

INSPECTION REPORT

BISHOP BARRINGTON SCHOOL

Bishop Auckland, County Durham.

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114301

Headteacher: Mr Bruce Guthrie, Acting Headteacher

Lead inspector: Val Lynch

Dates of inspection: 15th 18th September 2003

Inspection number: 258566

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	725
School address:	Woodhouse Lane Bishop Auckland County Durham
Postcode:	DL14 6LA
Telephone number:	01388 603307
Fax number:	01388 609990
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R A Smith
Date of previous inspection:	27/ 04/1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

There are 725 pupils in the school, who come mainly from the town of Bishop Auckland. The school has grown in popularity over the last five years. Very few pupils join or leave the school during a school year. When pupils, who are now in Years 7, 8 and 9, joined the school their test results at the end of their time in primary schools were average. This was not the case for pupils in Years 10 and 11 whose results when they joined the school were below average. Around 15 per cent of pupils have special educational needs. There are no pupils from other ethnic backgrounds and no pupil has a language other than English as their home language. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals, reflecting the socio-economic circumstances of the town. The school has won an *Artsmark* award for its work in expressive arts and in 2002 received a School Achievement Award for the improvement in its GCSE examination results. The school is working collaboratively with other schools in and around Bishop Auckland as part of *Excellence in Clusters*. This is a project designed to promote collaboration between primary and secondary schools in order to raise standards.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1475	Val Lynch	Lead inspector	
19743	Ann Taylor	Lay inspector	
33170	Julie Winterman	Team inspector	English
30576	Peter Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics
30596	Jack Brown	Team inspector	Science
15606	Christine Hill	Team inspector	Design and technology
32173	Barbara Brown	Team inspector	English as an additional language Modern languages
3755	Trevor Hulbert	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography History
18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team inspector	Art and design Information and communication technology
18846	Philip Priest	Team inspector	Music
13217	Malcolm Butterworth	Team inspector	Special educational needs Physical education
19599	Carmen Markham	Team inspector	Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Education

102 Bath Road
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire

GL53 7JX

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bishop Barrington School continues to improve and has significant strengths that are recognised and valued by pupils and parents. **Standards are improving** and are now in line with similar schools. **Teaching is well planned** so that pupils experience interesting lessons with a variety of learning activities. The school provides **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There is a very positive, friendly atmosphere and adults and pupils like and respect each other. Pupils behave well and want to learn from the first day they joined the school.
- The interim senior management team provides very good leadership, but the school does not have the management systems in place to monitor and evaluate its work.
- A significant minority of pupils are absent from school far too often, frequently with the support of their parents or carers. The school has not done enough to make sure that these pupils attend regularly.
- All adults, who work in the school, willingly provide very good help, advice and support to pupils, which they in turn really value.
- There are not enough alternative courses offered in Years 10 and 11 to meet the needs of all pupils, especially lower attainers.

Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have improved, most significantly in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs with grades A* - C. Results at the end of Year 9 have declined slightly over the last two years, but the provisional results in 2003 show improvement. There has been an increase in the number of support staff working in the school. The school has implemented a policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Provision and standards in modern foreign languages have improved substantially. In addition to these issues, raised at the previous inspection, the school has greatly improved its facilities for ICT. It has also developed a centre for pupils at the risk of exclusion and for pupils, who need extra help and support.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 11 results

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
	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 attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Overall, GCSE results are well below average, as the table indicates. This is mainly because not enough pupils gain five or more GCSEs with grades A* - G. Nearly every pupil, who underachieved did so because their attendance was poor or they had particular problems. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* - C grades is average and reflects the work that the school has done to support pupils capable of gaining the higher grades. In Years 10 and 11, standards are satisfactory in most subjects with the exception of art and physical education, where standards and achievement are unsatisfactory. Pupils achieve particularly well in geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, and music. In Years 7, 8 and 9, standards are satisfactory in most subjects with the exception of design and technology and physical education. In all subjects, pupils now achieve as expected, with the exception of boys in physical education. All pupils achieve particularly well in music and religious education.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **good**.

Attendance overall is unsatisfactory and the school could do more to try and improve it. Behaviour is good. Pupils show good attitudes to their learning and enjoy their time in school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching is **satisfactory overall** and is often good.

In nearly all lessons, teachers plan a range of activities that keep pupils motivated and interested in learning. Pupils enjoy and are good at speaking and listening and teachers give plenty of opportunities for this in lessons. Their writing is less well developed because they have too few opportunities to write at length. The curriculum offered has some strengths and some weaknesses. Opportunities for pupils to participate in activities outside of lessons in sport, music and expressive arts are good. However, there are not enough well-planned programmes for lower-attaining pupils to follow in Years 10 and 11. There is also not enough time for religious education in Years 10 and 11. All adults provide effective help and support for all pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**.

Over the last five years, the senior management team, with the support of the governors, has worked hard to improve the atmosphere in the school. The acting headteacher provides very good leadership and the senior team is developing into their new leadership roles. Management is satisfactory. Although there are effective systems for the day-to-day running of the school, there are not enough systems in place for the school to monitor and evaluate its work.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a popular choice for parents, who recognise and value the school's happy, welcoming atmosphere, good behaviour, and improving examination results. Its reputation with parents has grown over the years. The number of pupils just started in Year 7 is the highest the school has ever known, proof indeed of its popularity. Pupils also value those aspects that parents appreciate, namely, the school's friendliness and happy atmosphere. They particularly value the support and guidance given to them by all staff. Pupils are very critical, and rightly so, about the poor state of the physical education changing rooms.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Develop and implement procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, including making better use of data.
- Review its procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance.
- Develop a curriculum for lower attainers in Years 10 and 11 that could lead them into further education or training when they leave the school.

and to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide enough time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 so that the locally agreed syllabus can be covered.
- Ensure that tutor time follows up the theme for the week and the thought for the day so that the school meets the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **satisfactory** in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 to 11 for those pupils, who attend school regularly. Test and examination results are below average, but **are improving and are in line with similar schools**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs with A* - C grades improved significantly in 2002.
- Standards and achievement are good in music and religious education.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are good and teachers use these skills to help pupils learn. Writing skills are less well developed.
- Pupils are good at using computers for a range of tasks.
- Pupils of different abilities do not always make the progress that they should.
- Some older pupils do not do as well as they could because they do not attend school regularly.

Commentary

Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31 (32)	33.3 (33)
mathematics	31.2 (32.7)	34.7 (34.4)
science	29.8 (29.4)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 137 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Results in tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well below average and lower than average in similar schools. However, results in 2003 are better, reversing the trend of recent years when results were falling slightly year on year. English results are substantially better than results in 2002, particularly in the number of pupils gaining the higher than average level. Girls' results are generally better than boys in English and science. Their results are similar in maths.

