

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HIGHWORTH WARNEFORD SCHOOL**

Highworth, Swindon

LEA area: Swindon

Unique reference number: 126461

Headteacher: John Saunders

Lead inspector: Paul Sadler

Dates of inspection: 17 – 20 November 2003

Inspection number: 258660

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school:              | Comprehensive                           |
| School category:             | Community                               |
| Age range of pupils:         | 11-16                                   |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed                                   |
| Number on roll:              | 893                                     |
| School address:              | Shrivenham Road<br>Highworth<br>Swindon |
| Postcode:                    | SN6 7BZ                                 |
| Telephone number:            | 01793 762426                            |
| Fax number:                  | 01793 861865                            |
| Appropriate authority:       | The governing body                      |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mr H P Wirth                            |
| Date of previous inspection: | 5 November 2001                         |

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Highworth Warneford is an 11-16 comprehensive school serving the small town of Highworth, situated about five miles north-east of Swindon, and the surrounding rural area. This area is economically advantaged – 4.9 percent of pupils claim free school meals, which is well below the national average of 16.1 percent. There are 893 pupils on roll with approximately equal numbers of boys and girls, although in Year 11 boys predominate and in Year 8 girls predominate. Four percent of pupils are of minority ethnicity, which is below average, and there are very small numbers of refugees and asylum seekers, and of pupils speaking English as an additional language. The proportion with special educational needs is below average at 12.5 percent, of which 1 percent have statements, also below the national average of 2.4 percent. Most pupils with special educational needs have learning or behavioural difficulties. The attainment of pupils on entry as measured by national and other test results is average, although the work of Year 7 pupils suggests it is a little above this. Very few pupils enter or leave the school other than at the normal time. The school gained the Healthy Schools Award in 2001, and is a centre for adult education provided by Swindon College.

The school was last inspected in November 2001 and was judged to have serious weaknesses in the curriculum, the monitoring of teaching and learning and in aspects of performance analysis and assessment. It was judged to give unsatisfactory value for money. Progress on implementing the school's action plan was monitored by Additional Inspectors in May 2002. They judged that reasonable progress was being made, with good progress on improving assessment.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |             |                | Subject responsibilities   |
|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------|--|
| 1611                           | P Sadler    | Lead inspector |  |
| 9974                           | D Singh     | Lay inspector  |  |
| 11720                          | P Winch     | Team inspector | English, Drama   |
| 23528                          | A Bird      | Team Inspector | Mathematics  |
| 20832                          | M Galowalia | Team inspector | Science, English as an additional language                             |
| 22491                          | L Small     | Team inspector | Design and technology, Information and communications technology (ICT) |
| 31838                          | M Williams  | Team inspector | Modern Foreign Languages   |
| 31329                          | K Barratt   | Team inspector | History  |
| 4317                           | K Madrell   | Team inspector | Geography, Religious Education (RE), Citizenship                       |
| 18261                          | A Hill      | Team inspector | Art, Special educational needs   |
| 32219                          | N Smith     | Team inspector | Music  |
| 22042                          | J Challands | Team inspector | Physical education (PE), Leisure and Tourism                           |
| 13122                          | S Matthews  | Team inspector | Business Studies   |

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

|  | Page      |
|--|-----------|
| <b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>                              |           |
| <b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses                          |           |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities                                 |           |
| <b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>                                     | <b>11</b> |
| Teaching and learning  |           |
| The curriculum   |           |
| Care, guidance and support   |           |
| Partnership with parents, other schools and the community                              |           |
| <b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>   | <b>16</b> |
| <b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING,<br/>SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b> | <b>18</b> |
| <b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>                                      |           |
| <b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>                               | <b>36</b> |

