

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BRAUNTON SCHOOL & COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Braunton, near Barnstaple, North Devon

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113508

Headteacher: Mr V Game

Lead inspector: David Potter

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> September to 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2003

Inspection number: 258577

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

© Crown copyright 2003

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

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	777
School address:	Barton Lane Braunton North Devon
Postcode:	EX33 2BP
Telephone number:	(01271) 812221
Fax number:	(01271) 817145
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr E Chichester
Date of previous inspection:	5 <sup>th</sup> October 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school serves the village of Braunton and the surrounding coastal and rural area of north Devon. It is designated a community college because adult education for the area is based in the school; the site is a centre for community links of all kinds.

The school is small, with 777 pupils on roll, and has roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. About a quarter of the pupils come from beyond the school's designated area. The area served by the school is generally socially advantaged, but mobility of pupils is high, caused by the seasonal nature of much of the local employment, by migration into the area, by a local armed forces base, and by the admission of pupils excluded from other schools. Pupils arriving and leaving mid-year change the composition of each year group by about 13 per cent annually, and over half of those in the upper part of the school began secondary schooling elsewhere.

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low, and the school has few pupils of minority ethnic origin and none who are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is low overall, but many of those arriving later than the beginning of Year 7 have such needs. The attainment of those joining the school is average overall: it is slightly above average for those who join in Year 7, but below average for those who join later.

The turnover of staff, especially senior staff, in recent years has been high.

In two recent years, the school received government achievement awards for attainment and improvement and, in 2002, it achieved specialist status for mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT). This project is at an early stage in achieving its aim of raising standards across the curriculum, especially in mathematics and ICT, through the innovative use of computer technology.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1027	David Potter	Lead inspector	
9880	Tony Comer	Lay inspector	
3162	Philip O'Neill	Team inspector	English
31441	Maggie King	Team inspector	Mathematics
4738	David Berrisford	Team inspector	Science
2447	Faysal Mikdadi	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
4727	Jeff Hale	Team inspector	History Geography
2408	Joan Arnold	Team inspector	Art and design Music
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Design and technology
33081	Michael Cooper	Team inspector	Physical education
33170	Julie Winterman	Team inspector	Religious Education Special educational needs (SEN)
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
32603	Jan Urban-Smith	Team inspector	Citizenship Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Ltd  
102 Bath Rd, Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire  
GL53 7JX

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS</b>	<b>9</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>12</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	
Links with the community	<b>19</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 &amp; 4</b>	

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an **effective and improving school** in which strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses. Pupils generally achieve well, and results in tests and examinations are above the national average and improving. There is a lot of good teaching but the school is recovering from a period of heavy staff turnover and some weaknesses remain. Very good leadership is raising expectations. Links with the community are excellent. The school provides good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Improvement in the last two years has been especially good and is accelerating because of good leadership by senior staff.
- The new principal has achieved a lot in a short time: he has built a shared commitment to raise expectations across the school community, ensuring the capacity to improve still further.
- The monitoring of teaching and the analysis of pupils' progress are not yet sufficiently accurate, nor are they consistently implemented.
- In art, provision is very good and pupils achieve well, because teaching is very good. Prompted by the specialist school status, information and communications technology (ICT) has improved dramatically since the last inspection (when it was unsatisfactory), and is now good.
- Provision is unsatisfactory in religious education (RE) throughout the school, and in music for younger pupils, because management and teaching are both weak.
- Links with the community, including local schools and colleges, are excellent and help raise standards.
- There are serious shortcomings in the school's accommodation.
- The school breaches the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship, and does not teach the locally agreed syllabus for religious education in full.

Improvement since the last inspection in October 1998 has been **good**. The key issues raised in that inspection have largely been met, with particularly dramatic improvement in ICT. Results in tests and examinations have improved, especially in 2003.

### 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
	A	B	C	E

*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.*

Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have remained above the national average and in line with those of similar schools; results improved still further in 2003, especially in English. The dip in GCSE results in 2002 was a "blip": this year group was of lower ability than any the school has admitted, and achieved weaker results in the Year 9 tests two years earlier. GCSE results have been above average for many years, and those for 2003 are the best the school has ever produced, well above the national average. The school shows its inclusive approach by entering a much higher proportion of pupils for GCSE examinations than most schools; almost all gain at least five graded results and hardly any leave without qualifications. Pupil mobility (changes to the pupil population as it passes through the school) is significant and lowers results, especially those of older pupils.

Pupils across the school reach **above-average standards** in almost all subjects, including English, mathematics, science and ICT. In English, standards are improving rapidly under new management and with a more stable teaching team. Work in art is very good: standards are high in this well-managed subject. Standards are too low in religious education, and in music for younger pupils: tasks are unchallenging and pupils under-achieve.

**Achievement is good** overall. Pupils entering the school in Year 7 do so with slightly above-average attainment; the large number who enter later are generally of below-average ability. The

above-average standards in the national tests at age 14 and in GCSE therefore represent good progress and hard work by the great majority of pupils. Very-able pupils achieve very well, as do those of middle and low ability; pupils of just-above-average ability should achieve better. Achievement is good in almost all subjects, including in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT. Pupils' literacy is sound and their ability to use mathematics and ICT is good.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

All aspects are **good**. Provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good overall. Social, moral and cultural development, are well provided for; spiritual development is just satisfactory, limited by shortcomings in religious education and worship. Pupils have positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is predominantly **good**: only when teaching is weaker does it deteriorate. The school is an orderly, calm place. Attendance, which is above average, and punctuality are **good**.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

Teaching is **satisfactory** overall, as is learning. In the many good and very good lessons, pupils are enthusiastic, productive learners because they expect to work hard and behave well, and because they are challenged to undertake interesting tasks at a brisk pace. Learning is limited by the poorly developed learning skills of some pupils, the legacy of staff turnover, and by some unsatisfactory teaching, most of it in religious education and music in Years 7 to 9.

The curriculum is sound with a good range of extra-curricular opportunities, but lacks variety for older pupils. Currently there are few opportunities for pupils to follow vocational courses. Pupils are very well cared for and well guided and supported, but the current shortage of learning assistants means that some classes containing several pupils with learning difficulties lack support.

Links with the community are excellent. Not only do these links prepare pupils well for living in the community, they help promote achievement by ensuring continuity for pupils as they pass from primary to secondary school and on to college or employment.

The serious shortcomings in the school's accommodation include some rooms that are too small; the cramped site, which provides too little space for pupils to get away from each other and to let off steam; and changing rooms and a canteen, which are of unacceptable quality. Governors, school leaders and site staff have done all they can through bids and self-help to maintain and extend the accommodation, which is well looked-after.

### **LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT**

This is a **well-led** school. The repeated turnover of senior managers slowed improvement around the time of the last inspection. In recent years, senior managers have established good systems for school improvement and for smooth day-to-day running. Systems for the evaluation of performance are now good, but are not yet carried out sufficiently consistently by managers across the school, nor with sufficient precision, to ensure that sustained improvements to teaching and learning will result. Management is therefore sound. Leadership under the new principal is very good. The school community has a shared understanding of the improvement programme, its priorities and strategies. A great deal has been achieved in a short time.

The work of the governing body is **good**: governors have good procedures for supporting the school, understanding its strengths and weaknesses, and challenging its senior staff. However, governors have failed to ensure that the school provides religious education and worship as required by law, and this aspect of governance must therefore be deemed unsatisfactory.

### **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire have positive views of the school, but many expressed concerns about the impact of the behaviour and attitude of a minority of pupils on the learning of the remainder, and about the impact of staff turnover on standards. Pupils' views were very similar; both groups commented on the inconsistent setting of homework. Inspectors found that homework is being set well. Whilst they found some evidence to support parents' and

pupils' views of behaviour and staff turnover, inspectors considered these aspects to be of small scale and to have improved significantly.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Ensure that teaching and pupils' progress are monitored accurately and consistently.
  - Improve provision in religious education and in music for younger pupils, through better teaching and management of those subjects.
  - Working with the LEA, to improve the school's accommodation.
- and, to meet statutory requirements:
- provide a daily act of collective worship
  - teach in full the locally-agreed syllabus for religious education.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are **above average** overall, and achievement is **good**. Test and examination results are above average and improving, and the standard of current work is also above average. Girls out-perform boys, but by a smaller margin than nationally. GCSE results dipped in 2002 but those in 2003 are the best in the school's history. Pupils work hard and make good progress.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well in the core subjects of mathematics, science and ICT; pupils also achieve well in English, and standards are improving rapidly.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress in almost all subjects.
- Results in the national tests for 14-year olds are above the national average, in line with those of similar schools, and improving steadily.
- GCSE results for middle to lower ability pupils have been above, and often well above average for several years. Hardly any pupils leave without qualifications.
- Very-able pupils gain excellent GCSE certificates, but several of above-average ability fail to reach the five-higher-grade benchmark.
- Pupil mobility is having an impact on GCSE results: pupils arriving after Year 7 do less well.
- By entering almost all of its pupils for five or more GCSEs, Braunton shows its commitment to inclusion.
- GCSE results in modern languages in 2003 are weak.