Key Stage 4

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	40.8 (21.1)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	71.7 (71.1)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	93 (91)	96 (97)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	31.8 (25.6)	39.8 (39)

There were 120 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. GCSE results are below average, but have improved at a faster rate than results nationally over the last three years. Results in 2002 overall were the same as in similar schools. Although the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A* - C was good, not enough pupils gained five or more grades A* - G. Results in 2003 are similar to those in 2002. However, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* - G improved by 8 per cent on the 2002 figure.
3. Standards are satisfactory in all subjects in Years 7, 8 and 9 with the exception of design and technology and physical education. In design and technology, there is too much emphasis on the design process and not enough on making products. In physical education, the standards achieved by boys are low because, over a two-year period, temporary staff and sometimes non-specialists have often taught them. In other subjects, pupils achieve as expected. They achieve particularly well in music and religious education. In music, inspirational teaching helps pupils of all abilities to develop musical knowledge and skills.
4. In Years 10 and 11, standards are satisfactory in most subjects, with the exception of art and physical education. In the past, standards in mathematics have not been good enough, but they have now improved. Pupils achieve particularly well in geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, and music. Pupils do well on the GCSE religious education course, but achievement on the course that all pupils follow is unsatisfactory. There is not enough time on the timetable for them to complete the work required. Achievement is also unsatisfactory in art and physical education. In art, there is not enough three-dimensional work. Arrangements to cover the absence of the head of department are not monitored enough to make sure that the department continues to improve.
5. In a few subjects, pupils of different abilities are not achieving as well as they might. For example, higher attainers do not do as well as they should in art and geography. In ICT, there are not enough support resources for lower attainers. This shows that the school has not monitored teaching and learning enough to ensure that all pupils are achieving as they should.
6. Pupils, parents, governors and staff were very pleased with the improvement in GCSE examination results in 2002. The school had introduced a number of strategies to support pupils. All pupils, who were capable of achieving five or more GCSE grades, were allocated a mentor from the school staff. Parents were involved and the school made its expectations of them, if they wanted their children to succeed, very clear. Revision classes started early in the academic year. Some subjects completed coursework while pupils were in Year 10 to ensure that that part of the assessment was completed. Most significantly, the school stopped study leave in order to support pupils right up to the examination.
7. Pupils have very good speaking and listening skills, which teachers use in their teaching. Whole-class question and answer sessions are effective because pupils are confident and willing to express their ideas. Sometimes these sessions can continue for too long with too much talking from the teacher. Most pupils are competent readers. Writing skills are less well developed and teachers provide too few opportunities for extended writing. Pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory and good enough for them to be able to tackle number work in other subjects. Pupils' ICT skills are good because all pupils have an ICT lesson every week and teaching is good. Pupils will have no problems in using computers when they are used in other subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance overall is **unsatisfactory**. Behaviour is **good**. Pupils show **good** attitudes to their learning. The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is not as good as it should be. The school does not do enough to emphasise the importance of good attendance with parents.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils create a very positive climate for learning and a strong moral community.
- Not enough opportunities have been identified to develop the spiritual aspect of pupils' personalities.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	10.6	School data :	0.9
National data:	7.8	National data:	1.2

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

8. The school's procedures to improve attendance are unsatisfactory because they are not implemented with sufficient rigour to be effective. The repeated and sometimes prolonged absence of a significant minority of pupils is an important barrier to the raising of standards. Not only is progress slowed when lessons are missed, but some pupils fail to attend for external examinations. The school does not do enough to influence parental attitudes. It authorises absences without question and does not monitor and refuse requests for absence for holidays. Leadership decisions about attendance issues taken in the past have not been clearly thought-out and rationalised.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Asian

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
724	124	1
1	0	0

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

9. The majority of pupils, who attend regularly, show good attitudes to learning and conform well to the school's expectations. Behaviour in lessons is often very good. The school has established a new centre called the PIEL centre and support to reduce the number of exclusions.
10. Pupils often show their enthusiasm for learning, and generally respond very well to teachers' questions. They take opportunities to show initiative and willingly take on responsibilities when these are given. Group work and discussion are normally conducted sensibly and co-operatively. Pupils exercise self-control and show respect in listening to each other. Such discussions sometimes include sensitive issues, both

personal and social, fostering care and concern for others. This growing maturity is evident even when the teaching is not of a high quality because pupils still behave well. This applies to low- as well as high-attaining pupils and to boys and girls. The self-confidence of pupils is boosted by individual contact with teachers. Between lessons, the presence of Year 11 prefects and Year 10 'buddies' checks over-boisterous behaviour and supports younger pupils. The school feels a safe place to be, even when over 700 people are moving through the buildings.

11. Since pupils now generally conform well, more could be done to encourage them to be independent learners and to exercise real responsibility on important issues in the school community. Teaching in lessons, registration and assemblies does not provide enough opportunities to raise spiritual awareness, including by quiet reflection. Spiritual awareness has too low a profile in teaching and learning generally, despite some good examples.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching overall is **satisfactory** and is often good. In lessons where teaching is good or better, pupils make good gains in their learning. In lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, lesson planning is not as good as it could be. There is good practice in marking and assessment in some subjects, but this is not shared with other departments.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 95 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	14 (15%)	44 (46%)	26 (27%)	10 (11%)	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

- Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good, leading to a very good and purposeful atmosphere in lessons.
- All teachers have a good understanding of how to manage pupils' behaviour and do this effectively.
- Planning is good and teachers share the purpose of lessons with pupils. However, the 50 minute lesson is too short for mathematics, science and geography.
- Teachers are aware of the different needs of pupils, but in some subjects they do not always meet the needs of either higher or lower attainers.
- Lesson observations have taken place, but observations have not been used to identify an overall view of the quality of teaching and learning or to identify teachers, who would benefit from support to help them improve.

Commentary

12. Teaching and learning are good in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and geography. They are very good in music and ICT. Both very good and unsatisfactory teaching was seen in English and in design and technology.
13. In all subjects, teachers and pupils enjoy productive working relationships. Pupils also have very good relationships with each other. As a consequence of this they have the confidence to express their own ideas and opinions. Teachers often use and

encourage speaking and listening as part of their teaching. Sometimes this can be at the expense of writing and in some subjects there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length.

14. In all lessons, pupils behave well, even when teaching is not as good as it should be. Lessons begin promptly and there are very few distractions caused by pupils misbehaving. Teachers and the school overall have high expectations of behaviour, which most pupils live up to. Any minor incidents are dealt with effectively and no time is lost for learning.
15. Teachers make good use of the lesson-planning framework promoted as part of the national Key Stage 3 strategy. The best practice was seen in science and music. In a well-planned science lesson, the teacher shared clear learning objectives with pupils and at the end of the lesson she and the pupils summarised the learning that had taken place. In music, very good lesson planning, along with the teacher's enthusiasm and musical expertise, led to very good learning. Pupils were making great gains in musical knowledge and skills and in understanding of the styles and structure of African music.
16. Information on pupils with special educational needs and those, who are gifted or talented, is available to all teachers. Some teachers make good use of this information to plan their lessons. However, this practice is not well-developed across and within subjects. For example, whilst art teachers provide very good support for lower-attaining pupils they do not always take account of the needs of higher-attaining pupils in lessons. The opposite is true in ICT where teachers provide good support for higher attainers, but not enough for lower attainers.
17. In English and technology, there were too many unsatisfactory lessons. Although there is good leadership and management in these departments there is not enough monitoring of teaching and learning. This is because there is not a whole-school system of systematic lesson observations. As a result, teachers, who need help, are not easily identified and support provided.

The curriculum

The overall provision for the curriculum is **unsatisfactory**. The provision is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9, but not in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are not enough courses to cater for all abilities in Years 10 and 11. It is unclear how experiences fit together within the alternative curriculum for lower attainers and disaffected pupils.
- Information technology lessons are available to all pupils and computers are readily available as a learning resource.
- Religious education and physical education do not have enough time to deliver the curriculum.
- The newly opened support centre has much potential and is providing an effective base in which mentors and guidance staff can work with individual pupils at risk of exclusion or non-attendance.
- Extra-curricular activities in expressive arts are very good.