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is an effective school** as pupils reach standards well above national averages and achieve very well in their lessons and over longer periods of time. It offers good value for money. Teaching and learning are very good; teachers know their subjects well and expect pupils to work hard, which they do. All groups of pupils, boys and girls and those with special needs or from minority ethnic backgrounds, achieve equally well in most lessons. The school cares well for its pupils and they behave very well. The accommodation is unsatisfactory and limits pupils' opportunities in some subjects, especially physical education (PE), music and drama.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils reach above average standards, and their learning and their achievement are very good.
- Teaching is very good. This is a result of rigorous management of teachers' performance and the sharing of what works well.
- The performance of the school and its pupils is honestly analysed. This enables realistic and challenging targets to be set.
- Pupils' behaviour and their relationships with each other are very good.
- There are good relationships between all staff which result in effective teamwork.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and limits pupils' opportunities in some subjects.
- The proposal to apply for specialist technology school status has not been planned well.
- All pupils do not have the opportunity for a daily act of collective worship.
- Communication with parents on their children's progress could be improved.

At the time of its last inspection in 2001 the school was found to have serious weaknesses in its curriculum and in its leadership and management. These have now, in the main, been put right – there has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The new curriculum and timetable are working well and offer pupils, especially those in Years 10 and 11, a much improved range of opportunities. Provision for teaching information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school is much improved and is now good. The management and teaching staff have worked hard to put right the deficiencies that existed in some teaching; as a result there is now no weak teaching in the school. Assessment has improved but is not yet consistent throughout the school. Deficiencies in the leadership of the school that existed at that time have also been put right – leadership is now good.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with: | all schools |      |      | similar schools |
|---|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
|   | 2000        | 2001 | 2002 | 2002            |
|   | B           | B    | B    | C               |

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

**Pupils' achievement is very good overall.** At the end of Year 9 the proportion achieving at least the national standard of Level 5 is above average; in English it is well above average. There is good achievement in Years 7-9 as pupils enter with average results in the national tests at the end of Year 6. By Year 11, standards in the GCSE examinations are well above average. The table above is based on the number of GCSEs taken and the average grade achieved. On other measures, such as the number gaining at least 5 GCSE passes, standards are well above average. Although in 2002 the achievement of pupils was average when compared with those with similar prior attainment, achievement has improved as the school has improved, and is now very good. Results in 2002 in English, mathematics and science were well above national averages and these were maintained in 2003. Results in 2002 were also well above average in German, geography, history and home

economics. Pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11, building on their good achievement in Years 7-9.

**Pupils attitudes, values and personal qualities are very good overall. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.** Their behaviour and attendance are also very good. They have good attitudes to their work but a small minority display racist attitudes in lessons, effectively dealt with by teachers.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is very good overall.**

There is no unsatisfactory teaching. In Years 7-9 teaching is good and pupils learn well as teachers know their subjects and expect pupils to work hard, which they do. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are very good as these qualities are enhanced by a greater autonomy for pupils who are able to develop their own skills and interests, and by, overall, a higher quality of lesson planning than in Years 7-9. Homework is used well although some parents and pupils, with justification, find it burdensome.

Recent improvements in the curriculum mean it is now very good, especially in Years 10 and 11 where a useful alternative curriculum is offered to those who find many GCSEs difficult. Pupils with special needs get good quality help in those lessons where there are support staff, of which there are too few. Links with parents are satisfactory but could be improved by better communication. Links with other schools and colleges are very good.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good overall.** Leadership by the headteacher is good and he is very well supported by his senior team. Management is good, especially new systems that have been introduced to improve teaching and track individual pupils' progress. Governance is satisfactory. The governors now challenge the school well and involve themselves more in its work, but they are less clear about the long-term future of the school and have not provided a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

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

Parents and pupils alike correctly feel the school promotes high standards, expects a lot of its pupils, and that teaching is good. They also believe correctly that some teachers make excessive demands concerning homework. Pupils, and a small minority of parents, are concerned about the behaviour of other pupils and about bullying. The evidence gathered in the inspection did not support this view.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Review and strengthen the plans to apply for specialist school status.
- Be more ambitious in planning to improve the accommodation, including providing full access for the disabled.
- Seek parents' views on communication and act on them.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Standards are above average throughout the school. Pupils' achievement is very good overall. It is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. There are no significant differences in the achievement of groups of pupils across the school: Boys and girls achieve equally; pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language also achieve very well.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- National test and examination results are above average in almost all subjects.
- Pupils' achievement is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- All groups of pupils, including boys and girls, achieve equally well.

