now above the national average. In the lessons seen, pupils were making very good progress.
179. In Year 7, pupils can find notes on the keyboard but few use correct hand positions. They compose in groups but have difficulty playing together. By the end of Year 9, they compose and perform together satisfactorily using simple techniques. Pupils learning to play instruments do so imaginatively within group activities. This contributes well to their creative development.
180. Pupils in Year 10 compose using computers and quickly learn how to use the equipment, helped by a visiting tutor. They layer parts, manipulate chords, and are beginning to develop their ideas well. Year 11 pupils create purposeful compositions and have a good grasp of musical concepts, particularly when listening to music and performances.
181. The overall quality of teaching is very good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. However, the improvements in teaching are too recent to have had any impact on standards and teacher assessments at the end of Year 9. A significant minority of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is less good and this affects the progress some classes make. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is consistently very good. Teachers have a very good understanding of pupils' individual needs. For example, teachers make suitable adaptations to tasks, often using supporting information sheets well. Therefore, pupils of all abilities make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are willing to discuss each other's work, but in some lessons, are not given sufficient opportunity to do so.
182. Progress is very good where lessons are well paced, and there are a variety of activities to help pupils to learn. Short, challenging tasks engage pupils in music making from the outset. These tasks support what is going to be done later in the lesson. Individual pupils are often encouraged to demonstrate to the class. This provides a platform for pupils of all abilities to build self-confidence, and shows others what is expected. When working in pairs on clearly explained focussed tasks, pupils collaborate very well. However, progress is slower when a long time is spent on one task, or pupils are unclear about what they have to do.
183. Standards of pupils taking instrumental tuition have improved since the previous inspection. The instruments available engage both boys and girls. The take up of instruments is very good, and the department gives very good support to instrumental tutors. Vocal tuition is provided for pupils taking GCSE who do not play an instrument.
184. Pupils have access to the music block for practice outside lesson times. Responsible monitors ensure that it is used well. However, restricted space for group activity in

lessons means that pupils have difficulty hearing their work. The second classroom is sparsely equipped and time is wasted fetching resources. The practice rooms are a good size. Computers are very well used to support composing in Years 10 and 11 but are underused in Years 7 to 9. There are no instruments from non-western cultures, and this is an area for improvement.

185. The department is well lead and managed. Whilst improvement since the previous inspection has been very good overall, some excellent progress has been made in the development of assessment procedures. Teachers keep informative records of the progress of all pupils. There is a very good strategy for pupils' self-assessment, but it is not always used. There are many extra curricular activities on offer. Some instrumental tutors use their specialist skills to lead small ensembles. Opportunities provided for performance in class, in extra curricular groups and by singing in assembly, make a very good contribution to the personal development of pupils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

186. Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

Strengths:-

- The quality of teaching in the department is very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.
- The teaching of the GCSE course is very effective.
- The monitoring and marking of pupils' GCSE written coursework is extensive, and often excellent.

Areas for Improvement:-

- The department lacks a permanent base in which to teach the GCSE course.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in physical education:-	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	Good	Good
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Good	Very good

These standards are attained because:-

Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Good	Good
The quality of teaching is:	Very good	Very Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good	Very good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Very good	Very good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Very good	N/a.
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Very good	Very good

Other contributory factors:-

The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:	Very good
The leadership of the subject is:	Very good
The management of the subject is:	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:	Good

