

INSPECTION REPORT

FERNHILL SCHOOL

Farnborough

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116447

Headteacher: Mr Clive Gilbert

Lead inspector: Dr Vivien Johnston

Dates of inspection: 15th – 19th March 2004

Inspection number: 258627

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 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	790
School address:	Neville Duke Road Farnborough Hampshire
Postcode:	GU14 9BY
Telephone number:	01276 702540
Fax number:	01276 702541
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Richard E. Walker
Date of previous inspection:	19 th – 23 rd October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Fernhill School is a mixed comprehensive school. Its pupils come from the neighbouring residential area to the west of Farnborough. Their attainment on entry is average. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds; overall, their socio-economic background is broadly average. The vast majority of pupils are of white British ethnic origin, with a few from a wide range of other ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low, and only a very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including those with statements, is below the national average. Their needs relate to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The school is seeking specialist language college status.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8402	Vivien Johnston	Lead inspector	Information and Communication Technology English as an additional language
9454	Deborah Pepper	Lay inspector	
34157	Jennifer Barker	Team inspector	English
10244	Roger Freeman	Team inspector	Mathematics
24453	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	Science
33135	Kim Ropek	Team inspector	Art and design
2079	Trevor Slack	Team inspector	Design and technology
25073	Stuart Jordan	Team inspector	History Religious education
32208	Derek Aitken	Team inspector	French and German Citizenship
28036	John Parry	Team inspector	Geography
7854	Richard Crozier	Team inspector	Music
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

e-Qualitas Limited

Langshaw
Pastens Road
Limpsfield Chart
Oxted
Surrey
RH0 8RE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Many aspects of the school's work are very good. In particular, pupils do very well at GCSE, having started in Year 7 with an average level of attainment. **The overall effectiveness of the school is good**, as is the value for money it provides.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good, leading to pupils doing very well especially in mathematics, science, history and drama
- GCSE results were well above the national average in 2003, reflecting pupils' very good achievement
- The care and support of pupils are very good as the school places a high priority on meeting all pupils' individual needs – both academic and personal
- Relationships within the school community are very positive, reflecting the school's successful promotion of pupils' moral and social development
- The headteacher provides staff and pupils with very clear leadership
- The provision for citizenship and religious education is poor, and that for design and technology is unsatisfactory; statutory requirements for these subjects are not met

The school has made good improvements since the last inspection. In particular, GCSE results have risen further as a result of even better teaching. The weaknesses identified by the last inspection (the provision for design and technology, information and communication technology, and religious education; and planning for the school's development) were resolved. However, the school has experienced recruitment difficulties in design and technology and religious education during this school year, and the provision for these subjects is no longer satisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

The GCSE results in 2003 were particularly high as the pupils had worked exceptionally well. The standards currently being attained by pupils in Years 9 and 11 are above average. In the 2003 Year 9 tests, results were above average overall and in mathematics and science, but below average in English. Compared to similar schools (those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 6), the Year 9 test results were average.

Pupils' achievement is very good overall. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good, and those in Years 10 and 11 do very well. Pupils' achievement is particularly good in mathematics, science, history and drama. Their achievement in English is satisfactory overall, and good in GCSE work. Pupils are not achieving well enough in religious education and citizenship, and in aspects of design and technology.

The development of pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils' attitudes to school are good, as are their behaviour and attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Teaching and learning are very good, overall. They are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Mathematics, science, history and drama are taught particularly well. Teaching and learning that were very good, and occasionally excellent, were observed in many other subjects, including English, design and technology, geography and music. Throughout the school, teachers are very skilled in motivating the pupils by providing varied learning activities and keeping up a rapid pace in lessons. Pupils of all ages and levels of attainment work hard and are interested in the challenging tasks set.

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are very good, and partnerships with parents, other schools and the community are good. The curriculum is unsatisfactory, because the National Curriculum requirements for citizenship are not covered and the school does not meet statutory requirements relating to the subjects to be provided in the school curriculum. In other respects, the curriculum is good, with very good opportunities for pupils to learn modern foreign languages, and good provision for extra-curricular activities including sports. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good, overall. The leadership of the headteacher is very good, and he sets the direction of the school and its focus on high academic standards and meeting individual needs very clearly. The leadership of other staff is good, overall. Most subjects and areas of the school's work are led and managed successfully. The governing body provides good support and guidance to the school, but governance is unsatisfactory because of the statutory requirements that are not met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The level of parents' satisfaction with the school is good, and it is over-subscribed. Parents feel that the school is well run and successful, and they are very happy with its strong focus on meeting individual needs. Pupils are very happy with the school, and have a high regard for the staff and what is provided for them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Make better provision for citizenship, so that National Curriculum requirements are covered and pupils' attainment in the subject is reported to parents
- Teach religious education to all year groups, and those elements of design and technology that are currently not available for the younger pupils (the school is recruiting staff to enable this to happen by September 2004)

and, to meet other statutory requirements

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils
- Correct the omissions in the governors' annual report to parents, and ensure that staff are updated in child protection procedures

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Pupils' achievement is **very good**, overall. It is very good in GCSE courses, and good in Years 7 to 9. The standards pupils attain are above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11, overall and in mathematics and science. In English, standards are average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do very well in GCSE, and their overall results are well above the national average
- Pupils' achievement is very good, particularly in mathematics, science, history and drama
- In the national tests at the end of Year 9, pupils did very well in mathematics and science, but not in English
- Pupils are not doing well enough in religious education, citizenship and some aspects of design and technology

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.4 (31.3)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.9 (35.6)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.4 (34.5)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 126 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. The combined results for English, mathematics and science were above average in 2003. The difference between girls' and boys' performance was similar to that nationally, in all three subjects. Pupils did best in mathematics and science. Here, results were above the national average, and well above the results of similar schools (schools in which pupils had gained similar results in their Year 6 tests). In English, results were below average, though better than in the previous year. The English results were well below those of similar schools.
2. Lower-attaining pupils did well in mathematics and science as a higher proportion than nationally gained Level 5 or better, which is the level expected of pupils in Year 9. In English, the proportion of pupils who gained Level 5 or better was below that nationally, suggesting that lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs had not done well. Higher-attaining pupils also did not do well enough in English, as is shown by the proportion of pupils gaining Level 6 or better being lower than nationally.
3. Overall, the school's test results have risen since the last inspection, although the trend of improvement is below that nationally. This is because the English results fell in 2001 and 2002, although they had been well above average in 2000 and better than the results for mathematics and science. Results in mathematics and science have risen considerably over the last five years.
4. The standards now attained by pupils in Year 9 are above average in mathematics and science, and average in English. Here, the rise shown in the 2003 results is continuing, as work to improve the department is proving successful. In most other subjects, standards are above average in Year 9. However, where staffing difficulties have limited the curriculum provided, the standards pupils achieve have been affected. These subjects are design and technology, religious education and information and communication technology (ICT). Standards are well below expectations in citizenship because the subject is not focused on sufficiently. In the school as a whole, though, standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and, overall, pupils are achieving well.

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	79 (56)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (96)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	41.5 (38.8)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 144 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. GCSE results have risen since the last inspection, at a rate similar to that nationally. The overall results have been consistently better than the national results, and in 2003 were well above the national figure. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs did very well as almost all gained at least one GCSE grade G or better. Pupils did best in history and science, and least well (relative to their performance in their other subjects) in English and English literature.

6. In comparison with schools in which pupils had gained similar results in their Year 9 tests two years previously, the overall GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national average. The proportion gaining five or more grades A* to C was very high – in the top five per cent of schools nationally.

7. GCSE results are not expected to be so high in 2004 because of differences in the year groups. Nevertheless, the pupils now in Year 11 have achieved very well and overall standards are well above average. Pupils do particularly well in mathematics, science, history, music and drama as the teaching of these subjects is very good. In religious education and citizenship, standards are well below expectations and pupils' achievement is poor because of a lack of teaching of these subjects. This also affects how well pupils do in areas of the design and technology curriculum.

8. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs across all years is very good, in relation to the targets they are set. All pupils with special educational needs are entered for GCSE examinations, and whole-school tracking data shows that individuals have progressed very well. This information also shows that gifted and talented pupils do very well as the school is very successful in meeting the academic needs of pupils of differing levels of attainment. The few pupils who are not yet fluent in English achieve satisfactorily as they are generally being given suitable support.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school provides **good** support for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have **good** attitudes to school life and behave **well**. Attendance and punctuality are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils show good attitudes in lessons, and relationships are very good
- Pupils' behaviour is good overall
- The school provides well for pupils' personal development
- Pupils have few opportunities to explore faith and belief, which limits their spiritual development and their understanding of multicultural issues

Commentary

9. In lessons, pupils, including those with special educational needs, show good, and often very good, attitudes to their work. Most pupils enter enthusiastically into the fast-paced and interesting lessons characteristic of the school. For example, in a very good history lesson, Year 7 pupils were quickly confident to explain the main differences between pictures of Catholic and Protestant

churches at the time of the Reformation. Pupils work very well together in lessons, often in mixed gender pairs or groups. In a very good geography lesson, Year 9 pupils prepared for a debate on fair trade by taking part in a group exercise in which they explored the unequal distribution of resources in the world. Teachers are skilled in securing the interest and respect of the minority of pupils who are not so well motivated to learn. They use a range of well-planned activities, rapid pace and humour to convince these pupils that they can do well. Pupils enjoy the range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school and take-up is generally good. Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 are involved in Duke of Edinburgh or Project Trident awards.