#### Commentary

##### *Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 – average points scores in 2003*

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English       | 37.2 (34.7)    | 33.3 (33.3)      |
| mathematics   | 38.3 (37.2)    | 35.3 (34.7)      |
| science       | 35.5 (35.3)    | 33.7 (33.3)      |

*There were 175 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

1. Results in all three core subjects were above the national average in 2001 and rose further above in 2002. Standards in 2003 are similar. The proportion achieving the national standard of Level 5 is above the national average in mathematics and science and well above average in English; in mathematics the proportion achieving at least the higher Level 6 is also well above average. When compared with similar schools there is a picture of above and well above average attainment among those schools where pupils have similar attainment on entering the school.
2. In 2002, an 'added value' measure was produced which measured the progress of the actual pupils of the school between Years 7 and 9 against national averages. On this measure the progress of the pupils at this school was above average. These measures are born out by inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work and observation of their achievement in lessons. Because of teachers' consistently high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour, learning is very good and pupils achieve a lot in lessons. Similarly, their books and other work show very good achievement over time. Boys achieve as well as girls and the standards of the two genders in tests and examinations show less marked differences than is the case nationally. Other groups such as pupils with special needs also show very good achievement except in the minority of cases where they lack support, or where lessons are not planned to meet their needs, when achievement by these pupils is good.



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

|   | School results | National results |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades  | 66 (65)        | 50 (48)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades  | 95 (94)        | 91 (91)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades  | 97 (97)        | 96 (96)          |
| Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) | 40.6(n/a)      | 39.8 (n/a)       |

*There were 186 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. GCSE results have been somewhat static over time, nevertheless value added data suggests that pupils achieve well. The national measure of achievement shows that pupils' achievement in 2002 between Years 9 and 11 was well above average. Results in 2002 in English, mathematics and science were well above national averages. Results in 2002 were also well above average in German, geography, history and home economics. Unconfirmed results show that these standards were maintained in 2003, when a group of Year 10 pupils who entered GNVQ ICT achieved very creditable results: 87 per cent of those entering gained the equivalent of grades A\*-C at GCSE. Only in music and design and technology (resistant materials) were results in 2002 below the national average.
4. Evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' written and other work, and from observing lessons, shows that pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11. Their work shows increasing depth, analysis and attention to detail. Examples include work in art, drama, history and design and technology. Achievement is promoted by teachers' emphasis on developing skills, enhanced among these older pupils by the increasing development of independence and self-reliance. As with younger pupils, there is equally good achievement by all groups of pupils. Leaders and managers have focussed on raising achievement through high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and by monitoring teaching in order to improve it and eradicate weakness.
5. Across the school pupils' language and literacy skills are developed well in a range of subjects. Most have explicit statements in place showing how these skills are to be developed in the subject. Mathematical skills are developing in the same way but less progress has been made. Similar progress has been made with regard to ICT but this is dependent on teachers' access to computers and to some extent on their own skill levels. The recent lottery funded scheme to develop teachers' ICT skills had little impact in the school.

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

Pupils' very good attendance, behaviour, and their constructive relationship with each other and with teachers, ensure that all in the school community learn in a disciplined, friendly and welcoming manner. The learning environment is complemented by pupils' good attitudes and their good moral, social, cultural and spiritual development. This enables pupils to serve the school and wider community in a responsible and caring manner.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good attendance and efficient time keeping enable pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils' very good behaviour enables them to learn in a stimulating and caring environment.
- The very good provision for pupils' personal development ensures they value others and serve them as responsible citizens. There is good provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development.

