

INSPECTION REPORT

ASH GREEN SCHOOL

Coventry

LEA Area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125765

Headteacher: Janet Jenkins

Lead inspector: Robin Coulthard

Dates of inspection: 13th – 16th October 2003

Inspection number: 258552

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: Foundation
Age range of pupils: 11-16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll; 832

School address: Ash Green Lane
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Coventry
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Telephone number: 0124 7636 6772
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr Mike Harkin

Date of previous inspection: 27th April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ash Green School is an 11-16 foundation comprehensive school on the borders of Coventry and Warwickshire. About a third of the pupils live in Coventry. Ash Green is smaller than most secondary schools. The attainment of pupils coming into Year 7 is well below average and they have low literacy skills. Many come from areas which are economically disadvantaged, and where there is higher than average social deprivation. The number of pupils choosing to go into further education on leaving school is low, but it is increasing. Few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. A small number come from families where English is not the home language. A well-above-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs. These needs are mostly in connection with specific learning difficulties, speech and communication, and social, emotional and behavioural problems. The proportion with statements of special educational need is well above average. In recent years the school has had significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers. It is a school classified as being in challenging circumstances.

The school has received the following awards: Basic Skills Quality Mark, Sportsmark, and Investor in People. It is designated an International School.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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11746	Robin Coulthard	Lead inspector	Religious education Music
9053	Viv Phillips	Lay inspector	
32278	David Roberts	Team inspector	English
17808	Sue Orpin	Team inspector	Mathematics
18065	Susan Dutson	Team inspector	Science
22423	Jon Lovgreen	Team inspector	Vocational education English as an additional language Citizenship
8076	Terry Bendall	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology
33002	John Woodhouse	Team inspector	History
1994	Helen Olds	Team inspector	Geography
8159	Kevin Wright	Team inspector	Art
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Ash Green School provides a satisfactory standard of education, but has some significant weaknesses. Results at the end of Year 9 have improved. GCSE results are well below national average, but comparable with those gained in similar schools. Teaching is satisfactory but inconsistent in terms of expectations of work and behaviour. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory, and limit achievement. Under the good leadership of the new headteacher improvement has begun. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Leadership has given a clear focus to raising standards of work and behaviour.
- Results in the national end of Year 9 tests have improved significantly.
- Pupils are achieving well in English, art, geography, history and information and communication technology (ICT).
- There are good links with the community.
- A good range of enrichment activities is provided.
- GCSE results are too low.
- Teaching is too inconsistent, and there is not enough that is very good or excellent.
- Standards of assessment vary too much.
- Some teachers do not manage pupils' inattention and misbehaviour well enough.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory.

There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in 1998. Decline has been arrested, and clear strategies are being used to tackle issues of inconsistent teaching and pupils' misbehaviour. Improved end of Year 9 test results, and good teaching and achievement in several subjects indicate where action has been effective. Too many pupils' attitudes to learning, and sometimes to others, are still unsatisfactory. Attendance has improved and is close to the national average.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		Year 2002	Year 2001	Year 2000	Year 2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	E	E	E	C

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average

Similar schools are those whose pupils achieved similar results at the end of Year 9.

In Years 7 to 9, pupils reach well below average standards which, however, improved in 2003 in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory**. By the end of Year 11, standards are well below average, but comparable to similar schools. Achievement is **satisfactory**. Stimulating teaching in English, art, geography, history, and ICT is leading to good achievement. In business studies poor leadership and staffing issues are resulting in underachievement.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory. Most pupils accept instruction and want to work, but a significant few are reluctant to work hard, and sometimes misbehave. Attendance is now satisfactory but punctuality requires further improvement. The personal development of pupils is **unsatisfactory**, as are spiritual, moral and social development. Most pupils understand right and wrong, but some refuse to accept responsibility for their actions. The school gives too little attention to spiritual and cultural awareness.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but assessment is unsatisfactory because it is not well used. The effectiveness of good features such as teachers' planning and their subject knowledge is lessened by the difficult behaviour of some pupils. Teachers are too variable in how well they handle this. The curriculum is satisfactory, with good enrichment activities. Some older pupils do not get the full ICT experience to which they are entitled. A developing alternative curriculum for disaffected pupils in Years 10 and 11 succeeds in motivating them. Resources and accommodation are unsatisfactory. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and are increasingly concerned with raising standards. The school's work with parents and other schools is satisfactory. Community links are good, and many pupils benefit from the contribution made by visitors and friends of the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Leadership is good. In a short time, and with the help of senior managers, the headteacher has led an honest appraisal of the school. There is now a very clear vision of what needs to be done. Despite recruitment difficulties, all departments bar one have at least satisfactory leadership. The leadership provided by year heads is good. The management of the school is satisfactory but is too reliant on the presence and energy of the senior management team. The school runs smoothly but staff do not consistently apply systems for managing pupils' behaviour. The effectiveness of the governing body is improving. They support the school well and are now more aware of how to ask searching questions. However, governance is unsatisfactory since not all legal requirements are fully met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are pleased with the school and the direction the school is taking under the new headteacher. They appreciate the quality of teaching, the fact that teachers expect pupils to do their best, and the good arrangements for helping pupils settle into school. Pupils are happy to be at school and feel that they are well taught. They, too, comment positively about recent improvements. They are concerned about poor behaviour and bullying. A high proportion would not find it easy to share problems with an adult in school. They regret the frequency with which teachers move on. Inspectors share the concerns of parents and pupils.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Raise standards at GCSE particularly in mathematics, modern languages and design and technology.
- Ensure that teachers consistently expect good behaviour and effort from pupils.
- Increase the proportion of lessons which grab pupils' attention and interest them.
- Apply assessment procedures more effectively so that pupils know what they have to do to improve their work.
- Improve provision for pupils' personal and social development.
- Further improve attendance, especially amongst older pupils.

and, to meet statutory requirements

- Provide all pupils in Years 10 and 11 with an appropriate experience of ICT.
- Improve arrangements for pupils to have a daily act of worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Pupils' achievements are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The 2003 results in Year 9 tests show a significant improvement.
- In 2002, GCSE results were in line with those achieved in similar schools.
- There has been good improvement in GCSE results in art, geography and history.
- Previous end of Year 9 test results show that pupils have not achieved as well as they should have.
- GCSE results remain too low.
- GCSE results in mathematics, modern foreign languages and design and technology have been low compared to the national average.

Commentary

Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9)

1. Pupils join the school with standards which are well below average compared with schools nationally, partly because of weak literacy and learning skills. Very few pupils are high-attainers, and the proportion of lower-attaining pupils is greater than in most schools. There has been a big increase in the number of pupils with special educational needs and the proportion is well above the national average. For most pupils achievement is now satisfactory, and end-of-Year 9 results for 2003 have improved previous years. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve at a similar level to other pupils.
2. Results in the end of Year 9 tests have risen at a similar rate to the national trend, but the gap between school and national results widened in 2002. In 2002 they were well below national average and well below those achieved in similar schools. Results in science have traditionally been the best, but results across all three core subjects showed that pupils had not achieved as well as they should have done. This was especially true of girls. There was significant improvement in 2003 within all three subjects. In terms of pupils reaching the nationally expected level, English improved most, followed by science, then mathematics.
3. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are variable, but represent satisfactory achievement. Considering their capability, pupils are still not achieving well enough in mathematics or religious education. Work seen was at the level expected nationally in English. This is because of consistently good teaching, which clearly sets out learning objectives. Teachers use a good balance of whole-class and individual work, with the expectation that pupils can and should concentrate equally in both situations. Standards were well below average in mathematics, modern languages, citizenship, and religious education. This is because work set and methods used are not always appropriate to pupils' needs and interests. In all other subjects standards are below average.

Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)

4. GCSE results are well below average and similar to those at the time of the last inspection. The average points score per pupil has remained static, in contrast to the rising trend nationally. Standards are too low. In 2002 the percentage of pupils gaining five A* to C grades fell dramatically. In the past few years the proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE A* to G grades has increased, and is now above that in similar schools. Statistics suggest that there has been good value added, and therefore good achievement, on GCSE courses. This is, however, misleading because the same pupils have traditionally underachieved in Years 7 to 9. In 2002 (the latest year for which national comparisons are available) pupils achieved their best results in art, science and food technology. Relatively weaker results were in French, German and mathematics. On the whole boys did better than girls. With the exceptions of French and German, the percentage of pupils gaining a GCSE pass grade matched the national picture. The 2003 GCSE results showed a very similar

pattern throughout. Exceptions were declines in English, physical education (PE) and home economics. In contrast results in geography, history and art improved.

5. Standards of work seen during the inspection were below average. They were average in art, geography, and ICT. Following criticism in the last report the school has worked hard and successfully to improve standards in the latter. In all other subjects standards seen were below average apart from business studies, modern languages, music and design and technology where they were well below. Standards in these subjects are a concern. With staffing changes, improved teaching, and support from senior managers there have been improvements in English, mathematics and science. Inadequate time for the short course in religious education results in pupils underachieving.

Literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology

6. Literacy standards are poor when pupils join the school in Year 7, but improve to below average by Year 11. Many pupils produce neat written work but few have good technical accuracy. Reading is satisfactory and some subjects make good use of this for research. Speaking and listening skills are under-used and under-developed. In many lessons the teaching style does not encourage debate, partly because many pupils have poor listening and concentration skills in formal class discussion. Numeracy skills are poor. Subjects such as science, geography, and leisure and tourism help pupils to apply their numeracy skills, but other subjects, including history, show little awareness of the need to do this. ICT is being effectively used to improve standards. This was seen on vocational courses and in standards of presentation, especially by pupils with special educational needs, when there was access to computers.

