

INSPECTION REPORT

DEERNESS VALLEY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Durham, County Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114311

Headteacher: Mrs Anne Lakey

Lead inspector: Kathy MacFarlane

Dates of inspection: 26th – 29th April 2004

Inspection number: 258610

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	599
School address:	Bracken Court Ushaw Moor Durham County Durham
Postcode:	DH7 7NG
Telephone number:	0191 3730336
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Bell
Date of previous inspection:	18/1/1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Deerness Valley Comprehensive School is a small, mixed comprehensive school with 599 students. At the time of the previous inspection there were 702 students. This reduction in numbers is in part due to demographic change in the area. No students come from homes where English is not the home language. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is above the national average. Almost one third of students are on the special education needs register, which is higher than the national average. When students start the school in Year 7 the attainment of a large number is below average. Students at the school are mainly from Ushaw Moor, Bearpark, Brandon, Esh Winning and New Brancepeth. Census information indicates that many students come from areas of significant social and educational disadvantage. Few students move into or out of the school before the end of Year 11. The school has been granted Pathfinder Status by the Department for Education and Science to develop more innovative approaches to the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and to the range of courses offered to students.

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3555	Carol Emery	Team inspector	Design and technology Business education
21855	Dennis Carty	Team inspector	Citizenship Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Deerness Valley is a **good and improving** school. There is a strong commitment to raising achievement, standards and the self-esteem of the students. The governing body and staff associated with the school are determined to improve the learning opportunities for all students. Students appreciate the good care, advice and support they receive from staff and are positive about their school. The school provides **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership by the headteacher is very good. She is well supported by a very effective senior leadership team. Together they provide a clear vision and direction for the school.
- The good teaching is a key factor in raising students' aspirations and overall achievement.
- Standards of attainment in Years 10 and 11 are below national averages.
- The school has an innovative and appropriate curriculum that meets the differing needs of its students, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Attendance is improving but is still below the national average and is unsatisfactory. This is a contributory factor to the low standards attained by a small but significant minority of students, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- There are very productive partnerships with industry, other schools and the community. These widen the range of learning opportunities and experiences available to students.
- Relationships between adults and students are good and contribute to the positive attitudes around school and in lessons.
- The provision for mathematics and citizenship is improving but remains unsatisfactory overall.

Very strong leadership and effective teaching have led to **good** improvements since the previous inspection. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have improved slightly, whilst standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved at a faster rate than the national trend. There has been a significant improvement in the overall quality of teaching. The provision in design and technology and geography is now good. The school has introduced a range of relevant new courses in Years 10 and 11. Overall attendance, although still below the national average, has also improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall, students' achievement is **good**. Standards at the end of Year 9 are **average**. At the end of Year 11, they are **below average**. When students begin Year 7, their attainment is below average and a significant number have learning, behavioural and social difficulties. By the end of Year 9, overall standards in the core subjects are in line with national figures in 2003. They are above average when compared with similar schools, taking into account their attainment when they start in Year 7 and the social context of the school. The majority of students in Years 7 to 9 make good progress and achieve well. Results in GCSE examinations have shown an improvement since the previous inspection but remain well below the national average. In the majority of subjects, students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. However, in mathematics achievement is unsatisfactory. Improvements in teaching and the positive attitudes of the majority of students are leading to improved standards in lessons.

Year 11 results

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	E	E	E	D

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Students' personal development is satisfactory overall although there are missed opportunities for promoting their spiritual and cultural development. There is a good and caring ethos throughout the school. Students' attitudes to school are good. Behaviour is good and most students are punctual to school and to lessons. Attendance is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is good. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and is now good overall. This is the result of very good staff development and training, reflected in the quality of lesson planning and the greater consistency of teaching within and between departments. They also use a range of teaching strategies to interest and motivate pupils. As a consequence, students enjoy their lessons and achieve well. The curriculum is good and the school has introduced a range of innovative courses to provide students with a more relevant and appropriate range of options. The level of care is very good and students feel safe and secure and value the support they are given.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management are good. The headteacher, together with the senior leadership team, has successfully led the school through a period of significant change. They have a commitment to continued improvement and there is the capacity and determination to bring this about. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and there are clear guidelines and procedures in place. However, in some curriculum areas there is inconsistency in the application of these procedures. This is particularly true with regard to the setting of homework and the use of planners. The governance of the school is good, governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and work closely with the school to monitor improvement and bring about change.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' attitudes towards the school are good. They recognise the welcoming atmosphere and improved provision. The school's reputation in the community is now improving. Students are positive about the school. They value the good relationships they have with staff who are seen as being approachable and supportive.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards across the school.
- Improve the level of attendance.
- Improve provision in mathematics and citizenship.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the requirement to provide a daily collective act of worship is met.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is **good**. It is **satisfactory** in Years 10 and 11. Standards at the end of Year 9 are **average** when compared with those recorded nationally. By the end of Year 11, they are **below average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 9 are improving steadily as a result of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. The gap between boys and girls has narrowed.
- Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well below average and below those of similar schools.
- Standards in English are higher than in the other core subjects. Standards in mathematics are the lowest

Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school is below average and a significant number of students have potentially challenging social, behaviour or learning difficulties. By the end of Year 9, in 2003, standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were, overall, in line with those found nationally. This was in part due to the above average results in English. Standards in science were at the national average whilst in mathematics they were below average. Compared to similar schools, taking into account both attainment on entry and the socio-economic context of the school, standards were above average. This represented good progress from Year 7. The comparative rise in standards in the core subjects in 2003 was higher than the national trend.
2. GCSE examination results in 2003 were well below average. When compared with the standards achieved by these students at the end of Year 9, progress was well below expectations. When compared with schools with similar socio-economic backgrounds, standards were below average. The low standards are a result of staffing difficulties and inadequate development of basic skills in the early years in the school, as well as negative attitudes and low aspirations among a significant number of students. The school has addressed many of these issues, so results are beginning to improve. One of the reasons why the school's results were not higher in 2003 was the involvement of some students in a work related course, which, although appropriate to their needs, required them to be out of school for a considerable amount of time. The school is now looking for alternative provision, so that students do not lose too much contact with their lessons. Results at the end of Year 11 show satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Improvements in the school's leadership and management structure and the range of new courses on offer are contributing positively to the school's capacity to improve standards.
3. From work seen during the inspection, standards during Years 7 to 9 were in line with national expectations in English, science, design and technology, ICT, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education. They were below average in mathematics, art, history, music and religious education. It was not possible to see lessons in personal and social education and citizenship during the week of the inspection. However, from work seen, standards were judged to be below average. Achievement presents a more positive picture. It is good in English, science, design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education. The main reasons for this are the improvement in the quality of teaching and more effective leadership and management. Achievement was satisfactory in the remaining subjects, apart from citizenship, where it is unsatisfactory. In addition, the National Key Stage 3 strategy is having a positive impact on standards as seen in Years 7 to 9.

4. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 were above the national expectations in ICT, and in line with expectations in art and design and physical education. In all other subjects they were below expectations except in mathematics, where they were poor. Achievement in science, art, design and technology, ICT and physical education was good, it was satisfactory in English, modern foreign languages, religious education and business studies but unsatisfactory in the remaining subjects.
5. Until 2003, the attainment of boys was well below that of girls. However, in 2003, the boys narrowed the gap by the end of Year 9 to less than that seen nationally. By the end of Year 11 in 2003, boys still tended to do worse than the girls by a greater margin than that seen nationally. This is particularly true in English language and literature, mathematics, science and in design and technology.
6. Overall standards of literacy are satisfactory and sufficient to support learning across the curriculum. Standards of numeracy are below those expected nationally in Years 7 to 10 and well below in Year 11. However, students are usually sufficiently competent in using mathematics to satisfy the needs of other subjects. There is good use of ICT in almost all other subjects and standards overall are good. Students use hardware and software resources with confidence to enhance the quality of their work in other subjects.
7. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good. The school has taken action to provide Year 10 students with suitable alternative courses that give qualifications. Overall gifted and talented students also achieve well and standards seen were above the national average. However, the nature of tasks in some subjects hinders students' achievement of higher levels of attainment. Standards as seen, for gifted and talented students, are above the national expectation. Standards in physical education are well above national expectations in Years 10 and 11, particularly in gymnastics, where standards are excellent. Achievement is good. The achievement of gifted and talented students has improved across all the year groups. There are no students whose heritage language is not English.

Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.3 (28.5)	33.4(33.3)
Mathematics	33.3(29.9)	35.4(34.7)
Science	33.1(30.2)	33.6(33.3)

There were 114 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Key Stage 4

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	33 (22)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	79 (83)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	93 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	26.6 (24.1)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 123 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The development of students' attitudes and behaviour is **good**. **Satisfactory** arrangements to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensure that students' personal development is **satisfactory**. Students' attendance is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students like their school and appreciate that it is improving.
- A few students do not attend often enough to learn as well as most do.
- Students have good attitudes to lessons and so work hard and perform well.
- Most students behave well in lessons and around the school. There is some inconsistency by a few staff in the promotion of good behaviour. This confuses a small minority of students.
- Teachers do not promote students' spiritual and cultural understanding routinely, so these aspects of their personal development are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

8. Students have good attitudes to their work and to school life. They recognise the recent improvements in the school and take increasing pride in attending Deerness Valley School. They talk enthusiastically about their lessons and other activities. Students are keen to learn and respond well to good teaching, concentrating hard throughout lessons. A few students, often boys, lack attention when teachers do not manage them well, so a small minority of lessons are disrupted. However, the vast majority of students remain on task and concentrate well. This helps students to achieve well. A small minority of Year 10 and 11 students reflect the residue of negative attitudes to the school. This results in a lack of co-operation in some lessons and poor attendance. Teachers usually motivate these students through good teaching and very good curriculum initiatives.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-2003 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	9.8	School data:	0.5
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

9. Student's attendance has improved in recent years, and since the previous inspection, but is still unsatisfactory. However, the school accepts students who have experienced turbulence in their life and education, or who have established patterns of persistent absence. A significant minority of parents do not value education sufficiently to ensure that their children attend regularly. The school has an above average number of students with medical conditions, who require regular absence from school. These reasons depress the school's attendance figures. The school works hard and successfully to improve attendance. Constant communication with parents has harnessed parents' commitment, except in a small minority of cases. The school monitors attendance carefully on a day-to-day basis. The school is poised to adopt electronic registration but monitoring has been difficult due to the system's teething troubles. A very effective partnership is developing with the new education welfare officer, who is quickly making herself known to parents and students. Students arrive in time for lessons, so they begin promptly.
10. Students relate well to others. They work comfortably together in lessons and enjoy working in pairs and groups when given encouragement. Most teachers promote this well, but a few of them seldom plan or promote group activities. Students are pleasant and friendly towards adults and recognise the interest that staff take in their well-being. A few boys and girls are shy and have limited social skills with adults. The school works effectively to improve the self-

esteem and social awareness of the students. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to foster independence, such as the routine promotion and use of homework planners.

11. The vast majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school. They take good levels of responsibility for their own conduct. They alter their behaviour in the light of the needs of others. The school promotes students' moral understanding well, so students show good levels of respect and tolerance. Students realise their responsibility for their environment, because they debate and discuss issues affecting the wider world. This brings benefits in English, geography and religious education lessons in particular. Teachers encourage students to take responsibility for others through participation in the school council, for instance, as well as the very successful peer mentoring initiative.
12. Misbehaviour occurs when teachers do not make their expectations sufficiently clear. This happens in a small minority of lessons. A few teachers struggle, and occasionally fail, to achieve a calm purposeful atmosphere in their classrooms. The school is supporting these teachers well so that lessons are rarely disturbed. The few, mainly boys, who misbehave accept the school's sanctions and most show improvement in their behaviour.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	594	76	0
White – Irish	2	4	0

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

13. No student was permanently excluded last year. The school uses exclusion correctly and carefully monitors its incidence. The school has reduced exclusions by 30 per cent, by creating very good arrangements for supporting students who misbehave. The social inclusion centre is likewise a particularly successful initiative. Consequently, students report a significant reduction in bullying in the school to the current occasional incident and insist that the school is quick to act.
14. Student's personal development is satisfactory, because staff carefully nurture students' moral, social and cultural development. However, students rightly claim that they are encouraged to ponder, reflect and consider the lives of others in lessons in only a few curriculum areas. The school has recently introduced a thought for the day programme. Many tutors promote this well but a few either fail to mention it or give it too little attention. Consequently, students do not show sufficiently high levels of curiosity, wonder and spiritual awareness .
15. The development of students' multi-cultural awareness is also unsatisfactory. The school provides too few activities enabling students to experience the impact of cultural differences at first hand. The school curriculum ensures that students have a satisfactory understanding of their own local culture.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall the quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. The school's assessment procedures are **satisfactory**. There is also an appropriate curriculum for students and this, together with the range of extra curricular activities, is **good**.

Teaching and learning

Overall the quality of teaching and learning is **good**. The assessment of students' work and the use made of the information are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good subject knowledge enables teachers to plan effectively.
- Very good relationships and behaviour management create a good working environment.
- Where teaching is too teacher-directed or not challenging, there is a corresponding lack of motivation among students.
- Teachers' good knowledge of students allows them to adapt lessons and adjust activities in accordance with students' needs.
- Homework is not set carefully or regularly enough, so its benefits are minimised.
- The teaching of mathematics is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

16. The quality of teaching is good in all years. It is of a slightly higher standard in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching and in around one in five lessons teaching is very good. The very best lessons occur evenly throughout the years. There has been a good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. It is very good in ICT and English. It is good in the majority of subjects but is unsatisfactory in mathematics.
17. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and this enables them to plan effectively. In English, teachers who mark external tests and examinations have used this knowledge when revising schemes of work to focus on crucial areas of the syllabus. In physical education teachers put their thorough knowledge of National Curriculum levels to good use, constantly referring to them so as to help students understand how to improve.
18. The school has made the improvement of teaching a focus and priority within its professional development programme. Two areas given particular attention have been a tighter emphasis on learning objectives and the raising of students' self-esteem. Both these initiatives have been successful, with resulting benefits in classrooms. The staff development and teaching and learning groups, as well as disseminating good practice, undertake to trial new strategies, thus ensuring a pragmatic approach to improving the quality of teaching. The essential relationship between teaching and learning is clearly recognised. There are annual learning workshops for students from each year group, which diagnose and explore different styles of learning.
19. The results of the school's emphasis on professional development are increasingly well-structured lessons, the development of peer assessment in certain subjects and good classroom management. Much of the teaching is imaginative and stimulating. In a Year 9 poetry lesson, where the metaphor of limbo dancing occurred, the teacher gave a student the opportunity to demonstrate limbo dancing, which reinforced the image from the poem. Teachers put their knowledge of the pupils to good use. In an ICT lesson on data sets and graphs, very good differentiation of tasks and targeting of work resulted in excellent learning for the class.
20. The Key Stage 3 Strategy has been well integrated into much of the teaching. The school has made good use of the expertise of the local authority literacy consultant and the provision for

literacy is now good. There is further good evidence of other strands of the strategy in ICT and science. The good teaching that is common across the curriculum brings great benefits and is partly made possible by the good relationships between teachers and students.

21. Where teaching is less successful, lessons are frequently too teacher-directed, as is the case in mathematics. On those occasions where there is too little challenge, there is a corresponding lack of motivation among students. In modern foreign languages a wider range of teaching strategies is still needed. Homework is not set consistently and on occasions it is not set in a way that suggests it is very important.
22. The teaching of gifted and talented students is good, although there is not yet a systematic whole-school policy. Teaching is also good for students with special educational needs. Teaching assistants provide effective support in those lessons where they are present, so the achievement of these students equals that of their peers.
23. As a result of the good improvement in teaching since the previous inspection, the issues identified at that time generally no longer apply.
24. Although the monitoring of students' academic progress is satisfactory overall, there are inconsistencies across the curriculum. It was an area for improvement in the previous inspection and systems have moved forward since then. The testing of all students' reading ages in Year 7 helps to establish how their literacy levels progress. In ICT, for example, target setting is very good across the department. It is based on individual student targets, enabling teachers to manage improvement in all years. In science it is strengthened by the students' own evaluation of how well they are doing. While marking is effective in most areas, linking specific objectives to improvement and informing students how to improve, this good practice has yet to be shared across all subjects. Teachers generally use results of tests to alter their teaching plans, so that they can modify targets as students progress.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 80 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	15 (19%)	31 (39%)	29 (36%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	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.

The curriculum

Overall the curriculum provision is **good**. Students have access to a good range of enrichment activities. Resources and accommodation overall are adequate.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An innovative approach to the curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11, ensures that subject choices and courses match students' aspirations and abilities.
- Good careers education and work-related experiences prepare students well for the next stage of their lives.
- The after-school learning programme enriches and supports student learning well in school.
- There are very good community and business links, which support students' social and vocational development.
- Current provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- Statutory requirements for providing a collective act of worship are not met.

Commentary

25. The school provides courses in all National Curriculum subjects in Years 7 to 9. It also includes drama, which is being used as an effective way of supporting students' personal development and self esteem. In Years 10 and 11, the school provides a varied and flexible curriculum, which includes a good range of different courses. Rigorous curriculum review and innovative ideas have enabled the school to rectify weaknesses identified in the previous report. The school also provides a range of curriculum pathways that enable students to follow programmes of learning relevant to their individual needs. These include opportunities for students to mix traditional academic subjects with an increasing number of vocational courses. This is having a significant impact in improving students' attitudes, aspirations and motivation and is leading to improved levels of achievement within the school. It is also beginning to impact on attendance and there are decreasing incidents of exclusion.
26. The school has developed a particularly successful 'Fit for Employment' project. This involves working in partnership with a special school and the local Esh (construction) Group. The project is open to all Year 10 students and focuses closely on personal responsibility and employment skills. Interested students are able to go on and apply for more focused training in Year 11. The project benefits the students through its more work-oriented focus. It not only offers guaranteed employment and modern apprenticeships for those successful in completing the course, but it also enhances students' personal development. Those students involved, including those who decided not to continue with the programme, were very positive about the experience.
27. Provision for students with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. The school is making good progress in subjects such as English and science in planning the curriculum, so that there are clear learning expectations for pupils with special educational needs, Provision for students in Years 10 and 11 is good. A wide range of courses and accreditation has been made available through the options choices and through good partnerships with other education providers.