#### Commentary

##### Key Stage 3

1. Results in the national tests for 14-year olds have been above the national average for several years and have shown steady improvement. Improvement slowed slightly in 2003 in mathematics and science, but accelerated sharply in English. Here, new management and a teaching team stabilising after a period of rapid turnover, are bringing about rapid improvement. Current work is above average in most subjects. Standards for these younger pupils are therefore above average overall.
2. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with slightly-above-average attainment; the school population changes by an average of 17 per cent per year in the lower school, and so to reach above-average standards by the end of Year 9 represents good progress, confirmed by the school's above-average value added score in those years. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is therefore good overall, pupils' are working hard and making good progress. The current work seen in English, mathematics, science, ICT, technology, art and geography represents good achievement; only in religious education and music is achievement unsatisfactory.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.2 (33.0)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	37.1 (36.9)	34.7 (34.4)
science	34.8 (35.6)	33.3 (33.1)

*There were 159 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

##### Key Stage 4

3. The history of GCSE results since the mid-1990s shows steadily improving results, pulling away from the national average except in 2002, the year reported in the table below. This year group was academically the weakest the school has admitted, achieved lower results in the national tests for 14-year olds two years earlier, and suffered significant levels of pupil

turnover: less than half of those who took GCSE in 2002 entered the school in Year 7. Over time, and again in 2003, the school's results have been above the national average, and well above it for the proportion of pupils achieving five or more graded (A\* - G) results. The school has achieved much better results for these middle- and lower-ability pupils than similar schools. Only three or four pupils per year leave without qualifications. The most-able pupils get excellent GCSE results, four pupils gaining 14 higher-grade (A\* - C) passes in 2003. The group in between, the more able or "top of the middle", does less well, and lowers the proportion of students achieving five or more higher grades to below that of similar schools in recent years (although Braunton's results exceed the national average for 2003 by some distance). Inspectors believe that the curriculum for this group contains too heavy a diet of GCSE courses; the new GNVQ ICT course should prove successful for them, as would access to more vocational courses. The school has recognised this by setting up a review of the curriculum for older pupils.

4. The work seen during the inspection confirms the above-average standards indicated by these results. Pupils are achieving well in Years 10 and 11. Their achievement is at least satisfactory in all subjects; it is very good in art and ICT, and good in most other subjects. Their achievement is limited by the cumulative effects of pupil turnover, well-managed though this is, and a history of staff change, which is now stabilising.

**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	52 (59)	50 (48)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	39.4 (n/a)	39.8 (n/a)

*There were 159 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

5. Pupils with special educational needs throughout the school achieve and make progress in line with that made by similar pupils elsewhere, because teachers are aware of their individual needs and respond to these. The work of teaching assistants supports achievement well where planning is good and where the skills of the assistants are well matched to the requirements of the subject. The current shortfall in the number of assistants hampers the achievement of some pupils. In some subjects the enthusiasm of teachers and the good relationships established with pupils with special educational needs lead to high levels of achievement. This is particularly true in physical education. Targets for improvement identified on individual education plans are becoming more precise and are therefore helping pupils to achieve better. Arrangements for tracking pupils' progress, for identifying under-achievement, and for evaluating the impact of the work of the learning support department, are not yet sufficiently precise to ensure improvement.
6. Standards of literacy are sound across the school: pupils write well and read a good range of texts for pleasure and to support research. Speaking and listening are not as well developed, since discussion and questioning are not used well enough to extend pupils' ideas and to insist that reasons for opinions are given. Pupils' competence in mathematics is good; most subjects have a policy to develop numeracy, and some departments provide examples of good practice. Provision has not yet been monitored and does not yet form a coherent programme across all subjects. Pupils' ICT skills and knowledge are well developed and they can use these skills for research and presentation.

**Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal qualities are **good**. Their social, moral and cultural development is well provided for. Spiritual development is just satisfactory, limited by shortcomings in religious education and worship. Pupils have positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is

predominantly **good**: only when teaching is weaker does it deteriorate. Attendance and punctuality are **good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The attitudes of the majority of pupils to school and to their work are good.
- Attendance has remained above the national average for several years, with very low levels of unauthorised absence (truancy).
- Behaviour is good except when teaching is weak.
- Social and moral development are strongly encouraged by the school's involvement with its community.

**Commentary**

7. Pupils express their largely positive attitudes to school by working hard in the great majority of lessons and by participating enthusiastically in its life, including the wide range of activities outside the classroom and within the community. Despite concerns expressed in the pupil questionnaires about the effects of the poor behaviour of a small minority and the lack of respect between some pupils and some teachers, their views about what the school achieves and provides are substantially positive. They willingly take on responsibility, such as by joining the school council or becoming a prefect.
8. Overall, behaviour is good. Inspection evidence supports the views of parents and pupils that the behaviour of a small minority of pupils can disrupt the learning of others when teaching is not challenging and when behaviour management is not effective. However, such occasions are rare and, despite the small site and congested, narrow entrances, pupils generally conduct themselves well and move sensibly about the building. This was exemplified by the outstandingly calm and mature way in which they responded to a fire alarm (caused by an electrical fault) that occurred during the inspection. The new principal has responded firmly to examples of bad behaviour and fixed-term exclusions have increased as a result.
9. The school provides well for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Pupils' spiritual development is restricted by the absence of an effective religious education curriculum and of a daily act of collective worship, and is only satisfactory. Whilst effective in some subjects such as history, the school's spiritual development policy is not consistently applied across all areas of the curriculum. The citizenship, personal, social and health education curriculum is effective and well organised. The school council, the range of educational visits and visitors, activities outside the classroom and involvement in a range of community projects all encourage pupils to develop socially and morally, as well as contributing significantly to their achievement. Pupils value the extensive charitable work undertaken by the school; it is a strength of the provision for their moral development. Pupils are able to gain a clear understanding of their own and other cultures, particularly through their work in geography, history, art and music.
10. Attendance is good and authorised and unauthorised absence continue to decline because there is a very effective monitoring system that includes weekly attendance reviews. Most pupils arrive at school punctually and lessons begin on time.

**Attendance**

***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)***

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.1	School data:	0.3
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.*

## Exclusions

### Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

### Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
777	53	2

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Although over half of teaching is good or very good, and pupils respond by learning well in these lessons, learning overall is limited by inconsistencies in the teaching, some of which is unsatisfactory. The school provides a sound curriculum with good provision for very-able pupils and a good range of extra-curricular opportunities; more opportunities to follow vocational courses in the upper school would help motivate pupils and raise standards still further. The academic, careers and pastoral support and guidance pupils receive are very good.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are both **satisfactory**. Much is good and very good, but there is considerable inconsistency.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good or very good in the majority of lessons.
- Pupils learn well because of good teaching in several subjects, including the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT.
- There is some unsatisfactory teaching, much of it in religious education and music.
- Inconsistencies in the ways teachers manage classes lead to inconsistent behaviour and learning.
- Assessment systems are good, a great improvement on the last inspection.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 124 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	31 (25%)	42 (34%)	42 (34%)	9 (7%)	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.

## Commentary

11. In this school, lessons in which teaching is good or very good have well-established routines: pupils arrive expecting to behave well and work hard. Teachers are enthusiastic and lessons are challenging and pacy: a lot is asked of pupils, who respond by learning with enthusiasm. Such lessons are in the majority, about 60 per cent of the total and distributed evenly across the age range. Several subjects frequently give such lessons for example, English, mathematics, science, geography, history, art, physical education and ICT and pupils learn and achieve well in these subjects. In the case of ICT, this is a great improvement on the last inspection. In art, teaching is always at least good and often very good. In very-well-taught lessons, a quarter of all those observed, the extra dimension is often the very careful planning: teachers use assessment of pupils' work to focus with great precision on aspects which they have found difficult; in such lessons, progress is often impressive.

12. The quality of teaching, although satisfactory overall, is inconsistent:
- teacher turnover in recent years, although beginning to stabilise, has left a legacy of under-developed learning skills;
  - there is a small but significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, much of it in religious education and for younger pupils in music, and the remainder from inexperienced teachers. In these lessons, low-level work does not challenge pupils, who respond by becoming restless. Poor class management allows the small number of disruptive pupils to control the lesson, hampering the learning of the others. In their responses to inspectors, several parents and pupils were critical of this aspect of the school; inspectors recognise it, but found it only rarely;
  - learning in this school is unusually sensitive to the pace of teaching: even in otherwise good lessons, a drop in pace can lead to restlessness;
  - in the modern languages department, the teachers do not work as a team: the impact on learning of satisfactory or good teaching by individuals is diminished by inconsistent assessment and teaching methods;
  - effective methods of managing behaviour, such as reward systems and assertive discipline, are used in some departments but not others.

This inconsistency slows pupils' learning. The school does not yet achieve the critical mass of good teaching to ensure consistently good learning, and is not learning from its own best practice.

13. All groups of pupils are soundly taught. Most departments adapt materials to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs and those with particular talents, but this practice is uneven. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when taught in small groups such as in mathematics and literacy, because the programmes offered to them are well matched to their needs. The learning of pupils with special educational needs within larger groups is satisfactory rather than good because teachers have less time to support individuals and there are insufficient teaching assistants. In addition, the use of teaching assistants is not effective when they lack the knowledge and skills relevant to particular areas of the curriculum and where joint planning for the lesson has not taken place.
14. Assessment was a key weakness in the last inspection; it has improved considerably and is now good. The school now has a good system for tracking pupils' progress and for setting targets with them; as a result, most pupils know their targets and their current level. Marking is carried out thoroughly and some departments, especially mathematics, science, history and geography, provide good support for pupils, helping them understand how to improve their work; this is however inconsistent between subjects. Some subjects award pupils' work too high a level in Years 7 to 9, making target setting insecure.
15. Teaching and learning were also judged satisfactory at the last inspection. They have improved since then; there is more good and very good teaching, there are clear policies to develop teaching quality, assessment has improved markedly and the teacher turnover is stabilising.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **satisfactory** and improving.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school curriculum provides well for able, older pupils, but offers only a limited range of vocational courses.
- Following a period of rapid staff turnover, the school is fully staffed with well-qualified teachers.
- There are too few learning support assistants to support pupils' learning.
- Inadequate and cramped accommodation is limiting pupils' learning and behaviour.
- Links with post-16 providers, with other schools, and with the wider community are excellent: they promote learning and prepare pupils well for further education and employment.
- The improved provision for ICT is beginning to improve what is taught across the curriculum.