Commentary:-

187. Teacher assessments for pupils by the end of Year 9 in 2002 were average. However, whilst those for boys were just above average, those for girls were just below. GCSE results for 2002 were above the national average for A* to C passes, and this continues an improving trend in this examination. All pupils entered gained a grade A to F pass. Whilst no pupil achieved an A*, the percentage of those gaining an A grade was in line with the national average. Overall, pupils taking physical education GCSE achieved significantly higher than in their other subjects.
188. Boys and girls present very good coursework files and standards of homework. The teachers monitor pupils' work closely. This helps to ensure a sound level of pupils' personal organisation, so they can revise easily for their examinations. Written work is thoroughly, and often excellently, marked and extensive written comments are added to help ensure improvement. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is strongly encouraged and many pupils have a range of ICT skills, which they use very effectively. Use of the Internet gives opportunities for initiative and research. Pupils have sound knowledge in theoretical aspects of the subject. For example, in one theory lesson, boys and girls showed very good understanding of the circulatory system. In terms of what can be expected of them, standards of performance in practical activities are good. In Year 10, girls produce excellent work in gymnastics. They perform advanced movements including somersaults, vaults and floor movements such as back flips and walkovers, many with very good control, style and tension. Pupils perform well in athletics and most boys have a good range of bowling and batting skills in cricket.
189. By the end of Year 9, standards of performance in practical activities are good. Year 7 boys and girls work very well together in dance to produce newly choreographed routines. They also gain understanding about the cultural background to their work because the teacher makes this a priority. Pupils from Year 7, boys and girls, progress well in athletics. Good improvements in baton changing and triple jumping were seen in lessons. Year 9 boys play badminton effectively, producing a range of basic strokes, quickly developing new techniques and applying them in competitive games. This was clearly exemplified in the execution of dropped shots. Year 9 girls do similarly well in rounders, most having good striking, catching and fielding skills. In all years, boys and girls with special educational needs are very well integrated into lessons, and this allows them to progress in line with other pupils in their classes. Similarly, pupils with English as an additional language are enabled to make very good progress.
190. The quality of teaching is very good because the department has clear policies on methodology to which all teachers adhere. Lesson planning is very good, and, in some cases, it is exemplary. Clear explanation of learning objectives at the beginnings of lessons is standard practice and pupils clearly appreciate this. Styles of teaching are changed to meet varying objectives in different phases of lessons. This allows pupils to have some responsibility for planning and evaluating their performances and those of others. In this way, their understanding of activities is greatly enhanced and very good learning is ensured. The department has a clear policy for pupils who are gifted and talented in the subject and carefully selected learning targets are negotiated, set and reviewed for these pupils. The department places emphasis on the personal development of all pupils through their experiences in physical education.
191. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good in all years. Very few miss taking part without valid reason. Boys and girls concentrate well and sustain their efforts throughout lessons, and collaborate and co-operate well together. Most lessons are permeated by an atmosphere of purpose and enjoyment. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good and there is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to improve their standards and to participate in competitive sport. A number of boys and girls have

succeeded well at district and county levels. Others have joined local and professional clubs.

192. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Teachers in the department work very well as a team. Policies are clear and appropriate. They are regularly updated as the result of a programme of regular meetings and reviews. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and comprehensive. All staff use ICT very well for administrative and teaching purposes. The department takes particular care to ensure that all essential information reaches pupils. There are many excellent displays throughout the department, which both inform pupils and celebrate their achievements. Proper attention is paid to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy development. Although improvement since the previous inspection has been good, there is still no designated classroom for the teaching of the GCSE course and this remains an area for improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

193. Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **good**.

Strengths:-

- Teaching is good, with some very good and excellent features, which enables pupils to achieve well.
- The very good management of pupils contributes very well to a good climate for learning.
- The very good leadership and management of the subject provide a clear vision and direction.
- The very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils provides very good opportunities for their personal development.
- The good monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work is effectively raising standards.

Areas for Improvement:-

- The provision of suitable material for pupils with special educational needs in order for them to make further progress.
- The development of the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Standards in religious education	By Year 9	By Year 11
In national tests, teacher assessments & examinations in 2002 were:	N/a	N/a
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Average	Average

These standards are attained because:-

Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Good	Good
The quality of teaching is:	Good	Very good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good	Very good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Very good	Very good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is:	Good	Good
Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is:	Good	N/a.
Progress made by pupils who are gifted or talented in the subject is:	Good	Good

Other contributory factors:-

The contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is:	Very good
The leadership of the subject is:	Very good
The management of the subject is:	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection has been:	Good