Special educational needs

7. The school has a well-above-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs. These needs are mostly in connection with specific learning difficulties, speech and communication, and social, emotional and behavioural problems. They achieve as well as other pupils. This is because of the support they receive in lessons and focused support in small groups in the support area. In some subjects, such as mathematics, there is insufficient support and pupils do not do as well.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.9 (29.7)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	30.6 (31.3)	34.7 (34.4)
science	30.6 (31.1)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 155 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2001

Key Stage 4

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	24 (34)	50 (48)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (84)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (93)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	27.1(n/a)	34.1(n/a)

There were 162 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for 2001.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Overall, pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour in lessons and around the school are **unsatisfactory**. This affects the standards pupils' achieve. Attendance is now close to average, but punctuality remains an area for improvement. Pupils' personal and social skills, particularly how to listen carefully to others and show consideration for others' rights to learn, are unsatisfactory. Their personal development as a whole, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils attend regularly, try hard, behave well and show the maturity expected at their age.
- Attendance has improved significantly over the last year.
- Some pupils are not keen to do their best and take pride in their work. Their standards suffer as a result.
- A few pupils still behave badly in lessons and around school so that others' chances to learn and to make the most of school are restricted.
- Short, fixed-term exclusions are not solving the problem of behaviour for some pupils.
- It takes too long for some pupils to develop secure skills of listening and showing consideration for others.
- The school does not foster the development of personal qualities in a systematic, well-planned way.

Commentary

8. Throughout the school, pupils' levels of commitment and pride in their work are very uneven, partly because teachers' expectations are inconsistent. This affects the standards which pupils reach. In better lessons where their interest is captured with sparkling introductions, pupils are keen to do their best, as in Year 11 mathematics, where lively questions strongly motivated them to solve linear equations. In some lessons, however, some pupils make little effort, waste time and produce shoddy work, sometimes as a result of teachers being too quick to praise them for a simple answer. Some pupils said that they are happy to come to school "to be with their mates", not because they want to learn and build good prospects for the future.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.6	School data :	1.3
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

9. The school recognises that it faces the challenge of tackling resistance to learning, lateness and immature or anti-social behaviour. It has strengthened procedures to deal with poor conduct and attendance. As a result current attendance rates are a considerable improvement on those for the last full year. It is too soon to tell whether these procedures will secure lasting improvement. Not all parents support the school's efforts to ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually. Absence and exclusion rates fell in the year before the inspection but the attendance and behaviour of a few pupils are still unacceptable and have a detrimental affect on standards.

10. The school is very committed to inclusion and works strenuously, and for the most part successfully, with small groups of pupils at risk of exclusion to raise their self-esteem, basic literacy skills and standards of behaviour. Pupils generally respond quite well to this close attention. The school is reducing the number of exclusions. This is an improving situation, but, where necessary, pupils are excluded in order to set clear boundaries for others, and assure the school's duty of care to all its pupils. Most pupils respond satisfactorily to the rigorous and conspicuous efforts, particularly of senior staff, to maintain good order and thoughtful attitudes amongst pupils. However, a few individuals behave with no regard for the rights and welfare of others. Occasionally, this still involves

bullying. Sometimes, pupils who miss too much school and cannot keep up with the work disrupt lessons to avoid 'being found out', which detracts from the progress of others.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	799	96	2
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	1	1
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	16	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

11. Many pupils come into Year 7 with very immature personal and social skills. A few find it very hard to listen to instructions and other people's views, show great reluctance to get on with their work and little concern for how their behaviour affects others. As a result, their poor approach to work affects the whole class, in spite of good efforts by teachers to deliver effective lessons. The school has been slow to devise ways to secure rapid improvement in study skills, behaviour and awareness of others' rights to learn. Its provision for personal and social education and for citizenship has too low a priority. Pupils' personal qualities are not developed systematically. Social skills and moral themes have less prominence than expected in a school where behaviour is an issue, except in physical education lessons where co-operation and teamwork are taken very seriously. Pupils welcome but do not fully understand the new roles of school councillors and prefects. They are unsure how to make the most of opportunities to take on responsibility and to have a voice in school life. The school does too little to foster spiritual awareness and understanding of cultural diversity because in subjects other than art and music, these issues are overlooked.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly, being aware of the value of using various timed activities and appropriate resources. Pupils who are inattentive or misbehave are not always well managed. Homework is not well used to increase pupils' understanding or independence. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Despite some limitations resources are adequate, but the school's accommodation is unsatisfactory and does have a negative impact on learning.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 107 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2%)	11 (10%)	43 (40%)	43 (40%)	8 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in all subject areas.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge which helps pupils to learn and understand ideas.
- Lessons are well planned, with clear learning aims and the use of a good range of methods.
- In many lessons tightly timed tasks and appropriate use of resources result in pupils being motivated.
- The proportion of very good or better teaching is much less than that found nationally.
- Styles of classroom management are too varied, and some teachers have limited skills in interesting pupils, or managing inattention and misbehaviour.
- Teachers do not give enough thought to what tasks will be best as homework, so that pupils are poor at recording and completing such tasks.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory. Marking quality is very variable and teachers do not use it sufficiently to point out gaps in understanding.

Commentary

12. Teaching in every subject is at least satisfactory. In English, art, history, geography, and ICT it is good. Learning is satisfactory but is limited in personal, social and health education, citizenship and business studies by teachers' lack of certainty about appropriate course content. Whilst the majority of lessons are well thought out and organised, the proportion of very good or excellent lessons is very low. This is because many teachers are cautious about pupils' potential misbehaviour and play safe. Too few lessons are imaginative or exciting. Most teachers concentrate on trying to sustain calm and order in lessons, avoiding the more open and active types of approach. At its worst this can lead to mundane lessons where classroom atmosphere is seen as more important than the quality of learning.

13. In the best lessons teachers see managing potentially difficult pupils as a challenge to prepare for and rise to, rather than as an excuse for mediocre teaching or sending pupils out of lessons. In a Year 10 art lesson pupils created relief designs using clay. The teacher's quiet, businesslike approach was the basis for a lesson with many very good features. The teacher demonstrated the required practical skills, used brisk questioning to assess pupils' vocabulary, knowledge and understanding, and gave them guided freedom to tackle the task. The majority of pupils, in a class of wide-ranging ability, were engrossed. In a disappointing number of lessons teachers allow too much inattention, chatter and misbehaviour, or show very limited skills in correcting these. A minority of teachers show their frustration too easily, shout too often with too little effect, and make little use of agreed classroom management systems. Some pupils are quick to question or exploit such inconsistency and the energies of both teacher and pupils are diverted from learning.

14. Teachers have good subject knowledge, seen in their clear explanation of lesson aims and their ability to draw in links between the task in hand and other subjects or previous lessons. Pupils

learn key words and phrases which help them to show their knowledge and understanding and share it with others. For example, pupils in a Year 11 geography lesson learnt to analyse and discuss features of Coventry's central business district because the teacher modelled vocabulary and how it should be used, and expected its use both in group work and class discussion. He also made very good use of his own and pupils' received knowledge of how war damage had been a key factor in determining changes in the city centre. Given the hour-long lesson time, most lessons progress with a sense of pace and purpose, not least because teachers vary activities and make good use of appropriate resources. Such an approach naturally improves pupils' motivation. In a Year 10 English lesson, pupils were able to assess different ways of structuring narratives. Relevant word-sorts were used to grab their attention at the lesson start, this activity being followed by brisk use of pair, group and class discussion referring to well-prepared overhead projector transparencies, and extract sheets.

15. Lesson planning is good and there are clearly expressed aims for most lessons which are shared with pupils. In some instances insufficient thought is given as to how these aims are going to be fulfilled, so the teacher's thinking becomes generalised and hopeful rather than precise and practical. In a GCSE music lesson, the teacher gave clear explanations of terms but some definitions were very dry and detached from pupils' experience so that they gained insufficient understanding of mediaeval and Renaissance music. In contrast Year 8 pupils showed the ability to perform different London themes with reasonable accuracy and a sound understanding of rhythm because the purpose of the lesson was explained very clearly.

16. Most teachers plan a good range of methods within a lesson and in the best teaching there is flexibility about which approaches to use and for how long, according to how well pupils are learning from them. In a Year 9 ICT lesson, the teacher made good use of initial discussion to crisply remind pupils of the relative value of open and closed questions in questionnaires. Seeing the range of work being produced the teacher made good use of pupils' ideas to summarise the lesson, so that issues of background colour, the need for precision in wording questions, and the importance of layout for clarity were highlighted. In too many lessons teachers expect the method to work, and forget that their own interpretation and presentation of it are the key to success.

17. Homework is not well used. It has low status with many pupils, and some teachers reinforce this by not giving it regularly (or giving it in a cursory manner which suggest the hope, rather than the expectation, of its completion). Much homework is merely to finish off classwork, with insufficient emphasis on its value, length, or style. Many pupils have not been taught the importance of recording homework and few teachers check diaries or systematically check its completion and follow up defaulters. In subjects like English, history and geography pupils are given a good understanding of the purpose of tasks set to be done at home. Imaginative approaches are used and work is marked or checked regularly with praise for good work or effort and helpful advice about how to improve.

18. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Teachers have access to increasingly good and accurate data. Teachers are becoming more accurate in their assessment of pupils' standards. Assessment in English is very good: pupils are very clear about their level of achievement, how they are progressing, their target grades, and what the next step is towards improvement. Similarly English teachers are now adept at planning for the ability range within classes and knowing when to revise topics because they use assessment to judge how well pupils are learning and where gaps in knowledge or understanding remain. In subjects such as mathematics, PE, ICT, science, French and German, both marking and its use to improve learning are inadequate.