## Commentary

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

| Authorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| School data        | 5.9 |
| National data      | 7.8 |

| Unauthorised absence |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| School data          | 0.7 |
| National data        | 1.2 |

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

- The school, pupils, parents and the educational welfare service encourage and ensure regular attendance, appropriate time keeping and low levels of unauthorised absence, which are well below those for similar schools nationally. Clear systems are in place to record and pursue absences, exchange information with stakeholders and to monitor and reward attendance. Pupils are discouraged from taking family holidays during term time. These arrangements contribute significantly to improved attendance and enable pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils value learning and approach their learning tasks in a mature, informed and disciplined manner. In most subjects pupils contributed enthusiastically to teachers' questions, discussion and group work. This behaviour enhances achievement. Many pupils also enjoy learning through basketball, football, homework, science and ICT clubs. Pupils speak passionately about visits to the museum, local art galleries, theme parks and the recent visit to Paris. Pupils value these experiences and agree they support their social, cultural, moral and spiritual development.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils because of constraints on the accommodation. However, the assemblies in which all pupils participate regularly are of high quality and support pupils' spiritual development. They also include an act of collective worship. Pupils' spiritual development is reflected in the care they show for others, including those of different cultures and abilities.

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

| Categories used in the Annual School Census         |
|---|
| White – British                                     |
| White – any other White background                  |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean                   |
| Mixed – White and Asian                             |
| Mixed – any other mixed background                  |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian                     |
| 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 |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 819                  | 77                                | 3                              |
| 10                   | 0                                 | 0                              |
| 2                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| 1                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| 3                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| 3                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| 1                    | 1                                 | 0                              |
| 12                   | 0                                 | 0                              |
| 1                    | 6                                 | 0                              |
| 1                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| 2                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| 5                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| 5                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| 28                   | 0                                 | 0                              |

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

9. Most pupils know right from wrong, observe the school's code of conduct and respect authority. This ensures that pupils are polite, courteous and approach learning in a disciplined manner. Recent levels of fixed-term exclusion have been quite high due to the application of a robust policy to pupils who smoke on the school premises. During the inspection there were a few incidents of overt racist comments in discussions in lessons, which interrupted teaching and learning because teachers then had to pick up the issues raised and address them.
10. However, most relationships around school are based on mutual respect and consideration for others. The trust within the community is purposeful and enables teachers to appoint prefects in the upper school, and pupils from all years to work for the betterment of the school and wider community through year and school councils, serve as house captains and raise funds for charities. Raising funds for 'Children in Need' was particularly evident during the inspection week, an idea developed through the school council. Pupils used imaginative and fun ways to raise money. Pupils value their involvement and are proud to work in caring manner. Friendships between boys, girls and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds promote effective race relations and a better understanding between the two gender groups, ensuring that much of the learning is conducted in harmony and a pleasant atmosphere.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

**The school's approach to developing the school council is innovative in its level of support for the pupils and the influence it is able to have on the school's work.**

The school council consists of representatives of elected Year councils. Two pupils represent each year. The council has experienced two days' training with a commercial management development and training organisation. This involved team building and the identification of a prioritised agenda for the council, engendering remarkably mature attitudes among the members.

The council meets regularly and has considered a range of internal and external issues including fund-raising for charity, dining arrangements, work with the community including local primary schools, and the mentoring of new pupils. The pupils involved have gained insight into a range of aspects of citizenship and their work is beginning to be recognised positively by other pupils as an effective organ for change and representation of their views.

A newly appointed deputy head has driven this initiative with strong support from heads of year. The school council also has the strong support of the headteacher and governors. As such it is seen by staff and pupils as a major initiative within the school, exemplified by an excellent display in the entrance foyer at the time of the inspection.

#### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides good quality education. The main strength is in teaching; there are very good links with other schools and with the community. The main weaknesses are in aspects of the accommodation, in the failure to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and in some aspects of communications with parents.

#### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching is very good overall. It is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Learning follows the same pattern. Assessment is good and improving rapidly.

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

- Teachers' command of their subjects is very good.
- They have high expectations of pupils and the degree of challenge.
- Teachers' use of time and their insistence on high standards of behaviour are very good.
- Pupils apply themselves well and hence their acquisition of new skills, knowledge and understanding is very good.
- Teachers' planning of lessons for pupils in Years 7-9 is of variable quality.

- Skills of independent learning are underdeveloped in pupils in Years 7-9.