Commentary

18. The range of learning opportunities in all years broadly caters for pupils' needs, aspirations and interests, with the exception of particular aspects, which means that the curriculum overall cannot be described as satisfactory.
19. Pupils have satisfactory access to the range of National Curriculum subjects in Years 7, 8 and 9, but there is insufficient time allocated to physical education in Year 8 for the programme to be adequately delivered. In Years 10 and 11, a range of examination courses at GCSE level is offered, but there are not enough successful alternative courses offered in these years to meet the needs of all pupils satisfactorily. The lower-attaining pupils are particularly disadvantaged in this respect. Similarly, there is not enough time allocated on the timetable for religious education or physical education in Years 10 and 11. The provision of the national youth silver award in Key Skills is proving a successful course for some pupils. However, the routes and paths through the alternative curriculum in Years 10 and 11 are not clear. Most pupils feel generally well-guided in their choice of courses and careers. They have satisfactory access to guidance from Connexions and the school maintains effective links with two local colleges.
20. Pupils with special educational needs are generally satisfactorily provided for, with some areas of the school making good provision. The best practice occurs in lessons where teachers have high expectations, give special attention to slower learners and carefully structure their support. These teachers make constructive use of individual education plans and ensure that all pupils are included in the lessons.
21. The provision for pupils' personal, social, and health education is satisfactory with a new course in operation this year. This includes relationships education and units on alcohol and drug misuse. The programme is supplemented by a programme of visiting speakers and specialists. There is no satisfactory provision for a daily act of collective worship, although tutors and assemblies do offer a 'Thought for the Day' that allows some opportunity for reflection.
22. All pupils have access to all areas of learning with the exception of two subjects. Higher-attaining pupils are disadvantaged in mathematics because they are not entered for higher-level examinations. Due to long-term staffing difficulties in physical education, boys do not have access to the full range of sports and games.
23. The curriculum is developing with some innovative practice. Astronomy is offered to examination level, there is a statistics class in Year 10, pupils in Year 8 geography have been trialling a system of self-assessment for National Curriculum levels and e-learning is developing across the school.
24. The school offers a satisfactory range of activities outside the school day. Participation in the arts is good overall, thanks in part to the very good drama productions that are enthusiastically supported by pupils.
25. The school's staffing situation is good overall, except for physical education where staffing is very poor. Both accommodation and resources in school are satisfactory, except for the very poor outdoor accommodation in physical education. The school's bid for a new sports hall has been accepted. Otherwise, the premises, books and equipment adequately support learning.

Care, guidance and support

Care, guidance and support are consistently **very good** because all adults respect and value pupils and want to see them all do well and achieve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good and trusting relationships with adults in the school.
- The learning mentor programme to support pupils' academic progress through Years 7, 8 and 9 is good.
- The mentoring programme for pupils in Year 11 is a significant factor in improving GCSE examination results.
- Very good health and safety procedures ensure pupils work in a safe and secure environment, although some risk assessments have not been done.

Commentary

26. With good supportive advice and guidance, pupils are able to learn effectively. Arrangements to support pupils new to the school in Year 7 are so very good that pupils are excited, settle very quickly, behave well and get on with learning. The comprehensive programme that begins with the 'On Track' week for pupils in Year 5 involves parents all the way through to the pupils' entry in Year 7.
27. The school complies fully with procedures for child protection. The policies are effectively implemented, and the designated member of staff, class teachers and other adults are fully aware of what needs to be done should such cases arise. Pupils are very well cared for and the school meets the needs of pupils with statements of special educational needs well.
28. Healthy and safety procedures are very good. The school takes all reasonable steps to monitor and promote the health and well-being of all pupils and staff. Very effective use is made of technical information, advice and training to alert all staff to their responsibilities. Staff know the pupils very well and are alert to hazards in the work of the school. However, risk assessments have not been carried out in all subject areas.
29. Relationships are very good. Pupils feel secure and form very good relationships with adults in whom they feel they can confide. The school makes good use of assessment information to provide well-targeted support, advice and guidance for pupils and to raise achievement of identified groups of pupils. Pupils are very clear about the targets set and the role of teachers, mentors and learning mentors. Parents play a crucial role with the mentors in supporting their child's learning and speak highly about the support their children receive. Some pupils in Years 7 to 9, including those with special education needs, are successfully supported on a monitored programme that focuses on homework and involves parents.
30. In most subjects, assessment information is used well to track the pupils' progress and their personal development. It is less well used to monitor and measure the overall gains in pupils' learning from entering to leaving the school.
31. Pupils feel happy, secure and very well supported, especially those new to the school. Older pupils are glad they came to the school because there is always help and support for problems. The one-to-one mentoring, highly rated by pupils in Year 11, is successful in helping pupils at risk of underachieving in GCSE examinations. There are many opportunities for pupils to express their opinions, including the school's

council. Pupils know they are listened to and older pupils especially feel their views are respected.

32. Arrangements to make sure parents and pupils in Years 9 and 11 have careers information and impartial advice and guidance are effective. Pupils in Year 9 are well guided when choosing their options for exam entry. They are very appreciative of examples of past work that show the standards required. They also know where to get more information.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnerships with its parents, other schools and the community are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is well thought of by parents and is a popular choice. Relationships between home and school are warm and friendly.
- Annual written reports about pupils' progress are not very helpful; statements are often contradictory and repetitious.
- Too many parents allow their children to be off school unnecessarily and too much time is taken for holidays in term-time.
- The school makes good use of opportunities for the community to help with learning.
- Links with primary schools are strong, especially though the Year 5 Curriculum Week. College links are not so productive; there are too few alternative courses available for pupils, especially lower attainers.

Commentary

33. Over the years, parents have come to value the school, especially its friendliness, good pastoral care, good behaviour and improving examination results. These are reasons for its growing popularity. Improvements that focus on getting the climate for learning in school right have evolved through good leadership. The acting headteacher is well thought of by parents and is a popular figure.
34. Parental concerns are taken seriously and the school goes to great lengths to investigate and resolve any worries parents or pupils have. Pupils are happy in school and acknowledge the support they receive from staff. Governors realise there has been no formal process for assessing parents' views and considering them. They intend to remedy this in the future.
35. Encouragement for Year 11 parents to work with their child's mentor and provide support through examination and coursework means parents feel more confident and willing to keep an eye on their child's progress during their last vital year. Both current and past Year 11 pupils praised the mentoring system and said how helpful it was. They would like to see it extended into Year 10. The effective use of mentors is due to the commitment and dedication from the mentors themselves, heads of year and senior managers. Encouraging parents from other year groups to support their child is less strong.
36. Communications with parents are usually good and they are assured of a warm welcome by reception staff. Unfortunately, parents have not been helped this year by annual reports being bland, repetitious and sometimes contradictory. Reports do not clearly spell out what pupils need to do to improve.