Example of outstanding practice

'Curriculum initiative with local company. 'The ESH Project'

(This is an innovative DfES 14-19 Pathfinder project designed for Year 10 and 11 students.)

During the inspection, a group of Year 10 students were participating in week one of a programme designed to identify 20 out of a 100 students by the end of Year 11, whom the construction company, 'The Esh Group' will employ and sponsor through the national 'Modern Apprenticeship' programme. During the programme students acquire a range of key skills such as problem solving, communication, application writing, interviewing techniques, and team working. In addition they develop a more informed understanding of the wide range of opportunities in the construction industry. The group of Year 10 students had been selected so that there was a mix of abilities, attitudes, gender and physical attributes. This week-long programme, delivered in the Esh Group's training room engages its volunteer students in a variety of realistic problems to be solved to tight deadlines. Several of the contacts at the Esh Company were former students of Deerness Valley School.

By day 3, students were trying to construct a bridge which they had designed to given specifications of width, length and load bearing capacity, using paper, sticky tape and string. Their tutor was a knowledgeable company employee who was using a wide range of appropriate training techniques. The 12 students were engrossed in what they were doing, with each small group member playing his or her full part. They had previously drawn up their own code of conduct about expectations and standards of behaviour. Students explained what benefits they thought they were gaining from the experience. They talked about the realism of the tasks, the realistic working environment, the autonomy of choosing how to tackle particular tasks, the enjoyment they were experiencing, and the good humoured support and challenge from the tutor. Some felt that they would like to progress to week 2 of the process because they were interested in a career in construction. Others had already decided that construction was not for them, but were grateful of the experience and recognised the benefits to them of the week in this environment.

The Pathfinder co-ordinator in school carried out an interim evaluation of the project in March 2004. There was evidence that there has been an improvement in attendance by 61per cent of the participating cohort and an improvement in attainment by 83 per cent of those students continuing with the project. The Esh Group has increased its level of support in terms of numbers of tutors and some aspects of student feedback have been incorporated into company working practices. Additionally, students from Durham Trinity Special School took part with the support of Deerness Valley students as peer coaches and mentors.

28. The school has a structured programme for delivering citizenship. Currently, however, there is no effective strategy for monitoring the provision in order to ascertain the quality of teaching or students' attainment and progress.
29. The quality of careers information is good. There are close links with outside agencies and business links, which are used to support students' personal development, as well as provide useful advice, guidance and role models. Students in Years 7 to 9 receive early guidance in personal, social and health development days, as well as during tutor time. This is often enhanced by the input and advice of visiting speakers provided by the Durham Business Enterprise. Students in Years 10 and 11 have specific sessions focusing on employment skills and opportunities. These include the use of local community and business links to help in writing applications and conducting interviews. External providers such as the Connexions careers guidance service contribute significantly, providing careers advice and mock interviews. Students also benefit from a good work experience programme and links with local colleges. All these experiences provide greater insight into the options open to students.
30. The school's personal, social and health education programme is satisfactory overall. There is a good range of external inputs, including the police, who advise on aspects of drugs education and bullying, as well as issues relating to the law. It was not possible to see any personal, social and health education or citizenship lessons during the week of the inspection, as they take place on specific focus days. Students commented positively on the quality of input and the amount they learned. These days are complemented by the school's tutor periods, for which there is a clear, well-planned programme. However, the degree of use made of these sessions is variable. Too often they are not effectively used to support and reinforce

the wider programme. Currently there is no formal monitoring of these sessions. There is no satisfactory provision for a daily collective act of worship. Although tutor time and assemblies offer opportunities and time for a 'thought for the day' this is not consistently used by all tutors.

31. The overall provision for extra curricular activities is good. Provision is very good in both English and drama. Pupils take part in activities after school, as part of the enrichment of the curriculum and in the wider community. All year groups go on theatre visits and the Darlington Theatre Group has visited the school. Pupils in Year 8 have visited the Durham Light Infantry Museum to enrich their studies of war poetry. After seeing a production of *Macbeth*, Year 9 pupils took part in a theatre workshop. This year pupils performed in a whole-school musical production of *Carrots* and another – *Bugsy Malone* - is planned for the future. There is a regular drama club after school and pupils give presentations to the local elderly community. Year 11 pupils have taken part in presentations and public speaking to support the launch of the "Fit for Employment" initiative. In science the provision is good. The current Year 10 pupils have visited a local university to become familiar with "Chemistry at Work," an initiative organised by the Durham Business and Education Enterprise. In physical education the extra-curricular programme after school is good. Clubs and teams are well supported by pupils from all years. A wide range of pupils in the school uses the outstanding facilities for the World Class gymnastics training programme, located at Deerness Valley High Performance Centre, both during curriculum time and after school. Generally, good use is made of the funding for the gifted and talented, to enhance their opportunities for enrichment.
32. There is a very good after-school learning programme, whereby many subjects run clubs and support classes. This programme is well co-ordinated and provides good guidance and support to students. Participation levels are good and the programme is having a positive impact on raising achievement and giving students a belief that they can succeed.
33. The school's accommodation is satisfactory, with the subjects taught in clusters of specialist rooms. The social inclusion centre and provision for the community activities are good. However, some art and design, design and technology and mathematics rooms are small, restricting the range of activities that can be undertaken. Changing facilities in physical education are inadequate and two science laboratories need refurbishing. The inadequacies in physical education and science, are identified in the school's comprehensive development and refurbishment programme, and will be eliminated in the near future. The school ensures a safe environment for teachers and students, consistently reviewing its procedures for maintaining and improving already very good levels of care and safety. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in English, science, physical education and design and technology, but unsatisfactory in art and design and in music, where there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to use ICT to support their learning.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes **very good** care of its students, providing very good arrangements for their health and safety. It has **good** arrangements for supporting and guiding students, and for involving them in the life and work of the school through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know the students very well and carefully attend to individual needs.
- Key staff are very well qualified and highly experienced in ensuring the health and safety of the school.
- Routine and systematic review of progress is improving and is now very good in about half the curriculum areas.
- Students do not always value tutor periods because these sessions are not always sufficiently interesting.
- The school successfully promotes increasing student involvement in its development.

Commentary

34. The school achieves a caring ethos, in which students feel safe and secure. Teachers are alert to any negative changes in students' work and demeanour. They take prompt action to arrest any further deterioration and to help the student get back on track. Students with particular needs know that specialist staff provide sensitive and well-considered help. Staff provide good support for students with special education needs.
35. Five heads of year have replaced the school's traditional two pastoral co-ordinators. This has been a successful initiative. Most students feel a growing comfort with, and confidence in, their working relationships with tutors and heads of year. The school arranges good induction for new students, so that students manage the transfer confidently. All Year 7 students can participate in a residential activity early in their first term. This helps new students to feel part of the school community. Students get good advice about options for Year 10 and 11 courses, and for future career choices. They are happy with their chosen subjects.
36. The school has comprehensive arrangements for child protection. Strong features of this provision are very good leadership and rapid communication, both within the school and with external agencies. Staff promote a safe and healthy environment very effectively. Daily routines are carried out thoroughly. Staff with particular responsibilities for health and safety, have an acute awareness of their roles. They take their duties very seriously, for instance, carefully carrying out risk assessments for school visits.
37. Students' personal and academic wellbeing is a priority for staff. Teachers track students' progress carefully and most give good guidance on how to improve. About half the curriculum areas, including English, science, geography, ICT and design and technology, keep students very well informed about their working levels. They effectively track the progress they make towards their predicted grades. In other departments, marking and guidance on improvement is carefully carried out. This assessment is less helpful, but still satisfactory. Tutors support their students carefully and develop good working relationships with them. They conduct effective termly progress reviews with students. However, a few students do not all value tutor periods. The quality of these periods varies considerably, from very good to unsatisfactory. A few sessions lack structure and interest, so students do not settle well. Students have little enthusiasm for the recently introduced 'thought for the day', because a few teachers do not promote this well.
38. Students are regularly consulted about their views through the increasingly effective school council. The school encourages students to think of ways of improving routines and facilities. Students appraise their own progress towards targets at their reviews with tutors. Year 11 students are attached to form groups and help new students adjust to life in a secondary school. Mentoring, and particularly peer mentoring, is now a very successful feature of school life. Students recognise the school's efforts to involve them, and most respond well.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very good** partnerships with the local community and **good** partnerships with parents and with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's highly productive community partnerships benefit students, local people and organisations.
- Staff work hard and effectively to include parents in the life of the school.
- The school is rapidly improving its partnership with other schools, which are good and getting even better.
- A large minority of students do not make routine use of their homework planners.