10. In lessons, the attitudes and behaviour of pupils with special educational needs are generally as positive as those of other pupils. Most are happy to accept the extra help provided by learning support assistants; other pupils often take advantage of their presence and seek extra help themselves. In the learning support department, pupils with special educational needs behave very well. Those with a statement of special educational need are very appreciative of the help, support and guidance they have received throughout their time at the school, as are pupils who need help with learning English.

11. The school expects pupils to behave well, and generally they do. In lessons, this happens because teachers insist on high standards and have very good strategies for managing any inappropriate behaviour. As a result, even pupils with challenging behaviour usually co-operate and enjoy their lessons. Behaviour around the school is generally good, but at break times some pupils are very boisterous. Pupils value the school's rewards for good behaviour including the credit system, 'good news' slips and the letters which staff write to parents to commend achievement of all kinds.

12. A few pupils, mainly boys, do not behave well enough. The school has a 'zero tolerance' policy of behaviour it deems unacceptable, and uses temporary exclusions to enforce these expectations with pupils and their parents. This is why the exclusion figures are higher than in many other secondary schools. The school is good at seeking to make the exclusion an experience from which pupils learn. For example, before excluded pupils resume school, they and their parents meet school staff to discuss the behaviour that led to the exclusion and to agree what will happen in future. Mostly, this is very successful, and contributes to the good behaviour that is typical of the school day.

13. Bullying was raised as a concern by some parents and pupils on the pre-inspection questionnaires. However, in discussion with inspectors, pupils said they do not regard bullying as a significant problem, although incidents do occur from time to time. The school deals with any incidents effectively, and pupils are confident that bullying is taken very seriously. For example, the school has introduced initiatives to ensure that pupils can raise issues about bullying, including Year 11 'bully buddies' and an email 'bully line'.

14. Opportunities promoting pupils' personal development extend across a range of subjects. Artwork and drama provide evidence of the powerful way in which pupils have reflected on their own life experiences and those of others, promoting their spiritual and social development. Pupils explore complex moral, social and religious issues in history, for example by looking at the selective use of source materials in the history of Ireland during the reign of William III. In geography, Year 11 pupils explore issues such as the advantages and disadvantages of tourism to less economically-developed countries. This work helps pupils to understand multicultural issues. Membership of the student council and appointment as prefects in Year 11 provide good opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility, and support their social development. The strong ethos of providing for everyone's individual needs, which includes support for pupils with special educational needs, has a positive impact on all pupils' social development and learning.

15. Although provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory overall, pupils do not have enough opportunities to explore issues of faith and belief. Religious education is not currently taught after Year 7 and the provision for collective worship does not meet statutory requirements. As a result, pupils are not learning enough about belief and faith in Britain or worldwide and the need for respect and tolerance. They are also missing out on opportunities to learn about the cultural

traditions of other faiths. A group of Year 11 pupils, for example, found it difficult to identify the tensions which the British Pakistani author of one of their GCSE texts might face between her Pakistani heritage and her upbringing in Britain.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.8
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.6
National data	1.1

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

16. The school makes it clear that regular and prompt attendance is required, and almost all pupils attend school regularly and on time. This makes a positive contribution to their learning.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
758	137	2
3	0	0
1	1	0
1	1	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
6	0	0
3	0	0
5	0	0
5	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The main strengths are in the teaching and learning, and the school's care and support of pupils to meet their individual needs. The main weakness is in the curriculum, as a result of staffing difficulties.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **very good** overall. It is very good in Years 10 and 11, and good in Years 7 to 9.

Main strengths

- Very good, and occasionally excellent, teaching and learning are found consistently in all year groups
- Pupils of all ages work hard in response to their teachers' high expectations and the challenging, varied work they are set
- Teachers are very good at managing learning activities and motivating pupils
- Learning support assistants provide very good help to lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs
- Pupils taking GCSE courses are given very good feedback on the quality of their work

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 122 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12 (10%)	42 (35%)	43 (35%)	22 (18%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

17. The school has put much time and energy into ensuring that pupils of all ages are taught as well as possible, with considerable success. The quality of teaching and learning is higher than reported by the last inspection, when they were good. Both are now very good overall. The consistency with which very good and excellent teaching and learning are found in all year groups contributes much to pupils' academic success.

18. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11, where nine-tenths of the lessons observed were good or better and two-fifths were very good or better. The consistently successful teaching and learning is the main reason for pupils' very good achievement in their GCSE courses.

19. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are good. They were good or better in about three-quarters of the lessons seen, and very good or better in two-fifths. However, a very few lessons were judged unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because the work did not meet the needs of all in the class well enough, or because the teacher was unable to keep the pupils focused on the lesson activities.

20. In the vast majority of lessons, pupils are keen to learn and work hard. Relationships are very good, both among the class and between pupils and adults. Pupils are willing to work in any grouping, which facilitates their learning in pair and group activities. In several subjects, the pupils are required to sit in boy-girl pairs rather than with their friends, and this contributes to the class's focus on the learning activities. These are usually challenging to everyone in the class as the tasks and resources have been adapted to meet the range of needs within the class. Teachers are generally very good at noticing who needs extra help, and who could be expected to do more. Teaching assistants often provide skilled assistance to those with special educational needs, and to others in the class who are having difficulties and need additional explanations and support. The pupils respond very well to these high expectations of their work and effort.

21. In the lessons in which teaching and learning were excellent, the pace of the work was fast and the pupils were fully engaged in the activities. Teachers questioned pupils skilfully, pushing them to think more deeply as well as checking their understanding of what had been done so far. The teachers were alert to the first signs of pupils having difficulties, and were quick to provide further guidance to the class or individual support, as appropriate. Excellent teaching and learning were seen most often in history and drama, and also in English, mathematics and science. Here, teachers' expertise in their subject and how to teach it was such that they could readily and confidently go beyond what had been prepared for the lesson. The work was stimulating, varied and made accessible to everyone in the class.

22. Throughout the school, teachers are very good at planning varied and interesting activities for each lesson. Lessons start promptly, often with a quick introductory task that prepares for the main work. This means that the pupils get on quickly, and little time is wasted. Teachers anticipate and deal with any minor inattentiveness very well, and so pupils remain focused on their work. Those who are initially reluctant are drawn in, for example by being addressed by name and asked to make a contribution to whole-class discussion. Homework builds constructively on lesson activities, or prepares for what is to come.

23. Teachers are also very good at helping pupils develop their subject-specific vocabulary and use of language generally. They explain *how* to carry out reading and writing tasks, and provide clear prompts and guidance. This contributes to pupils doing very well in their tests and examinations. This awareness of language difficulties extends to the support given to pupils learning English as a second language, for example in mathematics where key vocabulary is translated.

Example of outstanding practice

Year 10 drama lesson, which illustrates how stimulating work involves and challenges all pupils.

This lesson was the final practice before the group visited a primary school to do a presentation and workshop for younger pupils, on the topic of the Spanish conquest of the Incas. The lesson started with a discussion of key vocabulary from the previous lesson, as a peg for exploring pupils' understanding of the words and how they connect to the story of the Incas. Momentary inattentiveness was dealt with very well, with an invitation to listen that led to the pupil concerned then making a major contribution to the discussion. The teacher checked pupils' understanding, with probing questions that refined their thinking, and ensured that the quieter pupils also contributed. Everyone had an opportunity to present his or her interpretation of the events in the story, and to explore how the key words ('Death', 'Pride', 'Love of Religion') connect the story to contemporary events. The final rehearsal of the presentation was highly effective as most of the class remembered their lines very well, and pupils' evaluations of how well they were performing helped them to do even better.

24. Pupils with special educational needs are generally taught in normal lessons. Most teachers are well aware of the needs of these pupils because they have access to their individual education plans (IEPs) and pen portraits of those on the school's list of pupils with special educational needs. IEPs are very informative and summarise pupils' strengths and interests as well as providing a broad assessment profile. Classroom strategies, informed by pupils' individual needs, are also provided. This enables teachers to plan work that matches the learning needs of these pupils. Small class sizes throughout the school are also of benefit to pupils with special educational needs, as is the grouping of pupils in sets on the basis of their prior attainment in some subjects.

25. Learning support staff often provide very good support for pupils with special educational needs. During the inspection, this was observed in several subjects including mathematics and history. The teaching in the learning support department is also very good, when pupils are withdrawn from class lessons for sessions focusing on literacy and on their individual needs. The pupils are very well supported, purposefully engaged and as a result make very good progress towards meeting the targets on their IEPs.

Example of outstanding practice

Year 7 mathematics lesson on triangles, for lower-attaining pupils many of whom have special educational needs.

The pupils were highly motivated by the starter activity, which involved drawing angles. They were keen to show their answers, drawn on small whiteboards. The teacher skilfully built on their efforts, for example to explain the convention for showing a right angle. Mathematical vocabulary was taught at every opportunity, with questioning that invited everyone to contribute ideas about angles and types of triangle. A constant flow of praise meant that the pupils were very keen to learn. Each of the lesson activities was discussed with the class before it was tackled, during and afterwards, and this ensured that everyone understood the work. Excellent organisation meant that the resources for practical work were instantly at hand. The learning assistant, who specialises in mathematics, worked in close partnership with the teacher. The higher-attaining pupils, who worked independently, sorted triangles into three categories (equilateral, scalene and isosceles) and went on to discover a fourth category of triangles. The lower attainers made similar progress with the support of the learning assistant. The pupils' learning was excellent in this lesson as a result of the skilled teaching.