37. Too many parents allow their child to be absent from school, and condone absences without genuine reasons for it. Parents ask for and take far too many holidays during term-time. This high level of absenteeism limits the academic success of some pupils. Work with parents has been too focussed on finding out the reason for absence, rather than working with parents to get the child back into school.
38. Community involvement is welcomed and actively sought out. Some productive and valued partnerships are helping to add a different perspective to all the school offers. The school has seen its role in the community grow, and several local clubs such as dance, football, and gym hire the school and are attended by pupils.
39. There are good links with primary schools. Each year, Year 5 pupils visit for a whole week to experience a well-planned programme of new learning, including science experiments, French, drama, and music. This is highly regarded by the partner primary schools and clearly enjoyed by pupils. Contacts between schools, to enable teachers to build on and develop primary work during pupils' first year here, are more variable. They are good in mathematics, but need more work in science and English.
40. College links are not as strong. Year 11 pupils receive enough information to help them choose sensibly what to do and where to go when they leave. The partnership is weaker in terms of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. There are not enough college courses offered for older and especially lower-attaining pupils, who would benefit from more vocational opportunities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are **good**. Leadership is **good**, particularly from the senior team and most middle managers, a number of whom are new to the school. Management is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very positive atmosphere in the school within which all pupils can learn and be happy. All staff, including support staff, play a significant role in creating this through the way they work with pupils and parents.
- There have been some very good strategies introduced to make sure that pupils capable of achieving five or more A* - C grades fulfil their potential.
- There is a strong sense of teamwork developing amongst staff, who feel well supported by the acting headteacher and deputy head.
- There has not been enough work on developing monitoring and evaluation within the school and data has not been used effectively to identify where the school is doing well and where it needs to focus improvements.
- Governors are knowledgeable and understand their roles and responsibilities. However, because they have not received sufficient information in the past they have not challenged the school as much as they might have done.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2 275 530
Total expenditure	2 244 112
Expenditure per pupil	3315

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	96 244
Balance carried forward to the next	127 662

Commentary

41. Over the last five years, the senior management team, with the support of the governors, has worked hard to improve the atmosphere in the school. Relationships between pupils and adults are very good because staff show considerable respect for pupils and gain pupils' respect in return. Pupils spoke very highly of the support they had received and past pupils exuded pride in their school. This same respect is extended to parents.
42. The school has prioritised the need to increase the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs with grades in the A* - C range. In 2002, results were the highest ever and better than results in similar schools. This was achieved through allocating mentors to pupils identified as being at risk of not fulfilling their potential. The school also decided to cancel any study leave and continued to teach pupils right up to their examinations. The school is also committed to working with pupils experiencing difficulties. With money provided through the national project called Excellence in Clusters, the school has established a centre for pupils at risk of exclusion and for pupils, who need additional support to help them return to lessons following absence.
43. Over the last five years, there have been changes in the leadership of a number of departments and most recently in the senior team as a result of the headteacher moving to another school. Already there is a strong sense of teamwork developing and staff are always very willing to help and support each other. Many spoke highly of the support they had received from the acting headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher. There is very good leadership in geography, ICT, modern foreign languages and music. Only in physical education are leadership and management unsatisfactory.
44. The school functions very effectively on a day-to-day basis as a calm and orderly community. Communications are effective and particularly with parents, who can be assured of a rapid response when they contact the school. Performance management is well established and supported by appropriate training opportunities. Although responsibilities are clear and outlined in job descriptions, line management responsibilities have relied too heavily on a few members of the senior team.
45. The school has taken a long-term view of planning and has priorities and objectives to cover four years. However, there are a number of different planning documents and no annual cycle to ensure that the next years plan builds on a systematic and formal evaluation of progress. Success criteria in the plan relate more to doing the tasks than achieving improvement. Lesson observations have taken place using a comprehensive framework provided by the local education authority. This has proved helpful to the group looking at effective teaching. It is less successful in monitoring teaching and learning in departments and in identifying where teachers need support.

46. The governing body are developing into a very effective team. There are a number of new governors, who, along with the more established members, are keen to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. They have worked hard to support the school, but have not always had the necessary information to help them challenge the school about its performance. This is not so in the case of the finance committee. The chair of this committee spoke knowledgeably about the way the committee works and how they ensure that the school provides value for money. She was able to give examples of best value principles in practice, such as comparing expenditure against other County Durham schools. Currently, the school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4.

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Lessons were sampled in Media Studies where provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong working relationships that teachers establish with pupils impact positively on standards.
- Test results at the end of Year 9 have improved significantly this year. The proportion of pupils, who gained GCSE grades A*-C is above average.
- The most able pupils achieve well in English.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed and contribute significantly to how well they learn in lessons.
- Inconsistency in the quality of teaching depresses the standards achieved.
- There are limited opportunities for independent and collaborative working by pupils.

Commentary

47. Test results at the end of Year 9 this year were much better than they were in 2002. Results in 2002 were below average, but were in line with similar schools. Girls achieved much better results than boys in 2002, but in 2003 that gap narrowed. The highly positive atmosphere and good working relations between teachers and pupils have contributed strongly to this improvement in standards. Achievement in terms of the progress pupils have made since entering the school is now satisfactory.
48. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A* - C in 2002 was above average for both boys and girls. However, the number of pupils not entered for the GCSE English Language examination was too high. Unconfirmed results in 2003 show an increase in the proportion of pupils entered for the examination, but a decline in results. In both English Language and in English literature, girls did better than boys.
49. High-attaining pupils achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11. Their growing ability to write detailed literary criticism is particularly notable. They learn to write good explanations of the language used by writers supported by a detailed analysis of its effectiveness. As a result, they produce work of a high standard.
50. All pupils develop their skills in the identification and use of imaginative language. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from effective support from the teaching assistant attached to the department. Levels of achievement are, however, clearly linked to the quality of teaching within the department and, whilst teaching is satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses, particularly in the teaching of low-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11. Poor patterns of attendance also depress the achievement of these pupils. A high proportion of pupils make good progress with speaking and listening skills because their contributions to lessons are clearly valued and this

supports self-confidence. The same good progress is not always evident in reading and writing.

51. There is a marked difference between good teaching that enthuses pupils and that which fails to make sufficient demands of the pupils. Where teaching is good and better, teachers have a very good command of their subject and they interest and engage pupils, whatever their ability. This ensures that they achieve well and reach standards at least in line with those expected for their age. For example, a low-ability group made good progress in understanding an excerpt from Chaucer's *The Miller's Tale* because of the teacher's own enthusiasm and ability to recite the text from memory and with feeling. Too much of the learning, however, is teacher directed with little opportunity for independent and collaborative working or for writing within lessons. When given the opportunity to work in groups, pupils do this exceptionally well, drawing on their well-developed skills of speaking and listening. An example of this was the confident and perceptive analysis of poems relating to prejudice seen in a Year 8 lesson. A lack of rigour and challenge and the failure to move learning forwards characterises the unsatisfactory teaching within the department. Although teachers set targets for improvement when marking work, these are not sufficiently linked to achieving a higher level or grade. Marking supports literary analysis very effectively, but is not so successful in helping pupils to overcome difficulties with basic skills such as paragraphing.
52. Leadership in the department is good. The new head of department has a clear understanding of standards within the subject and has identified a range of initiatives to improve pupils' achievements. She knows that progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory and recognises that she has to bring about a greater consistency in the quality of teaching for standards to rise.

Modern Foreign Languages

Overall, provision for modern foreign languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have been raised because planning is thorough and teaching is good.
 - Leadership and management are strong and have contributed to the significant improvement within the department.
 - Resources are used imaginatively, but teachers do not use enough French and German in lessons.
 - Work for Years 7, 8 and 9 still needs further development, as does the use of ICT.
 - The time of support staff is not always well used.
53. Standards have risen sharply since the last inspection. Results are in line with the national average at GCSE level and approaching the national averages by the end of Year 9. The progress pupils make is now satisfactory by the end of Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. This is directly related to the good standards of teaching and subsequent learning and to better planning that takes place in all years.
54. Teachers engage their groups with imaginative and varied activities and resources and this range of methods ensures that pupils remain interested and respond well to the work set. Pupils are also exactly aware of what they need to do because teachers share lesson objectives and refer consistently to examination requirements, especially in GCSE courses. Pupils are challenged to do their best at all levels and, as a result, the participation of both boys and girls is impressive. Pupils, who have special

educational needs are also well catered for and make progress at the same rate as their peers.

