

INSPECTION REPORT

CASTLE ROCK HIGH SCHOOL

Coalville

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120258

Headteacher: Mrs Rosemary Baker

Lead inspector: Robin Coulthard

Dates of inspection: 26th – 29th April 2004

Inspection number: 258595

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 14
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	550
School address:	Warren Hills Road Coalville Leicestershire
Postcode:	LE67 4UU
Telephone number:	01530 834368
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e-mail address	office@castlerock.leics.sch.uk
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Knight
Date of previous inspection:	11 th January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Castle Rock is a Leicestershire high school catering for students in Years 7 to 9. The school roll of 550 students, with similar numbers of boys and girls is about half the size of the average secondary school. Very few students are of non-White British origin. No student is at an early stage of learning English. The social backgrounds of students are mixed. The catchment contains pleasant residential areas and areas of deprivation. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below the national average. Students' attainment on entry is below average

Overall, 103 students are on the register of special educational needs which, at 18.6 per cent, is slightly above the national average. Thirty-one, or 5.6 per cent, of students have statements of special educational need, which is more than twice the average level. Students' needs are concerned mostly with dyslexia and moderate learning difficulty. The school maintains a learning support unit for ten students.

The school has received the following awards: Basic Skills Mark (2003), Healthy Schools Award (2000), Investors in people (1996, re-awarded 2001 and 2003), Sportsmark (2001), Partnership Promotion School (2002), National Excellence in Mentoring Award (2003), Career Mark (2003), Schools Achievement (2003).

Castle Rock School participates in a good range of regional and national initiatives, including: Community Action Zone, The Children's Fund, DFES Progress File, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority - Initiative for Curriculum Development at Key Stage 3, North West Leicestershire Improvement Zone, Leadership Incentive Grant Area Network, Royal Society of Arts Citizenship Development Initiative.

Significant partners in the school's development are: Education and Business Partnership (provision of Careers Advisors and Mentors for Year 9); King Edward VII Community College (curriculum development with the main receiving school); Transition Mentors through the Children's Fund; 'Opening Minds Curriculum' through the Royal Society of Arts.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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32352	Val Malcolm	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology
4922	Mike Driver	Team inspector	Science
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design
32208	Derek Aitkin	Team inspector	Citizenship
31238	Gordon Clubb	Team inspector	Design and technology
18663	Philip Burchell	Team inspector	History Geography
2496	Tony O'Sullivan	Team inspector	French English as an additional language
30800	Betty Colley	Team inspector	Special educational needs
3726	Maureen Bean	Team inspector	Physical education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Castle Rock High School is an effective school with many very good and excellent features.

The leadership has established a very strong ethos where all students are valued and their needs are very well provided for. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Teaching is good and students achieve well
- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the very effective work of the senior management team have created a very good climate for learning
- Standards are well above average in information and communication technology (ICT) and above average in French, geography, history, design and technology and citizenship
- Students receive excellent support and guidance
- A wide and rich curriculum provides students with very good opportunities for learning
- Attendance and punctuality remain unsatisfactory despite the school's strenuous efforts
- Leadership and management of art are not good enough

Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Issues raised then have been successfully tackled. Standards have improved and teaching is substantially better, with a much higher proportion of very good teaching and little that is unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	C	D	D	C
mathematics	D	D	D	B
science	C	C	C	A

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
Similar schools are those whose students have attained similarly at the end of Year 6.*

Students achieve well. They make good progress during their time in the school from standards that are below average when they arrive. Overall, standards are average by the end of Year 9. Standards are well above average in ICT, and above average in French, geography, history, design and technology and citizenship. They are average in mathematics, science and religious education, and below average in English music and art. In relation to their starting points, students achieve very well in ICT, geography, history and citizenship. Achievement is good in mathematics, science, French, design and technology, physical education and religious education; it is satisfactory in English and music, and unsatisfactory in art.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Students' behaviour is satisfactory overall. They generally behave well, show enthusiasm in class and participate well in extra-curricular activities. However, some students, usually boys, misbehave if the teachers do not keep a very firm hand on conduct in lessons. With occasional exceptions, behaviour is good around the site. The school has a very clear code of conduct and sets high expectations of students' behaviour and response. This contributes significantly to the school's very supportive learning environment. Attendance is below average because some parents do not ensure that their children attend school on a regular basis, and some take holidays in term time, which disrupts their children's learning.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The education provided by the school is good. Students benefit from a very good range of learning opportunities, with particular strengths in ICT and citizenship. Extra-curricular enrichment is good. Sport is well provided for, and drama productions take place regularly. Some older students produce and take part in Castle Rock Radio, broadcast in the school at lunchtimes. Students are well looked after and arrangements for their guidance and support are excellent. The school regularly seeks the advice of parents and involves them well in their children's education. **Teaching and learning are good** overall and very good in Year 9. Teachers are all specialists in their subjects. They plan well for the full range of students in each class. Lessons have clear objectives. A good range of teaching methods is employed to keep students interested and time is generally carefully allocated to maintain a good pace of learning. Teaching is very good in mathematics, ICT, geography, history and citizenship. Assessment is good overall, but not equally effective in all subjects at telling students what they must do to improve.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher is an outstanding leader with a keen awareness of current developments in education. She constantly evaluates the work of the school, seeks out new initiatives and compares the school's performance with the best practice available elsewhere. The senior management team shares her values, and works together very effectively to raise standards of teaching, learning and personal development, and to reflect best current educational practice. Staff share these values and the overall leadership of subjects is good. Governors are very well informed and make a very good contribution to the school's development.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have favourable views of the school. They think the teaching is good, that staff expect their children to work hard, and that the school helps their children to become mature. Parents feel comfortable when approaching the school with concerns about their children's progress. A good range of activities is provided for students. The school is led and managed well. Students like the school and think they are well taught. They value the availability of someone to talk to about problems. They feel trusted. They appreciate the interest the school shows in their views. They think the school is well run. Both children and their parents think that bullying takes place, but that it is effectively dealt with by the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is

- Improve provision for art and design

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects

Standards are below average when students join the school but have risen to average at the end of Year 9 because students achieve well over their time in the school.

Main strengths

- Students achieve well because the teaching is good
- Overall results in national tests have risen above the national trend over five years
- Results are above those gained by students in similar schools, and results in science in 2003 were well above
- Current standards are well above average in ICT, and above average in French, history, geography, design and technology and citizenship

Commentary

1. Students enter the school with below-average standards of attainment. In national tests taken at the end of Year 6, standards were below average overall. They were below average in English and mathematics. In science, students' reached average standards. In comparison with schools whose students had gained similar results at the end of Year 6, the school's results are above average overall. They were average in English, above average in mathematics, and well above average in science. Girls did better than boys in all three subjects, as is the case nationally. In science, girls' performance was above the national average for girls, as it has been for the last three years. Results in English, mathematics and science have risen above the national rate over the last five years. Results in mathematics and science have risen each year, but results in English fell between 2001 and 2002 and have not yet regained their former level.
2. Work seen during the inspection in classes and in students' books was average overall. In the core subjects, standards were average in mathematics and science and below average in English, where students experience some difficulties with formal writing. It was well above average in ICT, above average in French, geography, history, design and technology and citizenship. Standards were average in religious education and physical education. Standards were below average in music and art and design. From their below-average starting points, students achieve well in response to good teaching and reach average standards. Current achievement very good in ICT, geography, history and citizenship, good in French, mathematics, science, religious education, design and technology and physical education, satisfactory in English and music, and unsatisfactory in art and design.
3. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve as well as other students as a result of the good support they receive in class and in the learning support centre. Individual students achieve very well and a few have been removed from statements of special needs. Students receive good support in lessons and in the learning support centre to help them achieve as well as other students. Some students are placed in carefully setted groups and some have focused help in support lessons and lunchtime sessions; this concentrated support helps students with special educational needs to achieve well. Target setting at the beginning and end of sessions in the learning support centre is effectively done with individual students to raise achievement and focus on improvement.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32 (32)	33 (33)
mathematics	34 (33)	35 (35)
science	33 (33)	34 (33)