Assessment

26. Assessment is carried out thoroughly and is successful. Clear guidelines are included in the school's handbook for teachers, and assessment practice is monitored by subject leaders and senior managers. Departments are encouraged to adopt practices that best fit their purpose. As a result, the quality of assessments and record keeping varies somewhat, with some very good practice. For example, the use of pupil targets linked to learning objectives is very well developed in history. Assessment is very good in science, and good in mathematics, history, geography, ICT, music, physical education, French and German.

27. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are generally very clear as to GCSE expectations and how well they are doing. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are much less sure about the quality of their work, partly because they are usually not made aware of the National Curriculum levels at which they are working and of specifically what they should do to improve in future, including through informative marking. In design technology, modern foreign languages and, to a lesser extent, in science, assessment records are not clear enough to track pupils' attainment and progress over time. Sufficient assessment records are not kept for citizenship, nor for pupils' attainment in ICT in other subjects. Analysis of examination data to show how well groups of pupils have done, for example those with special educational needs, is not a feature of the school's analysis of data and planning, although individuals' attainment and progress are carefully checked.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **unsatisfactory** because statutory requirements for the subjects to be taught are not met, although in other respects it is good. The requirement for all pupils to experience a daily act of collective worship is also not met. Staffing is unsatisfactory. Resources for learning are sufficient.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Statutory requirements are not met for design and technology, citizenship and religious education, mainly because the school lacks the specialist staff needed
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good
- Good opportunities exist for enrichment through extra-curricular activities
- The careers education programme prepares pupils well for further education

Commentary

28. In many ways, the school provides a good curriculum. In Years 7 to 9, drama provides additional breadth for all year groups. A good range of modern languages is available. A weekly lesson of study skills has recently been introduced for pupils in all years, on the suggestion of the student council. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has an academic bias. Other than business studies in Year 11, the school provides no vocational subjects. However, the GCSE subjects available build well on the curriculum for Years 7 to 9. In science, lower-attaining pupils benefit from

the availability of a single science option at GCSE. The appropriateness of the range of courses available in Years 10 and 11 is shown by the pupils' satisfaction with the school and what it offers, their academic success and the fact that many progress to study at sixth form level.

29. The curriculum in most subjects is well planned, and this contributes to pupils' examination successes. In history, imaginative interpretation of schemes of work, combined with excellent resources such as the use of poetry and art, provide enriching experiences for pupils. In mathematics and science, and English in Years 10 and 11, work is well adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. The curriculum planning for physical education and ICT has considerably improved since the last inspection.

30. However, statutory requirements for the curriculum are not met. Religious education is taught only in Year 7. The resistant materials element of design and technology is not covered. Statutory requirements for personal, social and health education are met, but the subject is given relatively little time as it is not taught each week. Citizenship is taught through other subjects, including personal, social and health education, drama, history and English. The lack of overall planning for and specific focus on citizenship means that the requirements for this subject are not met.

31. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good; they have full and equal access to the school curriculum and are fully involved in the life of the school. The learning support department provides very effective extra help for literacy by means of withdrawal groups for pupils in Years 8 and 9. Individual learning support sessions for pupils on the school list of special educational needs are also very successful. Many pupils attend the learning resource centre's homework sessions, but the lack of formal extra-curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs means they have limited opportunities for extra subject support and guidance from specialists during the week. A special educational needs liaison group keeps departments well informed as to whole-school issues for the provision for these pupils.

32. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. A number of these contribute to pupils' examination success as they offer study support for GCSE. Year 8 pupils have a five-day residential visit to the New Forest, and other fieldwork supports learning in geography and history. Participation in sport is strong and growing as new ventures have recently been added, including a rugby club and mixed football in Year 7. Foreign language productions by a visiting theatre group enrich pupils' experience of learning languages.

33. Careers advice and work placements prepare pupils well for further education. Pupils are interviewed and guided by a combination of school and external careers advisors. Careers days draw well on the resources of the local community. Additionally, all Year 11 pupils have mock interviews to improve their presentational skills.

34. The match of teachers to the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The school insists that only high-quality staff are appointed, but this year has been unable to recruit specialists for resistant materials in design technology, and for religious education. Additionally, the school has one fewer ICT specialists than it needs, and so has had to reduce the amount of time spent on this subject in Years 7 to 9. However, appointments have recently been made to enable the school to cover National Curriculum requirements and to teach religious education to all years in the near future. The staffing for special educational needs is very good, both of teachers and support staff. The match of other support staff to the curriculum is also very good, particularly in having learning support assistants to focus on working in one subject area. Technical, secretarial and site management staff are effective.

35. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. The resource centre is very well organised and managed. It is well used by all year groups. The overall provision of computing facilities is good, having recently been improved, but some subject departments are not yet fully utilising the computers now available around the school. Accommodation is satisfactory. The provision for physical education is much improved with the recent completion of a new, very good sports hall.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes **good** care of its pupils. It provides pupils with **very good** support and guidance and involves them **very well** in the life of the school. This represents an overall improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths

- The staff are very good at noticing and responding to individual pupils' personal and academic needs
- Arrangements for the induction of pupils new to the school are very good
- Pupils are consulted and involved in the life of the school very well

Commentary

36. Teachers, including the headteacher and senior staff, know pupils extremely well and consistently provide them with very good guidance, advice and support. This contributes in a very significant way to the pupils' academic progress and very good achievement. Staff respond sensitively to pupils' needs. For example, teachers regularly make time after lessons or at lunchtime to speak to pupils who need extra help. Parents feel that their children are well cared for.

37. The school has very good arrangements for monitoring how well pupils are doing in relation to their personal development and academic attainment. For example, senior staff check individuals' academic progress carefully, and identify who is falling behind and so needs additional attention. The success of this system is illustrated by the pupils' very good GCSE results. Subject departments can and do access and share the assessment data collected at whole-school level, and some use it effectively to target support, advice and guidance for pupils.

38. The school's concern for meeting individual needs means that it is very good at monitoring and supporting disaffected pupils and those with specific difficulties. Pupils are confident to talk to teachers, many of whom provide regular informal support. Various arrangements are made for pupils with particular needs, including pastoral support plans and the Spotlight programme, which seeks to help pupils modify their behaviour. Where necessary, the school draws on support from other organisations. A small group of pupils in Year 7 has benefited from social skills support, and another group in Year 8 from training in anger management. There has been no recent whole-school training in child protection, and this is a weakness. Nevertheless, staff know that they should refer any concerns to the child protection officer.

39. Strong and supportive relationships between staff and pupils ensure very good access to well-informed advice at all levels, for example as pupils choose courses in Year 9 or move to further education or training at the end of Year 11. The school makes very good use of professional support from external agencies, for example 'Connexions' which helps with careers advice. The school's relationships with specialist agencies also enhance the quality of support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs. Annual and transitional reviews are good. Parents and pupils are involved well in setting and reviewing the targets set at these meetings.

40. Arrangements for the settling of pupils into the school are very well managed. The extensive links with the main contributing primary schools are used very well to ensure a smooth transition for pupils into secondary education. All Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to visit during the summer term. Visits to primary schools by teachers and the follow-through of assessment ensure pupils are known on arrival. The first day at their new school is designed to make them feel comfortable in their new surroundings before the older pupils start the term. The school has also made good arrangements for helping new pupils who are still learning English as an additional language to settle in, and has been sensitive to their need to develop confidence.

41. Pupils' views are sought and valued, and are acted on by the school. The school council, recently renamed the student council at the request of pupils, carried out its own survey of pupil views on a range of subjects and has prioritised issues for action. The school has introduced weekly study skills lessons for all year groups, in response to requests from the student council.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** links with parents. Links with the community support pupils' personal development **well**. Links with other schools and colleges are **good**.

Main strengths

- Parents are supportive of the work of the school
- The communication between the school and parents supports pupils' learning well
- The school draws successfully on the local community to enrich pupils' education
- The school has an active partnership with local schools and colleges

Commentary

42. Parents expressed positive views about their partnership with the school in the parents' questionnaire and at the parents' meeting. They feel that their children are well taught, make good progress and are expected to work hard. They find it easy to approach the school if they need to. Although a minority of parents expressed concerns about bullying, inspectors did not find that this was an issue of significant concern to pupils. They said that the school is quick to deal with bullying that does occasionally occur, and it does so successfully. Parents also are happy that the school takes a very firm line against any bullying that the staff learn about.

43. The school communicates well with parents, to involve them in their children's education. Homework diaries are used regularly to communicate with parents. Parents appreciate the school's quick response to their telephone queries. They receive a helpful summary of their child's achievements before one of the two parents' meetings, so they can use the time during the meeting itself very effectively. Annual reports are satisfactory. The 'tick box' approach allows for key information to be presented clearly, but the reports lack individual evaluation of the quality of pupils' work and targets for or guidance on the next steps in their learning. In some subjects, statements relating to pupils' attainment are made in the language of the National Curriculum documents, which can be hard for parents to interpret. The school provides other helpful information including the prospectus and termly newsletter, the latter prepared jointly by staff and pupils. The school is responsive to parents' views and, following a recent survey on homework, changed its policy. Homework is now set only where it is directly relevant to learning in lessons.

44. Good links between the learning support department and parents of pupils with special educational needs ensure that parents are kept fully informed of support procedures for their children.