- The school provides an extensive range of out-of-school and extra-curricular activities; these are well supported by pupils.
- The school does not teach the locally agreed syllabus for religious education in full in Years 10 and 11.

## Commentary

16. The curriculum for younger pupils is sound and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in full. For older pupils, the curriculum is more of a mixture. It has many strengths, such as:

- the new on-line ICT course, prompted by the school's specialist status, which will increase pupils' ability to apply their ICT skills across the subjects, and will improve pupils' qualifications;
- provision for very-able pupils is very good: these pupils can study three separate sciences, two modern languages, statistics and media studies in addition to the normal range of subjects. This ensures that very-able pupils can gain a large number of GCSE passes, 14 in the case of four pupils in 2003. Pupils with particular talents and interests can find suitable enrichment for their curriculum;
- the recently-introduced vocational courses: an applied business GCSE course, which is proving popular, and a one-day per week leisure and tourism course at the local college of further education, supported by a work-related programme of study at school. This 'alternative' programme is for a small group of pupils who cannot sustain the full GCSE programme;
- links with the community college enable pupils to attend evening classes and thereby extend their curriculum.

The weaknesses are:

- the failure to teach the full programme of religious education as set out in the locally-agreed syllabus;
- insufficient opportunities to follow vocational courses. The school has realised that a wider range of pupils would benefit from such courses and is embarking on a review with the aim of increasing access. Lack of variety in the curriculum for more-able pupils is limiting the number of pupils who achieve five or more higher grades at GCSE, because some are currently studying a wider range of GCSE courses than they can manage.

17. The range of new courses shows that the curriculum has improved and meets the needs of more pupils than it did, and the curriculum review shows that it is set to improve further.

18. Opportunities for pupils to extend their learning beyond the normal school day are extensive and well supported, ranging from evening classes in additional modern languages and psychology, to the wide range of games and other physical activities such as the Ten Tors competition, through a great variety of activities in music, drama and art, to homework and revision clubs, to help pupils catch up with their learning.

19. Excellent links with primary schools, including some joint training, ensure smooth transition at age 11 years. The links with North Devon College, the Connexions partnership and local employers are also excellent: together with the school's very good careers education and work experience programmes, these ensure that pupils are well prepared for what follows school at age 16 years. At the time of the inspection, pupils in Year 11 were going through a very well-planned programme of applying for a job: completing an application form, preparing a curriculum vitae. and writing a letter of application, to be followed by a mock interview by a local employer. Pupils on work placements are very well supervised. Links with Plymouth and Warwick Universities help enthuse pupils about the opportunities available in higher education.

20. Following a number of staff changes since the last inspection, the school has been able to recruit well-qualified teachers to match the requirements of the curriculum. The number of learning support assistants is, however, insufficient and the support provided to classes containing several pupils with identified learning needs is consequently irregular. This inhibits

joint planning between teachers and learning support assistants, and limits learning for some pupils with special educational needs. Three new learning support assistant appointments were due to be made in the week after the inspection.

21. Departments make the best use they can of the cramped accommodation: displays of pupils' work are good, the building is well cared for by all, and is well maintained by a skilled and hard-working site management team. Everything which can be done by self-help or by bids for funding has been done by staff and governors. However, the site is very small and the amount of space where pupils can get away and either relax quietly, or let off steam, is inadequate. Small rooms for art and media, and the size and fitting of one science room, restrict the methods teachers can use and what they can teach. Changing room facilities for physical education and the canteen are both too small and of unacceptably poor quality.
22. Governors play an active role in keeping the curriculum under review and hold senior managers to account for ensuring access of all pupils to the curricular opportunities provided.

### Care, guidance and support

These aspects of school's work are **very good** because they provide strong support for pupils' learning and achievement.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school ensures that pupils are very well cared for and protected.
- Induction procedures for pupils new to the school, whenever they arrive, are very good.
- The support, advice and guidance that pupils receive about their achievements and their personal development are good.
- The school seeks pupils' views about its work and development, but is at an early stage of acting on those views.

### Commentary

23. Policies and procedures for child protection and for promoting the health, safety and welfare of pupils are very good. All health and safety concerns expressed in the previous report have been successfully dealt with and current policies and procedures are very effective, overseen by the administration manager. This is another area of successful improvement since the last inspection.
24. The school's pastoral system, with its new focus on mentoring and its newly-constituted team of year heads, is well structured, with committed staff and effective lines of communication. The assessment and recording of pupils' personal development, related to the pastoral support, has improved since the last inspection and is now good.

#### Example of outstanding practice

*The school has adopted a multi-agency approach to ensuring that all pupils, including those who are hard to help because they are ill, poor attenders or excluded from school, receive good quality, coherent advice. The approach is exemplary, involving, amongst others, the school nurse, the youth service, the education welfare service and the Connexions partnership. Collaboration with the youth service to ensure that excluded pupils maintain contact with the school and do not go further off the rails is excellent inclusion practice. In particular, the extensive pupil profiles that are the outcome of a Year 8 mentoring scheme for a group of able but under-achieving pupils are being used by teaching staff to understand the special circumstances and needs of these children better, so that they will have a greater chance of reaching their full potential. This project is excellent practice that may well be extended to other groups of pupils.*

25. Teachers and support staff know pupils and their families well and cater for their needs effectively. The academic guidance that pupils receive throughout their time at school, based on the good progress-tracking system, is good. An example of this support is the information on the school website that gives pupils and parents an extensive range of resources to help

improve numeracy and mathematical skills.

26. Arrangements for the induction of pupils into the school, particularly for those who enter the school mid-term, and for their transfer to the next phase of education, are very good. The school actively seeks the views of pupils through the school council and pupil questionnaires although pupils cannot yet see how their views have been acted on.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Links with parents are **good**, while those with the community, including other schools are **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Links with the community help pupils' academic and social development.
- The school makes considerable and increasing efforts to work with parents.
- Parents have lost some confidence in the school because of staff and pupil turnover in recent years.
- Reports and other written communications with parents are very good.

### **Commentary**

27. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire or who attended the parents' meeting (approximately 30 per cent), and pupils, have generally positive views of what the school provides and achieves, but those views are muted: not many responded strongly in favour of the school. This seems to be because the turbulence of recent years, the mobility of pupils and turnover of staff, including senior staff has shaken their confidence. The commonest concerns voiced by parents and pupils were about inconsistency in teaching quality and in how pupils were treated, caused by staff turnover; and about the impact of the bad behaviour of a few pupils, most of whom did not start at Braunton in Year 7, on the learning of others. Some parents also believe that they are not kept informed about their children's progress, especially at parents' evenings, and that the school does not consult parents or take account of their views.
28. Inspection evidence suggests that the misgivings about behaviour have some foundation but are over-stated and that the situation is improving as the staff stabilises. The written information that parents receive, particularly about their children's progress, is now very good. The prospectus and annual governors' report to parents are well presented. Pupil reports, of which there are three per year, include a separate mentor's report and give a clear picture of pupils' academic and personal development and achievements. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. There are several opportunities through the school year for parents to discuss their children's progress and to express their views, including a recent parent questionnaire. Having evaluated their comments, the school acknowledged parents' concerns about the poor organisation of parents' evenings and have consulted with them on revised arrangements. Attendance at parents' evenings has increased.
29. The school makes good efforts to encourage parents to get involved in its life and work and in their children's education. The development of the school website, currently being piloted and soon to be launched officially, is one excellent example of how the school is being innovative in this respect. The 'family learning project', where parents are invited to work with their children to understand how they can support their learning at home and at school better, particularly in literacy and numeracy, is an example of excellent practice. The number of parents participating is small, but the school expects that this project will attract greater support once its benefits become more widely recognised. There is a small but active and supportive Friends of Braunton School Association.
30. The school's links with the local community are excellent. The school takes every opportunity to develop partnerships, such as the government-funded Building Bridges project, which involves joint work in geography with a local public school. Involvement with primary schools, the community college, North Devon College and other higher education institutions, the local



business community including the Rotary Club, the youth service, the local police and other agencies, as well as the involvement of pupils in a wide variety of community activities and projects, is highly commendable. These links add greatly to the school's standing in the community and its ability to provide a wide variety of resources and challenging opportunities for its pupils and staff.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

This is a **well-led** school. The work of the governing body is **good**, but its failure to ensure that religious education is taught in full, and to act on the recommendation of the previous inspection that collective worship be provided, mean that these aspects of governance must be deemed unsatisfactory. There have been multiple changes in senior management in recent years; overall leadership is **good**, and that brought by the new principal is **very good**. Management is **sound**: good systems are as yet inconsistently implemented.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvement in recent years has been good and is accelerating because of good leadership by senior staff.
- The new principal has achieved a lot in a short time: he has built a shared commitment to raise expectations across the school community, ensuring the capacity to improve still further.
- Systems to monitor teaching and pupils' progress are good, but are not yet sufficiently accurate, nor are they consistently implemented.
- Leadership by heads of department and year is of mixed quality; teamwork is very good in many areas, but weak in modern languages, religious education and music.
- Finances are well managed in accordance with the principles of best value.
- The work of the governing body is good, with some very good practice, particularly in respect of its knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and its readiness to hold the school's leadership to account.
- Governors have not ensured compliance with the statutory requirements to provide religious education and collective worship.