19. Pupils who have special educational needs have individual education plans (IEPs). The targets in these plans, for pupils with statements are satisfactory, but they are not always well linked to statements. Pupils have their progress monitored regularly against their targets in the review process but ongoing assessment is not recorded effectively. Teacher assistants note activities and behaviour they observe during lessons but these records do not document achievement nor do they always indicate areas for improvement. In the support area, teacher assistants again document the work of pupils but this does not record what pupils have achieved or indicate areas for improvement.

20. Teacher assistants are effective in lessons because their involvement is well planned. Teaching in the support area links well with IEPs and teachers' assistants work effectively with individual pupils. Subject teachers know which pupils have special educational needs, but not all have included them in their lesson planning. Subject-based targets do not clearly relate to IEPs and some subjects do not implement the training they have received on the new Code of Practice.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory, although in Years 10 and 11 statutory requirements are not met in respect of providing ICT for all pupils. The use of ICT in other subjects has improved since the last inspection, but not all subjects make sufficient use of it. There is no daily act of collective worship for all pupils, which is a statutory requirement. There is good provision of enrichment activities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Appropriate alternative provision has been made for pupils who have difficulty in following the standard provision.
- A broad curriculum is available to all pupils.
- A good range of extracurricular activities is provided.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements for ICT for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Personal, social and health education (PSHE), and citizenship have too low a status and priority.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements to provide an act of collective worship for all pupils.
- Changes in staff over the past five years have had a detrimental effect on teaching and learning.

Commentary

21. The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 with appropriate allocations of time to each subject. In Years 10 and 11, about 20 per cent of pupils do not have access to an appropriate ICT course. Although religious education is provided for all pupils in Years 10 and 11, it is in the form of a rotational course as part of the PSHE provision. Some provision is made for an alternative to straight GCSE courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who lack interest or motivation. This involves fairly small numbers but is having considerable success. Some vocational courses are offered in Years 10 and 11, but provision for these types of courses is limited. In Year 10, all mathematics lessons take place in the afternoon - not the best way of providing for this subject. Provision for ICT, an issue from the last inspection, is much improved but problems of access to suitable rooms by other subject teachers still remain. The use of ICT by other subjects is satisfactory in history, geography, special educational needs and good in PE in Years 10 and 11. Steps are being taken to increase the provision for acts of worship but the school does not yet adequately cover this on those days when pupils are not in assembly.

22. Whilst a satisfactory amount of time is given to PSHE and citizenship, pupils' needs are not being fully met. Very few teachers plan citizenship aspects into their lessons and make them clear to pupils. The general rationale to both subjects is vague and little thought has been given to what is best taught and at what stage. This results in Year 7 pupils studying topics such as money management whilst the basic social and study skills which many lack on entry to the school go unchallenged. There is adequate planning for issues such as sex and drugs education.

23. Pupils benefit from a good range of activities additional to those provided in the curriculum. They are encouraged to participate in the expressive arts and sport. There is a good range of sports teams and involvement is monitored and rewarded. In the expressive arts, internal school provision is complemented by a good range of visits, for example to plays and concerts. A number of the activities offered by the school relate to its aim of raising the self-esteem, ambition and attainment of the pupils. These include, for example, booster classes for those pupils who need extra help to meet national standards in key subjects, as well as opportunities to benefit from specialist facilities such as art and computer rooms beyond the school day. During the inspection, about fifty Year 9 pupils took part in an enrichment session, run by an external organisation, which focused their attention on improving the environment. Pupils participated with maturity and contributed well. Able pupils who

had spent time at a university felt that the experience had confirmed their ambitions to enter higher education. Similarly, pupils had benefited from a residential team-building session that brought together able pupils from a group of schools. These pupils remain in touch through email and a web site and find the contact helpful to their studies.

24. The alternative curriculum is effectively meeting the needs of some disaffected or low attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11. The school takes the opportunity of some disapplication from subjects to assist these pupils in training for employment. The local Connexions service is involved, from Year 9, in the placement of some of these pupils on work experience. Representatives attend reviews to assist pupils in finding appropriate employment.

25. Preparation for later stages of education and employment is good. A careers course runs in Years 10 and 11, using material published by the local education authority and government departments. Pupils study career pathways and local and regional opportunities for both further education and employment. Good links with agencies such as Connexions and the Education Business Partnership, as well as local further education institutions, allow the school to provide a broad-ranging programme.

26. The withdrawal system to support pupils with special educational needs takes a minority of pupils from subjects. Pupils do not always follow the timetabled subject; for example, pupils in Year 9 removed from French do not follow the subject in withdrawal. This will affect progress in the focus subject. Some support is available for pupils during extra-curricular and registration time but this is not planned and few learning opportunities are offered.

27. Pupils benefit greatly from the school's provision of well-trained teachers' assistants but, with so many pupils needing support, more are needed. Accommodation available for teaching pupils with special educational needs has improved since the last inspection but still more is required to manage the large numbers of pupils involved in the support area. ICT resources are insufficient for pupils' needs, and for teacher assistants to enable them to record pupils' progress more systematically.

28. Resources are adequate for all pupils enabling them to achieve at least satisfactorily. The provision for discrete ICT is very good although access for other subjects is restricted. Too few classrooms have computers. The library is under-resourced and inadequate. This is a vital facility for a school with such poor literacy skills where pupils need to be encouraged to use research skills. There is insufficient equipment for pupils to use for practical work in mathematics. The limited resources available in art in the area of critical study inhibit pupils gaining above a Grade C at GCSE.

29. Staffing is unsatisfactory overall. Thirty-seven members of staff have left during the past five years. Reasons for their leaving include promotion and retirement. These frequent changes in staffing have affected the quality of teaching and learning in several subject areas particularly modern foreign languages and mathematics. Stability has improved in most subjects where the match of teachers to the curriculum is found to be satisfactory. Some aspects are unsatisfactory. For example in the business studies and special educational needs departments, long-term absence has necessitated the employment of supply teachers or unqualified staff. Some non-specialist staff teach in history, design and technology and art. Clerical staff, technical staff and site management staff make effective contributions to the running of the school.

30. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The school occupies a sprawling site, which largely consists of shabby, ageing buildings and temporary accommodation. The dining area is too small for the present needs. The school makes the best use of its accommodation and has refurbished a number of classrooms to provide more storage and better facilities for ICT. A business education suite has been established. Humanities accommodation has, however, become dispersed as a result of this reorganisation. This hinders liaison between teachers, the organisation of resources and consequently affects pupils' learning. Some art lessons are taught in a general classroom without art tables or access to water. Design and technology rooms are shabby and poor for teaching resistant materials. Physical education lacks a regular classroom for teaching of GCSE theory. Sports facilities are very good and there are extensive playing fields. However, excessive litter in the school buildings and the grounds detracts from the quality of the learning environment. Wheelchair access is limited.

Care, guidance and support

The quality of care the school offers is satisfactory despite occasional lapses in attention to matters of health and safety. Reasonable attention is paid to pupils' day-to-day welfare. Support and guidance based on checks to see how well pupils are progressing are satisfactory. The school makes satisfactory efforts to seek and act on pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is committed to caring for pupils however great their difficulties.
- Some very trusting and supportive relationships benefit the most vulnerable pupils.
- Pastoral staff are very willing to help pupils and speak to their parents, which parents appreciate.
- The shabby learning environment devalues the sense of care for pupils.
- Support is not focused consistently on rapid improvement in learning and achievement.
- Monitoring of health and safety procedures is not rigorous enough.

Commentary

31. The school is determined to make a positive difference to the confidence and self-esteem of all its pupils, and to give them a worthwhile experience of school. As a result, it has made good efforts to support pupils with particular needs. Pupils with academic or personal difficulties have useful chances to benefit from work with others in small groups, and easy access to the sanctuary of the '*chill out*' room or the special educational needs base. Some pupils find it hard to identify a trusted adult because the high turnover of staff affects the planned continuity of tutors.

32. Pupils have to work in a run-down environment, which does not reflect high quality care. Litter is an eyesore. Toilets are in poor condition and kept locked most of the time. Lunchtime queues cause frustration. Pupils are not fully involved in deciding how to promote a better, healthier school.

33. Support staff give useful guidance to pupils with special educational needs during lessons with other pupils. The school provides good individual guidance for pupils who have special educational needs, including those in the support area. Good links have been established with local education authority services. The review process follows guidelines. Pupils are involved in setting targets and the school makes every effort to also involve parents in this process. Targets are measurable with dates by which they are to be achieved, but recording and feedback from subject areas are inadequate. Individual education plans provide enough guidance for teachers to know how they can help pupils reach their targets.

34. Academic and careers guidance are generally satisfactory, but without the sharp focus on individual performance that motivates and helps pupils to improve rapidly and achieve all that they can, ready for the next stage in work or study. Lessons are not always planned carefully enough to meet the different needs of groups of pupils within a class, so the quality of guidance given on how to cope better with a piece of work, or improve a particular skill, is uneven. Advice is not based securely on accurate assessment and is too general to be of much use to the individual pupil. In English, very clear targets are particularly helpful and allow pupils to see exactly what they need to do to improve.

These are also shared well with parents in pupils' annual reports. Parents are pleased that they can contact heads of year easily if they have concerns about their child.

35. The school's policies and procedures relating to welfare, health and safety, including child protection, are set out clearly. However, they are not monitored with enough rigour to ensure that any problems are dealt with promptly. For example, during the inspection two minor accidents flagged up the need for procedures to be checked more thoroughly and communicated more clearly. Many staff receive good briefings about child protection, but some new and non-teaching staff had insufficient information about the school's arrangements because the school had overlooked the need to train and update all staff. This situation has now been remedied.