## Commentary

11. Since the last inspection in 2001, weak teaching has been eradicated. The table below summarises the quality of lessons observed by the inspection team:

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 120 lessons**

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 7 (6%)    | 50 (41%)  | 45 (37%) | 18 (15%)     | 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.*

12. The table masks some variation in the teaching of pupils of different ages: teaching of pupils in Years 10 and 11 was stronger than that of younger pupils. Teaching of different groups of pupils was of consistently high quality except that, with younger pupils, the best use was not made of staff employed to support the teaching of pupils with special educational needs.
13. The best teaching was observed in English, design and technology, geography, history, art, citizenship and drama. It was very good in all of these subjects, but there was no subject in which the teaching was less than good. The consistently high quality of the teaching raises the level of pupils' learning as they arrive at lessons ready to learn, knowing that teachers will have consistently high expectations of their behaviour and application to the tasks in hand. Both pupils and parents acknowledge the high quality of the teaching they receive.
14. A good example of high quality teaching concerned the revision of terms used in biology in a Year 10 class. This was a card game in which pupils had to explain a term to a partner who then had to deduce the term being defined. This led to superb learning as the pupils demonstrated self-discipline in sticking with the task when they found it difficult, supporting each other through high-level discussion that quickly developed the understanding of both partners. In a Year 7 geography lesson, pupils again working in pairs drew and evaluated a map of a model in order to develop their understanding of the essential features of a good map. The fast pace was a particular feature of this lesson, which included the use of a timer to inject urgency into the learning. In a Year 11 GCSE art lesson, the pupils were using a very wide range of artistic media and the teacher's excellent command of the subject enabled her to provide high quality advice to all pupils. This had an impact both on the standards being achieved, which were entirely in the range A\*-C, and on pupils' learning as they were able to use the medium which they found stimulating in the knowledge that they could rely on high quality help and advice from an excellent teacher. This lesson was a further example of many where pupils rapidly gained knowledge, skills and understanding due to teachers' very good command of their subject, coupled with their high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement in lessons conducted at an appropriately fast pace.
15. Since the last inspection the school has implemented a rigorous programme of performance management of which a key feature is regular monitoring of teaching, followed by feedback to teachers. Those identified as having weaknesses have received further training and support. The sharing of good practice in teaching has been promoted through positive strategies including regular meetings at which effective practice is shared. Here leadership and management within the school have made a very good impact, representing very good improvement since the last inspection.
16. Where weaker teaching was observed, the planning of lessons was in some cases the cause. On occasions pupils ended the lesson unclear as to what they should have learned, often because a closing plenary session did not take place due to lack of time or because it was not

planned for. On other occasions, the tasks set did not fully challenge both the most and least able pupils. With younger pupils teachers tended to direct the task very closely, which did not promote the development of independent learning skills, although this weakness was not apparent in older pupils' lessons. The weaknesses listed here tended to be more apparent generally in the teaching of younger pupils, although in no case were they serious enough for the teaching to be judged unsatisfactory.

17. Assessment is used well to develop pupils' understanding of how they can improve. Teachers are beginning to use data well to identify individual strengths and weaknesses. There is greater variation between subjects than in the overall quality of teaching. In mathematics, science, art and drama assessment is used very well; in ICT for Years 7-9 and in citizenship it is underdeveloped. Teachers do not consistently use or monitor the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs in Years 7-9. Homework is set frequently and is used well, although parents and pupils claim with some justification that individual pupils have heavy workloads and that teachers do not always adhere to the homework timetable.

### **The curriculum**

The breadth of curricular opportunities offered by the school is very good. There are good opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall, although within this judgement accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good improvement in the curriculum and timetable since the last inspection.
- The breadth of opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- There is a good range of opportunities for pupils outside the school day, and for gifted and talented pupils.
- Pupils are prepared well for the later stages of their education and for employment.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory for geography, music, physical education, religious education and drama.
- There is insufficient staff to support pupils with special educational needs.