55. Less good teaching and slower progress is seen when teachers do not use enough French or German in lessons in the respective languages so that learners do not hear enough of the foreign language to achieve as well as they might. When teaching is only satisfactory the pace slackens, or the lesson recap is rushed, and pupils do not learn effectively. Marking is done regularly, but does not tell pupils how they can improve still further. The department knows that it needs to improve the way it uses support staff.
56. The leadership and management of the department are both very good. The head of department demonstrates clear vision, very good strategic planning and budgeting and a well-defined awareness of the issues involved. The department is very effectively led in its drive to raise standards. This is particularly evident in Years 10 and 11 where the focus on improvement has been. The team now understands the need to move this improvement into Years 7, 8 and 9 by employing the same rigorous marking, assessment and teaching techniques as are practised further up the school.
57. Other factors contributing to the department's success are the thriving exchange trip to Germany, the parity between French and German across the department and the contribution language learning makes to pupils' literacy skills. There is not enough use of ICT in lessons as a way of learning for all pupils. The quality of reports to parents is also an area needing development and improvement.
58. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The much improved leadership and management, full complement of staff, raised morale and time allocated on the timetable are all important factors. There is still a problem with absenteeism, ICT is still not available to all learners, and pupils are not able to study two languages. However, with the much improved profile of foreign languages within the school, the department is well-placed to address these issues in the future.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Standards of language and literacy across the curriculum are satisfactory overall. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed and this sometimes leads to an over-reliance on these skills within lessons. For example, in some English and mathematics lessons, whole-class questioning and answering went on for too long. Pupils have good opportunities for extended and imaginative writing in science, for example. In art, geography, history, music, modern foreign languages and religious education, teachers enthusiastically promote the learning of key words associated with the subjects. There is also evidence of the growing use of support structures such as writing frames and sentence starters to ensure effective writing. Nevertheless, the level of language used in reading materials is sometimes too high for pupils with difficulties in reading. Examples of this were seen in design and technology. In addition, limited opportunity for extended writing in subjects other than English means that pupils cannot always access the highest grades in subjects like history and geography.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

60. The main focus was on mathematics, but statistics was also sampled. In 2003, the school entered a very small number of pupils for GCSE in statistics and results are likely to be below average. The school now offers the subject to the two highest ability groups in Year 10 and it is taught within mathematics lessons. Both classes were seen and both lessons were good. Pupils are keen to learn and teachers have good subject knowledge.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in recent years have been well below the national average.
- Achievement across the school of current pupils is improving and is now satisfactory.
- Teaching is good and is typified by very good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- The imaginative use of interactive whiteboards is helping pupils to make better progress than they did in the past.
- Leadership and management are good and improving.
- There is too little emphasis on reading and writing.

Commentary

61. Standards are improving. Currently, pupils' work in Year 9 is in line with national expectation, but in Year 11, standards are below what is expected. This does, however, reflect satisfactory achievement as when these pupils joined the school in Year 7 their standards were below average. Achievement is now satisfactory because of the improved leadership and management in the last two years. This has focused on lively teaching and better tracking of pupils' progress by all teachers. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, mainly because pupils now learn well in the majority of lessons.
62. In 2002, the results of pupils in Year 9 in National Curriculum tests were well below average. In 2003, results improved slightly. This has reversed the downward trend of recent years. There continues to be no marked differences in the performance of boys and girls.
63. In lessons, there are further clear signs of improvement. Pupils in Year 9 with significant special educational needs in terms of behaviour and learning show great enthusiasm for their work. They achieve well because of the dedication of a particular teacher, who specialises in teaching lower-attaining pupils and has high expectations for them. The majority of pupils in Year 9, however, whilst progressing well now, have made only satisfactory progress since entry in Year 7 because of less consistent teaching in the past. The most able pupils talk confidently about mathematical problems, but pupils of average ability are sometimes quite passive. They show disappointing recall of facts they should know and sought reassurance too often at the start of a lesson. Only because of imaginative teaching using visual representations on an interactive whiteboard did the pupils reach the standard they should be at.
64. In 2002, the GCSE results were well below average. These continued the trend of recent years and were a little better in 2003. No pupils gained the highest grade in either year, despite there being a few pupils in each year with the potential to do so. In lessons, current Year 11 pupils are doing better than this. They make satisfactory

progress from their entry level in Year 7 and National Curriculum results at the end of Year 9. However, the high levels of absence mean that GCSE results for the whole cohort are likely to be well below average again. Those pupils with special educational needs, who attend regularly, make consistently good progress because of the individual attention they receive from teachers and the teaching assistant.

65. Overall, teaching is now good. All teachers use the interactive whiteboards well. The boards appeal to pupils because of the high quality of visual displays. Teachers structure lessons well to build up learning, but too often engage the whole class in oral question and answer sessions that last too long. In such cases, pupils within the class, who could move forward quicker, are delayed. Relationships with pupils are very good and pupils are attentive and well behaved. Pupils respond well to the opportunity to work together or come to the front to demonstrate use of the interactive whiteboard. Teachers care for pupils and track their progress well over time. Whilst learning is usually good and often very good, teachers do not do enough to help pupils develop more self-reliance. Pupils do not always have sufficient practice at reading questions or opportunities for sustained individual work within 50 minute lessons. They have few opportunities to produce written answers and few chances to take textbooks home.
66. Leadership and management are now good and improving. The new head of department has provided enthusiasm and monitors new developments well. Lively teaching, in line with the national strategy, and increased tracking of pupils' progress are now well established. Aspirations are rising for both teachers and pupils. The teachers work well as a team and are beginning to share good practice and decide what does not work so well.

Mathematics across the curriculum

67. Standards of mathematical competence are sufficient to allow pupils to progress at least adequately in all subject areas. In science, geography and history, pupils' numeracy skills enable them to measure accurately, calculate and draw graphs. In information and communication technology, pupils use spreadsheets well to introduce the fundamentals of algebra. Mathematical competency is developed less in music and modern foreign languages, although it is done effectively when the need arises in these subjects. All teachers have received training in numeracy and there is good written guidance to suggest how mathematics may be developed in all subjects. Whilst mathematical competence across the curriculum is satisfactory, there is no consistent tracking of its use. The mathematics department, however, usually focuses on one department each month to promote the importance of mathematics within that subject.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

68. The focus was on science, but a new course on astronomy was also sampled. In the one lesson, Year 10 pupils worked with enthusiasm and application to complete a demanding computer-based task related to the shapes of various constellations. Teaching and learning were both very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership ensures that the department is focused on good-quality teaching and learning.
- Very good use is made of investigative work to underpin the learning of scientific principles.
- Standards are below average at the end of Year 11.
- Very good working relationships give pupils the confidence to enter into discussions.
- Marking of class books does not give enough help in identifying what needs to improve nor guidance on how to improve.
- The head of department does not have enough time to monitor teaching and learning in order to ensure consistency and the spread of good practice.