36. Until recently, the school did not actively seek or act on pupils' views. It has set up school and year councils but their impact has yet to be seen. Teachers generally listen to and welcome pupils' ideas, which is a good foundation for involving pupils more in the school's work, once pupils know and understand how to use the opportunities well.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are satisfactory. Links with the community are good and with other schools are satisfactory. In general, these links provide satisfactory support for what pupils achieve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has good links with local people whose voluntary work helps pupils to achieve more.
- Links with local schools are much improved; they help with induction and courses for older pupils.
- The majority of parents have reasonable confidence in the quality of education offered.
- Parents are optimistic that the school is improving.
- Links with home are not doing enough to motivate pupils to make more effort and enjoy learning.

Commentary

37. Parents are reasonably happy with much of the school's work, particularly arrangements for new pupils to settle in, the quality of teaching, the effort which staff expect from pupils and everyday communication. Many parents have justifiable concerns about some pupils' behaviour. About one in five parents worry about whether their children like school, make enough progress, or have appropriate homework. Parents commented that the school is friendly, with staff who are very willing to talk to them. The clear boundaries and lead given by the new headteacher are welcomed by almost all. As a result, although the school has a long way to go to build a strong and highly effective partnership with parents, links have improved and are adequate to support reasonable progress. However, in a minority of cases, parents do not do all they can to respond to the school's efforts to involve them in improving attendance, standards of behaviour and schoolwork.

38. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the way it communicates with parents, starting with letters home that are more informative. Reports are written in a style that is usually easy to read and understand. Targets are very clear in English but not in all other subjects, which means that parents are not always sure how well their children are doing during and at the end of the year. Formal documents, such as the governors' report to parents, are quite dull, which is a missed opportunity to share successes and inspire parents to take more interest in school life.

39. The school has good, productive links with the community and these make a significant difference to pupils who work with local people and organisations. For example, volunteers help younger pupils with reading and writing as well as talking to them about personal experiences of key historical events. Youth workers provide invaluable support for those who need someone to talk to, or a break from the pressures of school life. As a result, pupils are better placed to take advantage of chances to learn.

40. Links with other schools help groups of pupils to learn about issues such as the challenges of disability, training and work opportunities available post-16, and using initiative. This was evident in volunteer pupils' contributions to the art workshop run for Year 6 pupils from the local primary school. As yet such links, while useful, do not benefit a wide enough range of pupils to be considered good and wholly effective, especially in terms of developing pupils' personal, social and learning skills.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Governance is unsatisfactory overall because some statutory requirements are not met. The headteacher's leadership is good. She is in her third term at the school and has analysed the school's needs thoroughly and accurately. She has identified the main needs of the school as greater consistency and quality in the teaching and learning to raise standards and improve behaviour, in the context of problems in recruiting staff. Governors are very supportive of the headteacher. They are aware of the school's needs, but are not rigorous in challenging innovation. Currently, governors are not ensuring that all their statutory duties are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school's future development.
- The senior management team members work together with a strong sense of common purpose and have made a good start to improving standards of behaviour.
- Senior managers maintain a high profile during the school day and are readily accessible to pupils.
- Financial management is very good.
- Teachers do not implement agreed systems for managing behaviour consistently.
- The senior management team does not have sufficient opportunity to monitor the implementation of school policies.
- Systems to check the achievement of pupils with special educational needs are too inconsistent.

Commentary

41. The school has seen a decline in standards since the last inspection. Since her recent arrival the headteacher has thoroughly analysed the school's provision and has set about energetically raising pupils' standards of work, behaviour and social development, giving pupils pride in their school. This has helped towards a rise in standards in English at the end of Year 9. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school's development. The headteacher and the two deputy headteachers work very closely in partnership, sharing a common philosophy. They are aware that the pupils' social development, behaviour and learning skills are inadequately developed. All members of the leadership team maintain a high profile around the school promoting its values and maintaining good order. They know the pupils well, and they show a friendly concern for all, not least pupils who have previously caused problems. As a result, the school's ethos has shown some improvement.

42. Senior staff are accessible and receptive if pupils have concerns. All senior staff provide good role models. New job descriptions ensure that staff responsibilities are clear and appropriate. The reintroduction of school uniform this term has been well managed and is a good initiative towards building up individual pupils' personal esteem and pride in membership of the school. The number of exclusions has been reduced this year, as has the incidence of bullying, and behaviour is improving. Currently, the head and leadership team have very heavy workloads. The school has not yet reached the stage where policies are consistently implemented by all staff, which would allow senior managers to monitor rather than personally implement policies and procedures.

43. Management of the school is satisfactory overall. New systems are appropriate but have not been established long enough fully to prove their effectiveness. Line management of departments is satisfactory. Heads of department meet regularly with their line manager. The process includes the monitoring of teaching and targets for personal development. Leadership and management of departments are satisfactory overall and good in the majority of cases. The head and leadership team work well to support those subjects whose leaders have left for promotion, as is the case with special educational needs, English and science. Temporary staff are well supported where illness has adversely affected provision, as in business studies. Not enough has been done over recent years to stimulate developments in subjects which have only one teacher. In music, for example, a lone specialist has run the subject for several years in professional isolation. Religious education is managed currently by a non-specialist teacher, who is receiving satisfactory monitoring and support.

44. The school development plan is linked with departmental development plans to ensure that whole-school priorities are reflected in developments in all areas of the curriculum. The school rightly sees behaviour as needing improvement. This is appropriately linked with developments in teaching and learning. Despite the very good example of the leadership team in raising standards of behaviour around the school, some staff do not see lunch time behaviour as their responsibility, and they fail to intervene appropriately. The good initiatives in the school development plan are at an early stage of implementation and are not yet resulting in higher standards. Not all aspects of the plan are fully embedded in practice. Teaching styles vary in their effectiveness, and not all staff have high enough expectations of pupils and challenge them consistently, for example to improve their speaking skills and the depth of their understanding. Assessment procedures are unsystematic across the school, which limits their value as a means of improving pupils' achievement.

45. Pastoral management of pupils with special educational needs is very good. The year team leaders know their pupils well and are developing very effective procedures for the monitoring of pupils' academic and personal progress. Form tutors are involved very well, and roles have been clearly defined. The practice of moving through the school with year groups has the very beneficial effect that teachers and pupils know each other well.

46. The coordination of special educational needs has developed satisfactorily since the previous inspection and present management is aware of areas for improvement, but management systems are not fully in place. Not all subject areas are implementing the New Code of Practice so the full impact on classroom practice has yet to be seen. Involvement of the support department with subject teachers has yet to ensure consistent and effective practice in meeting individuals' specific needs and monitoring their achievement.

47. Governors actively support the school. They attend all events, and have a satisfactory knowledge of what is going on. Until recently, however, they have not challenged the low standards sufficiently and have been uncritical of the information they have received. Under the new head they are better informed and more aware of their strategic role. They now know what questions to ask. Firm plans exist for them to be linked individually with departments. Most statutory responsibilities are satisfactorily discharged, but governance of the school is unsatisfactory because daily collective worship does not take place, and statutory requirements are not fully met in design and technology and ICT.

The school achieved Investors in People status in July 2002. Funding for professional development is limited, and carefully spent. Training for teaching and non-teaching staff is linked to performance management or appraisal and to development planning. The arrangements for the induction for new and newly-qualified staff are well planned and the school has productive links with the local education authority. The school has made good decisions as far as deployment of staff is concerned following the 2003 National Agreement on work reform and as a result the workload is fair. The school monitors and supports supply teachers closely.

48. Finances are tightly and efficiently managed. Auditing procedures are very good and all recommendations are acted on. Planned developments are carefully costed. The bursar implements very rigorous checks on departmental expenditure. Governors and staff understand the principles of

best value and apply these to all financial decisions. Finances have been very carefully managed in respect of the considerable use of supply teachers recently.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are determined to raise standards. Their plans are beginning to prove effective.
- Lessons are well planned so that pupils achieve well.
- Teachers give pupils detailed guidance on how they can improve.
- GCSE results are not high enough.
- The teaching scheme used in Years 10 and 11 is not as tightly focused as that used in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards of literacy across the curriculum are not high enough.

Commentary

Examination results

49. The examination results of pupils aged 14 and 16 were well below average in 2002. In 2003, there was a significant improvement in the results of 14 year olds. This was not the case at GCSE. Girls do better than boys, but the difference is broadly in line with the national pattern.

Standards and achievement

50. Pupils enter the school with standards that are well below average. In English, by the end of Year 9, standards are average. They are currently below average in Years 10 and 11. Given their starting points, pupils across the school are now making good progress and achieving well. Their standards of speaking and listening are average overall and are above the level of their reading and writing, which are below average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, partly because of the way teachers organise the work and partly because of the effective support the pupils receive from teaching assistants. Standards have been adversely affected by past difficulties in recruiting staff. The situation is improving since the promotion of a teacher to be acting head of department in January 2003.

Teaching and learning

51. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. They carefully explain the purpose of each lesson to the pupils. They mark work in a way that helps pupils to understand how they can improve. Pupils' work is accurately assessed and reports to parents give a clear picture of progress. For the most part, lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. When the pace flags, pupils learn less effectively. Where teaching is very good, pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and to take risks, for example by giving oral presentations at short notice. They respond well to such

challenges. In Years 7 to 9 the school makes good use of the government's programme for teaching pupils (the Key Stage 3 Strategy). The teaching structure for pupils in Years 10 and 11 lacks the tight focus of the Strategy. The school's decision to concentrate first on raising standards through the Strategy was a sensible assessment of priorities. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are usually good, but occasionally, the poor attitude of a few pupils, mainly older boys, disturbs learning. Although GCSE coursework files contain examples of work that is word processed, English classes do not have sufficient, planned access to computer facilities.