Commentary

39. The school is highly imaginative in its search for community partners. The local community association is now a very significant partner. Its work is fused with the life of the school. For instance, many people from the community use the school's facilities regularly. The On Line Centre at the school is of exceptional value and is particularly well used. Large numbers of local people attend a wide range of different courses, some during the school day. This ensures that students and community people work companionably side by side on the school's computers. This brings increased understanding of the lives and needs of different generations.
40. The extremely impressive link with a local construction company enables students to experience a wide variety of work situations. This link also provides an increasing number of modern apprenticeships for school leavers every year. Innovative links with football clubs ensure that hundreds of children access football coaching at the school. In addition, their family members can access different learning projects. Successful links like these account in part for the rapidly improving reputation of the school.
41. The school has made good efforts to improve its partnership with parents. Teachers commit significant time and energy to informing parents about the progress their child makes. They provide termly updates of performance in all subjects, matching progress made against targets set. Two consultation meetings are offered during the year, when parents are invited to meet form tutors. Attendance at these meetings has improved dramatically, so that the vast majority of parents now participate in regular discussion with the school.
42. Staff maintain very regular contact with parents of students experiencing difficulty in school, or of those with special education needs. The school arranges very effective support from a wide range of agencies and ensures that parents are partners in this collaboration. Parents are therefore confident that the school meets their child's individual needs. Staff deal with any parental concerns very promptly and sensitively. The school advertises carefully a parent helpline number, and responds immediately to calls. This good and improving partnership is changing parents' attitudes to the school.
43. A few parents responding to the questionnaire criticised the school's approach to homework. The school lacks a specific homework timetable and teachers promote planners inconsistently. Parents therefore have too limited understanding of, and insufficient involvement in, their child's learning at home. The school has consulted parents about the arrangements for homework.
44. The headteacher is sincerely committed to working in partnership with other schools. Rapidly emerging links enable staff to share and extend their expertise with other schools. The school willingly shares its facilities with other local schools, particularly local primaries and a special school. Students visit local schools for a wide variety of purposes, such as work experience and drama productions. Regular dialogue with these schools ensures that the transfer of information is timely and efficient. The school is increasingly working with the local college to extend the curriculum choice available to students in Years 10 and 11.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is **very good**. The leadership of other key staff is **good**. Management is **good**. Governance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very innovative leadership and shrewd management of the headteacher are driving the school forward.
- The clearly defined roles that exist within the leadership group have helped its members bring about good improvement in the school's priorities.

- The recent developments in some subject areas are not yet fully effective.
- Governors are highly committed to the school and share and support the headteacher's vision to do the best for all students.
- There are inconsistencies in the use of homework and students' planners.
- The school reviews its performance regularly and accurately, to ensure that it is on track to meet targets.

Commentary

45. The school has clearly stated aims that are translated into action effectively. This has produced the good and improving ethos within the school. Students achieve well academically, but more needs to be done to promote their personal development. However, the school is improving steadily in increasing the self-esteem of its students and providing them all with a curriculum very relevant to their individual needs. This is mainly because of the far-sighted vision of the headteacher, who has clearly set the right priorities of raising the aspirations and performance of all students. Governors are well informed. They have a good understanding of the strengths and the weaknesses of the school. They have supported the headteacher wisely when making crucial decisions in her imaginative redeployment of staff to promote the school's best interests. They have been largely successful in addressing key issues from the previous inspection and have done their utmost in ensuring the school fulfils its statutory duties.
46. The headteacher is a very good leader. She has been very innovative and determined in raising funds to address the school's priorities. She recognises strong qualities in suitable teachers and inducts them to senior roles. The members of the new leadership group use their individual autonomy very effectively. As a result, progress in the school's priorities has been largely successful. These include good improvements in teaching and learning, curriculum provision and support for students. The very good community links already in place are constantly being improved.
47. The school has a team of middle managers that is satisfactory and improving. Leadership is very good in English, where examination results show consistently good achievement. Leadership is good in science, geography, physical education, religious education, modern foreign languages and design and technology. Leadership is satisfactory in history, ICT, music, art and design, business education, special educational needs and citizenship. In many of these satisfactory areas, the new arrangements for leadership have not been in place long enough to be fully effective. Leadership is unsatisfactory in mathematics. Heads of year are new to their roles because of changes in the school's systems. They are showing satisfactory leadership in promoting the school's ideals to students.
48. The quality of management is good. The headteacher displays very good skills in managing change and being sensitive to staff and students alike. She has produced good systems for self-evaluation and monitoring performance, including regular reviews to help decide on changes if necessary. Outside agencies are used effectively to ensure objectivity. Students' progress is tracked accurately. The school functions as an orderly community. However, there are some inconsistencies in practice across the school. Not all teachers monitor the use of planners and these are little used by many students or their parents. There is no homework timetable and as a result, students often receive little or unsuitable homework. There are inconsistencies in the quality of marking. As a result, students' personal development and approach to independent learning is not as good as other aspects of learning. Management in mathematics and citizenship is unsatisfactory. However, the school does track students' progress accurately and has thoroughly reviewed its approach to homework, having recognised the problems.
49. The school has addressed a number of difficult staffing issues in the last two years and has worked hard to deploy its workforce effectively. All staff, whatever their role, are part of the performance management procedures. This process has played a significant part in the improvements achieved. The arrangements for the induction of all new staff to the school are

very good. The opportunities for continuing professional development are good and are linked to the school development plans. This programme has been a major factor in improving teaching. The support staff play a significant role in enabling teachers to focus on teaching, learning and providing personal guidance to students.

50. Governance of the school is good. Governors share the vision of the headteacher and are committed to improvement and development. They are fully involved in the school's development planning process as well as in setting the budget. They both challenge and support senior managers. They recognise the school's strengths and the difficulties facing the school. The chair of governors and the chair of finance are well involved and informed by the school. Governors apply the principles of best value and ensure that the school provides good value for money. The special educational needs governor has a good knowledge of the current provision and recognises its strengths and weaknesses.
51. Financial management is good. The school seeks and ensures best value and spending is clearly linked to educational priorities. Funding from many initiatives has been successfully obtained and used wisely. Whilst spending on staffing has been relatively high, this has provided stability to curriculum areas during a period of planned changes that have benefited the school. The latest audit report was positive and the few areas for improvement have been addressed.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,420,462.77	Balance from previous year	278,038.00
Total expenditure	2,421,057.95	Balance carried forward to the next	277,442.82
Expenditure per pupil	3,937.00		

52. The balance carried forward includes monies allocated by the DfES for ongoing initiatives within the school. In addition planned savings were included to resolve staffing difficulties. The actual balance from the budget was £59,156.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The greatly improved results in Year 9 demonstrate good achievement.
- Standards attained by boys in Year 11 are still well below average.
- Very good teaching both motivates students and encourages them to undertake difficult work.
- Very good leadership and management have ensured a consistent focus on key areas.
- Homework is not always set carefully enough to ensure its worth.

Commentary

53. In 2003, results in Year 9 national tests were above the national average and well above the average for schools with similar socio-economic circumstances. Results were considerably better than in the previous year and the difference in results between girls and boys had narrowed. The standard of work seen during the inspection was around the national average, which demonstrates good achievement by students since they entered the school. In GCSE English language and literature results overall were below the national average. Results for girls were close to the national average but boys performed much less well. Standards of work seen during the inspection confirmed the same attainment in Year 11, but also indicated higher attainment in Year 10. Achievement by Year 11 students is satisfactory. Overall achievement by all students throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, is good.
54. Very good teaching has brought about the greatly improved attainment in Years 7 to 9 and the improving attainment in Year 10. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and the overall quality is a marked improvement on that recorded at the time of the previous inspection. Lessons are always very well structured, with each activity building on the previous work. Many tasks are imaginative and fully engage the interest of students.
55. Very good classroom management and organisation not only ensure that students work well at all times, but also produce a lively pace, so that a sense of momentum permeates lessons. Questioning is effectively used to involve a high proportion of students and is targeted to match the needs of individuals. Teachers know their students well. They have accurate knowledge of their levels of attainment, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Marking is usually positive and recognises good achievement. It is less consistent with regard to providing guidance on how to improve. A distinct feature of lessons is the enjoyment of the subject by students and teachers alike, another factor accounting for very good levels of participation by students. The good relationships and atmosphere in lessons ensure that students attempt tasks they might otherwise find daunting. Although lessons always contain final sessions, where students and teachers review the work covered, the setting of homework is occasionally rushed and not, therefore, given due attention.
56. Students respond well to the very good teaching. They are willing to ask questions to clarify meaning. They collaborate well in pairs and groups and are keen to improve the standards of their work.
57. In speaking and listening, students by Year 9 participate confidently in different types of discussion. By Year 11, they use an increasing amount of emphasis and variety of registers to stress their meaning. The lower attaining students vary their contributions and manner of

presentation less frequently, in response to others' contributions. In reading, students throughout the school become increasingly adept at reading a wide variety of texts. Although the lowest attaining Year 9 students lapse into retelling the story when discussing fiction, the majority identify important issues and themes. In writing, Year 9 students generally use relevant styles and features when writing to persuade, inform, instruct and report. By Year 11, students use a wide range of strategies to shape and structure whole texts effectively. Note-making is a particularly strong feature of many students' work. This has been developed very carefully by teachers, demonstrating how to do it well and offering examples of different formats. Lower attaining pupils are less successful in using drafting to improve their writing.