Commentary

69. Results and current standards continue to rise, but are only average at the end of Year 9 and below average at the end of Year 11. Standards have improved from the previous inspection. The pace of change in Years 10 and 11 has been slower. The changes in attitudes in the lower school are only now beginning to have an effect in the upper school. Consequently, achievement is only satisfactory overall. It looks set to improve as standards in coursework are much higher than previously produced. The new head of department has sharply focussed the department on good-quality teaching and learning. More pupils are working at the higher levels and enjoying science. The setting of targets for pupils and the introduction of booster and revision classes have also given an impetus to learning.
70. Lessons are carefully planned with a range of learning activities. Science is made interesting so that pupils become more involved in their own learning. Teachers' assessments have become more accurate because of the increased frequency of tests and the analysis of the results. However, individual lessons are too short to allow ideas to be fully developed. The result is that pupils are not extended or fully stretched in their thinking. Pupils with special educational needs work in smaller classes, get more individual help and, consequently, make better progress. Pupils develop good literacy skills through discussions and the many opportunities to write their own descriptions and conclusions. All pupils have a very good understanding of scientific method and high attainers produce predictions based on research and evaluate their work with maturity and understanding.
71. Teaching is good. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed, which shows good improvement from the previous inspection. All lessons are carefully planned with a common structure to promote good learning. The short lesson time tends to make the final check of understanding too brief. In consequence, teachers cannot be certain that all pupils have achieved the learning targets. Pupils get fully involved in the many discussions and develop independence through planning their own experiments in extended investigations. However, shorter investigations are not of the same high quality. Work is more teacher-directed and, although classroom help is good, pupils receive less individual guidance and helpful advice in their class-work books. This hinders progress. The working relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and give pupils the confidence to join in the frequent discussions and to both ask and answer questions. Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences in science; marvelling at cell division and genetics, discussing the pros and cons of scientific advances, working safely in groups and researching the contribution of scientists from different cultures. Computers are not used widely enough to enhance teaching and learning.

72. Leadership is very good. This has improved from the previous inspection. Assessment and analysis of results are used effectively to influence curriculum planning. Although assessment and target-setting systems are good, they do not go far enough in identifying specific scientific areas for individual pupils to improve. Innovative courses in applied science and astronomy have been introduced and allow pupils to follow courses related to their ability and interest. The head of department does not have enough time to monitor teaching and learning in order to ensure consistency and spread of good practice. He fosters very good teamwork and is providing the leadership necessary to take the department forward. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 9 are good and results in public examinations are well above average.
- Teaching is very good overall and sets high expectations.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to their ICT work and make good progress.
- Pupils make variable and too little use of ICT to support their learning across other subjects.
- Both the school and the department are benefiting from the leadership and expertise of the head of department.

Commentary

73. By the end of Year 9, pupils use a range of software and have good levels of confidence when using computers. Work is clearly structured by teachers and pupils' knowledge and understanding are systematically developed through practical tasks. Standards are above average. Teaching and learning are good overall and Year 9 pupils quickly make up for their lack of not having ICT lessons in Year 8. Teacher assessments confirm that standards are better than they were in 2002. The national initiative for ICT is helping teachers develop materials and methods that increase pupils' involvement in lessons. Behaviour and relationships are very good and support independence and good learning. Improvements in facilities now ensure that all pupils have ICT lessons and other subjects can make use of ICT.
74. Standards in ICT are well above average by the end of Year 11 and have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils make very good progress in their learning. In 2002, a larger proportion of pupils took the examination than is the case nationally. Results for both boys and girls were well above average. Pupils did better in ICT than in their other subjects. Results in 2003 were again very good for the GNVQ course. Lower-attaining pupils and those on college link courses are catered for and can take a certificate of achievement in ICT. GNVQ pupils in particular demonstrate very good levels of independence. This is because teaching is very good, sets high expectations and builds on skills and knowledge developed from Year 9. Pupils get regular information about progress against the examination requirements, which helps them learn.
75. Leadership and management of ICT are very good. Roles and responsibilities within the teaching team are well managed and teachers' skills are used very effectively. There has been a very successful focus on improving facilities and raising standards.

ICT rooms and the resource centre are of high quality, well organised and pupils enjoy using computers for work in their own time. Parents are very appreciative of the facilities. They are well managed and maintained by the network manager and ICT technician.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. As there are now more computers in school more use is being made of them by other teachers in other subjects. Pupils certainly have the necessary skills to do this. Computers are now being used as an integral part of learning in the PIEL Centre. Design and technology and science both have their own facilities and the mathematics department is making good use of interactive whiteboards for teaching. Other departments, such as modern foreign languages and art, encourage regular use of ICT. Pupils are enthusiastic about using ICT, but there are not enough opportunities in other subjects for their competence with ICT to be used to support and extend their learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Detailed planning by experienced teachers results in interesting lessons in which highly motivated pupils learn well.
- Very good leadership has been responsible for departmental teamwork steadily improving results.
- Teachers' good knowledge of and high level of respect for their pupils contribute to the very positive attitudes of pupils.
- Information on how well pupils are doing is not sufficiently used to track the progress they make and to set individual targets that can be shared with pupils.
- Planning does not take account of the fact that higher-attaining pupils need to undertake more challenging tasks.
- Poor attendance limits the achievements of a small number of pupils in Year 11.

Commentary

77. Standards and achievement are satisfactory overall. Pupils currently enter the school with average geographical skills. By the end of Year 9, pupils' work is of a similar quality to that found in other schools, which means that pupils have made satisfactory progress.
78. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have chosen to study geography as an option. Results at GCSE have been steadily improving since 1998, although there have been occasional variations. These are mostly linked to cycles of poor attendance. Results are average for the higher grades A* - C, and above average for pass grades A*-G. Many of these pupils entered the school with below average geography skills and so have made good progress. Option choices have resulted in fewer higher-attaining pupils studying geography and this accounts for the recent dip in numbers attaining A* and A grades.
79. Teaching is good overall and results in good learning by most pupils. Lessons are very carefully planned and energetically presented. Pupils take a pride in their work,

which is neat, with homework usually fully completed. Classrooms are bright and filled with interesting displays of pupils' work and information on local and world issues. Although the marking in books does not identify levels of attainment or set progress targets, levels are described well in classrooms. The support provided for pupils with statements of special educational needs is good and they achieve well. Planning for higher achievement does not yet ensure that enough pupils undertake the more challenging tasks planned for them.

80. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. They have developed very good relations with pupils, who work hard as a result. GCSE teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. Individual needs are well recorded and the personal support pupils receive is a particular strength. Pupils have a clear idea of their predicted grades and can explain what they need to do to be surer of achieving them. Sadly, this does not always lead to the regular attendance needed in Year 11 if exam results are to improve significantly.
81. The department is very well led and well managed. School literacy and numeracy policies are well developed in lessons. The department works as a team, with consistently good teaching and high-quality, moderated marking of project work. Resources are well managed, although teaching would benefit from access to more up-to-date technology. Fieldwork is good in Years 10 and 11, but there is insufficient opportunity to develop practical skills in Years 7 to 9. A particularly interesting development is a pilot scheme whereby Year 8 pupils use examples of carefully marked work to learn how to evaluate their own progress. There are plans to extend this pioneering approach.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of department has very good subject knowledge and is determined to make history a popular and interesting subject for pupils.
- There are already very good relationships between new teachers and their pupils.
- Good-quality resources are well suited to the proposed changes in teaching and learning styles.
- There is not enough monitoring of teaching and learning in order to provide support to non-specialist teachers.
- Information on standards reached is not shared effectively with pupils and parents.

Commentary

82. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2002. Although standards overall have improved since the previous inspection, work at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was below average. The achievement of this group is unsatisfactory because these pupils entered school with skills that were average. The number of pupils studying history for GCSE has declined. In 2003, although all pupils, who entered GCSE gained a grade, results were not as good as in 2002. Many of these pupils had come into Year 7 with below average skills and pupils, who attended regularly through Year 11, made at least satisfactory progress.
83. Teaching is now generally satisfactory. The new head of department is already making her high expectations clear to pupils. Learning is good in lessons where pupils

begin to understand that history is about understanding issues and connections rather than remembering facts. Attitudes are generally positive, especially in the more interesting and challenging lessons. Most lessons are carefully planned, with clear objectives that are shared with pupils. Pupils learn more when well-organised teachers introduce interesting tasks, monitor pupils' progress and ensure that each pupil understands what is expected. Few pupils complete much sustained writing in lessons. By contrast, one Year 8 girl had worked at home to produce a long and historically accurate story. Her very detailed account vividly described the work and social experiences of an 18th century working-class family. Few pupils use computers for history, but they generally take pride in their work and complete homework well.