Leadership and management

52. The leadership and management of the English department are satisfactory. With very effective support from the headteacher, the acting head of department has established a clear and realistic set of priorities to raise standards. She ensures that teaching is both well structured and carefully monitored. She examines the pupils' work closely and offers helpful advice to their teachers. These are early days in her policies, but there are promising signs. In particular, the results of Year 9 pupils in national tests improved significantly in 2003. The team of staff work well together. Results declined after the last inspection, but have now started to improve. Teaching is now better than it was at that time.

Drama

53. Provision for drama is satisfactory. Results at GCSE are well below average. In lessons, pupils learn and progress well as a result of good teaching. A good feature of the lessons is that pupils display maturity in watching and evaluating the performances of others.

Literacy across the curriculum

54. Pupils' standards of literacy on entry to the school are poor. Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for the development of literacy, but does not do enough to ensure that all teachers consistently give it a high priority in their lessons. A deputy head has produced a good paper outlining the steps the school needs to take to retain the Basic Skills Quality Mark. This paper recognises the need to ensure that a systematic focus on literacy, properly monitored and evaluated, is central to all teaching.

55. The course for Year 7 pupils who find literacy difficult contains a number of good features, including the effective use of members of the community. Pupils who take part gain in self-confidence, as well as in literacy skills. In this course, and in English lessons, good use is made of the National Literacy Strategy. The school has sensible plans to improve the course by strengthening its links with the wider curriculum, with assessment, and with special educational needs provision.

56. Library provision is poor. The stock does not support the curriculum adequately and the library makes an inadequate impact on pupils' development of literacy.

English as an additional language

57. The school is making satisfactory provision for the few pupils whose home language is not English. In recent months, testing and interviews have been used to assess their potential and English language ability. Records are now kept of language issues which might inhibit them showing their potential. Pupils feel well supported, older ones appreciating the GCSE support sessions which they attend. They are making satisfactory progress. This is more to do with a general awareness of their needs rather than the specific targeted support which would enable some to progress at a faster rate.

Modern foreign languages

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' subject knowledge is strong.
- In most lessons a variety of different activities keeps up the pace and retains pupils' interest.
- Elements of fun motivate and enthuse pupils.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough experience of pair and group work in Years 8 and 9.
- Assessment data is not used effectively to bring about improvement in standards.
- Lack of formal monitoring of teaching and written work makes it difficult to share good practice such as in marking and the quality and relevance of homework.

Commentary

Examination results

58. In 2002 the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C in French and in German at GCSE was very low compared with the national average, but the percentage gaining a pass grade equalled the national average. Both boys and girls did better in almost all other GCSE subjects they took. Results in 2003 showed improvement, particularly in German, but remained well below national average.

Standards and achievement

59. Attainment on entry is well below national standards. Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory in all years. It is best in Years 7 and 10. Lack of continuity of staffing has resulted in past underachievement. By the end of Year 9 standards are well below average. There is an encouraging trend in Year 7, where pupils are proud of their ability to use the language and their work has a positive impact on their social development. This response falls away to some extent amongst some higher-attaining pupils and some with special educational needs in Years 8 and 9, largely as a result of materials and activities which are not focused on their needs. In the present Year 11, standards in German and French are well below national average. In German in particular learning has been hampered by the many staffing changes which occurred during last year. Many pupils were demotivated but they are slowly regaining their confidence this year. Staff changes have also had an adverse effect on the numbers taking French or German in Year 10. In these small groups pupils are keen to work and their present achievement is encouraging.

Teaching and learning

60. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The more effective teaching includes detailed planning by the teachers, friendly and firm management of the pupils, and realistically high expectations of their attainment and behaviour. Teachers have very good subject knowledge seen when the foreign language is used regularly within the lesson. A variety of activities are used to encourage learning and motivate pupils. Teachers use effectively visual images such as flash cards to elicit replies to questions or to check understanding for example about dates, or the weather. Such methods create pace in learning and generate enthusiasm amongst many pupils, who enjoy such approaches. In

view of the low base at which pupils enter the school and their continuing difficulties, many pupils find the learning of a new language difficult. In some cases they are reluctant to speak. There is little use of pair and group work to give pupils opportunities to develop their speaking skills and independent learning skills. Teachers do not always provide work appropriate to the needs of all and pupils with special educational needs make slower progress than expected due to a lack of understanding of their learning difficulties. Behaviour is generally satisfactory but in some cases the classes are not fully engaged and concentration is poor.

Leadership and management

61. The head of department has been in post since September and has a good vision for future developments in modern foreign languages. The department has made improvements in several areas and is beginning to find a new direction. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection but too few pupils opt for a modern language at GCSE. Not all teachers relate marking and assessment enough to the National Curriculum level descriptions for pupils to have a clear understanding of how their work is being judged or what they need to do to progress to the next level. There is no agreed understanding of what skills pupils need to show to gain a particular level or grade. Current planning of schemes of work and of lessons is often in terms of a list of activities to be completed and it is not based clearly enough on what pupils are expected to be able to do as a result of teaching. Pupils have no opportunities to come into contact with native speakers of French or German in this country or abroad.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11.
- There is good achievement in Year 11.
- Leadership is clear about where and how improvements need to be made.
- Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory: too many pupils do not behave well enough and are reluctant to learn.
- When assessment is too generous teachers plan lessons which do not sufficiently match pupil needs.

Commentary

Examination results

62. End of Key Stage 3 test results were well below average in 2002, when compared nationally and with similar schools. This represented a small improvement from 2001. Results improved slightly again in 2003. Results in GCSE were well below the national average in 2002, and have remained at the same level in 2003.

Standards and achievement

63. By the end of Year 9, pupils are achieving standards that are well below average in all aspects of mathematics, and they are particularly weak in handling number and simple calculations. They have learned to use flow charts and can use and interpret line graphs. Their ability to investigate and explore within the subject are underdeveloped. They have not yet acquired the basic numeracy skills required, nor have they developed the ability to work independently of the teacher. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory as the gaps in their prior learning and their unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour limit the progress they make. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall and it is good in Year 11. Standards in the current Year 11 are higher than those reflected in GCSE results last year. Pupils have already acquired good skills in solving linear equations and have undertaken some good work in data handling involving primary and secondary data and an extensive range of approaches. Although pupils' lack of prior learning and ability to calculate continue to limit older pupils, good teaching is helping to fill the gaps in their knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils, although planning for their specific needs is insufficiently matched to the priorities identified in their individual education plans.

Teaching and learning

64. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11 where it is having a noticeable impact on the achievement of Year 11 pupils. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their confidence inspires older pupils, in particular, to be self-assured and try more ambitious work. In the better lessons, pupils were organised and managed well. The lesson was well planned and moved at a brisk pace, technical language was used precisely, and available resources were used well. Some weaker areas of teaching are the inaccurate match of tasks to pupils' abilities in some lessons, insufficient opportunities for pupils to participate in their learning, and at times a lack of challenge for higher-attaining pupils. In some lessons pupils became confused, and there were too many occasions when pupils' unsatisfactory attitudes to their learning and unacceptable behaviour limited the learning that could take place. In Year 11 pupils demonstrate high levels of motivation and work with a sense of urgency. Assessment of pupils' achievements is satisfactory. Assessments are regular and recorded, but do not sufficiently indicate gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly in relation to number. Consequently teachers' assessments are often too generous and this contributes to the lack of match of planned work to the activities planned for some lessons.

Leadership and management

65. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The curriculum leader has a clear vision for the development of the subject and her monitoring of pupils' work and lessons has given her insight into the strengths and weaknesses in mathematics. The curriculum provided for pupils is enhanced well by additional learning opportunities provided for older pupils outside the normal school day. As yet, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in investigating, using and applying mathematics. Resources for pupils to use in practical activity are unsatisfactory and this limits many pupils' learning. Since the last inspection, the subject has been through a period of decline, but there are now strong signs of improvement. This is because of the more stable staffing situation, and curriculum leadership which is clear about how to improve.

Numeracy across the curriculum

66. Pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum are well below average and although mentioned in planning, they are not central to learning in all subjects. At times, pupils' lack of numeracy skills limits their achievement. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson pupils were learning about probability. Their understanding of the principle of probability was developing well, but when they tried to calculate examples for themselves, many pupils had difficulty in cancelling fractions so were unable to obtain correct answers. Also, too many pupils throughout the school did not know their tables. As a result they found any problems requiring the recall of number very difficult to do.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' lesson planning and preparation are good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good.
- Records kept by the science department and the use made of statistical data are good.
- Poor behaviour has a negative effect on learning.
- There is no consistent approach to the use of literacy and numeracy in science.
- Pupils' recording of their work is inconsistent and careless and often results in errors.

Commentary

Examination results

67. GCSE examination results were below national average in 2002 and only improved slightly in 2003. A high proportion of pupils gained an examination pass but few gained passes at the higher grades. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, results in 2002 declined from those achieved in previous years, and were well below average. In 2003 they improved substantially.

Standards and achievement

68. By the end of Year 9 standards seen in lessons are below average. Despite being adversely affected by poor attendance and careless presentation achievement is satisfactory given the below average standards on entry to the school. By the end of Year 11 standards are below average. Whilst pupils' recording skills have improved, absences and the lack of study skills impede progress. The ability to give detail and justification when answering questions, either written or spoken, is limited. Too many pupils do not realise the need for careful and accurate recording of their work so that they make many errors and do not sufficiently show their understanding. Standards achieved by pupils who are scientifically more able are too often limited by the immature behaviour of their class. Most pupils pay attention when the teacher is speaking but quickly lose concentration when asked to work more independently. When working on more challenging tasks in pairs and small groups, too many prefer to spend their time copying out rather than thinking, discussing or reasoning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because the organisation of the lessons means that they are always given a clear explanation of the science that is happening. The science focus of individual education plans is not sufficiently linked to their learning needs.