58. The English department contributes very well to students' cultural development, with a range of theatre visits and other extra-curricular activities. Social and moral issues are frequently considered, both in discussions and in written work. A Year 9 class considering *Henry V* developed the theme of the King taking his country to war, to include current events. There are good examples of students using ICT, but its use in the department is restricted by difficulties of access. It is to the department's credit that they have developed the wider reading of students successfully, when the fiction stock in the library is small.
59. The leadership and management of the English department are very good. This has been consistent and also pertained when the Head of English was temporarily involved in another role in the school. Very good use has been made of the expertise of teachers who are external markers for national tests and examinations, in informing the way the department shapes courses and prepares its students. Schemes of work have been revised by the whole department and provide a very good focus on essential skills. The success of this strategy, as well as the department's focus on improving the achievement of boys, is amply illustrated by the improved 2003 Year 9 results. The staffing provides a very well balanced blend of experience and expertise. The very good morale and commitment that exists is a further indication of all qualities already mentioned. The local education authority has identified the school as having a leading English department. The previous inspection report was very positive but further good improvement has taken place in both standards and the quality of teaching.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. Overall standards of literacy are satisfactory and are sufficient to support learning across the curriculum. The provision for the development of language and literacy skills is good. All curriculum areas are represented on the school's literacy working party and relevant priorities are identified for whole-school training. The school has made good use of the valuable support provided by the local education authority's literacy consultant. The teaching of literacy is good overall, but there are variations between departments. In ICT there is good attention to note-making and drafting. In science there are good opportunities for extended writing, but in music these are largely lacking. Most departments now give due attention to key vocabulary.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good levels of subject knowledge and language proficiency.
- Teachers ensure good productive working relationships that promote good student attitudes.
- Recent staffing difficulties have depressed students' attainment levels.
- Recent changes in leadership have given clarity of direction and sense of purpose.
- Lack of access to ICT is limiting both teaching and learning strategies.
- Teachers' planning is thorough, with clear learning objectives that aid students' achievement.

Commentary

61. The 2003 GCSE results at grades A*-C were well below average in both French and German, The department is performing well below average and recent trends show that these standards are not improving significantly. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 were below average. Standards of girls' work seen, was higher than that of boys. Given levels of attainment at the end of Year 9, achievement overall is satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9 standards in teacher assessments in 2003 were above average for National Curriculum Levels 5 and 6, with girls' attainment in these assessments being higher than that of boys. Recent trends show that these standards are improving. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 were average, with standards of girls' work being higher than that of boys. Given students' attainment in literacy on entry to the school, achievement overall is satisfactory.
62. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The significant majority of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but examples of both unsatisfactory and good teaching were seen. This unsatisfactory teaching was with lower attaining Year 9 students, where behaviour management strategies were not adequately applied nor teaching support satisfactorily deployed. The good teaching seen was with Year 7, where electronic presentation ensured a variety of stimulus with a range of teaching and learning strategies being demonstrated. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, and in some instances very good, with high levels of proficient and authentic language being used with students. Planning is very effective. Generally good, clear learning objectives are shared with students and invariably well reviewed at the end of lessons, so that students may recognise their learning gains. In some lessons in Years 7 to 9 disruptive boys dominate the attention of teachers and girls are not receiving equal support. Although there are some good examples of pair work, in general there are too few opportunities for independent learning. Teaching and learning strategies are limited by lack of adequate and consistent access to ICT, especially the absence of whiteboard technology. Furthermore, the use of homework to reinforce and extend work in lessons is unsatisfactory.
63. Curriculum leadership is now good and management is satisfactory. The head of the communications curriculum area demonstrates clarity of vision, sense of purpose and has high aspirations and expectations. He is a very good role model for staff. They know exactly what is expected of them. Management is only satisfactory because the restructuring is at an early stage and has yet to fully impact upon teaching and learning. Students commented on the staffing instability over the past four to five years and this has contributed significantly to well below average attainment.
64. The issues of attainment, achievement, students' attitudes, monitoring and evaluation, and unsatisfactory lessons reported in the previous inspection have all been dealt with. Therefore improvement since the previous inspection is good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement by the end of Year 11 is unsatisfactory.
- The good practice in teaching and learning seen in some lessons is not sufficiently shared.
- Leadership and management are not driving forward the improvements needed in standards.
- Achievement has improved and is satisfactory in Year 9, across the whole ability range.
- Relationships between students and teachers are usually good.

Commentary

65. The results gained by students at the end of Year 9 in national tests were below the national average in 2003. Whilst these showed improvement from 2002, they were very low in comparison with schools where prior attainment was similar. There was no significant difference in the results of boys and girls. Results in mathematics are consistently below those in science and well below those in English.
66. GCSE results for students at the end of Year 11 were below and almost well below the national average. The results of boys were well below the national average, perpetuating the considerable underachievement they had shown in the Year 9 national tests. Whilst girls performed almost as well as their counterparts nationally, they still did less well than in virtually all other subjects.
67. Standards seen in the current Year 9 during the inspection are below those expected nationally. However, this is satisfactory achievement compared with standards on entry in Year 7. Students with special educational needs make good progress when they have the more individual support of teaching assistants. When this support is not available, they achieve satisfactorily. The unsatisfactory attendance of a significant number of students inhibits achievement.
68. Standards seen in Year 11 were not as good as they should be, for all students. No students are aiming for the highest grades, continuing the lack of challenge they received in Year 9. Too many average ability students do not attend regularly. A significant number of those who do, particularly boys, often find concentration difficult and lack recall of basic arithmetic methods. Lower attaining students usually progress satisfactorily, because of the small numbers in teaching groups and greater attention from teachers. Overall, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
69. Teaching is unsatisfactory, overall. It is occasionally good, where teachers engage students, particularly with active approaches to learning, such as throwing two dice to find the likeliest total score. Where students use an investigative approach to puzzles, such as finding the connection between the number of non-parallel straight lines and crossover points, they also learn well. However, in too many lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11, the work is too mundane and lacks any real context. In many lessons with larger groups, teachers struggle to keep all students concentrating on the task in hand. Too often students are continually chivvied along and merely go through the motions of producing work, which fails to ensure learning for the future. In those instances, where management of pupils is clearly unsatisfactory, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory and even poor, where the teacher is not a subject specialist. Whilst relationships between teachers and students are usually good, this is sometimes at the expense of teachers not insisting on high enough standards of behaviour and academic performance. Whilst teachers plan to use the ideals of the National Strategy, the implementation is not effective overall.
70. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is insufficient determination from the head of curriculum area to address the reasons why results are not better. Schemes of work lack essential detail, such as clearly written revision programmes. In Years 10 and 11, teachers merely use the examination board's syllabus and support materials. The head of curriculum area has little presence, and does not support supply teachers sufficiently or lead the way with innovations in teaching. The subject is short of one specialist teacher and the use of non-specialists is reducing the likelihood of good teaching, overall. Whilst ICT is used in some lessons, there needs to be a systematic approach to ensure that all students receive their entitlement and are engaged in more relevant and enjoyable learning.
71. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Management has deteriorated and the achievement by the end of Year 11 is unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning have not progressed. The expectations of behaviour and attainment are inconsistent and too often are not high enough to promote good or even satisfactory learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Standards are below those expected nationally in Years 7 to 10 and well below in Year 11. However, students are usually sufficiently competent in using mathematics to satisfy the needs of other subjects. Where this is not the case, such as in a religious education lesson, where students needed to use percentages, the teacher took time to explain the process resulting in progress being made in a topic involving arguments for vegetarianism. In ICT, science and geography, mathematical skills are actively promoted. There is innovative practice in science, where Year 11 students are encouraged to “walk the graph” and are able to extrapolate information meaningfully. All students in geography are given practice with a variety of suitable graphs to display and interpret data. Students in Year 11 use triangulation methods to find locations on maps. In ICT, there are good activities involving the use of formulae, drawing shapes and handling databases. Students cope well in most situations. In music, English and business education, satisfactory use is made of opportunities to endorse skills relevant to the subject.
73. Whilst cross-curricular mathematics is not tracked rigorously, there has been training for all teachers in order to promote these skills. A group of teachers under the enthusiastic direction of the numeracy co-ordinator, meet regularly to discuss ideas, so as to enhance their skills further.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- Teachers plan very well to suit the needs of all students.
- The much improved examination results at the end of Year 9. Students achieve well.
- Assessment of students' progress is good.
- The setting of homework is inconsistent and does not reinforce work done in lessons.
- The analysis and evaluation strands of the coursework are underdeveloped.

Commentary

74. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were broadly in line with the national average in 2003. They had improved considerably from 2002. The results were below those of students in similar schools, based on the relative achievement in Year 6, but well above students in similar schools based on free school meals. Boys gained higher results than girls.
75. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations in double award science were well below average. They improved from 2002. Girls gained higher results than boys.
76. By the end of Year 9 standards in science are average. This represents good achievement for many students, including those with special educational needs, in relation to their attainment on entering the school. They show confidence when doing practical work and predict outcomes of experiments. Good strategies are employed so that students of all abilities show increasingly good literacy skills, which support their understanding of science. By the end of Year 11 students' knowledge of science is below average. Their practical skills have improved and they plan and observe experiments accurately. Higher attaining students identify anomalies and explain them. However, most students have difficulty in evaluating results and this reduces the chance of scoring higher marks in the practical coursework. The introduction of 'Twenty First Century Science' into the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has extended the range and styles of learning for the students. It links science to everyday life, and gives the students a better understanding of science in the world today. It is also instrumental in raising

their aspirations, since it gives them insight into employment opportunities in the general field of science. Achievement overall in Years 10 and 11 is good.