84. The topics studied are rather disjointed and pupils find it difficult to see historical patterns or make connections. This makes history unnecessarily hard, even boring, for them. The new head of department is very aware of this and already has detailed plans to change to a more thematic approach. Marking in the past has not identified the quality of the work nor provided pupils or parents with any indication of how well pupils are doing. Pupils work quite well, but most do not really enjoy history and this has resulted in reducing numbers choosing it for GCSE. Those that have are working well and are likely to achieve better results than in previous years. The main specialist room has interesting displays. National Curriculum levels are explained and there are effective sections relating to literacy and numeracy. The absence of access to communication technology, such as an overhead projector or interactive whiteboard, restricts the range of teaching techniques and resources available to pupils.
85. The head of department has only been at the school for two weeks so there is not enough evidence to judge management. However, good leadership with clear goals to raise standards are already evident. GCSE coursework has been moved into Year 10 to ensure that it is completed. History taught in Years 7 to 9 is moving to a topic approach that will make learning far more interesting. There are also plans to monitor the quality of teaching and to provide non-specialists with better subject support. The school's senior managers fully support these plans.

Religious Education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving in all year groups and pupils achieve well.
- There is not enough time for the non-examination course that all pupils follow in Years 10 and 11.
- Under the good leadership and management of the head of department, many aspects of the curriculum are improving.
- There is not enough support provided for pupils with special educational needs.

Commentary

86. The standards attained by pupils when they enter the school at the beginning of Year 7 are lower than they should be. However, by the age of 14, teachers' assessments show that standards are in line with what is expected. The majority of pupils following the GCSE course at the beginning of Year 11 achieve standards in line with national expectations.

87. As pupils move through the school, and especially when they take the GCSE course, the gap between what they are achieving and what they should achieve has closed. This reflects good achievement overall. However, the progress of some pupils with special educational needs is limited by their withdrawal from religious education lessons on a regular basis for support in basic skills. There is also a lack of additional support in the classroom, although teachers do their best to give pupils additional help in lessons. Girls achieve better results than boys, in line with the national trend.
88. During the inspection, it was not possible to see any religious education taught to the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11, who are not following the full GCSE course. No work from these pupils was available for scrutiny. Therefore, it is not possible to identify the standards that they are attaining in the subject. However, the curriculum time available for the majority of pupils is not enough to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus. This is a deterioration since the previous inspection.
89. Good teaching is responsible for improving standards in the subject. The evidence from pupils' work demonstrates that the curriculum and lessons are well planned. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They help pupils to make progress through the good use of praise, marking and assessment. Relationships are good and pupils respond well to the subject. Teachers are aware of their responsibility to develop literacy and ICT skills. Displays in the department demonstrate the development of these skills and include poems and extended writing relating to a range of topics including the war in the Middle East and the Holocaust. Although the quality of teaching is good overall there are several important areas that need to be improved. Teachers do not plan adequately for the needs of the most and least able pupils and they spend too much of the lesson talking so that pupils are not sufficiently involved in their own learning.
90. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has a clear vision of what she wants the department to look like and achieve. She is working towards this through the departmental improvement plan and through the effective use of monitoring and performance management. Good use is made of advice available in school and from the local education authority to help the department to be more effective.
91. There are good opportunities for reflection and personal response in lessons and there is a strong emphasis on moral and social education. A good lesson was seen on atonement in Judaism and pupils were invited to consider how they felt about things they had done wrong and the need to say 'sorry'. Cultural provision is good, but, although there are visits to churches in the area, there are few opportunities to visit other places of worship. The study of topics like the war in the Middle East shows the department's approach to ensuring that pupils understand religion in the context of global events and modern life.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and Technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new head of department and key staff have a clear vision for the subject and know how to improve standards.
- Relationships between staff and pupil are good and pupils are enthusiastic.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations are unsatisfactory.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory because there is too great an emphasis on designing at the expense of practical work.
- There is not enough monitoring of pupils' progress, nor of the curriculum or teaching and learning.

Commentary

92. The overall standards in design and technology are below average. Older pupils have not learned enough about how to design and make a range of products using different materials when they were younger. They do not have the breadth of ideas or experiences to call on. Their working knowledge of materials is very limited and they do not have enough skills to work materials with increased accuracy. Standards vary depending on the materials used. For example, they are better for pupils of both age groups when they are working with textiles. Pupils in Year 11 have achieved as expected since they joined the school. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is satisfactory and is beginning to improve with good teaching.
93. Teaching overall is unsatisfactory. While teachers insist on good standards of behaviour, the teaching methods used do not challenge all pupils of all abilities enough to keep them learning. Too often the resources to help pupils learn are limited and teachers rely too much on printed worksheets. Unsatisfactory planning means there is frequently too much time spent writing and drawing and not enough using materials to design and make products. When the teaching is good, pupils are given a range of ways to learn about the materials they are using. They develop design and make skills as they tackle realistic challenges. Some teachers are good at developing pupils' literacy skills and technical vocabulary, but this practice is not consistent across the department. This is a pity because pupils really enjoy using the correct technical terms to describe what they are doing. The use and development of numeracy skills are also inconsistent. Pupils use information communication technology to inform and present their work, but not often enough.
94. The new head of department has good leadership and management skills. He has an informed view of the strengths of the department and the areas for development. Assessment data is beginning to be used, especially for pupils new to the school, to match what is taught more accurately to what they need to learn and to measure progress. However, he does not have enough time to monitor the work of the department on a weekly basis, especially the teaching and pupils' class work. The number of part-time staff makes it very difficult to meet as a department to share experiences and good practice. Too much of his non-contact time is spent servicing the department because there is no technician support.

95. The new head of department has begun to make changes to what pupils are taught and when. In lessons, the progress they are making and standards of work seen are improving. However, since the last inspection, standards overall have declined.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

96. Drama and expressive arts were sampled during the inspection. Standards over the last four years are below average overall. This is partly because the expressive arts course tends to attract a higher proportion of lower attainers. Teaching and learning are good with lively interaction in response to well-focused and open questions. Teaching stimulates pupils to think about important issues in society, such as discrimination, racism and contrasting spiritual beliefs. Teaching also builds pupils' confidence and raises their self-esteem.

Art and Design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are too low by the end of Year 11.
- Painting and drawing techniques are taught well, but there is not enough three-dimensional work.
- Pupils behave very well and relationships are positive, which helps learning.
- Planning of what is to be learned over time is not sharp enough.
- Marking and assessment are not used enough to tell pupils how well they have done and how to improve further.

Commentary

97. Since the previous inspection, there has been considerable disruption to teaching and the leadership and management of the department. This has affected department developments and standards remain below the national average.
98. Teachers' assessment of standards as above average in 2002 was optimistic as it was based mainly on two-dimensional work. Assessments in 2003 indicate that standards at the end of Year 9 were slightly below average. This, however, represents satisfactory achievement by this group of pupils. Pupils are now making better progress because they enjoy regular specialist teaching. Teachers manage lessons well and relationships are very good. Pupils appreciate this and make satisfactory gains in their art skills and techniques by the end of Year 9. They make good use of the Internet for research and homework and are encouraged to speak and write about art.
99. In the 2002 GCSE examination, all Year 11 pupils, who entered achieved a grade. The proportion achieving a C grade or above was well below average. In 2003, only two pupils gained the top A* grade and overall the proportion achieving higher grades declined. Work seen indicates improvement, with standards closer to what are expected. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall, but work focuses only on two-dimensional skills. Techniques and skills in painting and drawing are sound, but pupils lack confidence in using them to develop their own ideas. Clear structured tasks help lower-attaining pupils, but restrict more imaginative and independent work by the most

able pupils. For a significant minority of pupils, poor attendance limits the progress they can make, especially with coursework.

100. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers give good advice to pupils in lessons. However, when they mark work they do not tell pupils how well they have done and what they must do to improve. Guidance in teaching schemes pays insufficient attention to what pupils should learn, how it will be assessed and how it builds on earlier work. Lessons take place in a workshop that is unsuitable and restricts the range of work.
101. The department is well managed on a day-to-day basis by an acting head of department, who gives good guidance to other staff. Since the previous inspection, there has not been sufficient progress on broadening the range of work set.

MUSIC

Provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good so that pupils both behave and achieve well.
 - Enthusiastic leadership and thorough management lead to a well-organised and very effective department.
 - Resources for learning are growing because of the teacher's initiative, so that pupils can experience a wider range of music making.
 - The accommodation is too cramped.
102. Standards overall are average. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show that a remarkably high proportion reach and exceed the expected level. Standards seen and heard during the inspection reflect these high standards. Girls do better than boys.
 103. GCSE music is now well established and examination results are average. Increasing numbers of boys and girls choose it and most achieve well. Composition and listening are better than performance for the majority of candidates since few start the course with instrumental skills. Pupils' use of computer technology is an aid to composition. Work seen during the inspection of pupils in Year 10, including two with special educational needs, and in Year 11 confirms the expectation that standards and good achievement will be maintained. A few pupils in each year go beyond, and even well beyond the expected level. All pupils make good progress, through practical and written work, in skills, knowledge and understanding of how music works and of its effects on the human spirit.
 104. Teaching in every year is very good. It engages pupils, helping them to concentrate because lessons move fast with a variety of learning activities and good use of resources. Planning is very good; it often expects different rates of progress from different pupils. Teaching has high expectations of behaviour, response and of success in the tasks set, so that achievement for all pupils is usually good. Relationships are very good because the teacher gets to know pupils well as individuals. A 'can do' atmosphere prevails in a stimulating, if cramped, environment. In GCSE classes, teaching boosts the confidence of those, who find tasks daunting, by providing achievable small steps and praise. In all years, work is assessed regularly and carefully. Pupils contribute to their assessments and most are aware of their

progress and of how to improve. Pupils are not encouraged enough to write about music and its effects in a more extended way than they do now.

105. Both leadership and management are very good. The sole teacher is very well organised, teaching all pupils in Years 7 to 9, GCSE groups, a variety of music groups at lunchtimes and after school and fostering and overseeing the work of visiting instrumental teachers. Concerts and visits are organised, benefiting talented pupils and others. The teacher seeks chances for her own professional development and is enterprising in using all opportunities for extra funds to expand resources. Music is supported well by senior managers, but largely on request rather than entitlement. The structure of line management is unclear. There is a pressing need for more space.
106. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Schemes have been re-written to a high standard. GCSE now enables some to study music further and to aim for a musical career. Deficiencies in teaching have been overcome and resources, including computers, expanded.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although girls' physical education lessons are good, boys have an unsatisfactory experience because of the absence of their teacher.
- Although teachers are doing their best, there is a lack of leadership and a number of management tasks are not being done.
- GCSE results are well below the national average and pupils' coursework is not being monitored.
- Pupils do not have enough time on their timetables in specific years for the subject.
- Accommodation is poor and has a negative affect on pupils' learning and experiences.
- Relationships between pupils and their teachers are good.

Commentary

107. GCSE passes consistently remain well below average. Through all years, with the exception of girls' gymnastics, standards of performance are unsatisfactory. In both games and trampolining, boys and girls do not reach the standards expected for their age. In basketball, even by Year 11, boys lack either basic skills or tactical awareness. However, by the end of Year 9, most girls have good gymnastic skills. Many perform skills such as cartwheels, walkovers and handstands with control and style, including pupils with special educational needs.
108. In gymnastics lessons, girls achieve well. The teacher has high expectations and gives pupils opportunities to perform to their own particular strengths. However, boys have been subjected to a very protracted period of teaching by supply, temporary and even, on occasions, non-specialist teachers. For them, teaching lacks continuity and this is having detrimental effects upon both their standards and achievements.
109. Overall, teaching is unsatisfactory. It is better, even very good, for girls and particularly in gymnastics where good lesson planning, clear learning objectives and

appropriate teacher expectations raise standards. In other lessons, learning objectives are not always shared with pupils. This means that all too easily lessons lose pace, direction and purpose. Supervision of GCSE coursework is uncoordinated. Most pupils' written work is not well organised. This leads to difficulties for them when they come to revise for their examinations.

110. Leadership and management are non-existent. Written policies and documentation do not provide vision, purpose and a sense of direction for the department. Insufficient curriculum time is allocated to the subject in Years 8, 10 and 11. This year, the GCSE course has been abandoned for Year 10 pupils. Accommodation for the subject is of very poor quality. There is no designated classroom for the GCSE course and, with the exception of a digital camera, no information and communication technology is provided within the department.
111. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Only a few miss taking part in lessons without reasonable excuses. Boys, girls and pupils with special educational needs all work well, concentrating and making sustained efforts to improve. There is good support for extra-curricular activities by staff from outside the department and from the girls' teacher. Boys and girls do, therefore, get some opportunities to take part in competitive sport.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school does not provide any courses under this heading.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The newly appointed subject co-ordinator has a clear vision for this part of the curriculum and is already introducing a scheme of work that links more closely with personal, social and health education.
- Pupils feel involved in the school council, volunteer enthusiastically to help in activities and welcome the proposed extension to year group councils.
- Procedures for monitoring teaching and learning are not yet firmly established.
- There is no systematic assessment or recording of pupils' attainment in Years 7 and 8.

Commentary

112. It was only possible to observe a lesson of citizenship in each of Years 7 and 9. In both of these, teaching and learning were satisfactory. Pupils worked hard, responding confidently and thoughtfully to the issues raised. Standards achieved were in line with those seen nationally. No lessons were seen in Years 10 and 11 and a new course that meets the National Curriculum requirements has only just started for these pupils.
113. The personal, social and health education programme meets all the statutory requirements. Good use is made of specialist visitors to deal with aspects of sex,

drugs and mental health education. Focus days are provided for each year and the programme is being extended to include issues of debt management.

114. During the inspection, there was a meeting of the school council to discuss arrangements for forthcoming elections. Pupils enthusiastically offered to help organise and staff fundraising activities. Pupils recognised that they had been responsible for securing improvements in toilet facilities and the installation of water coolers in corridors and were keen to consider new projects. They supported the idea of extending representation to year group councils and had a clear idea of how these two tiers could work to the advantage of pupils.
115. The newly appointed specialist subject co-ordinator has a clear vision for the development of citizenship education. There are clear links with pupils' personal, health and social education needs. An expanding programme of visits and focus days provides for pupils in each year. The subject co-ordinator already provides detailed guidance for the several non-specialist teachers and the learning support assistants, who work in Years 7, 8 and 9. She understands the need to develop effective ways of monitoring standards of teaching and learning and has shared her proposals with senior managers. Leadership of the subject is good, but management techniques have not yet had time to develop. The school does not have a framework in which pupil attainment and progress in this area of the curriculum are more systematically recorded.

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