Teaching and learning

69. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. They take time to share the lesson objectives with pupils and plan lessons that are varied and interesting to pupils, offering a good balance between practical and discussion opportunities. Teachers' planning for Year 7 pupils builds very successfully on the work that has been done at primary school, but there are too few opportunities to carry out scientific exploration. This is partly because in many lessons pupils find it difficult to work

sensibly and responsibly in pairs or small groups. In Years 7 to 9 the pace of lessons can be too slow to impose the required levels of concentration from pupils. Whilst teachers' expectations of both work and behaviour are satisfactory some pupils underachieve because they are too easily distracted and do not always complete tasks. In Years 10 and 11 some very good quality teaching placed higher demands on pupils, off-task behaviour was not an option and there was a high level of scientific challenge. In one lesson pupils responded enthusiastically to a task requiring them to discuss the moral and ethical acceptability of genetic engineering and selective breeding. However, achievement was limited by an inability to give explanations and reasons for their answers. In another lesson, after dehydrating some copper sulphate, pupils were asked to work in small groups to share their ideas before presenting findings to the class. This allowed them to clarify their scientific thinking and gave them a secure framework within which to give their answers. In an example of unsatisfactory teaching seen in Year 11, pupils spent too long copying text about which they were given poor quality explanations which did not further their scientific knowledge or understanding.

Leadership and management

70. The department has a well-structured scheme of work that provides effective support, particularly for new teachers. The newly appointed subject leader rightly sees raising standards and checking the quality of teaching as the two current priorities for improvement. Good records and The use of literacy and numeracy to enhance the science curriculum is inconsistent. Literacy opportunities tend to arise through good quality teaching and the use of number work and graphs is restricted because of the lack of investigative opportunities, particularly in Year 7-9. The use of ICT to enrich and extend the quality of the science curriculum is recognised as a weakness. The imminent installation of eight computers into one of the laboratories and the provision of some new data loggers are an appropriate means to overcome this problem. Good records of pupils' performance and effective use of statistics give teachers a clear understanding of achievement and progress. However, assessment and marking are inconsistent across all years. Teachers' comments and advice range from being helpful and informative so that pupils know what they need to do to improve to being superficial and meaningless.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' standards are improving: they are achieving well.
- Teachers are very well qualified and give good support to pupils.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Standards attained in the recently introduced GCSE course are low.

Commentary

Examination results

71. A GCSE course in ICT was offered for the first time in 2003. Nineteen per cent of candidates gained grades A* to C. No national comparison is possible for this first year of entry, but in 2002, the national average at GCSE for grades A* to C in ICT was 51 per cent.

Standards and achievement

72. In 2002 half of the pupils in Year 9 gained a level 5 or above in the teacher assessment of their ICT capability. This is below the national average. In the unconfirmed results for 2003, there was an increase in the proportion gaining the nationally expected level. Pupils come into the school with below-average attainment, but they are close to the average at the end of Year 9. This represents good progress. In the work seen in all years, the majority of pupils were reaching average standards. Achievement is good, especially in examination course work. In a Year 11 lesson, all pupils made simple queries using a database constructed using Microsoft Access, and the higher-attaining pupils carried out complex queries without help from the teacher. Those pupils who underachieve do so because they do not make sufficient effort with their work.

Teaching and learning

73. Teaching is good overall and staff have particular strengths in the degree of individual support given to pupils. Lessons start briskly, with good use of starter activities. Teachers have high expectations and good classroom management skills. The majority of pupils work productively and with interest. Learning is good for the majority of pupils. Lessons include good informal assessment when pupils are given sound advice on how to improve their work. There is little documented evidence of this. Assessment of completed work is good.

Leadership and management

74. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a good department handbook and scheme of work. There are clear objectives which will help move the department forward. The system of assessing completed work is good, but further work is required on ways in which ongoing work is assessed. The scheme of work is good but lacks detail on where higher order ICT skills are to be taught, such as opportunities for pupils to reflect on their use of ICT compared with its use in the wider world, and more consideration of target audiences for documents. At present pupils do not regularly record these aspects of their ICT work. The assessment system does not include evidence of how the higher levels in Years 7 to 9 are achieved.

75. Progress since the last inspection has been very good. The progress which pupils make in lessons is now much better and teaching and learning are much improved. Although the provision of ICT resources has improved, the requirement for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 to have an experience of ICT is not met. About 20 per cent of pupils do not follow a course which meets this requirement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. The use of ICT in other subjects is patchy. In PE it is good in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. It is satisfactory in history, geography and special educational needs. It is under-developed in other subjects, in some cases because of difficulties with access. The competence of pupils to use ICT to support their learning in other subjects is satisfactory. ICT training provided under the New Opportunities Funding has been generally successful, and some of this training has been supplemented by training offered by ICT staff. A good system has been set up to record assessment data and to allow staff to access the data easily.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are improving and good teaching encourages pupils to achieve well.
- Very good departmental leadership is effective in raising standards.
- There are good systems for checking the quality of teaching and how pupils are progressing.
- The tasks set for lower-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not always engage them sufficiently.

Commentary

Examination results

77. 2002 GCSE results were well below national average. There was a considerable improvement in 2003 when the A* to C proportion rose to come close to the national average, representing at least good achievement by the pupils involved.

Standards and achievement

78. Standards in the current Year 9 are below national expectations. This represents good achievement for many pupils in relation to when they started at the school in Year 7, including those pupils with special educational needs. Standards on entry in Year 7 are well below average. Pupils of all abilities in Year 9 recognise different ways of describing the height of the land through contour lines, spot heights and colour shading. They reach good understanding of landscape patterns from shaping paper and from models. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs respond well to discussion but find it difficult to settle to the written exercises which are intended to improve their skills.

79. Standards in the current Year 11 are close to average. This represents good achievement for all pupils during their GCSE course, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language. Middle and higher-attaining pupils demonstrate average map reading skills to reach a good understanding of the impact of the Second World War on local business. Interest galvanises their achievement as they describe the characteristics of the city centre. Individual fieldwork then builds very effectively on their studies of local urban regeneration. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to describe the regeneration of the London Docklands. They interpret maps and diagrams skilfully. The relative weakness of lower-attaining pupils is in the completion of work and homework.

Teaching and learning

80. The quality of teaching and learning in geography is good. A strong feature of the most effective teaching is the planning of lessons to reinforce literacy and number and to develop thinking skills. For example in a Year 8 lesson higher-attaining pupils responded eagerly to teacher questioning and classified information from written extracts. Textbooks are supplemented by the imaginative use of

magazine articles and the Internet. Weaknesses in teaching occur where groups are difficult to manage and the behaviour of lower-attaining pupils is disruptive. This slows their pace of learning. Teachers do not always match the demands of the work sufficiently to the needs of lower-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9. Generally teachers, learning support assistants and pupils enjoy good relationships. Pupils are expected to work hard in the lesson either independently or collaboratively. However, homework is often set too near the end of the lesson for pupils to record it accurately.

Leadership and management

81. The leadership of geography is very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, most notably in the improved examination results. Many pupils perform much better than their predicted grades. The subject is very well managed, with flexible systems for evaluating the work of both teachers and pupils. Assessment procedures are well considered, monitored and reviewed. Relocated and refurbished geography rooms are welcoming with high quality displays to celebrate pupils' learning. However, rooms lack the ICT facilities which were an integral part of the former suite.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching & Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are improving.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well.
- Lessons are well planned.
- There are clear strategies for further improvement.
- The department carries out too little monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Teachers expect too little of pupils in Year 7.

Commentary

Examination results

82. End of Year 9 teacher assessments in 2002 showed attainment to be below national expectations. 2002 GCSE examination results were significantly lower than the national average. There was a significant improvement in 2003. Both Year 9 and GCSE results show a rising trend because girls are outperforming boys.

Standards and achievement

83. Standards in lessons observed and written work analysed in Year 9 are below those expected nationally, although they are better than teacher assessments suggest. The levels of knowledge, understanding and skills reached by pupils in Year 11 are better than those in Year 9 but are still below national expectations. Pupils are doing as well as expected in Years 8 and 9 in relation to their capabilities and are making satisfactory progress with instances of slower progress in Year 7. Although extended writing is developing during Years 7 to 9, poor writing skills often restrict further progress. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of historical events. For example in a Year 8

lesson, pupils successfully used source material to analyse reasons for the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Pupils' ability and willingness to express their own views in discussion are limited.

84. By Year 11 pupils are doing better than expected in relation to their capabilities. Progress is often good. They can analyse a variety of sources (maps, photographs, narratives) and can test the reliability of this evidence. They are able to record information effectively on historical maps, diagrams and cartoons as an alternative to extended writing. For example in a Year 10 lesson, pupils were able to show the power structure in Europe in 1900 on a map, with explanatory notes. Some quite detailed work is done on the cause and effect of historical events. Year 11 pupils are able to analyse the cause of historical change when comparing the old Poor Law system with the one that replaced it. Throughout the age range, achievement is particularly good in relation to coursework, and work is often improved by the use of word processing.

Teaching and learning

85. Teaching is good. For the most part, teachers have good subject knowledge. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on the 'League of Nations', the teacher had the expertise to challenge pupils' views, resulting in further thinking and understanding. Lessons are well planned, with the setting of clear objectives so that pupils can see what they have to learn. Teachers use appropriate language suited to the needs of their students and particular attention is given to the meaning of key words. Teachers enjoy good relationships with their pupils and this has a positive effect on learning. The expectation of pupils is not high enough in some lessons, in particular in Year 7, although this starts to improve in Years 8 and 9. Work is usually, but not invariably, matched carefully to the needs of different abilities. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported when there is a learning support assistant present. Most pupils are aware of how they are doing as work is marked regularly with sufficient comments and targets so that they can improve. Homework is set regularly and is monitored and recorded.