There were 170 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes both to school and to learning are good. Behaviour, overall, is satisfactory. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. Attendance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attitudes to learning are good overall
- Most students are well mannered and confident, maturing very well as they progress through the school
- Most students respect the clear expectations of good behaviour promoted by the school
- The level of exclusions is high when compared with similar schools
- The citizenship programme is having a significant impact on students' personal development

Commentary

4. Most students have positive attitudes towards school and to their learning. Those who attend regularly do so with a reasonable level of enthusiasm and participate fully in lessons and extra-curricular activities. They co-operate well with their teachers, other staff and students.
5. Occasionally students' attitudes in lessons are unsatisfactory. This is usually because the pace of the lesson is slow and teachers have not been able to motivate them, or secure their interest or co-operation.
6. The behaviour of many students is good. The school has clear expectations of the standards required, and most students respect these. However, some students behave well only when the teacher has a firm control of the class and insists on high standards of behaviour. Some lessons are disrupted, usually by boys, and only become productive because good management of students by teachers combats inattentiveness and restless behaviour. Although the rate of fixed term exclusions is high, students are only excluded after other strategies have proved unsuccessful. Moreover, exclusions do contribute to the strong and effective message that poor behaviour will not be tolerated. Most students behave well around the school, but occasionally rough behaviour takes place in the corridors or outside. It appears that some students have disputes with others outside school and sometimes these continue inside the school gates.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	544	27	6
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0

Chinese	0	0	0
Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

7. Through the inspection questionnaires, a number of parents and students have expressed concerns about bullying. In interviews with inspectors, however, all students stated that any such incidents, when reported to the school, were swiftly and effectively dealt with.
8. Relationships between students, and between students and staff, are good. In many cases, the strong relationships in lessons contribute to the productive working atmosphere in lessons. Most students show a willingness to please their teachers, and work hard. In an excellent Year 7 history lesson on the Black Death, students achieved to a very high standard because they were totally engaged and focused on their work, and were keen to learn more. Older students have opportunities to support younger ones. For example, some Year 8 and 9 students support Year 7 students through the peer mentoring and mediation scheme.
9. Although the school is working hard to improve the low rates of attendance, a number of parents do not ensure that their children attend school regularly. The effort that the school makes to contact these parents to stress the importance of regular attendance has had little effect. For the past few years attendance has remained at 90 per cent, but statistics do show that this academic year attendance has been marginally higher. One per cent of absence is due to parents taking their children on holiday during term time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.6	School data	1.4
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

10. The school makes good provision for students' personal development. The very positive ethos in the school stimulates students, and encourages them to become involved in the school community.
11. Spiritual awareness is developed well in some lessons. For example, in religious education students are encouraged to reflect on issues such as forgiveness, and lessons in citizenship provide valuable opportunities for students to explore their feelings. Displays around the school show students their work is valued. Although assemblies explore social and moral issues, they do not always contribute to students' spiritual development and the school is failing to meet the requirement of a daily collective act of worship.
12. Moral development is good. The very positive ethos of the school ensures that the difference between right and wrong is clearly understood. Teachers are good role models and enforce standards of behaviour around the school. They encourage students, some of whom are very challenging, to reflect on their actions, and to think of others. Students, in their turn, show care for other people in the substantial sums they raise for a number of different charities. Lessons in citizenship and personal and social education provide students with a strong moral framework, and reinforce values such as respect for oneself and others.
13. Students' social development is very good. They contribute to community life in a number of ways. The school council offers them a voice in the decision-making in the school, and the Community Award scheme provides many worthwhile opportunities for them to develop social awareness and a sense of responsibility. Further opportunities to exercise responsibility and initiative are offered through the peer mentoring scheme, school radio station, and as library monitors. The annual school production, involving more than a quarter of the school population, provides students with

opportunities to develop skills in performing to others. The school is one of a small number of schools taking part in the 'Opening Minds Curriculum' and 'Relating to People Competence' run by the Royal Society of Arts, which aims to develop students' social skills and self-confidence.

14. Cultural development is satisfactory. Visits to theatres and museums, and visiting theatre companies, act as a stimulus for students' cultural awareness. The citizenship programme includes topics on cultural diversity, which broaden students' knowledge of multi-cultural societies and the issues involved, such as stereotyping and discrimination. The school is developing ways of broadening students' understanding of other cultures, and has recently held a cultural week for languages across the curriculum, and is beginning to make use of the Leicestershire multi-cultural centre.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good education. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum is very good. The school looks after its students well, and the partnership between the school and parents is good. Links with other schools are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good in Year 9. The school has implemented very effectively the good teaching practice outlined in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Students' work is assessed well.

Main strengths

- Teaching has improved markedly since the last inspection
- Lessons are organised in line with current best practice
- Students learn well and are keen to display and talk about their work

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 92 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (3%)	26 (28%)	37 (41%)	22 (24%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	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.

15. Teaching is substantially better than at the time of the last inspection. It is good in Years 7 and 8 and very good in Year 9, where more than eight of every ten lessons were good or better. Teaching is very good in mathematics, ICT, history, geography, physical education and citizenship; it is good in English, French, science, religious education and design and technology, and satisfactory in music. Teaching is unsatisfactory in art and design.
16. The good relationships that teachers establish with classes underpin the teaching. As a result of the very good management of the school, a strong work ethic prevails. Teachers know their students well. They know that most have good attitudes to learning, but some do not. As a result, almost universally across the school, teachers establish clear expectations of effort and behaviour. In response to this consistency of approach, students accept and conform to the 'house rules', behave well and want to learn. Students and their parents willingly acknowledge that the teaching is good.
17. Lessons are planned well, according to the accepted good practice contained in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Clear objectives are communicated to classes. Planning is varied to take into account the varied abilities within each group. Resources are suitable for the task in hand and well organised. Lessons begin with stimulating starter activities to recall a topic and establish a good pace of working. Time is carefully allocated to tasks to ensure that a good work rate is maintained. In some lessons that were satisfactory rather than good, deadlines were not adhered to and this led to a slackening of pace.

18. To maintain students' interest, teachers use a variety of grouping, individual work, whole-class activity and paired or small group working. This usually worked well and students developed the skills of collaborative working and the confidence to show initiative and work independently.
19. Students learn well. They are capable of sustained concentration and want to do well. They often take an obvious pride in what they have achieved. Year 9 students had lavished much effort on the researching and presentation of projects on 'disability' in design and technology. They enthusiastically showed their finished efforts to inspectors and were keen to explain the processes followed in their designs.
20. Teaching of students with special educational needs in mainstream classes is good because teachers know them well and most plan to meet their needs using good information as a result of well planned reviews of students' needs. All students have individual education plans with relevant targets for improvement, and teachers generally reflect these well in their planning. The work of learning support assistants is effective in lessons because their involvement is well planned. Teaching in the learning support centre and in the special needs area links well with the work covered in mainstream teaching. Good records are maintained of students' progress so that their needs can be met in subsequent lessons. Good communications exist between teachers to coordinate the work set and completed in the learning support centre.
21. Assessment is good overall, and some examples of very good practice were noted. Work is carefully and regularly marked. Marking is carefully related to National Curriculum requirements. Information is being used well to compare students' progress against their targets and set challenging goals. In some subjects, including English, students are involved in their own assessment and in setting targets for themselves.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good. The full National Curriculum is enhanced by careers, personal, social and health education and citizenship courses and a good extra-curricular programme, which provide very well for students' personal and educational development. Curricular links with primary and upper schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad, well planned and carefully targeted at students' needs
- The planning of work in individual subjects is good; citizenship is a particular strength
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good
- Students' literacy and ICT skills are well developed across the curriculum; the development of number skills is satisfactory
- The good extra-curricular programme has particular strengths in sport and ICT
- The school is staffed with well-qualified specialist teachers
- The school has worked hard to create a stimulating learning environment, but the use of some non-specialist accommodation and some small mobile classrooms limits the range of activities
- Resources are good