### **Commentary**

18. At the last inspection in 2001 the curriculum was unsatisfactory. Teaching time was insufficient, resulting in deficiencies in ICT, art, physical education, music, religious education and drama. Many classes were taught by more than one teacher and access for pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language was unsatisfactory.
19. These weaknesses have now been almost entirely eliminated. In a new timetable introduced in September 2003, teaching time has been increased to above the minimum recommendation. Time for those subjects where there was a deficiency has been increased appropriately except for religious education, where there is still insufficient time to teach the agreed syllabus in Year 9. Of particular note are the improvements in ICT, which is now taught separately to all pupils. There is already a noticeable improvement in standards in ICT. Pupils, parents and some staff are still settling to the longer school day and fortnightly timetable, but managers are evaluating its impact and making appropriate adjustments. Some arrangements need careful attention, such as those for pupils studying three sciences in Year 10, who are somewhat confused as to how their science teaching is organised.
20. Although there are insufficient support hours available to pupils with special educational needs, especially in the lower sets where numbers are higher, the teaching assistants make very good use of their time to work with teachers in helping pupils overcome the barriers to learning that they come up against. The very small number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English receive effective support from visiting specialist teachers, who also speak their home language, and from a support assistant. The support is provided in some lessons, for example

in science, and away from the classroom. The specialist support is effective and is helping the pupils to make good progress. The progress is not equally effective in all classes, especially when additional support is not present. The teachers in the school have received guidance on how to support these pupils in their lessons. However, the school has not yet monitored how effective this support is.

21. The school has introduced very good provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 including vocational GCSE courses in ICT, which all pupils study, and in business studies. Those pupils who would find difficulty accessing the normal school curriculum are identified. In both year groups approximately 15 pupils benefit from the provision of an alternative curriculum, about which staff, parents and pupils have been consulted. Pupils have extended work experience and attendance at a range of vocational course of their choice at the local college, where a course in leisure and tourism was inspected and found to be very good. Year 10 also participate in voluntary work to develop their self-esteem, confidence and organizational skills. It is too early to judge the progress of Year 10 pupils but those in Year 11 have made good progress and several have already been assured of employment when they leave school. All pupils still study mathematics, science, English, ICT and physical education at school.
22. There is a good range of enrichment opportunities available to all pupils outside normal lesson times. These include music, drama, science, chess and a range of sporting activities, where the opportunities for girls somewhat outweigh those for boys.
23. Overall resource levels are good for an 11-16 school. There is a good number of computers of which, unusually, none are outdated. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The school was built for a much smaller number of pupils. Although piecemeal additions have been made, that for drama (which lacks a dedicated space), music (which lacks ICT), geography, physical education (which has insufficient indoor space) and religious education is inadequate. Recent improvements, for instance to science and ICT, have been effective. Modest plans exist to further enhance the provision, but these lack ambition and a coherent vision. Both teaching and support staff are well qualified and experienced.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. Hard working staff at all levels of management ensure all pupils are given effective advice, support and guidance and this enables pupils to learn in a motivated and organised way. Pupils' views are sought effectively and they are involved well in the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Effective care, support and guidance enhance achievement and ensure that pupils learn in an informed, safe and secure environment.
- Staff value pupils' opinions and are keen to involve them in the work of the school.
- Good systems for monitoring pupils' personal development are used well to encourage very good relationships, attendance and behaviour.
- The school council is a strength of the school.

### **Commentary**

24. Caring and sensitive staff listen to the pupils and enjoy a trusting relationship with most. This enables the community to learn in a caring, constructive, safe and secure environment. Teachers value their pupils, acknowledge and celebrate their achievements, address their concerns and ensure that all pupils are well supported and are given information, advice and guidance that enables them to become responsible learners. Well-trained and well-supported members of the school council are making a good contribution to the school's development. Their work is beginning to be recognised by other pupils as an effective organ for change and representation of their views. The school makes effective use of the matron, nurse and the

educational welfare officers. The use of specialist agencies enables all pupils to value learning and adopt a more considerate and purposeful approach to life and others in the school community.