Leadership and management

86. The department has good leadership and management with some clear ideas as to how it should develop. For example, there are plans to work closely with external advisors to develop literacy, essay writing, and self-assessment. The development plan is a clear, thoughtful document and the success of strategies is carefully monitored, working closely with the head of faculty. Data is used to provide students with information on attainment although formal targets are not a part of regular pupil reviews. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection with the increased use of computers and the development of work to match the needs of pupils. The sharing of good practice in both these areas would stimulate the raising of standards in the department.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New topics are presented in an interesting way and teaching materials are carefully chosen and appropriate.
- GCSE results are well below average because teaching is not continuous.
- Discussions are too brief and searching questioning is too little used.
- In general, lessons are insufficiently challenging.

Commentary

Exam results

87. Results are well below average because religious education lessons rotate with careers and PHSE. As a result, the overall time available is too little and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.

Standards and achievement

88. Standards are well below average in Year 9. Pupils are not skilful enough in discussion and too few make the effort to answer questions, for example when discussing 'women's rights'. Few pupils are prepared to read aloud. Boys make less of an effort than girls. Achievement is unsatisfactory overall throughout the subject. Inadequate time for the short course means that standards in Year 11 are well below average. No Year 11 lessons took place during the inspection. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils had few ideas about 'the advantages of marriage' and discussion was at a low level because pupils had too little confidence and had not developed the skill of extended speaking.

Teaching and learning

89. Teaching was broadly satisfactory in lessons observed, but over time it is unsatisfactory. Topics were introduced in an interesting way, supported by good quality resources and textbooks. Ideas were carefully marshalled on the board to ensure methodical learning. Time was precisely rationed to maintain interest. Relationships between the teacher and pupils were friendly. However, the teaching was often too undemanding and questioning was not searching enough. Answers were almost always taken from volunteers and pupils who chose to be less involved were insufficiently challenged. As a result, learning over time is unsatisfactory, and lessons do too little to develop pupils' learning skills.

Leadership and management

90. Religious education is satisfactorily managed on a day-to-day basis. Teaching takes place in a carefully organised and attractive learning environment. However, the sole teacher is a non-specialist and the leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory. Resources are satisfactory overall, but there are insufficient artefacts to enliven the teaching of world religions. ICT is not used.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching staff are well qualified (apart from some non-specialist teaching in food technology), hard working and committed.
- The department is well resourced, except for ICT equipment.
- GCSE results are well below the national average.
- National Curriculum requirements are not fully met for the use of design and make assignments and for the evaluation of existing products.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Examination results

91. GCSE results in 2002 were well below average, and showed a significant decline from the previous year. Results for 2003 were slightly better, but were still well below average. Few higher-attaining pupils take design and technology, and this accounts to some extent for the well-below average standards.

Standards and achievement

92. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, the proportion of pupils reaching the level expected nationally was below average. Results for 2003 show some decline. The attainment of pupils in design and technology on entry to the school is below average, and they are still below average at the end of Year 9. The standards of the current Year 11 pupils are better than those of pupils who have taken GCSE in recent years, but they remain well below average. Achievement is satisfactory given that few higher attaining pupils take design and technology, and for some pupils it is good. There are examples of good achievement in graphics and food technology coursework in Year 11, where some pupils have clearly worked hard to produce work of a good standard. A significant number of pupils underachieve and this is often because they do not make an appropriate effort and lack the desire to learn.

Teaching and learning

93. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and some teaching is good. Where the teaching is good, staff employ a good range of different styles of teaching, and use effective questioning to ensure that pupils understand the subject matter. Some good teaching was seen in a Year 11 resistant materials lesson which enabled pupils to plan the preparation of a product effectively. Teachers have made good use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy materials, adapting them where necessary to suit the pupils' learning needs. Learning is satisfactory, and some is good. In one lesson learning was unsatisfactory because, despite the best efforts of the teacher, pupils gave insufficient attention to the methods of working and to the guidance materials which had been prepared.

Leadership and management

94. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The present post holder has done considerable work over the past year to produce a new department handbook and to work with staff in the department on a good new assessment system, though this has yet to be introduced. The schemes of work do not match current statutory requirements, as they lack sufficient emphasis on open-ended design and make tasks, and evaluation of existing products. Work remains to be done on ways in which the use of ICT can support pupils' learning.

95. A more consistent style of teaching is now evident, and learning objectives are better shared with pupils. The use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy to improve attainment is being implemented successfully. However, standards overall at GCSE and at the end of Year 9 are still too low. All of the resistant materials workshops provide poor accommodation. Although one workshop is due to be upgraded, the other two rooms are in urgent need of upgrading, not least because they present a poor image of the subject. One food technology room is satisfactory, but the other is too small for

classes of above 18 pupils. The textiles room is small and cramped. There is insufficient provision of ICT resources within the department. Non-specialist teachers, who do not have the necessary health and safety qualifications, teach some food technology lessons.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupil achievement has improved; standards in Year 11 are in line with the national average.
- Leadership is very good and has focused on improving pupil attainment.
- Management is very good: lesson planning, marking and assessment are very consistent.
- Teaching and learning are good in years 7 to 9 and very good at GCSE.
- Pupils have too little opportunity to use new technology in their art studies.
- Resources to support pupils' independent working and research are under-developed, which constrains the achievement of higher-attaining pupils.

Commentary

EXAMINATION RESULTS

96. Examination results were below the national average in 2002, as they were in previous years. In 2003 they improved and were in line with the national average.

Standards and achievement

97. Pupils' standards in art on entry to the school are well below national average. By the end of Year 9 their skills, knowledge and understanding are below average. They achieve well, producing colour work of satisfactory quality and their studies of work from other cultures are satisfactorily developed. However, there is insufficient use of basic principles and methods by lower and middle attaining pupils. By the end of Year 11 pupils' skills are average, reflecting further very good achievement. They study and make use of stylistic elements to develop their own work from selected cultural sources and chosen artists. Painting and drawing are satisfactorily developed.

Teaching and learning

98. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and lessons are planned well. The clear and consistent structure common to art lessons helps pupils develop effective working practices and make good use of their time in the classroom. Learning objectives are clearly presented and they have criteria for successful outcomes. This helps pupils focus on the key features of the tasks set. Teachers interpret the tasks to allow pupils of differing ability to take part fully in the work. Teachers maintain thorough and accurate assessment records. Judgements are checked regularly amongst staff. The marking of the sketchbooks of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is detailed and informative. Teachers give clear and specific advice to help pupils improve their work. Targets are set and regularly updated. Teaching of GCSE classes is very good. Teachers make

good use of technical demonstrations to help build pupils' skills. They conduct effective critical reviews to help pupils develop their language for talking about art. Teachers support pupils' learning through the use of helpful visual displays in which key words are shown. The highly supportive teaching and structured lessons, however, do not allow higher-attaining pupils to engage in enough individual work and research.

Leadership and management

99. Standards have risen since the last inspection because leadership and management have focused on this. The department is very well led. Teaching practices are consistently developed to bring about improvements in pupils' attainment levels. A scheme of work has been produced that secures the interest of the pupils. A departmental approach covering lesson planning, assessment, marking, and setting expectations for pupils' behaviour has been effective. Good extra-curricular GCSE provision is made for pupils whose options choices did not allow them to take art GCSE in the normal timetable. Excellent links have been developed with feeder schools. ICT is not sufficiently developed in the art curriculum: effective working methods and appropriate departmental resources are not yet in place. This weakness was identified in the last report. Nonetheless there has been good progress since the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Imaginative and well-planned lessons give pupils interesting musical experiences.
- Teaching is enthusiastic and relationships between teacher and pupils are very positive.
- Group activities provide very good opportunities for pupils to develop socially.
- Computers are not available for use in music.

Examination results

100. Recent results vary from below average to well above, representing the varied levels of ability of the pupils from year to year. Higher grades are regularly attained. In 2002 too few candidates took GCSE for comparisons to national figures to be valid.

Standards and achievement

101. Pupils gain a good understanding of the elements of music and of musical notation from the interesting range of practical tasks they carry out. In a Year 9 project on 'raps', pupils revealed a good understanding of rhyme, rhythm and metre. Their performances were rather timid, but they achieved well in relation to their starting points, which were well below average on entry to Year 7. The Year 11 music set contains some pupils for whom music was not the first choice. The range of accomplishment is very wide, and some pupils do not pursue musical interests outside the classroom. Standards are well below average overall, but several pupils gave confident performances, for example on guitar and piano and vocally. The achievement of such pupils is very good, but overall it is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

102. The teaching is enthusiastic with a good blend of musical challenge and fun in Years 7 to 9. Deadlines are used well to ensure a good pace of working. Group work is a good feature. Pupils benefit from much-needed social development opportunities when they listen constructively to each other performing, and work together, for example to compose from graphic scores in Year 7. The teaching is friendly and appreciative but demanding of high standards of response and behaviour. Relationships are very good. Pupils learn readily and behave well, but girls sustain their effort better than boys in Years 7 to 9. The pupils in Years 10 and 11 for whom music is an established hobby work purposefully and learn well. They benefit from the teacher's technical advice and thorough knowledge of examination requirements. Others are less well motivated and their learning is unsatisfactory, despite the good level of help and encouragement.

Leadership and management

103. The head of department manages the department well, but has to work in isolation and does not currently have opportunities to learn from music departments in other schools. Schemes of work are imaginative and well geared to the needs of the pupils, but no opportunities are yet provided for using computers. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Numbers learning instruments have grown. The curriculum is better. Worthwhile opportunities are provided at lunch times for pupils who wish to pursue their music further. The school's musicians perform regularly in school and in the community.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education (PE) is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising under new leadership and teaching is improving.
- Pupils have good attitudes which help their learning.
- New leadership is improving the management of the department.
- Extra-curricular activities and good links with external agencies and other schools give good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning.
- Pupils do not receive sufficient guidance on how they can improve their work.
- Risk assessment remains an area for improvement.