Commentary

22. The school provides the full National Curriculum, with strong emphasis on the core subjects English, mathematics and science. The curriculum is balanced, though the time allocated to French in Years 7 and 8 is below the level recommended. The curriculum is enhanced by very good provision for citizenship and careers education which, combined with a good taught course in personal and social education, provides very well for students' personal and academic development. The structure and content of the curriculum have been thoughtfully planned with the specific needs of all students in mind. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements such as the teaching of sex education and drug and alcohol abuse.
23. The school has been enterprising and outward-looking in its approach to the curriculum. A number of national initiatives such as Progress File, the Opening Minds project and mentoring have been taken on and links with primary and upper schools have been creatively developed to ensure continuity

between phases of education and progressive development through innovation and the exchange of ideas. Strategic planning has been guided by proposed changes to the whole secondary curriculum. Governors are closely involved in planning and review of the curriculum and fulfil their monitoring role very effectively.

24. Curriculum planning in subjects is good, with particular strengths in the imaginative English course, the thoroughly-planned ICT course, careers education and citizenship. Too little independent investigative work takes place in science, and the gradual development of skills in art is inadequately planned. The music curriculum is under review. The overall picture, however, is of a well-planned curriculum which is evolving progressively to cater for the needs of all students. Governors are linked to all subjects, further enhancing their insight and ability to monitor the curriculum.
25. Provision of extra-curricular activities is good. A good range of sports is offered and uptake has improved since the last inspection. Inter-form and inter-school competitions are well established. The school organises good drama productions and, at subject level, provides open access to ICT, a well-supported library and booster classes in English and a number of other subjects. One of the most innovative enterprises is Castle Rock Radio which broadcasts with the support of the English, ICT, design and technology and music departments.
26. The quality of teaching resources to support the curriculum is good overall. Resources in ICT and citizenship are particularly good. In most other subjects they are good, but they are inadequate in music and barely adequate in religious studies.
27. Since the last inspection, overall progress in the planning and management of the curriculum has been good. The school has combined a drive to raise standards with a focus on students' personal development and meeting all their needs and aspirations. It has kept abreast with national initiatives and has shown vision and a willingness to innovate.
28. Students with special educational needs are helped to improve their literacy and numeracy skills in intensive courses in Year 7 in particular. Courses generally build up self-esteem and develop leadership and responsibility qualities. The setting, withdrawal and inclusion arrangements in Years 7 to 9 reduce interruption to the timetable. Good support is available for students during extra-curricular time.
29. A good policy governs the development of the talents of gifted and talented students. Their needs are well provided for across the curriculum through teachers' careful planning. In addition, a group of talented Year 9 students is invited to attend upper school music workshops. Talented games players are nominated for County representation.
30. A new school building is planned for 2006, because of inherent structural problems. As a result, some developments have been understandably postponed. However, senior managers and governors have remained strongly committed to maintaining and improving facilities to support students' learning. Currently, accommodation is satisfactory overall and some is good. Accommodation for English and citizenship is very good, it is good in science, ICT and the learning support centre, and satisfactory in most other areas because of the school's rolling programme of refurbishment and development. However, the use of non-specialist accommodation limits some activities in art, history and religious education. Some subjects, including geography, are taught only in mobile classrooms, which provide limited space, and this also restricts what can be done. Teachers work very hard to provide a positive and stimulating learning environment by the use of excellent displays in most classrooms and public areas.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes good care of its students. Provision for students' guidance and support is very good. Students are monitored and supported very well as they enter and move through the school. The school provides very good opportunities to seek and act on students' views about their work and the development of the school.

Main strengths

- Staff know students very well and provide very effective support and guidance for their work and achievement
- The induction and transition procedures for students ensure a very smooth transition to and from the school
- Students receive very effective support and guidance, especially when choosing courses and careers
- Good opportunities are provided for students to contribute to, and influence, change through the school council and procedures

Commentary

31. The school implements very good systems for the welfare of its students. Child protection procedures are up to date, well known to staff and effective. Staff ensure that students work in a healthy environment and good risk assessments are in place for students' security, especially on visits out of school. A central register of yearly checks on equipment is not kept although at present individual departments take responsibility for this. Arrangements for first aid are good. Students are well supervised outside lessons.
32. Very thoughtful and well-managed induction and transition procedures smooth students' entry to and exit from the school. These arrangements are much appreciated by students and parents.
33. The pastoral system works very effectively. Staff know the students very well and an excellent meetings network gives individual students very good support. Students are aware of a wide variety of people they can turn to for guidance and support and students and parents particularly appreciate this. Sources of advice include tutors, heads of year, teaching assistants, support staff, the careers advice service and learning support systems. A very good mentoring programme, organised to include Year 9, further supports younger students. Students receive very good careers advice in Year 9 to help make appropriate options decisions. Support for gifted and talented students is developing well. The school provides good individual guidance for students who have special educational needs, including those in the support centre. Staff know these students and their needs very well and take very good care of them. Good links have been established with local authority services and upper schools. The local Connexions services are involved from Year 9 in the placement of these students, and representatives attend reviews and provide them with very good assistance towards finding appropriate employment.
34. Well-managed arrangements for assessment and for tracking progress through student progress files form an effective base to monitor students' achievements. Students on the school council discuss matters that are of interest to all students and students are involved in the appointment of staff. In some tutor groups opportunities exist to voice opinions. Overall, tutors are making good use of tutor group time. Students appreciate the very good overall level of support that the school provides.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is good. The quality of links with the local community is good. The school's links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school continues to foster good links with its parents, and works hard to involve them in their children's education
- Reports do not give clear information on how students can improve
- The school has a good range of community contacts which enhance students' education Very good links with local schools help to ease students' transition from one to the next

Commentary

35. Parents who responded to the questionnaire or attended the pre-inspection meeting, expressed satisfaction with the work of the school. They feel that their children are expected to work hard and that they achieve high standards and make good progress. Teaching is good, and their children are encouraged to become mature and independent. Inspectors endorsed parents' positive views.

36. Parents' views are actively sought and valued through regular surveys and individual contacts. In response to some parents' suggestions, the school has improved students' homework diaries. Although few parents are directly involved in school life, the parents/staff association is well organised and arranges regular fundraising events. Attendance at these is good, and the association raises considerable funds for the school each year. A regular newsletter, written in an accessible style, keeps parents well informed. All students have homework diaries which parents read and sign, and these act as channels of communication between home and school. A very wide range of information is available on the school website which is regularly updated. Parents say that they feel comfortable about approaching the school. Members of staff, including the headteacher, are readily available, if parents have queries or concerns.
37. Contacts with other schools are very good. Over many years, the school has built up a close and effective working relationship with the primary schools from which it draws its students, and these contribute both to the pastoral care and improve curriculum continuity. Prospective students have a number of opportunities to sample life in the school before Year 7, and induction arrangements are held in high regard by both parents and students. The school makes a strong contribution to the initial training of teachers. It works closely and productively with other schools in the community to improve both curriculum management and share staff training and expertise. Its citizenship programme is used as a model by other schools in North West Leicestershire. Students from Castle Rock are well prepared for the next stage of their education, because the school has such a constructive relationship with the adjacent secondary school.
38. Community links are good, particularly those with external agencies, and local employers who assist at the school's annual careers convention and provide mentors for Year 9 students. Students' personal development is enhanced through links with local organisations. Students from the school take part in a poetry competition run by the Rotary Club and deliver hampers to local elderly people at Christmas. Visitors, such as the police, school nurse and representatives from the North West Leicestershire Drugs Forum support the school's personal and social education programme. Students from a local special school attend art classes at the school each week.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is very well led and managed, with outstanding leadership from the headteacher. Governors are very knowledgeable and supportive. Planning of all school initiatives is very effective.