77. Teaching is good across the school. Strong features of the most effective teaching are very good planning and close tracking of students' progress. Assessment informing students how to improve is good. Teachers check students' understanding in class with probing questions. These questions encourage the students to consider their answers more carefully and therefore improve the accuracy of their responses. Planning is improved by the sharing of innovative ideas and good practice. This increases the range of teaching strategies and helps to raise standards. There is some variation in the quality and quantity of homework, so it does not always extend or build on the quality work done in lessons.
78. The department is well managed and there is a strong focus on raising standards. There is a shared understanding of what factors contribute to higher standards. The relatively new curriculum area leader has welded together new and experienced teachers into an effective team. The leadership places a high priority in helping to develop teachers' skills and sharing their good practice. All teachers have been trained in ways to support the National Science Strategy. This training is having a strong effect on the improvement in practical work, despite the shortcomings in evaluation. The curriculum area leader, by observing teachers in class, is helping to raise standards by identifying areas where teaching may be improved, thereby improving learning. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The use of ICT has increased and the interactive whiteboard and data projectors have added a beneficial visual impact to learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 to 11
- The Key Stage 3 Strategy is developing well and raising standards in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The GCSE ICT full and short courses provide very good development for students and yield results well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good and includes clear strategies for teachers' planning, assessment, monitoring of learning and feedback to students of the progress they make.
- There is good use of ICT in other subjects and standards are generally high across the school.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Cross-curricular ICT assessment strategies for monitoring students' progress are insufficiently developed.

Commentary

79. Standards at the start of Year 7, when pupils enter the school, are below average. In all years students receive separate ICT lessons taught by specialist teachers that enable them to make very good progress. By the end of Year 9 students' attainment is in line with national averages as recorded by teacher assessment and the work seen on inspection. There is good achievement in all aspects of ICT and clear signs that students are developing the independent learning skills they will require to reach higher National Curriculum levels by the end of Year 9. All groups of students achieve well, especially those with special educational needs. However, gifted and talented students are not fully extended and would benefit from more complex tasks requiring them to interpret data and model solutions.
80. Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above expectations compared with GCSE average outcomes in ICT. Standards are rising still further and there is potential for further improvement in Year 11. GCSE ICT portfolios are very well organised and presented. Project booklets demonstrate students' outstanding ability to analyse a problem, interpret information and data, design and implement a solution and then test and evaluate their work.

81. Overall achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. However, more able students in Year 9 are not sufficiently challenged. Students have very positive attitudes towards ICT and enjoy the wide variety of contexts they are given to work in.
82. Teaching and learning range from outstanding to satisfactory and are very good overall. Teachers have expert subject knowledge, which they use very effectively to present complex ICT procedures with clarity. For example in an excellent Year 7 lesson students were asked to interpret data sets and design and implement an appropriate graph to show their findings. All students succeeded at this demanding task and the requirement to present further work in several different graphical formats challenged those identified as very able.
83. There is very good teaching in Years 10 and 11, with extending and enriching projects, which are confidently undertaken by students of all abilities. They all make very good progress, due to very effective teaching and feedback. Very effective use is made of student performance data to set personal targets. Students' work is fully annotated to ensure they develop a working understanding of the assessment requirements and optimise their performance against the requirements.
84. The leadership and management of the department are very good and have very successfully bridged the staffing gap over the last two terms, with no negative impact upon standards. There is very effective subject development by the school's leadership team. They have empowered the ICT team to work closely together and manage co-operatively, which in turn has successfully addressed all the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. The team has also revised the schemes of work and incorporated the Key Stage 3 ICT Strategy very effectively into their teaching and learning strategies. Teachers have tackled whole school ICT issues via a full subject audit to map coverage across the curriculum.
85. ICT makes a significant contribution to whole school literacy and numeracy. In most subjects in the curriculum, students use ICT in homework research. Computer resources now match national provision targets and are about to be increased further.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

86. The use of ICT across the curriculum is good in almost all subjects. In Years 10 and 11 students are able to apply the skills, techniques and knowledge they have learned in ICT to lessons in other curriculum areas.
87. Students use hardware and software resources confidently to enhance the quality of their work. Staff competence is also good in most subjects, with notable strengths in English, science, business studies, all aspects of design and technology, history and music. The on-line ICT Centre is an example of the excellent deployment of resources where students and members of the community have access to state of the art facilities from 9.00 am to 9.00 pm, with guidance from a learning resources manager. This resource compares favourably with those usually found in specialist technology, business or computing colleges.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards reached by Year 9 are improving steadily.
- Achievement of students by the end of Year 9 is good.
- Teaching and learning are good, with effective use made of individual progress targets.
- Progress is limited by irregular attendance, mostly by boys.
- Students' limited literacy skills reduce the quality of extended written answers

Commentary

88. Standards have improved recently. They are now average by Year 9 but remain below average in Year 11. Students enter the school with a limited range of geographical skills, which are below national expectations. They make good progress and, by Year 9, the quality of their work is similar to that seen nationally so that achievement is good. Students' spoken contributions are often perceptive. However, limited writing stamina and over-reliance on teachers' prompts mean that independent written work often lacks sufficient explanation of links between geographical factors. Standards reached at GCSE have varied in recent years, but have consistently been below national averages. In 2003, results were better than in previous years, with over a third entering obtaining higher A*-C grades and the large majority obtaining A*-G grades. Staffing changes, alterations in option choices and low student morale contributed to the above average proportion, 15 per cent, who did not achieve a pass grade. Work seen in the present Year 10 is significantly better, although the proportion of predicted A*-C grades is still below average. Irregular attendance and the low aspirations of a significant minority of boys continue to limit the proportion of potential higher levels or grades.
89. Teaching is good overall, with some very good elements. This results in good learning. Students enjoy their geography lessons. Detailed lesson planning and the careful sharing of learning objectives mean that they know what is expected of them and work hard to meet the challenges. In a typical lesson, students enter the inviting classroom expecting to work hard, but successfully. The hour-long lessons are carefully divided up, with a range of activities that link well with previous learning, as well as providing new challenges. Precise time checks move lessons on and encourage students to keep focused on the tasks in hand. A particular strength is the way that students have been taught how to evaluate each other's work against the learning targets set for each lesson. The advice they produce for their friends is perceptive and helpful, so most students are able to explain exactly what they need to do to improve. The teaching observed was fast paced, often humorous and always interesting. In consequence, behaviour in classrooms is very good. The significant minority of students who are poor attenders do not benefit from this good teaching and inevitably make slower progress.
90. Both boys and girls say that they are well supported and feel valued. Where extra support is available, detailed joint planning means that the classroom assistant knows exactly what is expected from every student with a special educational need. Whist help is always available these students are encouraged to become more independent. The teacher values their contributions to lessons, so their self-confidence grows and they achieve well.
91. There are many opportunities to consider social and moral issues as they apply in other places and cultures. Students get opportunities in each year to prepare extended projects, for example, on earthquakes, ecosystems or Japan. There is a good range of topic resources obtained through the school's library service. Many students use computers to prepare projects and most understand the importance of using their own words and judgments. There is not enough use of fieldwork, so skills in recording data and explaining findings are not sufficiently well developed by the end of Year 9.

92. Subject leadership and management are both good. The recently appointed subject leader is an accomplished geographer with a clear belief in the subject's importance. He works very effectively within a larger humanities team. Subject resources are well managed and support good learning. Good use is made of information on students' performance to improve teachers' planning and set targets. Improvements in provision, although relatively recent, address most of the key issues in the previous report.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards reached at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 in 2003 were below the national average. Current work in Year 9 is close to the national average and achievement is good.
- Overall, the standards of teaching and learning are now satisfactory. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Marking does not provide students with clear guidance on what level they have achieved or what steps to take to improve further.
- Inadequate skills in independent and extended writing prevent more able students from achieving higher levels and examination grades.