### Commentary

31. Repeated changes in senior management in recent years slowed the rate of improvement, which has therefore not been linear since the last inspection. Under the previous leadership, systems and policies were put in place, providing solid foundations for improvement. The new principal has worked quickly and effectively to assess the school's strengths and weaknesses and to achieve a shared commitment among staff and governors to raise standards through higher expectations, a high-quality curriculum and consistently good teaching. His personal leadership is excellent, but parents and pupils do not yet understand and share this vision.
32. The quality of 'middle leaders', heads of department and year is more mixed and is satisfactory overall. There are considerable strengths in the leadership of the core subjects (English, mathematics, science and ICT), art, geography and history. A distinctive feature of the good leadership in these areas is the building of teams that share planning and good practice and therefore drive up quality and standards. The poor teamwork in modern languages, and the failure of the faculty organisation in humanities and expressive arts to diagnose and address the weaknesses in religious education and music, stand in stark contrast.
33. Management systems have ensured that there is now an effective school improvement plan, based on good analysis of strengths and weaknesses, and that the school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis, supported by the very efficient and welcoming administrative staff. The school finances are very well managed, with proper oversight by the governing body. Not only are they tidy, shown by the very good recent audit report, they are focused on achieving the school's ambitions. The principles of Best Value are understood by key governors and administrative staff, and applied not only to routine purchasing, but also to the appointment of

staff. As an example of the school's ability to bring about rapid improvement, a local authority audit in July 2003 raised a significant number of areas in which the school fell short of compliance with recommended practice. Following work over the summer by the principal, administration manager and finance officer, a re-visit was requested in September and revealed almost full compliance.

34. Despite its strengths, management is only sound overall because of the limited impact of monitoring systems. Systems for the evaluation of teaching and pupils' progress are now good, but are not yet carried out sufficiently consistently across the school, nor are they with sufficient precision, to ensure that sustained improvements, especially in teaching and learning, will result.
35. Governors support the school very well: they are visible in the school, for example leading assemblies, and play a full part in school development. They played a leading role in the bid for specialist school status, driving the process and harnessing the support of the business community. In these ways, their work has helped raise standards. Governors organise their business well, ensuring that, as a body, they work smoothly and efficiently. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and take a long-term view of its improvement. They have well-tried ways of holding the school to account through the committee structure and its attached members of the senior management.
36. Governors have ensured that the school meets most statutory requirements, including those for health and safety, which were not met at the time of the last inspection. They have not however ensured that the school fulfils the requirement for worship and for the teaching of religious education. The amount of time allocated to the subject for older pupils is around half of that recommended and as a result, the programme cannot be taught in full.
37. All leaders and governors are aware of the school's desire to be inclusive, and to ensure that the school meets the needs of all its pupils. The following examples show the thoroughness and whole-heartedness of this intention:
  - governors' very careful exclusion procedures;
  - support programmes organised with the youth service to keep excludees in touch with the school;
  - induction procedures for pupils who join the school at times other than the start of Year 7;
  - increased curricular opportunities for more-able pupils;
  - the forthcoming curriculum review to increase the access and achievement for older pupils to vocational courses.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,326,146
Total expenditure	2,313,366
Expenditure per pupil	3,035.91

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	32,322
Balance carried forward to the next	12,780

## LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY

The quality, management and evaluation of the school's community links are **excellent** and they greatly benefit pupils' achievement and personal development.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

The school's community links benefit pupils' learning, achievement and personal and social development by:

- ensuring smooth transition from primary school to work and further education;
- providing good quality, coherent guidance to pupils in difficulty;
- extending the curriculum;
- providing pupils with opportunities to gain a sense of responsibility and service.

### Commentary

38. The extensive, first-class links with primary schools through the Braunton Academic Council, with the local college of further education through North Devon Academic Board, with universities and with local employers all ensure smooth transfer for pupils through their education.
39. The school's multi-agency approach to providing advice, support and guidance to its pupils, especially those experiencing problems, is extremely effective. Close working relationships between the school and the education welfare service, social services, the school nurse, the youth service, the local police and Connexions partnership ensure good, coherent individual support.
40. Not only does the local business community provide opportunities for work experience, design project work and mock business interviews, its members also initiate community-based projects such as the 'Aquabox' scheme, in which pupils design and provide the contents for emergency boxes for areas of the world experiencing different types of disaster.
41. Pupils are actively involved with the community in a wide variety of projects. These include involvement with the Westmead Cheshire Home, fundraising for the local hospice and participation in Comic Relief Day. Pupils also participate in local environmental projects such as the Croyde Beach Project in conjunction with the Devon Wildlife Trust, with the Velator wetlands nature reserve project and many participate in a number of residential trips, both local and international. Year 7 go on a residential trip to Exmoor as part of their introduction to secondary education, supported by the youth service. The youth service also contributes funds to enable a community basketball club to be run at the school and combines with the school to keep some 'hard-to-help' pupils in school.
42. As well as going into the community and the community coming into school, the school is attempting to develop the community within, through initiatives such as buddying older with younger pupils, strengthening the role of the school council and the strong prefect role.
43. The school takes every opportunity to build links and partnerships. All of this activity has an extremely beneficial effect on the achievement and personal development of pupils and enhances the life of the local community of which the school is an integral part.

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4.

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

In this curriculum area, the school provides courses to GCSE in English language and literature, French and German, all of which were inspected in detail, and in media studies. The media course is a new introduction to widen the range of courses available. It will be examined for the first time in 2004. Standards are high and results promise well. This is one of the subjects in which the small size of rooms restricts what can be taught.

#### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**

##### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good, with the result that the work of the department is improving in leaps and bounds.
- Standards are improving.
- Pupils achieve well as a result of good and very good teaching.
- There is a small measure of unsatisfactory teaching.
- The teaching of poetry and of Shakespeare has some excellent features.
- Occasionally lessons are not managed well enough to engage higher-attaining pupils to the full extent of their capabilities.
- There are some missed opportunities in lessons to extend pupils' vocabulary and skills in discussion.

##### Commentary

44. Standards reached in the 2002 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 were average overall and in line with those of similar schools. An average proportion of pupils achieved above the expected level for their age. Results in 2003 show a marked improvement, particularly in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. Standards in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were above the national average. The proportion reaching the higher grades was average. Boys and girls reach comparable standards at the age of 14 and 16 years.
45. The analysis of pupils' work reveals standards just above those reached in the tests and in the GCSE examinations. This represents good achievement in relation to pupils' earlier standards of attainment. The higher-attaining pupils in Year 11, for instance, show considerable refinement in exploring themes in literary texts and in the analysis of language in contemporary poetry. Many show exceptional sensitivity and empathy in response to these works. This results from the teachers' enthusiasm for what they teach and their persistent expectation that pupils will do their best. Middle- and lower-attaining pupils are equally well served and achieve well in relation to their attainment on joining their courses. In Years 7 to 9 even the most reluctant readers are encouraged to express a personal response to literature. This helps to strengthen their spiritual and moral development as they explore issues of deep personal concern to them. The teachers' enthusiasm for books communicates itself to the pupils who, in turn, read a good range of fiction and non-fiction, including texts from the Internet. Pupils get off to a flying start in their experience of books through the many imaginative initiatives of the librarian, and build well on these experiences. Many pupils produce research projects of a good standard. They achieve well in relation to their earlier attainment, making rapid advances in the development of their reading and writing. They are slower to improve their skills in speaking and listening and in their accuracy in spelling as teachers pay less attention to these aspects of the pupils' work.

46. A crucial factor in the improvements in the standards reached and in the quality of the pupils' learning is the quality of teaching, which is good and often very good, with some excellent features. There is a small measure of unsatisfactory teaching, weakened by inadequate classroom management and a lack of challenge, with the consequence that pupils are content to settle for a modest pace in their work. Frequent changes of staff in recent years have left a legacy of unsatisfactory work habits. In the best lessons, there is a crisp start that immediately connects with the pupils' interests, with the consequence that they settle quickly to their tasks. A strength of the department is the teaching of poetry and of Shakespeare. Pupils are led to the deeper meaning of the poems and plays they study. There is a good emphasis on creative writing. Pupils write for a good variety of purposes and readers. They are eager to refine and improve their work through drafting and redrafting as a result of some very good assessment by teachers. Questioning and discussion are not always used to best effect to extend pupils' ideas. In the more successful lessons, however, the teachers tend to insist on reasons for opinions and on greater attention to the analysis of the views of others.
47. The department has gained a new lease of life under the new dynamic head of department who has done much to redress the dip in standards resulting from significant instability in staffing over the last few years. She has built what is steadily emerging as a high-performing team. The department forms a cohesive, forward looking group of teachers set to bring about further significant improvements. This is clearly a department on the move.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

Standards of literacy across the curriculum are satisfactory. Pupils generally write well and read a good range of texts for pleasure and to support research. Speaking and listening are not as well developed, since discussion and questioning are not always used well to extend pupils' ideas and to insist on reasons for opinions. A good start has been made towards implementing a coherent policy on literacy and there is some good practice, for example, in history. The current acknowledged inconsistencies in practice across subjects do not yet provide a secure enough base for raising standards of reading, writing and discussion across the school.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Provision in modern foreign languages (French and German) is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- Pupils' current work is an improvement on that of previous years.
- Provisional 2003 GCSE results are weak.
- Departmental leadership has not yet succeeded in getting teachers to work together for the general good of their pupils. Each teacher works alone without sharing good practice and without conforming to agreed departmental policies.
- Teaching and learning are always at least satisfactory and occasionally good.