Main strengths

- The headteacher is an outstanding leader and she has built a very effective senior leadership team
- The team-work of senior managers is very effective with a collective commitment to improvement and providing the best for every student
- The school's strengths and weaknesses are rigorously evaluated and the findings acted upon
- Priorities for improvement are very well coordinated in the school and between outside agencies
- Improvement since the last inspection has been very good
- The school gives very good value for money and has managed very well with fewer resources than schools in similar circumstances and with a similar intake

Commentary

39. The excellent leadership of the headteacher is the major factor that underpins the work of the school. She has established a strong culture of success. Her strong leadership has established a common purpose and shared values amongst her colleagues, teaching and non-teaching. Where staff have common expectations of students' behaviour and attitudes to work and this has led to a secure and civilised ethos. Staff enjoy teaching in the school and the stability of staffing has a positive impact on students' progress. The students, some of whom are by nature challenging, respond very well to the values that have been established. They are well cared for and respected, and they feel secure. Through judicious appointments, the headteacher has secured a like-minded senior management team, whose members share her values, and they provide very good leadership. The collegiate nature of the management, coupled with very good communication, ensures that all staff are aware of school priorities, and individual teachers have good opportunities to contribute their ideas when

initiatives are being planned. The cohesive and purposeful nature of the management has led to very good progress since the last inspection.

40. The reflective and enterprising nature of the senior management means that the school is aware of current developments in education and constantly seeks relevant new initiatives to guide its planning and stimulate its development. All initiatives are very well managed. For example, the school has carried out pioneering work in the newly-established subject, citizenship, where its provision is a model of good practice which is recognised nationally. The purposeful adoption of the effective elements of good teaching practice contained in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has resulted in significantly improved teaching since the last inspection.
41. Leadership and management of subjects are strengths in almost all areas. Staff are aware of current developments in their subjects. Day-to-day planning and organisation are efficient. Good communications about students with special educational needs enable their welfare and learning to be well managed. In the recent past subject leaders have all taken part in management training to improve their use and understanding of performance data. This information is used well and often very well to analyse performance. It helps leaders to critically evaluate the impact of teaching, enabling them to explain what is working well and helping them to develop a sharper sense of what needs to improve.
42. Strategic planning is very good. The school development plan is clearly focused on important priorities: raising attainment, responding to national and local education authority initiatives, developing staff and making the best use of resources, and extending links with feeder schools and the upper school. Success criteria are valid, responsibilities are appropriately allocated costs and timescales are realistic.
43. The school evaluates its practices and performance rigorously and acts on its findings. In response to a potential weakness in communications a very effective forum has been established where the combined actions of the school and outside agencies can be coordinated so that they work better for the students concerned. These regular discussions, reviews and checks on students' academic and social development, and the resulting communications between mentors, parents, carers and with local support services are sensitively handled and very well coordinated.
44. Professional development has served the school well by targeting staff's personal needs for advancement alongside the specific needs of the school. Successful developments include the steps taken to raise standards and achievements in literacy and in ICT. Since the last inspection standards, teaching and learning have improved. Lessons are well structured, with some very effective starter activities observed, and time used more effectively.
45. Governance is very good. Governors are enthusiastic, visit the school regularly and are very knowledgeable about what goes on. Governors have useful links with individual subjects. They are strongly committed to the school's aims and its future development. They work in close partnership with the headteacher and parents on a shared agenda for improvement. The current priorities are continually to raise standards and to oversee the building of the new school. Governors bring a wide range of professional expertise to the school. This is of particular value currently in areas such as finance, health and safety and planning for the new building. Governors fulfil all of their statutory duties and play an integral part in planning strategic developments.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,896,144	Balance from previous year	32,514
Total expenditure	1,916,011	Balance carried forward to the next	-12,647
Expenditure per student	3,471		

46. All spending is very carefully planned. Finances are very prudently and efficiently managed by the school bursar. Spending is closely monitored and very good systems provide staff and governors with up-to-the minute information. The school gives very good value for the money it receives.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGE 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students write well in a wide range of styles and are particularly good at creative and autobiographical writing
- Basic errors in spelling and punctuation, particularly from boys result in lower standards in writing than in reading, speaking and listening
- The brisk pace of lessons and stimulating teaching motivate students very well
- Teachers do not challenge the higher-attaining students enough in work set, resources and questioning in class
- The involvement of students in assessment and target setting means they have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Examination results

47. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, students' results were below average in 2002 and 2003. Students have, however, improved steadily over the past four years in the percentage reaching average and above-average standards. Girls perform significantly better than boys mainly because boys, and particularly the higher-attaining, underachieve in writing. Although standards are below the national average, results in 2003 were average in comparison with similar schools.

Standards and achievement

48. The initiatives the English department has taken to raise the standards of boys' writing in particular are beginning to have an effect. Imaginative and autobiographical writing by boys and girls is lively and well structured, with good use of detailed observations. Some students at all levels attainment respond in a sophisticated way to literature, and standards of reading are higher than those of writing. Students with special educational needs are tackling some difficult books. Some of the work being produced on Macbeth by students at all levels shows a sophisticated understanding of the play. Nearly all students show a growing mastery of a wide range of types of writing.
49. Although students improve their basic spelling, punctuation and grammar during Year 9, this is still an area of weakness for students over the whole range of attainment. The use of commas, semi-colons, and full stops to break down parts of sentences and to separate sentences is not sufficiently developed. Another area of weakness is in understanding when more formal language is needed. An example of this is the written work on Macbeth where some very able students are using conversational language in their written responses to the play.

50. A similar picture is reflected in the work of students in Years 7 and 8, with students achieving well overall in both year groups and displaying much the same strengths and weaknesses. Some of the novels written by Year 8 are very imaginative. In both Years 7 and 8, students comprehend texts well and making perceptive responses.

Teaching and learning

51. Teachers have introduced suitable strategies to improve students' standards, and those being used to raise the standards of boys' writing are beginning to have an effect. The English department comprises a skilful and knowledgeable team of teachers with particular strengths in classroom management and the use of a range of activities and resources to engage interest and maintain pace. This is leading to students enjoying lessons and applying themselves well to some difficult tasks. One particularly imaginative lesson on key themes in Macbeth involved the students in discussing statements about the play and justifying whether they were key themes to the whole class. If the class agreed they were put into an 'ingredient' pot in the centre of the room. This caught the interest of the class, developed their understanding well and provided a good opportunity for them to develop confidence in speaking. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good and teacher assistants are skilful and have a good awareness of individual students' needs. A key area for development in teaching is the targeting of work on the higher-attaining. In general, when setting written exercises, teachers do not make clear enough exactly how tasks are to be tackled and provide models of good practice for them to follow.

Leadership and management

52. The English department has introduced some particularly innovative approaches to student assessment, which involve the students setting their own targets and reflecting on their work in journals. The head of department has accurately analysed the factors which have led to only satisfactory achievement and a wide range of strategies for raising boys' achievement is being implemented. Good plans for improving the achievement of the higher-attaining students have been introduced, but have yet to become embedded in classroom practice. Assessment of individual students' work is good. However, the department has an insufficient overview of standards and rates of progress for each year group and class to guide planning and allocate resources to best effect.