Commentary

93. Standards are below average but are beginning to improve. Many new students have only limited skills in reading and writing as well as in history. In 2003, teachers assessed standards as being below average by the end of Year 9. GCSE results were well below average for higher A*-C grades but close to average for A*-G grades. In both areas, results were slightly better than in previous years. Year 9 work seen confirmed teachers' assessment that standards are continuing to improve and are approaching the national average. These students have made good progress and achievement overall is satisfactory
94. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and contribute to the improving standards. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their careful team planning results in lessons that contain an effective sequence of linked activities. Lesson objectives are shared with students. The quality of learning is further improved when these objectives relate to the learning of skills rather than merely to the performing of tasks. Some lessons lack pace and, in these, a few students lose interest. However, behaviour in all lessons is at least satisfactory and usually good. Students respond with confidence and share their knowledge willingly. In some lessons concepts are too challenging. For example, a lesson on the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente alignment of nations in 1914 was too theoretical for several students in one set. In contrast, students have a good grasp of aspects of the First World War, where their interest had been extended by the use of videos and topic tables containing interesting books and memorabilia. Work is regularly marked and teachers provide considerable encouragement. Due to a well-intentioned attempt to raise self-confidence, there is overuse of 'excellent', implying outstanding quality, when the strength actually lies in the evidence of hard work. Because progress targets do not describe levels or goals in sufficient detail, students are unable to explain what they need to do to improve, other than 'doing more work' or 'making my work neater'. Students who find the work hard get support from teachers and classroom assistants and so make as much progress as most of the others.
95. The use of fieldwork is developing, with a recent joint history and geography visit to Killhope Colliery museum. Students talked enthusiastically about features of life as a lead miner. Students' use writing frames regularly, but excessive use of them limits the development of independence and writing stamina in higher attaining students. As students move through the school, the gap between what they can describe orally and what they are able to write increases. Students understand complex links, such as those between the chronology of the Wall Street Crash and its developing impact on ordinary people. However, their attempts to

convey this in writing are often lacking in details and explanation. This weakness in literacy prevents many students from obtaining higher grades. A few students use computers effectively to research and write project work. Teachers are aware of the need for easier access to computers. In one Year 8 lesson, the novelty of going to a computer room resulted in students wasting time exploring general features, rather than focusing productively on the planned Civil War work.

96. Leadership and management in history are satisfactory. The hard work and determination of the recently appointed subject leader mean that all the key issues are being addressed. Improvements in teaching and planning are beginning to raise standards. The most effective forms of teaching and marking are not shared widely enough and schemes of work, including units that involve the use of computers, are not complete. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' good subject knowledge and knowledge of the students supports learning well.
- Standards are below local expectations at the end of Year 9 and equate to the national average at the end of Year 11.
- Leadership and management are good. Priorities for further improvement are well considered.
- Good relationships help students to develop positive attitudes and enable them to learn well.
- From a low starting point, students achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Marking and assessment levels are too generous, particularly at the end of Year 9.

Commentary

97. Standards at the end of Year 9 are slightly below the expectations identified in the Durham Agreed Syllabus. However, students arrive at the school having had a wide range of different experiences in their primary schools. The majority have relatively limited knowledge and understanding of different religions and lower than average literacy skills. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and their overall achievement is good. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average. This was in part because of staffing and timetable difficulties and confusion over the nature and assessment of coursework. Current standards of work seen were better than these examination results suggest. The attainment of those following the full GCSE course is now above the national average, although for those studying the short course standards are below average. Overall achievement is satisfactory. Girls out-perform boys in all years. This is recognised by the department and strategies are currently being developed to address this issue.
98. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers are committed to their subject and to the well-being of the students. They have good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject, both of which they use to motivate and engage their classes. Lessons are well planned to take account of the needs of all students. There is a sharp focus on improving students' knowledge and skills in the subject, as well as their literacy skills. At times, however, learning objectives are more a description of what students will be doing, rather than what they might achieve in the lesson. Lessons feature a number of different activities, which allow the learning needs of different students to be met. Marking and assessment, however, are over-generous at times and give a false impression of the quality of work produced. Teachers have high expectations in terms of both behaviour and work. This is recognised by students and they respond positively. This was evident in a Year 10 lesson on sexual relationships. Students discussed and agreed what was appropriate language to use and the need to establish moral codes that take into account the views of others.

99. In some lessons opportunities to develop and sustain speaking and extended writing skills are missed. At times, teachers try to cover too much, which restricts the time available to reflect and consolidate learning. Students do not currently have sufficient access to ICT and different source materials, which restricts the development of their research and investigative skills.
100. Leadership and management are good. The teacher in charge of the subject is well motivated and involved with other secondary schools, sharing and developing good practice. She is well supported and encouraged by the head of the curriculum area. She is keen to seek advice and adopt new ideas if they benefit the learning of the students. Students' progress is tracked and appropriate targets for improvement identified. The teacher in charge of the subject has clear priorities for moving the department forward, but these are not incorporated in the overall curriculum development plan for the area. As a result there is no clear strategy for achieving or monitoring progress towards these goals
101. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. Students' attitudes have improved, standards are rising and teaching is now good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good, with good arrangements for sustaining and developing existing improvements in standards.
- Standards are below average but have improved over the past two years. Achievement is now good.
- Effective assessment enables students to improve their work.
- Lack of challenge for more able students restricts the standards achieved.

Commentary

102. Standards in teacher assessments in 2003 were below expectations at the end of Year 9 and below average in the GCSE. However, they have been improving over the past two years with standards in food and graphics achieving standards in line with expectations. Results in resistant materials were well below, but many students achieved better than predicted.
103. Students enter the school with various experiences and levels in skills, knowledge and understanding. They are given very good opportunities to use a variety of materials and develop confident and competent skills, using a range of tools and equipment. They develop good understanding and application of a design brief, developing specifications as well as planning and organising their work. Students in Years 7 and 8 are gaining good practical and ICT skills. They acquire thorough knowledge of materials, to produce a quality product, so achievement by the end of Year 9 is good and improving. Graphic skills are unsatisfactory in the current Year 9 because of poor provision in previous years. Improved opportunities in Years 7 and 8 have resulted in skills, which are now satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, students build effectively on practical skills. They develop a good understanding of the design processes, applying them creatively to their product development. Students use ICT adequately to develop their designs and enhance their coursework. Their achievement is good overall. However, their use of technical and extended language is underdeveloped, restricting standards of analytical and evaluative writing in coursework.
104. Teaching is satisfactory, with examples of good and very good teaching. Lessons are effectively planned, with the majority of lessons offering a variety of activities that motivate and interest students. When teaching is good, learning objectives are identified and shared effectively with students, so they are clear about the purpose of what they are doing. However,

this is not consistent across the department. Students are developing a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to obtain higher levels and grades. Students with special educational needs make good progress, because of the good support they receive. However, a lack of challenge in many lessons hinders the progress of higher attaining students. Relationships are very good and students' positive attitudes towards the subject, create a safe, productive working environment.

105. Leadership and management are good. The head of department, together with a hardworking and committed team of teachers, has improved the provision and standards significantly since the previous inspection. The strengths and weaknesses are well identified, with good procedures in place to secure further improvements. Monitoring of pupils' progress is good, but the lack of formal monitoring of teaching by the head of department has resulted in inconsistencies teaching and learning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 10 and 11 have improved since the previous inspection and are now at the national average.
- There is good improvement in the use of sketchbooks.
- Good assessment is used to monitor pupils' progress and creative development.
- Leadership and management of the creative arts faculty and art and design department are good.
- The developing use of ICT has not impacted on the work that students produce in Years 7 to 9 and in GCSE projects.

Commentary

106. Standards are just below average by the end of Year 9, compared to national expectations. However, many arrive with only limited skills and knowledge of art and design. The curriculum they now undertake enables them to acquire a sound knowledge of the subject and to develop a range of techniques in drawing, painting, printing and textiles. Their overall achievement is satisfactory. However, limited opportunities currently exist for three-dimensional work. Their designing and creative thinking skills are also extended in a variety of ways, including working in different historical and cultural contexts.

107. In the GCSE examinations in 2003 standards in Years 10 and 11 were below average. However, standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that they are now average and improving. They make good progress and their achievement is good.

108. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. Students are very effectively monitored through on-going assessment strategies. In Years 10 and 11, students' learning is very effectively developed through the use of additional staffing in the art and design GCSE course. This extends and enriches students' creative experiences and provides them with good quality advice on the improvement of their projects. Students are undertaking their work with growing confidence and commitment. This is because of the effective teaching and feedback they receive from their teachers. However, more able students are not always sufficiently challenged and are not therefore reaching their full potential. Effective use is also made of students' performance data to monitor progress and set personal improvement targets.

109. The effective leadership and management of the creative arts faculty have successfully addressed many areas for improvement. Art and design teachers are now embracing a

number of whole-school development issues, including literacy, numeracy and citizenship. Subject teachers make a significant contribution to whole-school literacy through their emphasis on key words, used to develop a strong subject vocabulary and to perform extended writing tasks.

110. ICT is underdeveloped during art and design lessons but is used effectively in Years 7 to 9 for homework and research tasks. In Years 10 and 11 there is too little use made of this valuable resource, which could further improve the quality of students' finished work.
111. Improvements made since the previous inspection have been good. Teachers have raised standards to just below national expectations in Years 7 and 8 and towards national averages in Year 9. Improving standards in Years 10 and 11 are bringing results closer to the national average in art and design. Learning and achievement have also improved, since significant improvements in students' attitudes have raised their attainment. Teaching has risen from unsatisfactory to satisfactory in all years and this is closely matched by better learning and achievement. The leadership and management of the faculty and department have improved to good and this has made a considerable impact upon provision and standards.

Drama

112. In 2003 GCSE results were at the national average, which represents good achievement. One Year 9 lesson was observed. The teaching was good. Objectives were made very clear from the outset and students knew exactly what was expected. The lesson was part of a programme leading to the making of a video. Students showed good initiative and responded well to opportunities to work collaboratively. They were very familiar with the routines and procedures of a drama workshop. The teacher maintained a very good pace throughout the lesson and students responded with enthusiasm. They achieved well in the lesson. Drama also makes a valuable contribution to the social and cultural development of students, through a good range of theatre visits and opportunities to participate in performances.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is enthusiastic, well planned, and imaginative, and this has a positive impact of students' learning.
- The behaviour of a significant minority of students is unsatisfactory, which has a negative impact on standards.
- The faculty is giving good support to the new teacher.
- Resources are unsatisfactory, particularly the lack of computers in the department, which limits achievement.