Commentary:-

194. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average in relation to the Wakefield locally agreed syllabus. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are now studying the GCSE short course in religious education. As the current Year 11 are the first group to take this course, there are no 2002 results. However, by Year 11 standards are average for the GCSE short course and in the current Year 10 they are above average. There are no significant differences in the standards attained by pupils of different gender or ethnic backgrounds. Pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as other pupils owing to the teachers' attention to their individual needs. However, the provision of more appropriate tasks for these pupils is currently under-developed. Pupils with English as an additional language and those who are gifted or talented also make good progress.
195. In Years 7 to 9, there are many examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. In Year 7, pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of Jewish sacred writings and compare them with the Christian Bible. As a result of a well-prepared task, pupils show a clear understanding of how the synagogue reflects the key beliefs of Judaism. In Year 8, pupils develop a good understanding of why religious people view the environment as sacred. They understand the difference between religious and moral issues. In Year 9, pupils understand and empathise with the need to apply Islamic principles in relation to temptation, selfishness and greed in their own lives. This was as a result of a well planned and taught lesson on the views of Muslims concerning wealth and poverty. Consequently, pupils make useful links with their everyday experiences.
196. In Year 10, pupils showed a clear understanding of the difference between religious and moral issues through a very good lesson on religion and the media. The excellent knowledge of the teacher enabled pupils to make very good links between Christian principles and their own experiences. Consequently, pupils are able to make clear judgements and develop very good attitudes towards their studies. In Year 11, as the result of a very good revision lesson where the teacher used brainstorms, video clips and a well structured worksheet, pupils understood well the importance of producing well-balanced arguments. Their skills of analysis, investigation and interpretation are developing well.
197. Overall, pupils behave very well because they are well motivated and apply themselves to their work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The working relationship between teachers and pupils is very good, and sometimes excellent. This is because teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Pupils' very good behaviour makes a significant contribution to their achievement and progress. Teachers manage pupil behaviour very well, contributing to a very good climate for learning. Teachers have very clear expectations of the pupils, and challenge them to succeed. These demands are effective in raising pupils' achievement.
198. Teaching often has some very good, and occasionally excellent, features which also have a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Planning is very good, and this assists pupils to focus on information learnt in previous lessons. Lesson objectives are well shared with pupils in all cases. Teachers make good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. Teachers use a suitable range of styles, which enables pupils to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion. This assists pupils to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Resources are well used, especially video and worksheets. These enable pupils with different needs to learn well. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work are very useful aids to improve speaking and

listening skills. Extension work and homework are used to good effect in allowing pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Assessment of pupils' work is good and helpful comments are made in exercise books. The procedures provide a good basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. The department set clear targets for the pupils. Pupils are provided with helpful information, which allows them to know where they are and what they need to do to improve. However, the provision for the department's contribution to the pupils' ICT education is under-developed.

199. Religious Education makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, providing opportunities for pupils to explore issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. In lessons, the teaching encourages pupils to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues. Work on the major world religions necessitates discussion about the cultures which support them. Such discussions help to prepare pupils very well for life in a multi-faith and multicultural society.

200. The department is managed very well with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The leadership of the head of department ensures that pupils make good progress. Pupils are provided with a rich diet of religious education in all years. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and deep commitment to the pupils. There is excellent support from other departmental staff. The monitoring of the work of the department through observing teachers and regular examination of pupils' work is well established. The quality of display, which celebrates pupils' achievement, is very good. Since the previous inspection, statutory requirements have been met. Standards, contributions to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, assessment procedures and the use of assessment have all improved.

VOCATIONAL AND OTHER COURSES OFFERED BY THE SCHOOL

201. In addition to the main subjects of the National Curriculum, the school and its governing body are currently seeking to develop the range of vocational and other examination courses it offers for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The expansion of such courses is part of the school's planning for improvement. Currently, hairdressing is offered as a vocational course, but this is taught off-site at a time when inspectors were not at the school, and therefore this was not the subject of inspection. However, although not the focus of an inspection, the school's courses in business education and sociology were sampled.

Strengths:-

- The quality of teaching and learning in business education and sociology are good.
- The level of challenge offered to pupils promotes learning and pupils' interest in the subjects.
- The school's approach to examination entry gives pupils good opportunities to achieve well in examinations in relation to their abilities.
- The working relationships between teachers and pupils, which promote learning and the personal development of the pupils, are good.

Areas for Improvement:-

- The encouragement of pupils to check their work more thoroughly before the presentation of final work, in order to improve further standards and achievement.