45. The school has useful links with the local community. Representatives from local businesses offer interview practice to Year 11 pupils, and attend careers days. Several governors work in the local business community and are able to secure resources and advice for the school. Year 10 pupils are involved in Project Trident and, in addition to work placements in the local community, take up a community project.

46. The school's links with its feeder primary schools and local colleges support pupils well in the transition between the different stages of their education. The transition and induction arrangements for Year 7 pupils are well planned. Close liaison with the special needs co-ordinators in the primary schools means that relevant information gets passed on. Parents of prospective Year 7 pupils particularly like the opportunity to meet Fernhill staff in their children's primary school. Curricular links are beginning to be made. The school also has purposeful links with local sixth form colleges, particularly Farnborough, which helps pupils make informed 'A' level choices. The school is an active partner in a consortium of local secondary and primary schools, working with other secondary schools in areas of common interest.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**, and the leadership offered by the headteacher is very good. The work of the governors is good. However, governance is unsatisfactory, overall, because a number of statutory requirements are not complied with. The school gives good value for money.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides strong leadership with a very clear focus on high-quality teaching and learning
- Although in other respects the governing body is good, governance is unsatisfactory because statutory requirements are not met in a number of areas
- Many areas of the school's work are very well managed
- The arrangements for staff development are very good

Commentary

47. The headteacher runs the school with a very clear vision and high aspirations for its pupils and staff. His priorities are to enable the pupils to achieve as well as possible academically and for their individual needs to be met. This has resulted in the school building further on the strengths identified by the last inspection. In particular, GCSE results have risen; teaching is now very good; and the school's accommodation has been improved. Parents and pupils feel that this is a good school, and it is now over-subscribed.

48. The governing body is an experienced team, and governors bring a wide range of expertise to the school. They are involved in strategic planning and monitoring, and have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are very supportive of the headteacher and other staff, but also challenge robustly when appropriate. The governing body has been fully involved in decisions relating to the curriculum provided by the school, and supports the headteacher's approach. However, governance is unsatisfactory as a number of statutory requirements are not met. The National Curriculum for design and technology is not fully covered, and religious education is not taught to pupils in Years 8 to 11. National Curriculum requirements for citizenship are not met. The requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is not fully met, partly because the school hall is too small for everyone to attend an assembly. The most recent governors' annual report to parents does not include all the information it should.

49. The headteacher seeks to appoint teachers of high calibre, to maintain the high standard of teaching that characterises the school. Recent difficulties in recruiting staff of this quality explain the gaps in provision of design and technology and religious education. Staffing difficulties have also contributed to the lack of time given to ICT, and have meant that English is currently taught by many non-specialists in Years 7 to 9. The situation has been managed well, under difficult circumstances.

50. The school is well managed, overall. Senior managers, heads of department and other staff are committed to enabling the school to achieve its vision. The staff share the headteacher's sense of purpose and very clear focus on improving further the quality of teaching and learning. Subject departments are closely involved in implementing the school development plan. This is a short document that sets out the overall priorities, which are expanded by each department. Governors and pupils also have an input into the process. The performance of subject departments is reviewed carefully by senior managers, and additional support is provided where weaknesses are identified. This has contributed to the recent improvement in English. The leadership and management of subject areas vary considerably. In several subjects, heads of department are very effective. In the subjects in which provision is not satisfactory, the absence of a head of department is a significant weakness. This contributes to the wide variance in the quality of departments' planning for future development and in their setting out of day-to-day procedures.

51. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well managed, and that for pupils who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory. Monitoring how well individual pupils are doing is very successful, and contributes to their success at GCSE.

52. The school provides very well for staff development, with a strong focus on helping all teachers and support staff to be successful in enabling pupils to learn well. Performance management arrangements are very good, and are helping to raise further the quality of teaching and learning. The induction of staff new to the school is also very good, particularly for newly-qualified teachers. The school is also a very good provider of initial teacher training. Learning support staff are deployed very well and training has updated their expertise. A good feature of the way the school runs is that subject staff have a timetabled meeting each week for development activities, and generally make very purposeful use of this time.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,386,123	Balance from previous year	14,975
Total expenditure	2,352,395	Balance carried forward to the next year	48,703
Expenditure per pupil	3,055		

53. The financial affairs of the school are managed well, with an assured grasp of financial planning and budget procedures. Governors have a good overview of the budget and are kept regularly updated and informed of the school’s financial situation. The small financial surplus is as a result of the school’s bid for specialist language college status. Principles of best value are applied well, and resources are well targeted.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Media studies, which has been recently introduced as a GCSE option, was sampled. The written work seen showed that pupils have learned how to plan and write material, and to record and edit film. Resources are good, with a range of ICT equipment which pupils use effectively.

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 11 because of good teaching
- Relationships in lessons are very good, and teachers are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour
- The quality of marking is inconsistent, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and pupils are not always told what they should do to improve their work

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

54. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average in 2003. Pupils did less well in English than in mathematics and science. GCSE results in English and English literature were average overall. Higher-attaining pupils did well in English literature as the proportion gaining A* to C grades was higher than nationally.

55. The standard pupils attain in Year 9 represents satisfactory achievement in relation to their average attainment at the start of Year 7. Pupils make good progress in learning to write for different purposes. They use competently a range of strategies for planning and drafting their work, including spider diagrams. High-attaining pupils' essays on the literature they study are good, as they support their ideas with well-chosen comments from the text. Average and lower-attaining pupils have good ideas for their work, but its quality is lowered by mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar and paragraphing. Pupils with special educational needs are given good help with improving their skills in reading and writing.

56. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is average overall. Their achievement is good as these pupils started Year 10 with below-average attainment, due to previous weaknesses in teaching and learning. Speaking and listening are strengths. Pupils listen attentively and answer questions with thoughtful, relevant comments. They also build well on each others' ideas through group discussion. Higher- and average-attaining pupils write confidently, and are working on appropriately challenging literary texts. Lower-attaining pupils are well supported as individuals and in groups and their writing shows that they have a sound knowledge of the texts they study. Those who are unlikely to do well in English literature are entered only for English. The extra time this gives them for the English course enables them to be successful. Consequently, in 2003 all those who entered for GCSE English gained grade F or better, and half the year group gained grade C or D.

57. Teaching and learning are stronger in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 because the classes are taught by specialist staff. Nevertheless, very good or excellent lessons were occasionally observed from Year 7 onwards. Consistent strengths in teaching are that lesson activities are well planned, and that pupils are expected to work hard and behave well. Relationships are generally very good, which contributes to the success of speaking and listening activities. In most lessons, a variety of activities holds pupils' attention, although at times they have to listen too long to teachers' explanations and are not challenged to explain or justify short answers to the questions they are asked. Teaching assistants often provide skilful support for lower-attaining pupils, helping them to make good progress in lessons. Marking is inconsistent, and better for GCSE work than for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The best marking provides pupils with informative comments on what they should do to improve and how to go about it, but much gives encouragement but too little guidance.

58. The department's improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Development work is beginning to raise standards and results, which fell after reaching a high point in 2000. Test and examination results have been analysed carefully to determine which aspects of the English curriculum need further emphasis. Overall, results since the last inspection have risen in line with the national trend. Recent improvement has been helped considerably by staff implementing the approaches of the National Strategy for Key Stage 3 as this has made teaching more purposeful. However, most of the teachers of classes in Years 7 to 9 are non-specialists, and this has contributed to the quality of teaching being uneven. A weakness in overall curriculum planning is that it does not show what pupils of different levels of attainment are expected to learn from the planned activities, how their work will be assessed, and how each unit of work builds on previous learning. Appropriate priorities for further development have been set, including assessing pupils' learning more systematically and using the information to help teachers adapt the work for the full range of pupils in the class.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. The provision for teaching English language and literacy in other subjects is good. It is the responsibility of departments to plan for and monitor literacy, and most do so successfully. Teachers of history are particularly skilled in promoting pupils' language development. They place a strong emphasis on questioning that challenges pupils to express their ideas very clearly, and give pupils many opportunities to research and interpret information for themselves. A very good range of resources is available. As a result, pupils are able to write GCSE essays of a high standard. In many other subjects, including mathematics, science, geography, religious education, drama and ICT, teachers draw pupils' attention to key words, ensuring that they understand what they mean. The many opportunities for paired work and discussion assist the development of pupils' skills in speaking and listening, and help them to know what to write down. Consequently, pupils' skills in language and literacy across the curriculum are good.

Modern foreign languages

The focus during the inspection was on the main languages, French and German. Spanish is also taught in Years 8 to 10. One lesson was observed, in which the teaching and learning were satisfactory. As the pupils were in their first year of learning Spanish, their correct answers to questions about the music they like showed that their achievement is good.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching enables pupils to achieve very well by the end of Year 11
- GCSE results in German were very high in 2003
- Teachers' commitment to improving their teaching, underpinned by effective leadership and management, is leading to a steady improvement in how well pupils do in languages
- The curriculum offers all pupils good opportunities to broaden their linguistic experiences

- At times, the lesson activities and marking do not challenge higher-attaining pupils sufficiently

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11 French	Year 11 German
Standards	Above average	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

60. Teacher assessments show that Year 9 pupils have attained levels that are well above the national average. The standards attained by pupils now in Year 9 are also above average. In 2003, GCSE results were very high in German, the most popular language. The 2003 results were very low in French, having previously been considerably better than this. The fall in results was mainly due to difficulties with staffing and pupil grouping.

61. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good as their starting point in Year 7 is average. Higher- and average-attaining pupils construct sentences correctly when combining parts of speech with, for example, time and place phrases. They use link words to develop their ideas, can compare and contrast, and give and justify opinions. The higher-attaining pupils express their ideas in longer, more connected forms of writing, for example to describe a past holiday. Average-attaining pupils benefit from teachers' encouragement to respond well orally and in writing. Teachers work very hard to overcome the reluctance of some lower-attaining pupils to be involved in lessons, and this enables these pupils to make satisfactory progress.

62. The standard attained in Year 11 is higher in German than French, but the gap is now considerably narrower than previously because of improvements in staffing and changes to grouping arrangements this year. Pupils make substantial progress in all aspects of learning the languages. Average-attaining pupils are given very good support to help them set out their work clearly and to prepare them thoroughly for examinations. For example, the use of spider diagrams helps them to organise their ideas, and visual aids help them remember information. Pupils are skilled at capturing detailed information in listening activities. Very good behaviour, good concentration and a strong work ethos add to the effect of the consistently good and better teaching.

63. Teaching and learning are good in all years, and very good in German in Years 10 and 11. Attractive displays and well-organised classrooms provide a stimulating environment for language learning. Teachers plan lessons very well. A good variety of activities captures and holds pupils' attention, and ensures steady development of their knowledge and skills. Expectations are high, but realistic. Extensive use is made of the foreign language, appropriately modified to ensure pupils' understanding. Very good use is made of the overhead projector, particularly for assessment. This ensures pupils receive instant feedback while maintaining the pace of the lesson. The feedback sustains pupils' motivation as it shows them they are making good progress. While lesson objectives are always very clear to pupils, what they have learned is not always systematically reviewed at the end of lessons. Sometimes, opportunities are missed to adapt work for the higher-attaining pupils, especially in Years 7 to 9. Marking is regular, but comments and targets do not give higher-attaining pupils enough guidance on how to improve their language skills. In Years 10 and 11 some of the work is over-directed by the teachers, reducing opportunities for spontaneity in oral work. However, the overall level of guidance, support and monitoring is a significant factor in the success of the teaching as pupils receive every encouragement to succeed.

64. The major strength of the leadership and management of the department lies in its consistent focus on teaching and learning to promote high achievement for all pupils. Improvement since the

last inspection has been good, as GCSE results in German have improved substantially and facilities for ICT are improving. The school is working towards achieving Language College status, and its provision of three languages means that the curriculum is broader than in many schools of this size. The vast majority of pupils do two languages successfully from Year 8 onwards, which is a tribute to the quality of the teaching.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths

- Pupils achieve very well as a result of the very good quality of teaching and learning
- Very well planned lessons, based on good schemes of work, produce test and examination results which have shown improvement each year and were well above average in 2003
- Strong leadership and management have resulted in a consistent approach to all aspects of the department's work
- Very good feedback during lessons and effective marking of homework result in pupils producing work of a very good quality

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

65. The results of the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2003. GCSE results were very good in 2003. Almost all the Year 11 pupils were entered for the examination (nationally over a tenth of Year 11 pupils are not entered) and all gained grade G or better (nationally, a small proportion of those entered do not achieve this). Girls did particularly well as four-fifths of them gained grades A* to C. The results in both the Year 9 tests and GCSE have risen steadily since the last inspection.

66. At the start of Year 7, the standards pupils attain are broadly average. Very good achievement in all years means that in Year 9 standards are above average. The standards attained in Year 11 are also above average. The difference between the standards now attained in Year 11 and the 2003 GCSE results reflects a difference in the capability of the year groups.

67. Pupils build very well upon their learning in earlier years. In work on circles, higher-attaining Year 9 pupils showed a very good understanding of loci. They drew neat, accurate diagrams locating a house at given distances from the school and the M3. Lower-attaining pupils built successfully upon their knowledge of co-ordinates to establish the rule for number pattern between the lengths of sides in similar triangles and their areas. Year 11 higher-attaining pupils showed very good algebraic skills when they applied the sine and cosine rules confidently in calculating the sides and angles of a variety of non-right-angled triangles. An effective partnership between teachers and learning support staff provides valuable support for pupils with special educational needs, enabling their achievement to match that of their peers. Pupils who are new to speaking English are given good support, for example through the provision of key mathematical words printed in English and Bangladeshi.

68. Many factors contribute to the very good quality of both teaching and learning. Pupils are keen, take pride in the presentation of their work and have the confidence to ask questions and make

mistakes as they gain further understanding. Teachers' planning is very good. It is based on good schemes of work, which are updated regularly to meet framework and new syllabus requirements. Pupils are stimulated and challenged. The high quality of pupils' investigations is indicative of the thought given by teachers to promoting learning. For example, guidelines (known as 'writing frames') are given to improve pupils' skills in writing independently. Very regular feedback during lessons boosts pupils' confidence, as does informative marking of their homework. However, pupils are given little feedback on how to reach even higher standards, and teachers' record-keeping does not identify specific strengths and weaknesses efficiently.

69. Teachers have a very good understanding of the range of pupils' needs. They use question and answer techniques very well to challenge and extend pupils' learning, building upon their responses in a carefully structured way. A starter activity always sets a very good tone to lessons, and links well to what follows. For example, lower-attaining Year 7 pupils were posed a number of short questions on angles. Pupils drew their answers enthusiastically on mini-whiteboards, with the teacher skilfully asking further questions. Very good use was made of other resources, to extend pupils' knowledge. This enabled the pupils to identify triangles as scalene, isosceles, equilateral and right-angled. In all lessons, very good classroom management, together with very good relationships and touches of humour, ensures that pupils concentrate well, working at a good pace within a calm and very good working environment.

70. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The department is led and managed with enthusiasm and energy, and a very strong team of committed teachers has been built up. The match of staff to the needs of the curriculum is excellent, with an appropriate balance of age and experience. Monitoring and evaluation of the department are mostly informal, but effective. Thoughtful planning, management, consultation and care for pupils and colleagues are ensuring continuing improvement. Teachers new to the department benefit from a good induction into the department's practices and the support of a mentor. The classrooms have a similar corporate image, with bright purposeful displays and well-organised resources, and this provides further support for teachers and reassurance for pupils. The use of ICT to enhance mathematics teaching is satisfactory, following the installation of eight computers, and further developments are scheduled.

Mathematics across the curriculum

71. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy within mathematics lessons is providing pupils with the necessary competencies to meet all the numerical demands of their other subjects very well. Discussions between the mathematics staff and other departments are identifying common ground in relation to the methodology and timing of mathematical topics. Collaboration between subjects is good. For example, in a Year 7 litter project the data is collected during geography lessons and presented graphically during mathematics. Overall, the promotion of mathematics across the curriculum is very good, and pupils' competence in mathematical skills is good.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good, and contributes to the very good achievement of pupils in all years
- A very high proportion of pupils attain the top grades (A* to B) in GCSE examinations
- Pupils display very good attitudes towards their work in science, which enhances the quality of their learning
- Very good management of the department results in very effective teamwork
- The department's database does not provide sufficient detail to help teachers monitor pupils' progress

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

72. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average in 2003. This has been the case in each of the past five years, and results have risen more than nationally. The 2003 results were substantially better than the target set for the department. The GCSE results in 2003 were particularly impressive as the proportion of girls and boys gaining each of the A*, A and B grades was approximately twice the national average.

73. At the start of Year 7, standards in science are in line with the national average. The pupils made very good progress to attain the Year 9 test and GCSE results in 2003. The good quality of work seen in lessons reflects these results, as does pupils' written work that is particularly well presented. Pupils with special educational needs do very well because of the support they are given. Gifted and talented pupils are also suitably challenged, for example by the use of imaginative homework and opportunities for web research.

74. A learning culture is strongly fostered in the department, characterised by good relationships and very effective teaching. Teaching and learning were very good, and occasionally excellent, in a high proportion of the lessons seen during the inspection. Lessons are planned well and good use is made of resources. Topics are delivered with pace and imagination, and pitched at appropriate levels. A wide range of teaching styles and variety of approaches is used, including humour to enliven the lessons. This stimulates pupils' interest and involvement in learning activities. Pupils relate particularly well to practical work. The department has a strong and successful focus on developing literacy skills, including the correct use of key words and spellings. ICT is used when opportunities arise. However, the department's computer resources are limited and so science makes only a small contribution to the development of pupils' ICT skills.

75. The department consists of knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers supported by a very effective team of laboratory technicians. Well-developed schemes of work and files of resources form the basis of the successful teaching. Management of the department is very good, which ensures that all aspects of the department's work and links with whole-school issues are fully covered. A clear vision for the development of science teaching has been established, identifying areas where further action is needed. These include modifying the department's assessment records so that pupils' attainment and progress can be monitored more easily, and making use of ICT to aid pupils' learning in science. Since the last inspection, good improvements have been made in the areas identified as requiring attention. These included raising overall standards and girls' achievement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils taking GCSE courses achieve well by the end of Year 11 as a result of good quality teaching and learning
- Recent improvements have been very good, and are leading to rising standards
- Insufficient time is given to ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9, because of a shortage of specialist staff this year
- Several subjects make too little use of ICT to support pupils' learning

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

76. Overall, the result of the teacher assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2003 was below the national average. Few pupils gained Level 6 or higher, indicating that the higher-attainers did not do as well as they should have. The standard attained by pupils now in Year 9 is also below average, although good teaching is enabling these pupils to catch up as the quality of their work is improving. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, and improving.