### **Commentary**

48. Standards at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average in 2002, but dipped to the national average in 2003. The number of pupils reaching the higher levels was well below the national average and particularly low for boys. GCSE results for each year from 2000 and 2002 were in line with the national average. In 2003 GCSE French results dipped significantly and German results were very low. Reasons for these dips included long-term staff absence, the change to a new GCSE course and lack of consistency in how well examination classes are taught.
49. Pupils' current achievement in all years is at least satisfactory, and often better for younger pupils. By the end of Year 9, pupils are able to understand fairly complex instructions and to respond accurately. Using simple sentences, they are able to write short passages about themselves, their families and their school. In Years 10 and 11 pupils studying French are able

to write longer passages and can take part in dialogues. Those following German are less competent because of the late start in learning that language. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress, but the most able should be reaching higher standards.

50. Teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory and occasionally they are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan lessons carefully, correct inaccuracies and help pupils learn from their mistakes, giving them good one-to-one support. In the sound lessons, the carefully planned tasks result in pupils doing what they are told and getting on with their work quietly. They carry out the tasks set and try hard to get the answers right and do well, but in some lessons they begin to lose interest. In the good lessons, teachers enthuse pupils and give them more opportunities to work independently; pupils respond with enthusiasm and their learning improves. Teachers do not always use French or German in lessons and issue many instructions in English when pupils are perfectly capable of understanding them in the language being studied. The challenge provided to more-able pupils should be greater.
51. The department is disunited. Teachers work independently of each other with little communication about good practice. They do not discuss ways of improving teaching and learning, and so, for example, the benefits to learning brought by more independent working are not shared and extended. Teachers do not use the agreed schemes of work or the department's agreed policies on teaching and learning. The head of department has not succeeded in getting teachers to implement agreed policies, to evaluate their teaching and to plan together, and so leadership is unsatisfactory. Management of the department is satisfactory because the head of department has produced appropriate documentation and has arranged resources in a way that helps teachers in their individual planning.
52. Senior managers have tried to ensure cohesive working but have not yet been successful; the department will not improve significantly until this happens.

## **MATHEMATICS**

In this curriculum area, in addition to GCSE mathematics, which was inspected in detail, the department provides a GCSE statistics course for able mathematicians. Results in this course last year were good: over 90 per cent of pupils gained a C grade or better, and over a third A\*/A.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievement is good, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- The department is well led. Strengths and weaknesses are well understood and there are clear plans and a shared commitment to improve further.
- Pupils' standards in using and applying mathematics and algebra are less good than their standards in other aspects of the subject.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Years 7 to 9, underpinned by the national strategy, is good.
- The use of technology to enhance learning and assessment at school and at home is extensive and effective.
- Older pupils in middle sets are less committed to learning and this affects their achievement.
- Although there is some good practice in mathematics across the curriculum, it is not consistent, nor systematically evaluated.

### **Commentary**

53. Results in 2002 in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average and that of similar schools, for both boys and girls. The 2003 results were similar and close to the school's target. They represent good achievement for pupils whose standards on entry are average. GCSE results in 2002 were in line with the national average. Results in 2003 were a significant improvement, in line with pupils' higher national test results two years before.

Coursework marks for using and applying mathematics were lower than marks for written examinations. Results show satisfactory achievement given pupils' results in the national tests for 14-year olds two years earlier.

54. Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards are above average: more pupils are working at higher, and fewer at lower, levels than is the case nationally. Standards are higher in number, shape and space and handling data than they are in using and applying mathematics and algebra. This was also true at the time of the last inspection. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11; achievement is good overall and improving. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve equally well and make equally good progress.
55. Teaching is good overall. Teaching by substantive teachers is always satisfactory and most is good. Teachers have good knowledge of mathematics and syllabus requirements. They are enthusiastic and manage pupils well to secure good attitudes, behaviour and learning. ICT is very well used to enhance planning, teaching, learning and assessment. Planning and methodology are better in Years 7 to 9 where the National Key Stage 3 Strategy<sup>1</sup> underpins schemes and activities. For example, in a Year 7 class, the teacher encouraged pupils to display their own ideas using an interactive whiteboard, and a game using a random number generator stimulated their interest in ordering decimals. They learned very well. In Years 10 and 11, more lessons involve the explanation of a technique followed by exercises. The teachers sometimes spend too much time talking. Pupils gain knowledge and learn skills at a good rate. Their understanding of concepts and their ability to use and apply techniques in unfamiliar situations is less well developed. Some pupils in middle sets are passive and compliant rather than engaged and committed to learning, and this affects their achievement.
56. Teachers of mathematics promote pupils' literacy by displaying mathematical terminology in all rooms, but rarely refer to it. ICT is fundamental to the work of the department and packages such as Excel and Geometer's Sketchpad are used regularly to enhance learning.
57. Assessment arrangements have improved greatly since the last inspection. Standard tests are used at least once every half term and levels or grades are collated electronically. Results will shortly be available to pupils and parents via the school website, where they can already find course plans, lessons and homework activities. Pupils are encouraged to mark their own work. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding and most pupils are aware of their target grades and levels. They are less clear about how to improve their work, because teachers' marking is inconsistent and occasionally perfunctory.
58. The department is well led. The head of department is a clear and visible presence and secures good relationships and attitudes from both staff and pupils. There is a strong, shared commitment to improvement and a willingness to experiment. Departmental management is good. There are common processes and procedures, accepted and applied consistently. The department knows its strengths and weaknesses well, including through the analysis of examination results, and has sensible plans to address identified weaknesses. There is little monitoring of learning other than through assessment records.
59. The school's status as specialist mathematics and computing college is already having an impact. For the first time for many years, the school has a full complement of qualified staff. Despite the ill-health absence of one teacher during the inspection, the quality of teaching is improving. The department has good resources to support learning, especially interactive whiteboards, graphical calculators and written material.
60. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Achievement has improved and most issues have been addressed.

---

<sup>1</sup> [The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. This National Strategy now affects all subjects.](#)

## Mathematics across the curriculum

Pupils' skills in using mathematics are good. The school and most departments have numeracy policies. All teachers have been trained in approaches to mathematical skills and there are some examples of good practice. For example, in science, pupils' graph-plotting and data-handling skills are developed. In geography, analysis and data-handling skills are consciously taught and used. Provision has not been monitored and is not yet sufficiently systematic across all subjects.

## SCIENCE

The science department provides a broad science course to GCSE (double award) for most pupils, and a course leading to GCSE in the three separate sciences (biology, chemistry and physics) for the most-able scientists. These courses were inspected in detail. Results in the triple science course are impressive: all grades were C or above, and nearly 40 per cent were A\* or A grade.

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the tests at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average; results at GCSE are improving overall and are very good for those taking three separate sciences.
- Pupils enjoy science: they have positive attitudes towards their learning and are achieving well across the age range.
- Leadership of the department is good, providing a clear sense of direction and a strong drive for improvement.
- Teaching is good, with examples of very good practice.
- Insufficient use is made of end-of-lesson reviews to check understanding and to plan additional support for individuals and groups.

### Commentary

61. Attainment has fluctuated year-on-year since the last inspection, but the trend is of rising attainment at both 14 and 16 years. In the tests at the end of Year 9, pupils attain results well above the national average and in line with pupils in similar schools. When compared with their attainment on entry to the school, performance in these tests shows that pupils make good progress in the lower part of the school.
62. Each year, an above-average proportion of those entered for GCSE in science secures a grade (A\* to G). The percentage of pupils reaching the higher grades fell in 2002, but recovered in 2003 and is above the national average. Pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 is somewhat less rapid than in the lower part of the school, the result of long-term staff absence.
63. Standards of work are currently above average, and pupils are achieving well in the lower part of the school and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. For example, pupils in Year 7 appreciate the variety of living things and the importance of classification, and those in Year 9 have a good understanding of the formation and behaviour of static electricity. Pupils in Year 11 can identify possible variables to consider when tackling their scientific investigations. Pupils are confident to use appropriate scientific terminology. Written work is generally well presented with diagrams and graphs drawn accurately.
64. Teaching is good overall in the department, but varies: it is frequently good or very good but sometimes only satisfactory. Teachers are well qualified and have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Learning objectives are usually made clear to pupils and reinforced throughout the lesson, giving pupils a sense of purpose and helping them learn. Most lessons convey a sense of urgency, and teachers challenge their pupils to think. In the very best lessons, teachers use all three parts of their lesson plan well. Starter activities are relevant and provide a good stimulus for the main learning activities of the lesson, and review sessions test pupils' understanding of what the lesson has covered. In the satisfactory lessons, the review session is limited to a few general questions that only a small number of



pupils answer: the intended learning and understanding by the pupils, therefore, remain unchecked.