(a) BUSINESS EDUCATION

202. Overall, the quality of provision in business education is **good**.

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Business education	By Year 11
Standards in national GCSE examinations in 2002 were:	Below average
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Average
These standards are attained because:-	
Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Satisfactory
The quality of teaching is:	Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Good

Commentary:-

203. In 2002, 25 per cent of the pupils in Year 11 were entered for the GCSE examination. This is significantly higher than the national average of 15 per cent. Whilst the proportion gaining A* to C passes was below average, the numbers gaining an A* to G grade were above the national average. This represents good achievement for many of the lower attaining pupils. On average, pupils taking business studies gained a quarter of a grade higher in the subject than in others taken at the same time. Although no pupils gained the highest A*, boys did particularly well with the percentage gaining a high A grade being close to the national average. Overall, a higher than average percentage of boys and girls gained passes at grades C to F.

204. Inspectors sampled two lessons in GCSE business education courses, one each in Years 10 and 11. In Year 10, the pupils' business communication skills were being developed soundly through work involving the writing of business letters. Pupils showed good interest in the task and made sound practical use of ICT through desktop publishing, word processing and the use of clip-art. There was good use of technical language by the teacher to support not only subject development but also pupils' key literacy skills. The Year 11 lesson involved practice for a computer-based examination. Good learning and revision work was enabled because of the consistent monitoring and support provided by the teacher whilst the pupils undertook the test paper. The teacher showed good awareness of individual pupils' strengths and showed fine judgement when intervening in their work, by posing questions or suggestions designed to help them make progress. The pupils consequently showed good levels of self-motivation and involvement, leading to sound achievement and a good pace to the lesson. All pupils showed a secure knowledge of the spreadsheet and word processing programs being used, and applied this knowledge to good, practical effect. However, there was a weakness in that some pupils were not always reading through their work thoroughly enough, on-screen, to check for errors before printing. Pupils know their potential grades and, because of the teacher's strategies and approach to assessment, that which they need to do to improve.

(b) SOCIOLOGY

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

Summary of the key inspection judgements:-

Sociology	By Year 11
Standards in national GCSE examinations in 2002 were:	No entries
Standards in pupils' work and lessons seen by inspectors are:	Average
These standards are attained because:-	
Pupils' achievement in relation to what can be expected of them is:	Good
The quality of teaching is:	Good
The quality of pupils' learning is:	Good
Pupils' attitudes to their work are:	Good
The progress pupils make as they move through the school is:	Good

Commentary:-

206. There were no GCSE entries for sociology in 2002. During the inspection, two lessons in the subject were sampled, one each in Years 10 and 11. The Year 10 lesson, on the concepts of social control and deviance, was very good. This was because the teacher's approach to questioning the pupils constantly challenged them and caused them to think through the problems posed for themselves. As a result, very good learning took place through which the pupils came to a good understanding of 'moral panics' and the ways in which society views crime. Pupils were able to suggest some excellent examples of their own, particularly related to the way in which the media views the effects of alcoholism, animal cruelty, racism and vandalism. The thoughtful approaches and reasoning of the pupils was very good for the development of their independent thinking. The teacher's approach to the lesson was often excellent, maintaining a fast, but well judged, pace whilst always checking the pupils' understanding. Pupils of all abilities in the class were therefore well challenged, and the aims of the lesson very well met. The re-phrasing of questions, and the use of examples, succeeded in meeting very well the needs of all pupils in the group. Consequently, there were very good levels of mutual respect and trust between teacher and pupils, which contributed significantly to the pupils' personal development.

207. In the Year 11 lesson, there was good learning and achievement because, once again, the teacher's strategies were well focused on the pupils both collectively and individually. Where specific support was required, such as with a special educational needs pupil with literacy difficulties, this was given well. The teaching encouraged pupils to become increasingly involved in the lesson and in the exploration of the sociological concepts being considered. There was good emphasis on the use of key words and terms, such as 'Marxism', 'functionalism' and 'feminism' when exploring different sociological views of society. Pupils showed a sound understanding of 'socialisation' as the process of learning how to behave, and the majority of pupils were able to give straightforward examples of this from their own experience. That they were prepared to do so reflected not only the quality of teaching but also its impact in promoting the personal development of the pupils. As the lesson progressed, the pupils became increasingly involved in the sharing and interchange of ideas. There were good levels of respect and the toleration of alternative points of view. The pupils were obviously enjoying their learning, and this was summed up by the comment of one pupil on leaving the classroom at the end of the lesson "*This has been really helpful, sir*".