Literacy across the curriculum

53. The students develop good competence in literacy across their subjects. The teaching of literacy skills is particularly good in history, geography, physical education, art, modern languages and mathematics. Teachers have been trained in how to develop students' oral, reading and writing skills and departments have included good opportunities for literacy development into schemes of work. A particular strength is the focus on key subject words and concepts. Often these words are written on classroom walls. In lessons, nearly all teachers make efforts to discuss technical concepts before they are used. Some refined approaches to supporting writing were seen, in history and geography in particular, where careful guidance is given on extended writing and on selecting and ordering information. The support for literacy in design and technology is undeveloped and some opportunities are missed in science.

French

Provision in French is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are enthusiastic and learn well: they are aware of their progress and of how to improve
- Innovative teaching approaches have raised achievement and improved motivation, particularly among boys
- Time allocated to French in Years 7 and 8 is below recommended levels
- ICT is not exploited sufficiently as a means of enriching students' experience of the French-speaking world

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

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

Standards and achievement

54. Teachers' assessments of students' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average. This continues a rising trend, especially for boys, though the gap between the achievement of boys and girls is still about the same as that found nationally. The department's own very good analysis indicates that achievement was not well above average across all skills. Students' listening skills are good and their reading and writing are often very good. They speak French willingly and spontaneously and have achieved the best improvement in this skill since the last inspection. Students competently express their own thoughts and opinions in French. However, they still need to improve accuracy and the ability to speak at greater length. Students with special educational needs make good progress: this is made possible by materials tailored to their needs and by good specialist support teaching of small groups. The highest-attaining linguists achieve well in response to more challenging tasks.

Teaching and learning

55. The best lessons feature very good presentation and practice of language, variety and clear objectives, which are shared with students and reviewed in very good plenary sessions. Teachers place a strong emphasis on communication through French. They and the students use the language extensively in lessons. Lessons have imaginative content. In Year 8, students increased their skills by giving and receiving instructions about cookery. In Year 9, fairy stories provided a good vehicle for using past tenses. Assessment is good. Students are involved in evaluating their progress and are clear about the next steps in their learning. However, marking does not offer them sufficiently specific guidance as to how to improve. Students learn well. Work is consolidated through intensive practice to ensure that they absorb and retain new language. Dynamic and engaging teaching keeps them focused and motivated. They have positive attitudes and behaviour and relationships are good.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership of the department is committed, enthusiastic and outward-looking. Teachers have been involved in national and local projects to develop the subject, which refines their skills and puts them in touch with up-to-date developments in teaching. The head of department provides very good support and is a very good role model. Planning and policies are thorough and detailed and previous weaknesses have been effectively addressed. The department is a cohesive team. Although the French curriculum is well planned, time in Years 7 and 8 is below the level recommended. Lessons in Year 9 are excessively concentrated in afternoons, when students' concentration tends to be limited. The department is rapidly developing its use of ICT and good work using computers was seen in Year 7. However, the department does not have its own ICT equipment and is not therefore able to exploit the potential of, for example, the Internet to enrich students' experience of the French-speaking world. Since the last inspection, the achievement of boys and the progress of all students have improved, and teaching is more consistently good. The department has the capacity to maintain this improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards continue to rise faster than the national rate
- Consistently good teaching including an interesting variety of teaching methods
- The members of staff work very well together with a strong sense of common purpose
- Students with special educational needs receive good support
- ICT is effectively used to improve students' understanding of concepts and to enhance their enjoyment of the subject
- The marking of students' work to inform them of how they may improve their learning is inconsistent

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Standards and achievement

57. The percentage of students gaining Level 5 or more at the end of Year 9 has been increasing over the last three years and is now reaching the national average. A relatively high proportion gain Level 6, but few achieve Level 7. Boys' attainment has risen and is now equal to that of the girls. The results are better than in English and science and above those in similar schools. Students enter the school with below-average standards and achieve well from this starting point. Students' mental skills are particularly good. In a Year 9 lesson, higher-attaining students approached the problem of finding out the number of factors in one billion with confidence and success. Lower-attaining students are able to substitute and solve simple algebraic expressions mentally and can explain how they apply number bonds to speed up their mental calculations. Students with special educational needs achieve well. Good learning support and smaller classes are positive factors in this.

Teaching and learning

58. In lessons taught by the permanent teachers of the department, the quality of teaching observed was at least good and in the majority of lessons was very good or excellent. Students are set by ability which enables work to be closely matched to students' needs. Lessons are well planned and are characterised by a variety of activities that ensure a rapid pace. Teachers manage students' behaviour well and create a strong sense of purpose within a relaxed and good-humoured atmosphere. Relationships between students and teachers are very good, which benefits learning. Students enjoy mathematics. Students in a lower-attaining group preparing for their Year 9 national test enthusiastically asked whether they might do extra questions. The Key Stage 3 Strategy has had a positive impact on the teachers' lesson planning, their purposeful use of time and the variety of teaching and learning styles used. A starter activity that interested a class involved students in identifying the probability of pulling out different coloured counters from a bag. The good use of resources helped the teacher exemplify the problem and students understood 'conditional probability'. Teachers use ICT well to motivate students and achieve effective learning. In one lesson, an integrated learning package engaged the lower-attaining students very successfully. In another lesson, a program was used successfully to help Year 7 students solve algebraic equations.
59. The quality of assessment is good. The department records students' performance regularly and checks it against target data to check that students are making good progress. A good system for

self-assessment is being introduced to enable students to assess their progress independently and understand what they must do to improve. Most students are aware of the level at which they are working, but the marking of work does not give enough specific advice on how work can be improved.

Leadership and management

60. Standards have improved as a result of the very good leadership of the department. Staff morale is high, with a good team spirit and a shared commitment to further improvement. The head of department has identified the areas of weakness in provision and devised appropriate strategies for improvement. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly by the head of department through classroom observation to ensure that good practice is identified and shared. Written guidance for teachers is undergoing a thorough revision to ensure that all members of the department are consistent in their approach to teaching. Over the past four years the quality of teaching has improved. The concentration of mathematics teaching means that teachers can collaborate and share resources easily, but some of the rooms are small for the groups taught in them. The learning environment is enhanced by attractive displays. The department, with its current staffing, reduced class sizes and very good teaching is in a strong position to improve further. Very good links with the adjacent upper school have resulted in the use of bridging units to ensure that students have a smooth transition to Key Stage 4.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. Students' numeracy skills are average and are sufficiently developed to help them cope with mathematical work in other subjects. In physical education, students are required to record pulse rate over a short period and can then multiply it up to beats per minute. In citizenship, students use a number of numeracy skills as they study the basics of global economy. For example, they calculate the proportions of different world population types and express them in terms of the current population of Coalville. Students used rotational symmetry in art and could explain the structure of repeat patterns. However, the opportunities to use these skills are not systematically planned in all subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in 2003 were well above similar schools
- A significant core of good and very good teaching results in students achieving well or very well
- Some assessment practices are not fully developed
- Leadership is good with a focus on raising standards
- Students undertake insufficient independent investigative work

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

62. Examination results at the end of Year 9 were average in 2003, and were well above those of similar schools.

Standards and achievement

63. Students enter the school with standards that are below average. Standards are average at the end of Year 9. Students understand solubility curves for different chemicals and changes of state, and how this relates to temperature-time graphs. They have a good knowledge of concepts, such as respiration, and understand different organ systems in the human body. In a significant number of lessons, students make good, very good and occasionally excellent progress and this is reflected in their achievement.

Teaching and learning

64. The quality of teaching is good overall, but inconsistent and on the whole a little less effective than last year, when results were high. Not all teaching includes the full range of qualities found in the best lessons. In the core of good, very good and occasionally excellent teaching, teachers have high expectations and lessons are well structured, with a good pace and a suitable variety of activity to engage and motivate the students. Good use is made of models and diagrams to aid explanations. Lessons include a good range of teaching and learning activities including practical, written questions, matching activities, sequencing activities, modelling, presentations, debate and posters. ICT is used too little because of resource restrictions. National Curriculum-related assessment has been improved and target setting takes place annually. Students sometimes evaluate each other's work which enhances the learning of all. Evaluation sheets in 'student-speak' are being introduced to enable students to contribute to devising their own targets. At its best, day-to-day marking provides students with a clear picture of how well they are doing and provides specific targets for improvement and strategies for achieving them. Overall, however, the quality and depth of marking tend to vary.