65. Pupils demonstrate a very positive approach to their work and to lessons. They undertake practical activities with care and are prepared to ask as well as answer questions. When the pace drops, pupils become restless, lapsing into chatter while waiting either for the teacher or for other pupils to complete their work. The work of pupils with special educational needs is limited by there being too few learning assistants, and by work that is not matched sufficiently carefully to their needs.
66. This is a well-led department. The head of department provides clear and effective leadership and is successfully rebuilding the department following an extended period of staff turbulence. Appropriate priorities have been identified for raising standards. The department is beginning to evaluate its work and teachers are using data more effectively to set targets with pupils. Pupils can gain access to learning resources on-line from the innovative website that is currently being developed by the department. Access to ICT in lessons is limited. Teachers and pupils are supported by the services of a qualified technician who ensures that practical work runs smoothly and that resources are ready and waiting for the pupils. She greatly enhances the learning opportunities for the pupils.
67. Pupils benefit from having the majority of their lessons taught in laboratories, enabling practical work to be undertaken. Although the teaching rooms are in need of refurbishment, all bar one, which is unsuitable for practical work, are adequate. The teachers have worked hard to improve the learning environment by self-help decoration and good display.
68. Improvement since the last inspection has been good; the department has addressed almost all of the issues identified then. In particular, the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 has been revised, textbook resources have been improved and the health and safety issues resolved. The issue relating to the planning of lessons in order to meet the needs of all pupils still remains, and is the key issue of this inspection of the department.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The department provides the GNVQ on-line IT course, the equivalent of four GCSEs, and is about to embark on the GCSE IT course

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The head of department has worked effectively to bring about great improvements in the provision for ICT.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 are high and rising.
- Results in examinations at 16 are above average.
- The range of courses and the number of pupils gaining certification in ICT are increasing.
- The pace in lessons is good and the curriculum is well planned.
- The school provides a broad range of worthwhile opportunities in ICT, meeting the interests and aptitudes of all pupils.

### **Commentary**

69. At the time of the last inspection, ICT was a major key issue: provision, quality and results were all a cause of concern. All aspects have improved sharply and ICT is now a strength of the school. The specialist school status, with its emphasis on ICT, is beginning to have an impact across the school, but work is at an early stage and access to hardware is still patchy. The ICT skills of the pupils are good: they can log on to the network confidently and can navigate through the Internet and other information sites with ease. Excellent use is made of

intranet-based work schemes, to which pupils can gain access from home. The reinforcement and development of pupils' ICT skills across the subjects remains patchy and is an area for development.

70. Results at all levels are above average and rising. Standards are above the national average throughout the school, and well above average among older pupils, who are beginning to reach high levels of attainment. Given their attainment on entry to the school, achievement is good. This is brought about mainly by a lot of good and very good teaching, and in particular by clear assessment guidelines, well known to the pupils, which set high levels of expectation; these guidelines help them achieve standards above the national average. Pupils of all abilities achieve well because the more able have access to extension work and the less able have well-targeted support from the teacher.
71. Teaching is good overall and very good in the upper part of the school. There is a more variation in Years 7 to 9, but the quality there remains good overall. Very good relationships in lessons enable pupils to work together well and remain motivated. The teachers' knowledge of ICT is very good: they use technical terms with confidence and provide immediate help for pupils who need it. Good quality, detailed marking helps pupils make progress in their work. Teachers are enthusiastic and pupils respond by working with purpose and enthusiasm themselves. Lessons are very well planned with a good range of activities that stimulate pupils' learning. Pupils can achieve higher levels through extension work provided through the excellent range of software and hardware available. Pupils' use supervised ICT areas to continue their coursework and increase their ICT skills. Homework is good: it is used effectively to reinforce and extend what is learnt in school. Pupils do not have e-mail accounts at school but they do have access to a secure Internet site to view reports and assessments.
72. Parents are well informed about their children's ICT standards. Reports to parents refer to National Curriculum levels where appropriate and give helpful advice on ways pupils may improve standards. Homework is well marked with a clear indication of the progress made.
73. Leadership of ICT at both senior management and departmental level is excellent and has brought about dramatic, ongoing improvement. There are excellent systems and working relationships within the team, which includes the technicians, ensuring that progress is monitored and action is swift, guaranteeing that the very good facilities are reliable and well maintained. The technicians make a good contribution to the confidence that teachers have to use ICT. The ratio of pupils to computers of 4.6:1 is better than the national average.

## **HUMANITIES**

The faculty of humanities provides courses to GCSE in history, geography and religious education, all of which were inspected in detail.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in geography are above average and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good. It ensures pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good
- Leadership of the department is very good.
- Teachers do not always ensure that pupils act on the advice they receive when work is marked.

### **Commentary**

74. In GCSE in 2002, the school outperformed the national average by a considerable margin, with able pupils achieving very high standards and boys, in particular, performing impressively. In 2003, results fell to the national average; more-able pupils did less well. However, work seen in lessons and in course work submitted for examination show that

standards are above average and set to rise sharply. Older pupils' analytical skills are often very good. Work on settlement is frequently of a high standard, as are the development of pupils' map skills and their understanding of natural hazards. Pupils write confidently and accurately about these issues and are developing a good grasp of technical debates and skills, such as the relative merits of the different models of urbanisation offered by Burgess and Hoyt. They achieve well and take a justified pride in the quality and presentation of their work.

75. Younger pupils also achieve well, reaching standards by the end of Year 9, which are above average and often well above. In 2003, almost half the pupils taking geography exceeded the standard expected for their age group. They have a good grasp of technical concepts and are familiar with, and use, demanding terminology confidently. Work on Japan, for example, is comprehensive and detailed. It is not, however, fluently written, and pupils of all ages are more ready to write in note and short answer form than they are to offer detailed, extensive and well-argued conclusions. It is in this area that the scope to improve pupils' standards, particularly those of the most able, lies.
76. Teaching is good. Teachers have an excellent grasp of their subject and know how to present it to pupils in ways that are motivating and exciting. Consequently, pupils learn well. They are respectful to teachers and listen attentively to them and to each other and respond readily to the challenges they are posed. Throughout all the lessons observed, there was a constant buzz of activity and enthusiasm as pupils worked at pace to carry out the tasks set. Teachers are skilled in engaging pupils, and in ensuring that all work purposefully, using ICT to motivate and to extend the range of pupils' skills and understanding. The support given to older pupils completing examination coursework is very good. Fieldwork opportunities are imaginative and well planned, and homework is used very well to extend the opportunities for pupils to learn. Teachers use assessment well, both to inform pupils about their progress and to show them how to improve; however, insufficient emphasis is given to ensuring that pupils act on the excellent advice they receive, and so some pupils repeat the same errors. Equally, although all teachers use a good range of teaching methods, lessons sometimes proceed at too great a pace for genuine discussion and reflection. This causes difficulties for pupils with special educational needs, particularly when they are not supported by teaching assistants, and restricting the depth of understanding achieved by the most able.
77. Geography is very well led and has improved steadily since the last inspection. The department enjoys an excellent sense of teamwork. It is innovative and self-confident, and always ready to explore new ideas, all the direct result of the drive and vision provided by the head of faculty. The department evaluates its work well to improve the quality of education it offers. Test results and teaching are monitored regularly to identify the scope for improvement. However, the department does not yet use the weaknesses it has identified in pupils' skills' and understanding to refine its approach to planning. Day-to-day management and communication within the department are good. There is an excellent scheme of work and subject handbook, both of which help new and existing staff work within subject and school guidelines and ensure the curriculum is imaginative and relevant.

## **HISTORY**

Provision in history is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are good and pupils achieve well.
- The department is led well.
- Teaching is good, particularly the way assessment is used to help pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- Pupils' learning is good; they are well motivated and conscientious.
- Some teaching makes undue use of instruction from the front, allowing pupils to be passive and dependent in their learning.

## Commentary

78. Standards in history are above average and pupils achieve well. In 2002, GCSE results bettered the national average, and pupils achieved better in history than they did in most other subjects. Able pupils did well, as they did in 2003, when an increased percentage of pupils attained grades A/A\*. Older pupils' examination coursework and other class-work are diligently completed and pupils take an obvious pride in their work. The best examples of written work are well composed and fluent, incorporating good knowledge of the topic and an ability to write extensively and fluently. However, in many cases, pupils' ability to analyse or respond to source material is greater than their ability to compose succinct written essays and, although they work hard, many are prone to include unnecessary incidental detail, indicating that their understanding of the main issues being explored is not always secure.
79. The most-able younger pupils achieve well. They analyse sources carefully and their levels of knowledge are good. In class, they make pertinent and well-phrased contributions to class discussions. Pupils with special educational needs, when supported by learning support assistants, often make good progress. However, the school is not always able to ensure the provision of this support and, when it is absent, these pupils do not achieve as well. The majority of pupils are making good progress and achieving well but, as with older pupils, written work does not always match the standard of oral discussion.
80. Teachers' management of pupils is very good. As a result, pupils listen attentively, collaborate willingly and the majority are keen to do well. In the best lessons, there is a good balance of formal teaching and the use of opportunities for independent research, sometimes using ICT. Teachers' command of their subject enables them to marshal pupils' comments, directing their attention to precise distinctions that improve their understanding. Such lessons have a marked impact on pupils' achievement. Sometimes, however, teaching, whilst invariably well-planned and prepared, involves too much use of instruction from the front and this allows pupils to be unduly passive and unadventurous. Assessment is used very well to tell pupils how they are performing and how they might improve, but marking, which is sometimes too concerned to be supportive, can be optimistic in its award of grades and levels. Teachers give insufficient emphasis to ensuring pupils respond to the guidance they have been offered.
81. History is well led and has improved steadily since the last inspection. The department regularly reviews the success of its work, auditing the patterns of achievement and pupils' progress and using lesson observations to judge the quality and effectiveness of teaching. There is a good development plan and a well-written scheme of work, both reflecting the department's vision for the subject. The department is well managed: communication is good, and funds are used carefully to ensure that textbooks and other visual aids are in reasonable supply. Difficulties of access have meant that the department has not fully exploited the opportunities offered by ICT.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The lack of challenge in most lessons leads pupils to underachieve.
- Pupils lack depth, continuity and coherence in their learning because leadership and management in the subject are unsatisfactory.
- Provision does not meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.
- The unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of many pupils limit their progress in religious education.
- The small number who took GCSE in 2003 all passed at grade C or above.