Commentary

113. Evidence from teacher assessments in 2003 and from the analysis of students' work, indicates that standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. This represents satisfactory achievement, because standards on entry to the school are also below average. Students in Year 7 lack the self-discipline to engage effectively in musical activity and their knowledge of musical terms is poor. By the end of Year 9, students have developed a basic understanding of keyboard technique, and compose simple pieces, exploring different styles. However, their notational skills are weak, and they do not retain the musical knowledge that they have gained.
114. There is no timetabled GCSE music course and students undertake music within a GNVQ course in performing arts. This enables them to study music alongside other art forms, and is a satisfactory arrangement. Students have the opportunity to enter for music GCSE, with extra support after school, but none are currently doing so in Years 10 or 11.

115. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are carefully planned and contain a variety of imaginative activities. There is a good focus on literacy. Students are encouraged to talk to each other about music, and to use musical terminology when writing. When students give full attention to these activities, they show good achievement. However, their response overall is only satisfactory, because a significant minority are uncooperative, and in Year 7 the behaviour of some students is poor. Because homework is not set regularly, the opportunity to reinforce what has been learned is being missed. Less able students and those who are musically talented are given good individual support, both within and outside of lessons.
116. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The teacher, who is in her first year in the profession, is well supported by leaders in the creative arts faculty. Well written schemes of work and policies are being developed, although they have yet to impact on standards. The department offers tuition on a range of instruments, and funding is provided to enable those of limited means to benefit. The uptake of this tuition is well below the national average. There is a small range of extra-curricular groups available, and an annual school production enables many students to engage in a large-scale musical activity.
117. The accommodation has improved, since the department now has an additional rehearsal room. Some of the classroom instrumental resources are of poor quality, however. The continuing lack of ICT means that students do not use technology enough to help them to develop their composing. Good progress has been made in helping students to understand how to improve their work. The curriculum has been reviewed and now covers the activities of listening, performing and composing in a balanced way.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is very good.
- Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good and effectively promotes students' skills of evaluation.
- The provision in Years 10 and 11 does not cater for all students' needs, because GCSE physical education is not offered in Year 10.
- Excellent community links are well managed and highly productive.
- Planning for the Junior Sports Leadership Award lacks clarity.
- There is a shortfall in time allocation in Years 10 and 11 .

Commentary

118. Students join the school with standards that are below expectations. The standards seen at the end of Year 9 were in line with national expectations and students make good progress. They perform a range of aerobic exercise movements with control and accuracy and select exercises to raise the pulse or promote mobility. The standards seen by the end of Year 11 are in line with national expectations. Currently, students in Years 10 and 11 have only one lesson of core physical education each week and this limits the extent of students' learning experiences. Despite this, their progress is satisfactory. The GCSE results in 2003 were well above average.
119. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is good. Lessons focus consistently on developing students' skills of evaluation and students are challenged to develop their vocabulary of movement. In a very good Year 7 dance lesson seen, students quickly grasped the concept of complementary movement and applied this creatively in their own dance movements.
120. In Years 10 and 11 core physical education, the quality of teaching and learning is good and students are encouraged to evaluate their work in accordance with GCSE marking criteria. In a

very good Year 11 trampoline lesson, effective questioning by the teacher encouraged students to analyse their skills and identify faults successfully, with reference to these criteria. This motivated them to improve their performance to the next level and the majority of the group achieved this.

121. GCSE physical education is not offered in Year 10, so not all students who wish to can take the examination option. A “fast track” one-year course is taught after school, for which students are selected for their high levels of overall performance. Throughout the year they complete their studies using computers, working with course texts, revision guides and the support of both teachers. Students’ very good use of ICT and their successful independent learning result in good progress.
122. All students in Years 10 and 11 are following the Junior Sports Leadership Award (JSLA.) course. Planning is, however, not clearly structured and students’ understanding of the different roles of organiser and coach needs to be more fully developed. The extra-curricular programme is good and is well supported by students from all age groups.
123. Community links are excellent and make an exceptional contribution to students’ achievement. There are good links with feeder primary schools and the local specialist sports college provides support for gifted and talented students through the Junior Athlete Education programme. The Football in the Community partnership is a thriving initiative based at the school. As a result the school has been chosen as a hub for excellence, which has enabled a bid for substantial funding through the Football Association. The partnership with Deerness Valley High Performance Centre provides outstanding opportunities for students to use the facilities that support the World Class gymnastics training programme. Currently, two students have been picked for the Great Britain team, some 11 are training on the programme and over 50 students use the centre after school during the week. Students following the GCSE course have access to the High Performance staff coaches.
124. There is a clear vision for the future and a good understanding of what needs to be done. The introduction of the “fast track” GCSE course reflects innovative leadership of the curriculum. Staff provide good role models and students have increasing opportunities to develop their leadership capabilities. Management is good. Essential functions are covered well and staff are clear about their responsibilities. The professional development programme is good and supports the aims of the action plan. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

125. The department offers GCSE business to students in Years 10 and 11. The provision was sampled. Standards of work seen in students’ folders and the two lessons observed were below average. However, achievement was satisfactory. Many students develop an adequate knowledge of business organisations and recognise the impact of marketing and motivational strategies on companies. The use of business terms is underdeveloped and students’ have insufficient knowledge of business concepts and their application to business organisations. As a result, standards are below average.
126. Evidence from students’ work and lesson observations shows teaching is satisfactory overall. Lessons are well planned to include a range of activities. Students work well together to explore ideas and gain a better understanding of the tasks undertaken. During a very good lesson, subject knowledge was shared effectively with students, encouraging them to take responsibility for planning and organising their revision. Short, focused tasks sustained good levels of involvement and concentration.

127. The school, with the support of the local education authority, has managed the department's staffing difficulties very well, thus ensuring that examination students are not adversely affected.

Vocational courses

128. Four lessons were sampled across the range of courses on offer in Years 10 and 11. A Year 11 ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network), one Year 10 and one Year 11 vocational GCSE health and social care and a GNVQ performing arts lesson. Teaching and learning in all the lessons seen was good. Teachers had established particularly good relationships with the students and were very supportive of their individual needs. Lessons were well prepared and teachers had good subject knowledge. Students' responses to the courses were good, they were attentive and had good attitudes to their work. Attainment seen in health and social care and performing arts lessons and in student's finished work indicated standards in line with those found nationally. Students in the ASDAN class had all achieved at least a bronze award.

129. All students are given the opportunity to choose a vocational course and plans are well advanced to include more vocational GCSE courses in the curriculum from September 2004.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is not sufficiently rigorous monitoring of teaching.
- Attainment is not satisfactorily assessed with reference to the descriptors at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- There is a comprehensive audit and viable action plan covering each of the three strands.
- There is little evidence of progression of learning outcomes in any year.
- Monitoring performance data, reviewing outcomes and modifying programmes are all unsatisfactory.

Commentary

130. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 were unsatisfactory. Given the students' levels of attainment in literacy and in personal, social and health education, achievement overall is unsatisfactory. There is little evidence of progression across or within year groups.

131. Throughout the school teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Planning is satisfactory at the strategic level but good clear learning objectives are not in evidence for the discrete activities. Student self-review and programme evaluation is embryonic and not satisfactory across or within year groups. The encouragement and engagement of students is not satisfactory across all year groups, though it is better in Years 10 and 11. The citizenship co-ordinator's command of subject knowledge is satisfactory. She has worked hard to secure an increasing range of external input, such as bringing speakers in to school and facilitating activities with external agencies. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. This is demonstrated by the very good range of activities within the taught curriculum and the very good range of extra-curricular activities and visits. Students said that they enjoy the practical and discursive elements of activities, but have not enjoyed the reflection upon learning gains and the recording of them. There is little recording of learning outcomes or achievements and there is no use of homework to reinforce or extend work done in lessons. There are in general too few opportunities for independent learning, although there are some good examples, such as the student council. Teaching and learning strategies do not take advantage of the available ICT.

Student attainment is not satisfactorily assessed with reference to the descriptors at the end of Years 9 and 11, which impairs the evaluation of the programme's effectiveness.

132. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory. School leadership demonstrates some clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspiration, but effective teams are not being created for the delivery of citizenship. There is knowledgeable co-ordination of the curriculum. The co-ordinator demonstrates her commitment by the production of packs for both students and staff and by her contribution to continuous professional development for staff team members. Management is unsatisfactory, largely due to the absence of either rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning or the consistent assessment and reporting of student attainment. These were issues identified during the local education authority adviser's visit of June 2002. In discussions, students were unable to identify the contributions of citizenship to their personal development. Citizenship in the school has been introduced as an entitlement for all students and involves all tutors in its delivery, giving a good context for enhancing pastoral relationships. Initial audits have been carried out, as well as some student evaluations of the first year's activities.

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

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