Leadership and management

65. Year 9 test results have improved considerably in recent years. Nationally-recommended schemes of work have been introduced with day-to-day lesson plans which are being thoroughly revised to take account of the KS3 National Strategy. Currently, insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching is taking place to ensure consistently high achievement. Teachers have too few opportunities to observe each other teaching so that the best practice in teaching can be shared.

Example of outstanding practice

The teacher ensured in a science lesson that students made excellent progress in understanding difficult ideas through the imaginative use of resources, excellent lesson planning and very efficient teaching.

The teacher had high expectations in terms of the pace and level of work. The lesson began briskly with a game of Periodic Table bingo. The students responded enthusiastically making very good progress in their knowledge of symbols for the different elements. The teacher made imaginative use of Lego models to illustrate the difference between elements and compounds. The features of the fixed composition of compounds for water were exemplified well using the students to link hands to make particles of water. Very good use was made of coloured paper stickers for students to produce models of molecules in their books and to reinforce the concept that compounds have a fixed composition. The teacher's explanation of the technical terms reactant and product was very clear. A well-designed worksheet was used to reinforce the key learning objectives. The very thorough knowledge and understanding that the students revealed at the end of the lesson indicated that they had made excellent progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High standards that have been maintained over a number of years
- Students have opportunities to use ICT in a good range of interesting contexts
- The support of students with low literacy levels enables them to make very good progress
- Information from assessment is used well to plan subsequent work
- The highest-attaining students are not stretched enough

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Excellent
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Standards and achievement

66. The high standards in work seen during the inspection match those recorded in teacher assessments. The slight drop in recorded standards over the past three years has occurred as the moderation of work has become more accurate. A few Year 8 or 9 students enter for the information systems GCSE examination each year. The attainment of higher grade results is excellent. Students enter the school with below-average ICT skills. They achieve well in Years 7 and 8 and very well in Year 9. The average and lower-attaining students achieve particularly well during their time in the school. Achievement in lessons seen varied mainly because of the approach of a small number of students towards their work. Students use a variety of software, including desktop publishing and presentational software, to communicate information. They use appropriate software to create a sequence of instructions to control devices, for example in a greenhouse. They evaluate web pages to decide the validity of the information it is providing. Students with special educational needs use an integrated learning system effectively to improve their numeracy and literacy skills.

Teaching and learning

67. The very good teaching is characterised by very good questioning techniques and good pace. The continual referral by the teachers to the relevance of work covered to different subject areas, and how skills learned can be employed across the curriculum, is a particular strength. Work done is regularly related to real working situations, which increases its validity to students. The lessons are meticulously planned. Learning objectives are shared with students and lessons benefit from the structure recommended by the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Tasks are varied and engage both boys and girls. Well-structured and helpful worksheets guide the students through tasks. Lower-attaining students, on occasions, can choose alternative worksheets that have embedded sound files to increase the level of assistance they receive. The learning support assistant provides good support to students who ask for help. Planning does not always provide the flexibility, however, for higher-attaining students to develop their creativity and problem-solving skills through ICT. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress is very good. The very good systems for tracking students' performance enable underachievers to be brought to the attention of the teacher. The progress sheet used at the end of each topic of work usefully checks students' knowledge and understanding of keywords, their understanding of the skills acquired in the tasks and enables them to review their own progress.

Leadership and management

68. The department has followed an ambitious plan for the development of ICT since the last inspection, and the head of department has made significant strides towards fulfilling this. The number of computers has been increased considerably so that the student-to-computer ratio is now in line with national recommendations. The teaching of specialist lessons in all three years has provided a very good grounding for students to use computers in other subjects. The department's self-evaluation is very thorough. Strategies for further improvement are appropriate. All guidance is very thorough and clearly presented.
69. The school's website is of great benefit to students, enabling them to access work from home.
70. Extra-curricular opportunities for developing ICT are very good. Clubs and extra courses provided add breadth to the curricular provision. The GCSE course and booster lessons for Year 9 are excellent examples. The very good relationship with the local community college enhances significantly what the school can offer.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

71. Students exhibit a good level of competence in ICT because it is very well taught as a distinct subject. The cross-curricular provision of ICT is satisfactory overall. Its development has been restricted until recently by the lack of resources. The use of ICT is not yet integral to all schemes of work across the curriculum and it is inconsistently developed in other subjects. The use of computers is increasing, and some good examples were seen. In modern languages, Year 7 students use their skills, for example write about their families and are taught ICT terminology in French. Year 9 students, in history, create very good newspaper-style presentations, with graphs and images imported from the Internet. In design technology, students build their design briefs using word-processing. In religious education, students are competent in creating databases and spreadsheets to manipulate data they have collected. The library suite of computers is used regularly at lunchtimes, during lessons and after school for independent research and the presentation of work by word-processing.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are now above national expectation because the department has worked hard to improve standards
- Teachers high expectations and good support encourage students to have positive attitudes to learning
- Very good assessment procedures have a beneficial effect on students' achievement
- Higher-attaining students are not fully challenged

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good

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

Standards and achievement

72. Results of teacher assessment in 2003 for Year 9 were above average, which was a significant improvement on previous years. However, students achieved fewer than predicted of the highest levels. Girls do better than boys, but boys' performance has improved, and is above national expectation. Most students achieve very well in lessons because teachers have high expectations and use a stimulating range of methods. Year 7 students' attainment at the start of the course is below average and they have limited experience of the key skills of the subject. They improve quickly and acquire a sound base on which to build future progress. Boys' oral work is often better than girls'. Boys tend to lack skills in extended writing but progress well over three years. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others, because work is structured well for them, and different tasks are set when appropriate. Higher-attaining students do not always achieve as much as possible because their work is sometimes not sufficiently more challenging than that set for other students.

Teaching and learning

73. Students learn very well because teachers promote good attitudes to learning by having high expectations of them in work and behaviour. Teachers plan well, have good subject knowledge and use resources very well to ensure that students remain interested and learn in appropriate ways. Learning is often active and students are often challenged to think and explain in speech and writing, all of which stimulates their interest and understanding. For example, Year 7 students, through discussion in pairs, deduced reasons why settlements come and go, and organised their information methodically on well-designed information sheets. By the end of the lesson, they could explain relevant features on photographs and recognize examples from their own area.

Leadership and management

74. The department has worked hard, and with a clear sense of purpose, to improve standards. It has led school developments in target setting. Teachers collaborate very productively and systems are becoming well established, with purposeful evaluation, to enable students maintain consistent progress throughout their time in the school. Formal assessment has been used very purposefully to improve basic standards, but is not yet used to full effect to ensure that the potentially highest-attaining students are fully stretched. ICT is used well by teachers and students, but is not available regularly enough in lessons because it is under-resourced. Literacy and citizenship are well served by geography, and the department works very well with others, especially the history department, in planning and development. The school environment is used well, but other fieldwork opportunities are too limited.

History

Provision in history is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results have been consistently above national expectation because the department is very well led with a clear focus on achievement
- Assessment is imaginative and very well organised
- Students have positive attitudes to learning, because teaching promotes high standards and some aspects are excellent
- Higher-attaining students are not yet achieving their full potential

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good

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

Standards and achievement

75. In 2003, results of Year 9 Teacher Assessments were above average, as they had been for the last four years. Girls have consistently done much better than boys, and are near to being well above average. Boys' performance has improved and is above national expectation. Students achieve very well overall, but standards in lessons vary from average to above-average, depending on teacher's expectation and methods. Students begin below average, but often improve by one level during Year 7. By Year 9, most are above average. Levels of literacy initially hinder students' progress, but teachers do much to develop this, especially boys' weaknesses in extended writing; this is a major factor in their very good achievement. Students achievement is similar over the whole range of ability.