## Commentary

82. A small group of pupils studied the GCSE short course in religious education in their own time in 2003, and all gained grades A\* to C. There are now GCSE option courses in Years 10 and 11. The small amount of work available for inspection in Years 10 and 11 shows that standards are in line with the expectations of the locally-agreed syllabus and with national standards.
83. The standards of work in Years 7 to 9 are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and below national expectations for pupils of their age. Most pupils under-achieve because the work set is not sufficiently challenging. In Years 7 to 9, planning does not allow pupils to cover an appropriate range of topics, nor to work at the higher levels of which they are capable. The time allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11 for pupils not studying for GCSE is insufficient for them to move on to the more reflective and evaluative aspects of the syllabus. There is limited evidence of achievement, since pupils have no record of work from previous years. In lessons, pupils do not demonstrate what they know and understand in a meaningful way and fail to make connections between different aspects of their learning.
84. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 9 there is too much emphasis on the simple facts of individual religions and little attempt to connect religions or to teach pupils how religion can impact on people's lives. Teaching does not encourage pupils to explore meaning and purpose. In Years 10 and 11, however, there were some examples of pupils investigating values and commitments when considering the work of Christian Aid and the theme of marriage. Assessment does not identify levels of achievement nor does it help pupils to understand what they must do to improve. Unsatisfactory attitudes to religious education and poor behaviour also limit the progress pupils' make. When teaching is good, as seen in one Year 7 lesson, expectations are high and pupils remain enthusiastic and productive throughout. On this occasion the group was able to debate the nature of truth and identify reasons why clerics in the middle-ages may have held particular views, which influenced their writing. They used specialist vocabulary well.
85. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The teacher in charge of religious education has no clear vision for the subject. In lessons, she focuses more on personal and social development than on the requirements of the agreed syllabus. Systems of monitoring and support within the humanities faculty, at least insofar as they relate to religious education, are under-developed, and the subject leader for religious education feels isolated and uncertain of her role as a result.
86. Improvement since the time of the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Notably, the number of pupils studying for GCSE examinations has declined. Standards in Years 7 to 9 no longer match the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and the quality of teaching in those years is now unsatisfactory. Attitudes to religious education and behaviour within lessons have deteriorated.

## TECHNOLOGY

In technology, the department provides courses to GCSE in design and technology (resistant materials), design and technology (food), graphics and textiles. All elements of the programme were inspected.

### Design and Technology

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good; most pupils are working to their individual capabilities.
- Teaching and learning are good.

- The great majority of pupils have positive attitudes and work hard.
- Pupils with special educational needs would benefit from more help with their learning, especially in practical sessions.
- Health and safety is generally well addressed in classrooms, workshops and kitchens, but a more rigorous approach and attention to detail is necessary in lessons.
- Assessment in the first three years should be more closely related to National Curriculum levels and shared more effectively with pupils.

## Commentary

87. Standards are in line with the national average by the end of Year 9; inspection evidence indicates that teachers' assessments of younger pupils' work are a little generous. Good progress is made and, by the end of Year 11, standards are just above the national average. In recent years GCSE results have improved steadily, with the proportion of higher grades being above the national average in 2003. Results fell in all areas of the subject in 2002, in line with the school as a whole. Realistic predictions are for above average results overall in 2004, with food technology and textiles being the strongest aspects of the subject. Girls do better than boys, as they do nationally. Pupils in all years follow the design process well, for example when designing and making a mechanical toy in Year 9. They have a sound understanding of how motion is transferred through mechanical means such as linkages, and experiment by constructing linkages of their own using strips of card and paper clips for pivots. Achievement was high, for example, in an electronics lesson in which all pupils tried very hard to achieve neat and accurately-soldered joints when making a light sensor. Their written work and diagrams were well presented, and their understanding of electronic components was above that expected for their age. Pupils in Year 11 work confidently and productively during food technology practical lessons. Their standard of food preparation and cooking is high. They understand the nutritional values of the ingredients they used, and adjust their recipes to make their products suitable for particular groups of people, for example high-energy food for athletes.
88. Design sheets in all areas are however, sometimes marred by weak layout. Pupils spoken to in a Year 11 graphics lesson had a sound knowledge of market research and corporate image; although their design sheets are generally well presented and have accurate content, they show tenuous understanding of the use of colour, and compositional balance.
89. Teaching and learning are good overall, never less than satisfactory, and there is some very good teaching. The best lessons are well planned to cover National Curriculum and examination requirements, with lesson aims and objectives clearly stated. Teachers communicate their considerable knowledge of the subject with enthusiasm, as in a Year 10 resistant materials lesson, when focused practical tasks were well taught through clear explanation and very good demonstrations. In the best lessons, effective use is made of resources. There are high expectations of pupils' work, and appropriate challenges. This promotes interest, as in a food technology lesson where learning was good through direct problem solving activities. In the best lessons, pupils were fully engaged throughout. However, in some lessons a few pupils were less well motivated and sometimes off-task chatter was unchecked, which reduced the quality of learning. In some lessons, better class management is required to tackle and improve the negative attitudes of some difficult pupils, whose behaviour is unacceptable. Most lessons observed would have been better with more opportunity for question and answer sessions, and appropriate questions directed at specific pupils by name. To aid achievement and promote high standards, more emphasis should be placed on design principles, and links with designers and design movements. Most pupils use tools, machinery, and electrical equipment carefully and safely, but in some lessons observed, teachers were insufficiently rigorous in the application of safety rules.
90. Assessment of work is satisfactory, although little reference is made to National Curriculum levels, and pupils would benefit from more written comments on how their work can be improved. However, the work set helps all pupils achieve well, since projects are largely open-

ended and one-to-one feedback is good. The department makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development through project work, contacts with local retail establishments, and the community. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall; however, more support assistants and more guidance for them could improve achievement further.

91. Currently, leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There have been several changes in leadership, staffing and the curriculum. The new acting head of department has a clear vision for the development of the subject; a good team ethos is developing, and improvement is secure. Following refurbishment, accommodation has improved, and is now well organised. Colourful wall displays show pupils how to achieve high standards. The small computer room is being used effectively, but there are insufficient machines for whole classes. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. The major concerns have been addressed and now there is a steady trend of improvement.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

The faculty of expressive arts provides courses to GCSE in art and music, which were inspected in detail, and drama, which was sampled.

Provision for the visual and performing arts is **good** overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The visual and performing arts faculty makes a positive contribution to the school and the community.
- Extra-curricular opportunities for pupils are very good in drama, art and music.
- Teachers in the faculty work well as a team.
- The school has yet to establish a shared philosophy and strategic purpose for the faculty.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning within the faculty are not yet systematic.

## **DRAMA**

Pupils make steady progress and achieve satisfactorily throughout the age range. They enjoy the subject and the majority of pupils have a growing understanding of dramatic conventions and, in Years 10 and 11, increasing knowledge of the history of theatre. The subject has sustained very good examination results over the years, with a very high proportion achieving grades A\* - C. Several pupils have achieved local and national success in drama.

Teaching is satisfactory overall with good features. It is well planned and organised, and is based on good relationships between the teacher and the pupils, as shown in a lesson in which the teacher divided the pupils into groups and the text of "Mak the Shepherd" Guild play into short episodes, so that each group could perform part of the action. She organised the groups around the room and pupils rehearsed their extracts, which were then played out in sequence. 'Freeze frames' moved the action from one group to the next. The challenge of having it video recorded in the next lesson motivated the pupils to improve their performances. They worked well together. The use of unobtrusive and sensitive discipline techniques motivates and controls some potentially awkward pupils and the purposes of activities are made clear. Pupils respond positively. Occasionally the instructions are too long. This limits learning time, slows the lesson and impedes progress.

## ART

Provision for art is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress and achieve very high standards in art because of the skilful teaching they receive.
- Teachers' assessment of work is very good: as a result, pupils know what to do to improve and take pride in producing their best work.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about the subject and do better in it than in many of their other subjects.
- Teachers make best use of the very cramped accommodation and the rooms are vibrant, colourful and stimulate imaginative and creative responses from the pupils.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is not as rigorous as it could be.
- Strategic planning and supporting planning for development is not well articulated

### Commentary

92. There is an air of expectancy. The teacher is calm and smiling and gives clear instructions, helpfully written on the board. Pupils are alert, listen intently and are quick to grasp the purpose of the activity. They respond immediately and are instantly engrossed. This is typical of the purposeful way art lessons begin. Consequently standards of attainment are above average for the majority of pupils throughout the school. A significant number of Year 10 pupils produce work that is well above average, having made rapid progress since the end of Year 9. In recent GCSE examinations, pupils achieved significantly higher standards in art than in their other subjects. Work on display around the school and in pupils' own sketchbooks is impressive. It illustrates the wide range of skills, techniques and styles that the pupils learn and reflects the enthusiasm, care and detail they put into their work.
93. Teaching is very good with some excellent features. Lessons are well planned and imaginative. For example, in one Year 11 class, pupils were set enjoyable, quick-fire exercises, drawing an observed object first with their wrong hand, then over the top with their eyes shut and finally superimposing an emerging pattern. This guided and motivated pupils and helped them work more quickly, with greater freedom. The carefully structured and -sequenced activities help pupils to improve and apply their skills. Teachers use homework constructively to aid work in class. They assess pupils' work very well, praising strengths and clarifying what pupils need to do to improve. Even in the very cramped classrooms, teachers have successfully created an exciting, stimulating environment. However, the lack of wet-room facilities and storage space limits their ability to provide aspects of three-dimensional work and to get pupils to work on large-scale projects, narrowing pupils' experience of art.
94. Teamwork is very good in this department. It is very well led and managed and flourishes because of the innovative approach of the two teachers and the excellent role models they provide for pupils. However, the monitoring and evaluation they currently do is not sufficiently focused on developing the very good teaching into more consistent excellent practice. The head of department has ideas for improvement but these are not set out in a long-term strategic statement; nor are there detailed, prioritised development plans to support them. Nevertheless the department has made good progress since the last inspection.