77. There are two main reasons for standards and achievement not being higher, despite the good teaching and learning that now characterise the department:

- In the past, the ICT curriculum was less well planned than is the case now, and so the older pupils have not covered all that they should have
- ICT has been allocated less than one lesson a week in Years 7 to 9, as a result of a shortage of specialist teachers during this school year. Although pupils do well in learning the skills now being taught, they need more time to develop their confidence and extend their experience

78. GCSE results were average in 2003, having been very high in 2002. The 2003 results were affected by staffing difficulties in the last few months of the course, which meant that the Year 11 classes had too few specialist teachers to cover the timetabled lessons. A good feature in Years 10 and 11 is that over half the year group take a full GCSE in ICT, a much higher proportion than nationally. The overall standard attained by pupils now in Year 11 is average, and the achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. The achievement of those taking the GCSE course is good, because of consistently good teaching. However, some of those not taking ICT at GCSE have had too few opportunities to learn and develop ICT skills through their other subjects.

79. The main strengths in pupils' work at present lie in the areas of communications and data handling. Particularly good work was seen in the CD covers that GCSE pupils have designed and developed. Pupils' coursework includes much evidence of their having researched information from the Internet, for inclusion in projects such as creating a brochure about a city for tourists. The younger pupils have used PowerPoint well to create presentations, making use of the multi-media facilities to convey their message clearly and attractively. Pupils of all ages have secure skills in

using the keyboard and mouse, and are quick and accurate in navigating programs and entering data.

80. In lessons, the work interests the pupils because the topics are relevant to them and the teaching is stimulating and challenging. Key features that make the teaching successful are:

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge, which means that key concepts and skills are taught very clearly and so pupils understand the work
- Very good relationships, and pupils responding very positively to teachers' high expectations of their work, effort and behaviour
- Well-planned lessons, which have short activities that alternate between focused teaching of the whole class and opportunities for pupils to work on their own and get individual help

81. The subject is now very well led and managed, and in two terms many changes have been made. A very clear schedule for improving the subject has been drawn up, with good prioritising of what to focus on first. Planning for ICT is now very good, with topics and projects that interest the pupils and enable them to develop their skills systematically. Assessment of the quality of pupils' work is rigorous and accurate. The work of the department is now documented well. Standards are rising, and the subject is increasingly popular. Other improvements since the last inspection are that the ICT resources are much better, GCSE results have gone up and the quality of teaching and learning is better.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

82. The provision for ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory, overall. The availability of computers is good as the school has recently invested in providing small suites of computers for the major subjects. Subjects which are making successful use of the ICT facilities include geography and business studies. In Years 10 and 11, the graphics course, which is part of design and technology, makes a good contribution to developing the ICT skills of many of the pupils who do not take ICT as a GCSE subject. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is enhanced by very good access to computers. However, other subjects including English, science, art and music do not make sufficiently regular use of ICT. Planning for ICT across the curriculum is as yet incomplete. This means that the school has no means of ensuring that the National Curriculum requirements in ICT are covered by the minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not take GCSEs in ICT or graphics within DT. Nevertheless, overall the pupils' competence in ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths

- Pupils achieve well at the end of Year 9, and Year 11 in the GCSE course
- Teaching and learning are consistently good
- Strong leadership and management have led to improving standards in the subject
- ICT is used well to support pupils' learning

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
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Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

83. In 2003, the results of the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above the national average. In GCSE, the overall results were higher than nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grade passes was above the national average, and all those who were entered gained grade E or higher. This was a significant improvement on results attained in the two previous years.

84. Overall, the standard attained by the end of Year 9 is above average. This represents very good progress in relation to pupils' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7, which is below expectations. By Year 9, pupils analyse aspects of physical geography very well and are confident in using geographical terminology. They are also good at map work, and discuss global issues in a mature and sensitive manner.

85. By the end of Year 11, standards of work are above average. This represents good achievement in relation to these pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. Pupils work well together and conduct well-informed debates on geographical issues. The quality of pupils' written fieldwork is very good. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well because the work is suitably adapted for their needs and they are given good help by learning support assistants.

86. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with some very good features. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to deliver stimulating and challenging lessons. A purposeful work ethic is established and so pupils behave and concentrate well. Lesson activities are well sequenced, with a clear introduction, development into the main activities, and final discussion of what has been learned. The work is challenging, and so pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding. ICT is used effectively to support pupils' learning. Teachers assess pupil's work thoroughly and regularly. Good marking ensures that pupils know what they have to do to improve the quality of their work, and regular homework extends what is learned in school.

87. Leadership and management are very good. This provides a clear vision and sense of purpose, with a focus on improving standards even further. GCSE results, for example, have improved significantly. Teachers work well as a team, and all pupils are valued and well supported. Good quality documentation guides the work of the department and very good quality schemes of work help teachers plan their work to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils' results and other assessments are reviewed, and appropriate action taken as necessary.

History

Provision in history is **excellent**.

Main strengths

- Both boys and girls do very well, and GCSE results were exceptionally high in 2003
- Imaginative and enthusiastic teaching excites pupils' interest in history and develops their historical skills expertly
- Teachers' strong emphasis on developing literacy skills contributes to pupils doing very well
- The subject makes a major contribution to pupils' personal development
- Excellent classroom relationships foster independent learning and co-operative working amongst the pupils
- Teachers' marking is very good, and so pupils know what they must do to improve

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Excellent
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Excellent

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

88. GCSE results in 2003 were very high. The proportion who gained A* or A grades was double that nationally, and almost all the pupils gained grade C or better. Pupils did better in history than their other subjects, boys doing equally well as girls. The history results were the best in the school in 2003, and have been high for several years.

89. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve very well and so the standards they attain at the end of Year 9 are above the national expectation. Most striking is the range of subject skills pupils acquire and apply in their work. They have a very sound knowledge and understanding of chronology. All know how to trawl sources to provide evidence in support of inferences, and they understand that events can be interpreted in different ways and how propaganda is used. Pupils have a very good grasp of the relative importance of events and individuals. A Year 8 lesson on living conditions in nineteenth century Leeds showed that pupils are good at evaluating the significance of events and individuals in bringing about change.

90. In Year 11, standards are well above the level expected, though not as high as the exceptional results of 2003 would suggest. All pupils have a very good knowledge of historical facts. They have learned to evaluate sources in terms of their reliability and usefulness. They have a very mature understanding of cause and effect, which was clearly shown when Year 10 pupils reviewed the causes of conflict in Northern Ireland, understanding how accounts of events have been distorted by the protagonists. Pupils' written work is particularly strong. They are taught the skills necessary for essay work and independence from Year 7 onwards. For example, in a lesson on the Reformation, Year 7 pupils selected adjectives to describe change and thereby gained an excellent understanding of important terms.

91. Overall, teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers' subject expertise, understanding of course requirements and enthusiasm ensure that pupils are interested and attentive, and work with sustained concentration. Lessons have varied activities that challenge and encourage both boys and girls, with an emphasis on decision-making tasks. Lessons move at a brisk pace, and full use is made of the generous time allocation for history. Teachers make extensive use of historical sources, which means that pupils of all ages gain the confidence to question the reliability of evidence. The well-sequenced build-up to extended writing tasks contributes strongly to developing pupils' literacy skills. A good example of this was seen in the search for "loaded language" in British and German sources of evidence about Dunkirk. When challenged to analyse sources critically, pupils are good at supporting their conclusions with evidence. Their contributions are valued and their positive relationships with teachers encourage self-confidence. Pupils collaborate very well when working in pairs or groups. Teachers provide very good support to lower- and higher- attainers, ensuring that the work meets the needs of everyone. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress when supported by learning assistants. Teachers' subject expertise means that they respond well to unexpected questions, and develop a dialogue which goes beyond the boundaries of the planned lesson. Assessment is very good, though best in Years 10 and 11. Work is marked regularly, promptly and to a high standard, and so pupils know what they must do to improve. Regular assessments contribute to the very good monitoring of pupils' progress.

Example of outstanding practice

Year 9 lesson on the Second World War, focusing on why it is so difficult to find balanced accounts of Dunkirk written at the time.

The starter activity was for pupils to work out the most significant features of a cartoon, with only a few clues from the teacher. This set the scene for a yet more challenging task: to identify the questions the pupils wanted answering, in relation to who did what, and when. The pupils made many perceptive comments that the teacher used skilfully to build their interest and create suspense. The pupils then examined a map, and the teacher asked questions that focused pupils' attention on key features as they explored what could be learned from this source of evidence. The pace was brisk, with all the pupils thinking independently and testing out their ideas. The higher attainers were expected to support their ideas with evidence from the source materials, and a teaching assistant helped the lower attainers to see the main points. The pupils then selected words that best described the events of Dunkirk, and used this vocabulary to review an actual report. This activity enabled them to recognise the distinctive features of the language of the contemporary report, and to understand the concept of 'loaded' language. The pupils' learning was excellent as a result of the skilful sequencing of the activities, and the way in which everyone thoroughly engaged in historical thinking.