Commentary

Examination results

104. GCSE results in 2002 were well below average. The 2003 results were better. New management has brought about changes in teaching which are improving pupils' performance.

Standards and achievement

105. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are now achieving satisfactorily in all year groups. Pupils sustain the below average standards which they join the school with. The majority of pupils on the GCSE course are achieving well because of focused teaching. For example, pupils in Year 11 are able to access video images to enhance their performance. Most pupils know the mechanics of trampolining but do not transfer this to the quality of performance in positions. The new ICT program is a valuable acquisition towards raising standards.

Teaching and learning

106. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers demonstrate well and give clear explanations that help all pupils understand. Questioning is effective. For example, in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson the teacher ensured that all key words were understood and then checked understanding through stick drawings, which all pupils could relate to well, to ensure safety as well as comprehension. Teachers usually share objectives with pupils, but at the end of lessons teachers do not always check what has actually been achieved, what has been done well and what still needs to be improved. Provision for talented pupils in school is not extensive enough. However, the department encourages them to join local clubs so they can participate at a suitably high level.

107. There is a strong focus on raising standards in GCSE lessons. For example, Year 11 GCSE work gives good coverage of the syllabus and teachers link the various components of fitness well so that pupils can relate theory to practice effectively. More consistency in how pupils present their work would benefit their revision. Systems are in place for checking pupils' achievement but currently work is not linked closely enough to formal grades and pupils do not check their progress and improvement sufficiently.

108. Pupils have good attitudes in lessons and teachers have high expectations of behaviour. Some pupils risk the safety of others and themselves in practical activities by wearing jewellery or chewing, in defiance of teachers' instructions. Risk assessment was an issue in the last report and health and safety is still an area for improvement.

Leadership and management

109. Raising standards is the principal aim of the new head of department. Attention has been focused on improving schemes of work and lesson structures for effective learning. Not all teachers follow the structures suggested and some management difficulties result. Accommodation is good and well used for extra-curricular activities and matches, although pupils do not have access to a theory room to benefit their GCSE studies. Resources are good and pupils now have better access to ICT to assist learning and to analyse and improve practical performance. The department is well placed to improve further.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school has offered a GCSE course in business studies for several years, and pupils in Year 10 are able to follow a vocational GCSE course in leisure and tourism. The latter has had a small uptake, but business studies courses are popular, with two classes in each of Years 10 and 11. A certificate in life skills is provided for a small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11. A Year 10 group showed real pride in their work and an ability to communicate it both in discussion and through work in their challenge files. They enjoyed good relationships within the group and with the teacher, who stressed to them their responsibility to school, community and each other. Some pupils follow a day-release course at college. Most are grateful for this opportunity to work in a more adult environment on more relevant courses such as bricklaying and car maintenance.

BUSINESS STUDIES

Provision in business studies is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The present standard of teaching is satisfactory.
- Some pupils have learnt how to work independently, and use computers effectively.
- Results have been well below average, too many pupils having failed to gain a grade.
- Leadership and management are poor.
- Too many pupils are frustrated and disillusioned by their lack of progress.

Commentary

Examination results

110. Exam results in business studies have declined. In 2002 few pupils gained distinctions, and over half the pupils were unclassified. In 2003 the high proportion of unclassified grades continued and only one candidate gained a distinction. These results are low compared to national average. Pupils tended to gain better results in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

111. The standards of pupils currently in Year 11 are well below average. Some draw effectively on their work experience to gain insights into business methods and principles such as the benefits and pitfalls of computerised banking systems, the need for security, and the increased potential for error or fraud. Others show a sound grasp of computer skills and the potential of the Internet as a research tool. Most work willingly but feel most comfortable with low-level tasks such as copying notes or summarising ideas. Achievement is unsatisfactory as a result. Few pupils generate ideas of their own being heavily dependent on what the teacher suggests or directs.

Teaching and learning

112. The present teaching is satisfactory, but suffers from the lack of a clear scheme of work. A number of pupils have been frustrated to find how little they have achieved in the past in terms of coursework, and the gaps which they know they have in their knowledge. They react by only attending intermittently or by resenting being asked to do other than mundane tasks. Whilst teaching is well planned, tasks are structured tightly to improve pupils' attention and confidence. As a result few pupils have the chance to fully develop their own ideas or to pursue those of others to any depth. Learning is limited by below-average literacy skills, with poor listening and attention skills in class discussion.

Leadership and management

113. Leadership and management are poor. Inexperienced and part-time staff are working hard to stabilise a situation which has led to low standards, disaffection, and indifference amongst pupils. Pupils have a limited concept of the course and how best to approach it. Their files show a lack of

completed coursework and too little of their own work compared with the amount they have copied or downloaded.

Leisure and tourism

114. In the lesson, seen pupils' achievement was satisfactory. Standards were well below average. Students showed a sound general knowledge of types of leisure attractions. Some were able to offer sensible suggestions about their location and catchment area. Teaching was satisfactory, with a good range of activities and resources. Too many pupils were unappreciative of the teacher's efforts. They showed interest in practical tasks, but many were resistant to tasks which expected them to think for themselves, or to link ideas together in a new format. The teacher's effective use of questioning enabled some to gain insights into charging rates and the value of discount deals, and how directions were best communicated in graphic form. Many showed reasonable numeracy skills, for instance in comparing deal prices and in estimating distances to attractions using variously scaled maps.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

Provision in personal, social and health education (PSHE) is **unsatisfactory**.

115. Personal, social and health education is taught in occasional designated periods and sometimes in tutor periods by form tutors. PSHE included careers education. This supplements contributions from other subjects to the PSHE programme.

116. Planning does not meet the needs of pupils. For example, in Year 7, the programme does not help pupils to adapt to changes in the new school and confirm in them the need to behave well and complete homework. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not value the subject or believe that it contributes sufficiently to their development. Not all form tutors are comfortable in teaching PSHE and teaching quality is not consistent because there is no specialist teacher to provide guidance and no time is allocated for teachers to evaluate the programme together.

117. Visiting speakers are popular and make pupils aware of safety, social, health and personal issues. Sometimes pupils assist in the community. For example, charities receive support from planned events. Pupils have opportunities to engage in school activities, for example sport, and express their views through the newly formed school council.

118. The management of PSHE is unsatisfactory. A policy is in place, which covers sex and relationships education and drug and alcohol abuse, but the course is not assessed, monitored or recorded well enough to be effective in meeting pupils' needs. Pupils' achievements are not recorded and, although pupils have folders for storing their work, these do not constitute progress files. Reports are written at the end of the year but they contain little information on pupils' achievement. Some monitoring of the course takes place but it is insufficient to ensure consistency of provision. Pupils evaluate units of work, but this does not lead to developments in the materials and courses. Assessment and recording are not in place to identify achievement and bring about improvement.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a clear vision of how the subject should be developed.
- Pupils achieve well in carefully planned 'Citizenship Day' events.
- Despite planning, arrangements for teaching citizenship in Years 7 to 9 are haphazard.
- There are no agreed arrangements for recording and assessing pupils' work and progress.
- The school has no way of checking what experience pupils are getting of citizenship.

Commentary

119. There was no opportunity during the inspection to observe a Year 10 or 11 citizenship lesson, but a few lessons seen across all years contained elements of citizenship. Standards reached by pupils are well below average because the subject does not yet feature prominently in the thinking of teachers or pupils. The school has completed a thorough audit and has a good understanding of what needs to be put in the curriculum. Citizenship lessons are taught to older pupils on a rota basis, but in Years 7 to 9 the curriculum depends on what individual subjects can usefully contribute. Thus much that happens is incidental – opportunities taken by teachers during lessons rather than a carefully planned course to help pupils learn and achieve. Inspectors observed an unusually small number of lessons where citizenship was directly taught within other subjects.

Standards and achievement

120. Pupils have an understanding of what citizenship is about, but little awareness of how it relates to them. They are interested, but rarely see that finding out about systems and issues also involves them in realising how people and things can be correctly challenged. Most see enquiry as a way of finding facts rather than a starting point to begin to consider why things are as they are, and how they might reasonably and practically be improved. The re-formed school council is viewed positively by pupils, but most see it as a way of trying to get what they want rather than as a means of helping the school community to improve for the benefit of all. Achievement is unsatisfactory. Too many pupils still see responsibility as lying purely with adults, or with those pupils who wish to volunteer. The ability and willingness to accept responsibility is a weakness. Whilst many pupils achieve well in their ability to talk and are comfortable talking to adults including visitors, their opinions are often lacking in depth and thought.

Teaching and learning

121. Learning is unsatisfactory because teachers do not make clear what aspects of citizenship are being taught when. This results in pupils' experience being haphazard: too varied across classes, and in unlinked chunks. Good opportunities were taken in PE to bring out aspects of teamwork and responsibility in games, such as how to criticise others without undermining them. However, this occurred because of circumstances rather than because it was planned. A very good feature is the use of 'Citizenship Days' when the timetable is suspended and themes, often involving outside speakers and workers, are studied. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about these and see their relevance to their own experience. In the past a European day, a 'Crimestoppers' day, and a UNICEF day have all successfully stimulated pupils' awareness of wider issues. A year group responded very well to a leadership and decision-making workshop. They worked very well, in groups with non-teaching adults, discussing local problems, their causes, possible solutions, and practical projects to tackle the problems.

Leadership and management

122. Subject leadership is good with clear planning for developing the subject. Management is unsatisfactory. The school has no means of checking the amount or the quality of citizenship through subjects, and no regular system for recording pupils' experiences, progress and standards.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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