Teaching and learning

76. Students have good attitudes and learn very well because lessons are very well planned and structured. Teachers use a wide range of interesting resources and methods, sometimes setting different tasks so that they meet the needs of the full range of students in a group. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and generally have high expectations of students' work and behaviour. At its best, students' learning is enthusiastic and vigorous. Teaching methods and resources are imaginative. For example, Year 7 students used excellent department-made booklets, with pictures and musical resources, to understand and record the causes of the Black Death. Year 9 students were challenged to think about, and deduce by discussion, the causes of the Second World War. Some individual lessons lack this sparkle, but learning is very effective over time because it is very well managed. Assessment is used very well to enable and record progress, so that students are clear about how to improve. However, self-assessment to help particularly the higher-attaining students to become learn more independently is not yet fully developed.

Leadership and management

77. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection, because it has a strong commitment to self-review, innovation and improvement. Teachers work well together, and with other departments, to create and share good practice, and the department has led improvements in whole-school assessment. Other initiatives, such as citizenship and literacy, are very well reflected in history. Both teachers and students use ICT very well, although resources are not as accessible as is desirable.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have mature attitudes, acknowledge the importance of the subject and are well taught to take responsibility for their own learning
- Religious education currently has no permanent base
- Assessment of students' work is good and makes it clear how they may improve their performance

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Standards and achievement

78. No evidence of standards in previous years is available. Year 9 students are preparing to be assessed, and the results will be reported to parents for the first time. The Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus is being revised to include Levels. In Year 7, students are aware of major religious traditions and can talk about festivals, holy books, important people and buildings. They respond well to philosophical ideas about human rights and responsibilities, with good links to citizenship education. By the end of Year 9, students respond maturely to issues of faith. They accept the need to continue to study religions. Standards of understanding and knowledge of world faiths are in line with national averages, but learning from religious and secular views of the world is weaker, although developing. Students enter the school with a variety of experience, ranging from satisfactory to weak. They are encouraged to respond orally and in writing. Students with special educational needs make as good progress as others, and individual education plans are used well to ensure that work is appropriate for them. The use of ICT helps boys to progress in line with girls. All make good progress in independent learning and discussion.

Teaching and learning

79. The overall good teaching includes a substantial minority that is taught by non-specialists. These teachers are all successful teachers in other subjects. Particular strengths in teaching include the teachers' knowledge and subject skills and the use of library and other resources, including ICT. Spiritual and moral development is good, with frequent use of creative writing, including poetry, and appropriate references to modern situations, when social and spiritual issues are discussed. In a lesson on creation and destruction, Year 7 students responded imaginatively by writing their own modern version of creation. Students' attitudes are good. They speak well and listen sensitively to each other and their teachers. The curriculum is satisfactory. In Year 9, students study Christianity and Hinduism. This permits more depth of study than does learning about up to six major faiths in Years 7 and 8, which leads to information overload. Students are not led to draw on the diversity of religious experience available locally, and no visits are organised to enrich the curriculum in religious education.

Leadership and management

80. The lack of a subject base and specialist teaching room impinges badly on religious education. Opportunities to use display materials and artefacts are severely limited. The school closely follows the local agreed syllabus, but the need to improve the curriculum is a priority, to include recent developments in teaching and assessing religious education. Collaboration with the next stage in education is good, including starting the short course religious education at the end of Year 9. Non-specialist staff are very well supported and bring a range of skills to the subject. Assessment is better than at the time of the last inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching staff are committed, well qualified, and hard working
- The assessment procedures are good but are not yet used consistently
- Girls achieve significantly better than boys
- Students enjoy the lessons and because of this they work hard and achieve well
- A good range of extra-curricular opportunities is provided to enable students to develop their interests further

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Examination results

81. Results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2003, were above those reported nationally. The girls' results have climbed steadily since 2000 and are now well above the national average. The boys' results dipped in 2001 and 2002 recovering in 2003 to slightly above their 2000 figure. Despite this improvement the boys' results are still below the national average.

Standards and achievement

82. Achievement is significantly better for girls than for boys. It is because the girls achieve so well that the whole school's standard is above the national average. In Years 8 and 9, achievement is good for the majority of students, but sometimes lower-achieving students are not challenged sufficiently by the nature of the work set. For instance sometimes students with special educational needs do not achieve as well as their classmates because they are allowed to spend too long colouring in their design sketches. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been adopted and this is raising standards by providing a focus for the lessons. At the end of Year 9 students can construct basic electronic circuits soldering joints with accuracy. They sometimes have problems with spelling terms such as 'predict' and 'trace'.

Teaching and learning

83. Teaching and learning range from very good to unsatisfactory. Where teaching is good, the staff use a range of styles to maintain interest, and take steps to ensure that students understand the subject matter by the effective use of questions. In a Year 8 resistant materials lesson, students had researched the needs of people with various disabilities and were designing and making tools and equipment to help them. The teaching style adopted resulted in students enjoying the experience and they were reluctant to stop work at the end of the lesson. The impact of the work was heightened by the relevance of the topic to real life social issues. In less successful lessons, the structure and use of time were not organised to develop skills in an appropriate sequence and at a good pace. In consequence, small tasks became too extended. A good assessment system has been developed, suitably linked to National Curriculum levels that includes an element of self-assessment. Its use is not yet consistent, but it is already helping to raise standards.

Leadership and management

84. Teachers are well qualified and work well together as a team. The department handbook contains relevant and helpful information. The schemes of work continue to be reviewed and are being updated to ensure continuity when the students transfer at the end of Year 9. The extra-curricular provision is very good and provides students with chances to carry out interesting projects. At present, some students are building robots after school. The move to double lessons has stimulated useful development of teaching styles used. Resources are good. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and standards have risen.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students do not achieve their potential
- Leadership, management and improvement since the last inspection are unsatisfactory
- Students have good attitudes to learning and respond well to questions
- The curriculum is not structured to build systematically on previous achievements and experiences

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Insufficient evidence

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Standards and achievement

85. Teacher assessments in 2003 show standards at the end of Year 9 to be below expected levels for students' ages. Performance by girls was better than boys. Boys achieved less well than boys nationally. Overall, standards seen in the inspection were below expectation and achievement was unsatisfactory. In all years, this is reflected in the variable quality of work. The curriculum is not planned to build sequentially on students' experiences and achievements. Discussions with students and their responses to the teacher's questions provided insights into what they were actually capable of and the extent of underachievement. In a Year 9 class, students could explain how they had adapted and refined their initial drawings - from a still-life group of objects – as the basis for computer images. They followed the class teacher's instructions and acquired the necessary technical expertise to use software to good effect and see the potential for other work. They spoke with understanding about the links between these computer-generated images and their earlier drawings based on work by Picasso and Braque. Other skills were less well-developed and practised. For example students were given too little guidance on the use of sketchbooks and a high proportion did not use them. There was an over-reliance on secondary sources of information and images and too little evidence of independent investigation and research. Presentation was generally poor. Boys achieved less well than the girls and were more likely to drift off task and disrupt others.

Teaching and learning

86. Insufficient teaching was observed during the inspection to provide a judgement. However, from the work seen and extensive discussions with students, learning is unsatisfactory. Some strengths were evident, but also some significant weaknesses. Students were generally positive about their work and those who were keen to improve were given a lot of encouragement. Examples of good quality

work were displayed around the school and helped boost confidence. Demonstrations by teachers were effective and students asked, and responded well to questions. Staff share a good range of specialist expertise but these are diluted by the weaknesses in curriculum and lesson planning. Expectations about the amount of work to be completed are too low. Time is wasted, for example because work cannot be found or because a few students cannot maintain concentration. Homework does not always support and reinforce work in lessons, neither is it set regularly and followed-up when deadlines for completion are missed. The school amasses much information about students' prior attainment and potential performance but not enough use is made of this to plan work that meets the needs of the full range of ability.