92. Leadership is excellent, and the department is very well managed. Schemes of work are constantly updated and improved, as teaching and learning are evaluated. The team of very talented teachers makes extremely effective use of the weekly departmental meetings. Significant improvement has been achieved since the last inspection. The teaching of history makes a considerable contribution to citizenship but this is not identified clearly enough to pupils. The subject also makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Lessons are structured to ensure the maximum active participation of pupils, and they respond very positively. Visits further enrich teaching and learning.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is not taught beyond Year 7, and this has affected pupils' achievement
- Year 7 pupils are interested and are making good progress because the teaching is good
- In lessons, Year 7 pupils feel supported, their views are valued and so they contribute confidently
- The subject makes a good contribution to Year 7 pupils' personal development

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Insufficient evidence (in line with expectations for Year 7)	Insufficient evidence
Achievement	Poor (good in Year 7)	Poor
Teaching and Learning	Good in Year 7	No teaching takes place

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Unsatisfactory

93. There are no results for either Year 9 or 11 as the subject is not taught beyond Year 7. This is the reason for provision and pupils' achievement being poor. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the standards attained at the end of Years 9 and 11.

94. Year 7 pupils achieve well. They make good progress in investigating world religions and exploring and responding to human experiences. For example, in a lesson on the vision of Martin Luther King, pupils understood how his Christian beliefs underpinned his desire for social reform. They were able to comment thoughtfully on prejudice, recognising the evils of segregation. In response to probing questions, they rejected racial intolerance. This approach of balanced consideration of controversial and sensitive topics makes a good contribution to pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and to their personal development. Higher-attaining pupils are beginning to understand differences between major religions and to empathise with ideas and viewpoints different from their own. All have an increasing understanding of factual information relating to selected faith groups.

95. Pupils in Year 7 learn well because lessons are planned carefully to include a range of learning activities and teaching strategies. Pupils are challenged to seek meanings, for example of symbols in the story of Adam and Eve. The teaching demands their active participation. This works because trust and supportive relationships give pupils confidence to express their views. Attitudes and behaviour are generally good, though occasionally a failure to counter the poor behaviour of a minority of boys has a significant impact on the learning of others. Resources were well-chosen and excited pupils' interest, for example as they drew inferences about attitudes to racial issues from a theatre ticket issued in Alabama during the 1960s. A strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' literacy skills. The lessons observed included a variety of writing tasks, and great care was taken to ensure that pupils understood difficult terms such as 'segregation' and 'discrimination'. Paired activities involving accurate description and interpretation of sources developed pupils' speaking and listening skills. However, exercise books show that tasks do not always meet the needs of lower-attaining pupils.

96. The currently poor provision for religious education results from recent staffing difficulties which have undermined the improvements since the last inspection. Temporary arrangements for leading and managing the subject have worked well, and considerable progress has been made towards re-establishing it. For example, a scheme of work that meets requirements for Year 7 is nearing completion. However, overall the lack of a head of department means that the subject leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The school has recently appointed a specialist teacher of religious education, which means that it should shortly be able to provide the subject to all year groups, and a GCSE course is to be started in Year 10 in September 2004.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject, and this contributes to their good achievement in during Years 10 and 11
- Teaching is consistently good in all years, and enables the pupils to learn well in the courses studied because the work challenges them
- The school does not have all the subject specialists needed by the department, with several negative consequences including that National Curriculum requirements in Years 7 to 9 are not met
- Good use is made of ICT in graphics work

Commentary

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

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Unsatisfactory

97. The results of the 2003 teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9, were average in comparison to the national average. In 2003, pupils gained results in their GCSE examinations that were above average at A* to C grades, indicating that average- and higher-attaining pupils had done well. The results in textiles were high, and in food and resistant materials they were above average. These results were significantly better than those for 2002.

98. In the work seen in Year 9, levels of attainment are below average overall, because the pupils have not studied all of the National Curriculum requirements for design and technology sufficiently. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject. Their achievement in the areas of food technology and graphics is good as their starting point in Year 7 is below average. The teachers set challenging projects and tasks, and make increasing demands on all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Girls do slightly better than boys, particularly in designing. Many pupils are more successful in making than in designing and in their graphical skills. Higher-attaining pupils have a secure grasp of subject knowledge and vocabulary. Despite these strengths, pupils' overall achievement is only satisfactory due to a lack of continuity of design and technology experiences during Years 7 to 9. Also, insufficient use is made of ICT to support and extend the learning, including in the area of computer-aided manufacturing.

99. The Year 11 work seen during the inspection is average. The girls' design and graphical communication skills continue to be better developed than those of the boys, especially those of middle and lower levels of attainment. The girls' work to develop their designs usually has a greater depth of research and more rigorous analysis. The strength of the boys' work continues to be their practical making skills. Good use of computers in the graphics course contributes well to these pupils' developing skills in ICT. Most pupils' very good behaviour and levels of concentration and their very positive attitudes to the subject, together with consistently good teaching, ensure that achievement is good in Years 10 and 11.

100. Overall, teaching and learning are good in all years. They were good or better in all the lessons observed during the inspection, and very good in several. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a variety of stimulating projects that engage the interest of their pupils. This is leading to pupils making good progress in the limited number of units of work undertaken in Years 7 to 9 and on the GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11, as the pupils are challenged by the tasks presented to them. The teachers use a wide range of methods to involve the pupils in lessons, with demonstrations, explanations and questioning being particularly effective in developing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. In all lessons, the teachers give high levels of support and well-informed feedback which encourages pupils to value their efforts and raises their level of motivation. Support staff are effectively deployed, and are good at enabling pupils with special educational needs to do well. The teachers have clear objectives for the learning in lessons, but do not always share these with the pupils or review the progress made at the end. This means that pupils' efforts to improve the quality of their work are sometimes not well focused. The other main weakness in lessons was that the pace of pupils' work in some lessons slowed down because the teachers did not set time deadlines for the completion of intermediate tasks.

101. The staffing of the department is unsatisfactory. Despite its best efforts, the school has been unable to recruit additional high-quality specialist teachers for the subject this year, although an appointment has been made for the next school year. The staffing difficulty has led to the provision being unsatisfactory because:

- Considerable time-tabling and curricular difficulties have had an adverse impact on achievement and standards, especially in Years 7 to 9. The breadth of opportunities expected in design and technology is not available as pupils do not currently work with textiles and resistant materials, nor do they experience electronics and control systems
- Pupils' choice of course in Year 10 has been restricted as resistant materials and textiles courses have not been offered
- The department has lacked a leader, which has contributed to the difficulties that the staff are working under and is inhibiting the further development of design and technology

102. Following the last inspection, the provision for design and technology improved. However, it has now slipped back because of the current staffing problem and so, overall, its improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

103. **Drama**, which is taught from Year 7 onwards, was sampled. The provision in drama is very good. GCSE results were below the national average in 2003, but standards in practical work in Year 11 are now well above course expectations because of high-quality teaching. Pupils have more difficulty with the written element of the course, but are given good guidance on how to structure their work. Teaching and learning are very good overall, as is pupils' achievement. Teachers are very skilled in keeping pupils focused on the work of the lesson and motivating them to take risks in rehearsal and when performing to the class. Displays and resources are used very successfully to stimulate pupils' imagination and to remind them of the key concepts and vocabulary they have been taught. This is done very clearly, and is planned for meticulously. Teachers' questioning of pupils is rigorous, and they respond by being fully engaged in the work. Work in drama makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, imaginative links with primary schools involve Year 10 pupils creating drama workshops with a storytelling theme, to perform for Year 6 pupils.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Art is a successful and popular subject in which pupils do well
- Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise enable pupils to make good progress
- Projects undertaken in Years 10 and 11 relate closely to pupils' own interests and life experiences
- Insufficient use is made of ICT, particularly in Years 7 to 9
- The timetabling of art in Years 7 and 8 affects the continuity of pupils' learning experiences

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

104. The results of the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above the national average. In 2003, GCSE results were very high, with more A and B grades than in previous years.

105. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with average attainment overall. They achieve well during Years 7 to 9, and so by the end of Year 9 standards are above average. Pupils make good progress in learning new skills and using a variety of media in both two- and three-dimensions. During the inspection, pupils who were engaged in making sculpture in the style of Giacometti (using wire and other materials) and pottery models inspired by the work of Georgia O’Keeffe discussed their work and that of other artists confidently, and demonstrated a good grasp of the subject. However, too little use is made of ICT, particularly in Years 7 to 9, to extend the range of pupils’ art work.

106. The varied opportunities offered in Years 7 to 9 prepares pupils well for Years 10 and 11. Here, projects are interesting and challenging, and connect closely to pupils’ own interests and experience. Their work becomes more experimental. Pupils produce work in various scales, often revisiting media processes learned in earlier years as well as acquiring new skills.

107. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and expertise, enabling pupils to learn new skills and techniques, and to make good progress. Pupils are keen to learn as a result of the stimulating, challenging and enthusiastic teaching. A strong feature of the department is the way in which pupils and teachers relate very positively to each other. Pupils work well together and are very supportive of each other. For example, Year 11 art prefects help younger pupils in extra-curricular art activities. The combination of informative assessment, target-setting and strong dialogue between pupils and teachers enables pupils to reflect upon their own work and to understand clearly how to improve it. Complicated timetabling arrangements for teaching art to pupils in Years 7 and 8 lead to a lack of continuity of learning experiences because pupils experience gaps when art is not taught for several weeks.