## MUSIC

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Weaknesses in the teaching of younger pupils slow their progress and result in unsatisfactory achievement over time.
- Younger pupils, particularly those with musical talent, are not stretched sufficiently in lessons.
- Results in the recent GCSE examination were very good.
- Older pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- The assessment of younger pupils' work is not helping them understand how well they are doing and how they can make progress.
- Strategic development planning for music and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are underdeveloped.

### Commentary

95. The small number of older pupils who choose music achieve well because of the teacher's excellent knowledge of the subject and because of the way she involves pupils in discussion, sequencing activities logically and using resources imaginatively. Pupils who take music GCSE usually do well: all 11 pupils who took the examination in 2003 achieved an A\*-C grade.
96. The situation is different for younger pupils, the majority of whom do not achieve as well as they should because the teaching does not expect enough of them. Lessons are not always timed to allow work to be evaluated in depth and to summarise learning properly. Assessment is not used systematically enough to help pupils understand how well they are doing. Sometimes a few pupils do not see the relevance of what they are doing or the work is too easy for them, so they lose interest and concentration, get bored and disturb the flow of the lessons. Therefore, although teaching is good for older pupils, it is unsatisfactory in lessons in Years 7 to 9.
97. The head of department has worked hard to increase the facilities and make the music room a cheerful and informative environment. This and the extra-curricular opportunities have improved music's image with the pupils since the last inspection. Pupils participate in concerts and clubs with enthusiasm and make use of the music room for drumming practice and to rehearse their rock bands. Nevertheless, this involves a relatively small number of pupils. The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory because there is insufficient understanding about, and attention to, weaknesses in teaching and learning for the majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9. Monitoring has been too imprecise and assessment too optimistic. The head of department has ideas for improving the department on but these are not prioritised or set out in a clear plan.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The department provides a core programme for all pupils and a GCSE course in physical education, both were inspected.

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is very well led and managed, resulting in very good teamwork among staff.
- Teaching and learning are of high quality, especially in dance
- Staff insist on high standards and, as a result, pupils develop good attitudes
- The range of activities provided for Years 10 and 11 is limited by the large size of groups.
- The size and condition of changing rooms are unacceptable.

## Commentary

98. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average overall and, because of the emphasis on self-discipline and a strong rewards system, most pupils take a full part in physical education, trying hard to improve their skills. At GCSE, results in 2002 were above the national average with both girls and boys performing well. In 2003 the results improved still further. Standards in core physical education for Years 10 and 11 are average, with all pupils taking a full part.
99. Achievement is good overall. In Years 7 to 9 it is satisfactory. In Year 9, pupils know the names of the muscle groups that are being warmed up. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support to integrate well into lessons and as a result they make satisfactory progress. Where the groups are smaller their achievement is good. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is good in both the core programme and the GCSE examination course. Pupils in Year 11 can set a personal fitness programme in the context of their own particular sport and they train hard, while recording improvements in fitness levels.
100. Teaching and learning are good overall, always at least satisfactory and sometimes very good. Teachers place great emphasis on challenging their pupils to reach higher levels of achievement. Their insistence on high standards encourages pupils to try hard so that they make good progress. In Year 9 the combination of a small group and very good teaching allowed pupils, including those with physical and learning disabilities, to achieve highly as they devised a dance to well-chosen music.
101. Leadership and management are very good and are bringing about rapid improvement. All relevant policies are in place and teachers monitor the progress of each pupil in detail. Teachers are good role models for their pupils and the strong commitment to self-evaluation leads to very effective teamwork. The use of ICT as a learning tool is a growing strength and the improved performance and understanding of pupils is encouraged by the use of video playback and analysis.
102. The broad range of extra-curricular activities and the use of adults other than teachers to pass on their skills in a controlled and safe environment are fine examples of community education. Year 10 and 11 pupils assist the School Sports Co-ordinator to teach youngsters from neighbouring primary schools and thereby gain in their own understanding of recreation and play.
103. The department has made very good improvements since the last inspection by raising expectations further, by meeting all National Curriculum requirements and by establishing a clear policy for those pupils who do not participate in physical education.

## BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

In this curriculum area, the school provides the applied GCSE course in business studies and, for a small number of pupils who find full-time attendance at school difficult, a leisure and tourism intermediate course based at the local college of further education. Both courses were sampled. Pupils may also follow GCSE courses in engineering and ICT at the local college.

Standards on the business course are average, and pupils show enthusiasm for the well-informed and well-planned teaching they receive. The design of this course and its scheme of work are good. The subject will be examined at GCSE for the first time in 2004.

The work-related course, with its one day per week at the nearby further education college, its support programme for basic skills, and its strong personal, social and careers element stressing preparation for work, is a very good piece of provision. It maintains the motivation of the pupils who follow it and, by maintaining them in education and encouraging them to continue in full-time education after the age of 16, is a good example of inclusion. Support for individual pupils at college, in work placements and in their work at school is very good.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school provides a personal, social and health education course and a citizenship programme for all its pupils; the focal point of citizenship is the personal, social and health education course, but elements are taught through the other subjects. Neither course is examined, although consideration is being given to a certificated course in personal skills as part of the work-related course. Both courses were inspected.

### Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The programme is developing well as a result of good planning.
- There is no whole-school system for the monitoring and assessment of citizenship.
- Pupils have good opportunities to be active citizens outside of the formal curriculum.
- Citizenship opportunities are often not made explicit by teachers for pupils.

### Commentary

104. Provision for citizenship is well planned and taught within the personal, social and health education programme, and the school has conducted a detailed audit of the contributions made through all subjects, across the age range. Pupils and teachers are not fully aware of the distinctive nature of the subject.
105. Standards are satisfactory overall. Pupils' achievement is sound overall, but inconsistent since it depends on the skills of the individual teachers and subjects, and their ability to make citizenship explicit within what they teach. In some subjects, such as geography, pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are being developed well because teachers recognise the wider perspective that citizenship brings.
106. The teaching of citizenship is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good and very good. It is satisfactory because the elements of the subject are taught competently; when it is good or very good, it is because those citizenship elements are made explicit to pupils, but this does not happen often enough. As a result, many pupils are unaware of what they should be learning or how they could improve. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to be active citizens by contributing to the community, and by participating in the life of the school, such as through a school council which is becoming a more effective voice for pupils' views, and through the prefect system.
107. The subject is well led and managed. There is a clear vision and direction for citizenship, supported by senior managers. Changes in senior management over recent years have slowed the planning and development of citizenship across the school. There are now plans for a way forward, which should ensure that the subject is more central to the curriculum and to all aspects of school life.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Provision for personal, social and health education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a well-established, comprehensive programme for all year groups.
- The programme is well led and managed.
- There is a wide range of opportunities both within and outside of the formal curriculum.
- The use of outside agencies and services is good.
- Systems to assess and demonstrate pupils' progress in personal, social and health education are under-developed.

### Commentary

108. Provision is good because of an effective and thorough programme that responds to pupils' needs. Opportunities are taken to extend pupils' learning through the school's considerable links with the community; these enable pupils to work in local businesses and help local needy people, as well as bringing valuable outside speakers into the programme. Relationships, drugs, sex and careers education are all well covered.
109. From the evidence seen during the inspection, standards are average. Pupils' achievement in individual lessons is often good or very good. Discussion lessons on bullying with younger pupils showed how sensitive and mature their views are. Older pupils are able to hypothesise, test their ideas and defend them in discussion. Pupils' attitudes, their sense of social responsibility and their social and moral development are all good, showing that the school's attempts to embody personal, social and health education throughout all of its life and work are generally successful.
110. The teaching of personal, social and health education is good. The best lessons are active and encourage pupils to develop the skills to make informed choices. Pupils learned well in a lesson on peer counselling because they found the work useful and they could contribute their views. Pupils of different abilities were well catered for when preparing for mock interviews. A lack of rigour and weaker classroom management skills did impede learning for some younger pupils. Clear recording and assessment procedures for personal, social and health education would benefit pupils by showing them how they could improve.
111. Leadership and management are good. The programme has been run successfully for a number of years and is constantly modified to meet the changing needs of the pupils and the school. Staff who teach personal, social and health education are well supported by a good scheme of work and by well-chosen resources, and take their responsibilities seriously. The skilful management of outside agencies and services to enhance the programme supports pupils' learning and encourages a wider perspective.
112. Since the last inspection the planned opportunities for pupils' personal and social development have improved steadily. The school should now go on to clarify and make productive the relationship between citizenship and personal, social and health education.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	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	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
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).*