Leadership and management

87. Learning has not been rigorously evaluated, as a means of improving the teaching and better meeting students' learning needs. The room and resources are poorly managed. These significant weaknesses limit the effectiveness of teachers and teaching and benefits of teamwork are lost. Part-time staff receive too little support.

Music

Provision in music is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students develop their listening skills well
- Proficient use of ICT to match sounds to pictures
- Very well organised resources and accommodation
- Students lack the confidence to experiment when composing and performing
- Expectations are sometimes too low as a result of assessment that is too generous

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Standards and achievement

88. Students join the school with below-average skills in music. Over their time in the school, their achievement is satisfactory, although standards in composing and performing and students' factual knowledge remain below national expectations. In Year 9, students use ICT confidently to match sounds to pictures, which develops their listening skills well. They make imaginative suggestions about the feeling created by music they hear, such as 'tense', 'active', 'like being followed'. They understand a limited range of technicalities, such as 'ground'. A few students show flair when performing on keyboards, and reach expected standards. Some students invent interesting musical ideas when composing, but lack confidence to experiment purposefully.

Teaching and learning

89. Good relationships exist between the teacher and students, and students behave well and work willingly. They listen attentively to instructions and demonstrations and treat resources with care. Students achieve a good level of co-operation when working in pairs. Lessons are well planned with suitable resources. Sometimes, however, instructions are too long and not accompanied by enough demonstrations to make them meaningful. Students receive a good level of individual support and encouragement when working independently. In general, too much time is allowed for practical tasks without the attention of the class being re-focused, for example by listening to a good example of

work in progress. As a result, students' efficiency wanes. Some evaluations are too generous, and, while this boosts students' confidence, it does not challenge them enough to strive for higher standards. Expectations of what students can achieve are not always high enough. Students show tolerance and goodwill when listening to the efforts of classmates, but, in lessons observed, were not invited to contribute to assessment in a way that would improve their own work. Formal systems for assessment are very good, however, and closely related to National Curriculum requirements.

Leadership and management

90. The teacher in charge is new in post and is energetically reviewing every aspect of provision. The scheme of work is undergoing a thorough revision. Plans for development are appropriate and realistic. Day-to-day organisation is impeccable, and the specialist room provides a very attractive learning environment. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory because, at that time, music was well established, whereas now it is in a state of flux because new ideas are at an early stage of introduction. Existing resources are inadequate in range and quantity for providing students with the full range of experiences expected.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good planning with implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy
- Very good implementation of literacy policy
- Good teaching overall with some very good aspects
- Lack of continuity in some activities through the key stage

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

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

Standards and achievement

91. Teacher assessments in 2003 for Year 9 students were slightly above the national average. The standards of work seen of the present Year 9 cohort were broadly average, but standards in invasion games such as football and netball, and in some net games, were higher than in games such as cricket and rounders. Generally, fielding skills were seen to be average although girls' ability to throw for distance, as in an over arm throw, was below average. Both boys and girls had a good understanding of principles and techniques, for example they knew why it was necessary to stand sideways on to strike a ball in rounders. Girls continue to outperform boys in practical terms, although the department has instituted a number of strategies in the present school year to redress this, which are slowly beginning to have a positive effect. Boys and girls achieve well in lessons. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers because they are known very well by their teachers and targeted appropriately. By the use of much praise and encouragement, the department enables all students to participate in lessons, whatever their particular needs. Occasionally, the learning and achievement of a few students, usually boys, is hindered by inattention and silly behaviour. This was seen in a dance lesson, but the tactic of giving one boy a particular role to play and praising his efforts to succeed, ensured that he and his friends completed the lesson with a deserved sense of achievement.

Teaching and learning

92. Some aspects of teaching are very good. Lesson planning is very good with clear evidence of the use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy; objectives are shared with students and learning is evaluated at the end of the lesson. The literacy policy is particularly well implemented, with banks of words on display in the changing areas and corridors, which are referred to throughout lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use progressive practices well to enable students to consolidate and improve their skills. Lessons have good pace and activities are varied and challenging for all students, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The effectiveness of all lessons being taught in double periods is being evaluated, particularly with regard to the problem of continuity of experience which was an issue in the last inspection and which has not yet been resolved fully. Students generally respond well in lessons and work hard to improve their performance. They participate well in extra-curricular sport, whether in club activities, inter-school fixtures or inter-form competitions, all of which are well supported.

Leadership and management

93. Leadership has a clear vision of the strengths and needs of the department. Good use is made of available data and internal assessments to inform curriculum planning and the effectiveness of the department is continuously evaluated. This has ensured a consistency of approach and high expectations of participation and work.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Innovative and comprehensive curriculum planning has established citizenship firmly in the work of the school
- Very good leadership and management provide appropriate direction to the extensive provision for the subject
- Very good teaching enables students to achieve very well in oral work
- Students' very positive attitudes towards the subject help them learn well
- Lack of homework and opportunities for extended writing restricts the achievement of higher-attaining students

Commentary

Area	Judgement
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the previous inspection	Not applicable

Standards and achievement

94. The comprehensive provision for citizenship enables students to gain a good understanding of specific ideas, for example rights and responsibilities. Achievement is enhanced by the students' very good attitudes. They value and enjoy the subject which places a strong emphasis in exploring relationship competencies. They participate enthusiastically in group discussions and apply themselves well in reading and writing activities. Middle- and lower-attaining students identify accurately examples of sensationalist reporting in the media and express themselves sensibly and clearly on a range of issues, for example foxhunting. Higher-attaining students, especially girls, show considerable maturity in their observations, are skilled in giving feedback from a group perspective and express their ideas precisely and fluently in writing. However, a lack of opportunities for extended

writing inhibits their progress in this skill. Individual targets provide a strong focus for students' active participation and learning in lessons. Student achievement is promoted by large-scale involvement in numerous other high-profile initiatives, including the Community Award Scheme, the Conflict Resolution in Schools Project, peer mentoring and mediation and various workshops.

Teaching and learning

95. Teachers have a very good understanding of the contribution citizenship can make to the education of the whole child and demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the curriculum and the necessary expertise to ensure successful learning. Lessons are very well timed, planned and sequenced. Activities are varied and sensitively managed to enable students to develop personal and social qualities. Students are provided with attractive files to help them organise and record their learning efficiently. They settle to work quickly and use time well. They respond promptly and frankly because they know their views and opinions are listened to and respected by all. They make good use of opportunities to develop emotional literacy as, for example, in one lesson, when they had to pick a colour which best symbolised their feelings at the time and justify their choice. Relationships between students are strong and they work well together, especially in paired tasks. On a few occasions, lapses in boys' concentration when listening hamper the successful outcome of group tasks. Respect between teachers and students is mutual. Teachers use praise well to encourage and appreciate good work. The excellent quality of displays reinforces the very good climate for learning. Informal assessment is well used by teachers to guide students' progress in class, but learning is restricted by a lack of homework. This deprives teachers of an additional source of evidence for judging the development of written communication against National Curriculum criteria.

Leadership and management

96. The department fully deserves its growing reputation as a model of good practice in the wider educational community. The leadership has a very clear vision for development, a strong sense of purpose. High aspirations to develop the subject further provide a clear impetus for progress. Schemes of work are regularly refined, and planning is of very high quality. Several measures for future development, for example improved monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, are already in hand. Some work remains to be done in preparing for statutory assessments and in providing an updated cross-curriculum audit.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	3
Students' achievement	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well students learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for students	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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