108. The department is well led and managed. Staff are well qualified and offer a variety of specialisms within the art and design curriculum. The departmental development plan identifies some targets for improvement but is insufficiently detailed, and the impact of changes and initiatives has not been checked sufficiently rigorously. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Examination results are still high, and art remains a strong and popular subject within the school. Large displays of artwork around the school demonstrate the strength and importance of the subject.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have done very well in GCSE examinations, and standards in Year 9 are above average
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils’ work and effort, and set challenging work that motivates the pupils. As a result, the subject is very popular
- Very good leadership and satisfactory management have brought about good improvements over the last few years
- Pupils have too few opportunities for using ICT within music

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

109. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do well because the practical approach adopted enables them both to acquire skills and to understand basic musical concepts. Pupils gain confidence through articulating their knowledge in oral and written responses. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 enjoy group work and most are able to collaborate effectively, persevering to complete the task set for them. For example, Year 7 pupils were involved in both repeating rhythmic patterns as a whole class, with each pupil using a pair of drumsticks, and preparing small group work with each creating his or her own rhythm pattern. This work was complemented by 'call and response' singing led confidently by the teacher. Combining activities in the practical work helped the pupils to understand pulse and rhythm.

110. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is very good. Through a combination of written and practical work, pupils build very well on the understanding developed earlier. They are confident about what they know, understand and can do. Teachers place a greater emphasis on independent learning, particularly for composition work, and pupils adapt readily to this. The number of pupils opting for GCSE music has risen since the last inspection, as this is a popular and successful subject. The GCSE results were excellent in 2003 as over 90% of the candidates gained A* to C grades. Results have been high for the past few years.

111. Teaching and learning are very good, overall. Teachers' expectations in lessons are high. They plan their lessons thoroughly, and use a wide range of teaching strategies to very good effect. The pace of the lessons is brisk, and the tasks are well matched to the learning styles of the majority of pupils. Assessment and pupils' self-evaluation, coupled with individual target setting, help to motivate pupils. However, teachers sometimes do too little to adapt the work to the needs of pupils of differing levels of attainment, in Years 7 to 9.

112. Very good leadership and satisfactory management result in a lively, enthusiastic and well-motivated department within which teachers regularly exchange ideas about teaching. Overall, the improvement since the last inspection has been good. The accommodation for music has improved. Classroom teaching space is excellent, and smaller rooms are available for group work and instrumental tuition. However, the shortfall in access to ICT for musical activities has only partly been resolved, and pupils still have too little access to computers. The school provides very well for pupils to further their musical skills through a good range of extra-curricular activities, some of which attract large numbers of participants. Rehearsals are both enjoyable and purposeful. A high number of pupils, about 120, are learning to play instruments, a wide variety of which is available.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The great majority of pupils achieves well by the end of Years 9 and 11 in the compulsory course and very well by the end of Year 11 in the GCSE course
- Very good quality teaching and learning across all years results in pupils consistently making very good progress
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and so the atmosphere in lessons and extra-curricular activities is very positive
- Whilst very good leadership provides a purposeful focus and direction for the subject, new management procedures are not yet fully embedded
- Teachers make insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning in both the compulsory and examination courses

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average (GCSE above average)
Achievement	Good	Good (GCSE very good)
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

113. Standards in Year 9 are average. Pupils achieve well, as their attainment on entry to Year 7 is below the national expectation. In badminton, boys are developing their stroke play skills well. The higher attainers have learned to use footwork well and employ a variety of strokes to make their opponents move. Most understand the 'ready' position, but the lower attainers are still playing too square on and rely too much on overhead strokes. In trampolining, girls show confidence when developing their sequence work. The more capable are using body tension well and have a secure range of moves such as the seat drop and half twist. The less capable still need to work on body tension and spotting on the centre of the bed as well as developing a greater range of moves in sequence work.

114. Standards in the Year 11 compulsory course are in line with national expectations. Pupils build well on the skills and techniques learned in Years 7 to 9. In hockey, most boys control the ball and pass with accuracy. Teamwork skills are developing well, but movement off the ball and use of space could be better. Pupils' table tennis skills are secure, with the more capable using footwork effectively to apply a range of shots, including the use of spin. In trampolining, most girls have produced sequences that include a range of moves but the less capable lack quality body tension. In basketball, though standards are in line with national expectations, pupils have not reached their full potential because of the lack of quality indoor accommodation throughout most of their time in the school. Across all years, pupils have developed well their understanding of the principles and procedures for warm up.

115. The proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grade passes in the GCSE course has risen considerably over the past three years and in 2003 was very high. Compared to many other subjects, pupils did very well. Current standards in Year 11 are above average. Overall, pupils are achieving very well because theory is taught through practical activities. Also, the pupils are prepared

well for their examinations and have opportunities to receive extra help and support from their teachers outside normal curriculum time.

116. Teaching and learning are very good across all years. Teachers have a very good command of the activities being taught, and have a very consistent approach towards behaviour and discipline. Lesson activities are well sequenced, challenging and purposeful. Well-planned activities ensure that pupils are all actively involved and improving their skills and techniques. Learning objectives are made clear at the start of lessons and so the pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils work very well together as pairs and in small groups as their attitudes and behaviour are very good. They clearly respect the ethos within which the subject is taught, which enhances the quality of learning and promotes a very good atmosphere in lessons.

117. Very effective use of questioning by teachers enhances pupils' speaking and listening skills and enables teachers to gauge the level of pupils' understanding. This was particularly effective in a Year 10 GCSE lesson, when teaching the impact of exercise on the circulatory system through a practical activity – as a result, pupils were learning this aspect of the theory course very well. Teachers circulate very well in lessons and their effective use of praise and constructive criticism makes pupils well aware of their capabilities. Occasionally, pupil evaluation of their peers is insufficiently used, missing opportunities to help them refine and develop their own practice and deepen their knowledge and understanding even further. Though the department has software available, there is generally insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning. Good quality marking of theory work ensures pupils know what they have to do to improve.

118. Very good leadership provides a purposeful focus and direction for the subject in order to improve standards even further. Good practice is shared within the department and the breadth and balance of the curriculum have been improved. The team ethos is strong with a shared commitment to improve provision. Management is developing well. New assessment procedures for the compulsory course, focusing on the four strands of the physical education National Curriculum, have been developed and documentation to guide the work of the department is also being introduced. However, these developments are not yet fully embedded.

119. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is available throughout the year, including both recreational and competitive fixtures. Six pupils have attained representative honours at district level, and five have attended county trials in a range of games. Individual pupils have attained regional or national representative honours in their particular sports. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Comment on general sporting provision in the school

120. Sporting provision is good, overall. All pupils have at least two formal timetabled lessons per week of compulsory physical education. Further opportunities are provided through a good range of extra-curricular provision throughout the year and the opportunity for older pupils to opt for the GCSE course. The department has embraced the development of the Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy by becoming involved in the local schools' sports co-ordinator (SSCo) scheme. It has established links with local community sporting organisations that are of benefit to pupils, such as the 'inclusion through football' initiative for small groups of disaffected boys.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies is taught in Year 11 only, by staff from other subjects as the school does not have a specialist business studies teacher this year. The subject is being managed satisfactorily, on a temporary basis. One lesson was observed, and a small amount of previously-completed work was scrutinised. This evidence indicated that the provision for business studies is satisfactory. Standards in the lesson observed were below course expectations, but the pupils were motivated by the use of ICT in their work on the tax system.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

No **personal, social and health education** (PSHE) lessons were observed because the subject was not taught during the week of the inspection. No previously-completed written work was available, but the planning for PSHE was looked at. This showed that the required topics are covered, including sex and drugs education, although the coverage is brief because relatively little time is given to PSHE.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **poor**.

Main weaknesses

- National Curriculum requirements are not covered because very little time is given to citizenship
- The school has not met statutory requirements relating to the assessment and reporting of citizenship
- The elements of citizenship that are covered in other subjects are given too little focus, resulting in pupils making poor progress
- The subject is not properly led and managed

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Achievement	Poor	Poor
Teaching and learning	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence

Leadership	Poor
Management	Poor
Improvement since the last inspection	Not applicable

121. Citizenship was introduced two years ago for all year groups. The school's approach is to teach citizenship through other subjects, but this is unsuccessful. No lessons in which citizenship was focused on were observed during the inspection, and no written work was available for scrutiny. Therefore, insufficient evidence was available for judgements of standards of attainment, teaching and learning to be made. Discussions with pupils showed that most have only slight knowledge of the subject, and that their achievement is poor. The school has not appointed someone to lead and manage citizenship, and this contributes to the low profile of the subject.

122. A useful audit of other subjects' contributions to citizenship was undertaken two years ago, and showed that subjects such as history and drama cover topics that relate well to citizenship. However, work has not been undertaken to develop the citizenship curriculum further. The school lacks overall planning for how and when the required topics within the National Curriculum for citizenship will be taught, and for how pupils' learning will be assessed. Teachers of other subjects do not make citizenship work a clear focus. As a result, pupils' experience of education in citizenship is incidental to their learning in other subjects, and the links are usually not recognised. Pupils keep very few written records their citizenship work, which contributes to their lack of awareness of the subject. Subject teachers have a very brief assessment sheet on which to record their estimates of the standard of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9. As subject contributions are so minor, any recorded assessments are of little value. Pupils' attainment and progress in citizenship have not been reported to parents.

123. Occasionally, PSHE lessons focus on citizenship topics, such as how local government money is spent. As the PSHE programme itself is given very little time, there is no scope for pupils to work in increasing depth in citizenship. Planning identifies two days for Year 11 pupils to work on citizenship, but this amount of time is inadequate and is not provided for other year groups. The school's recent initiative to develop the role of the student council has a connection to citizenship education, but again the links are not built on clearly and systematically enough.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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