25. Inspection evidence indicates that the induction programme from the primary school is productive and secure, because very experienced staff frequently visit the primary school to support teaching and learning, exchange information, arrange visits for pupils and their parents to meet key staff and become better informed. This ensures that all the stakeholders make informed choices about the pupils' future and education. All the stakeholders ensure a seamless transition, which enables pupils to learn in a happy and informed environment and settle quickly.
26. The provision for careers education is very well led and staff at all levels work very hard, providing impartial advice and opportunities to work closely with employers, and this prepares students for the world of work and enables them to make informed decisions about their future. Students are provided with equal opportunities and equal access to work and training through work placements in Years 10 and 11. This experience enables students to develop their own abilities, talents, and aptitudes and become responsible citizens. Leaders and managers have put good systems in place to ensure that these strengths are secure.
27. The arrangements for the alternative curriculum in Years 10 and 11 are very well organized and managed by the member of staff responsible. Although very little time is allocated for her responsibilities, she monitors pupils' progress carefully and ensures good communication between the school, the college, employers, and voluntary agencies. At the moment there is little opportunity for Year 10 pupils to meet and discuss progress in school with an appropriate member of staff.
28. The school identifies gifted and talented pupils from test evidence and from recommendations from primary school staff. The expressive, performing and creative departments also identify talented pupils, as they work with Year 7 pupils in the first few weeks. Underachieving gifted and talented pupils, identified through 'effort league tables', are mentored by senior staff to raise their levels of effort and attainment.

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

The school has very effective links with other schools and the wider community. This is a very significant improvement since the last inspection. Most parents enjoy a sound relationship with the school and effectively support learning in and out of school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school rightly values its partnership with other schools, which ensures learning in a wider school context.
- Invaluable links with the wider community effectively support students' personal development.
- Aspects of the school's communication with parents could be improved.

### **Commentary**

29. The school is rightly proud of its work with other schools and local colleges in the community. Regular meetings between staff, exchange of teaching and learning practices and clear and purposeful channels of communication ensure a seamless and smooth transition of students to post-16 education. There are also good links with a pupil referral unit, which supports teaching and learning and enables the school and the community to reduce permanent exclusions and for disaffected pupils to make informed decisions about their education and reintegration to school and community.

30. Employers, artists, musicians, tradesmen and other professionals frequently visit the school to support teaching and learning. The school hosts industry days and sustains very strong links with Connexions and representatives from industry and commerce, which enable students in Years 10 and 11 to make informed choices about the world of work. Some disaffected students with low self-esteem benefit from mentoring provided by managers working in the private sector. Pupils also work closely with the international community by visiting Paris and raising their cultural profile and extending a hand of friendship to less fortunate members of the international community by sending clothing parcels. This arrangement assists students to have self-belief, realistic expectations of themselves and others and to approach their learning tasks in a more assertive manner.
31. Overall, links with parents are satisfactory and some aspects are good, such as consultation over curriculum change. Parents are supportive of the school but feel that some aspects of communication are weak, for instance over homework and pupils' progress. There is evidence to support this. A new reporting system is currently being introduced. Leaders and managers intend to evaluate the success of this, which they should do by direct consultation with parents and pupils. Some parents are also dissatisfied with the arrangements for consulting teachers.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good overall.

The serious weaknesses in leadership and management identified at the last inspection have been remedied. Leadership is good overall. The leadership of the headteacher is good and he is very well supported by his senior team and other key staff. Management is good; governance is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school's commitment to self-evaluation, and its impact, are good.
- The monitoring of performance, both of pupils and of staff, is very good. Weak teaching has been eradicated since the last inspection and achievement, already high, is rising.
- The school's contribution to initial teacher training through its membership of the Swindon school centred initial teacher training partnership is very effective.
- Teamwork is very well developed throughout the school, based on good relationships among staff and with pupils.
- Planning for application for specialist school status has been weak.
- Pupils do not have the opportunity to take part in a daily act of collective worship.
- Some minor weaknesses in the curriculum at Key Stage 3 remain to be rectified.

### **Commentary**

32. At the last inspection the school was identified as having serious weaknesses in leadership and management. These weaknesses have now been largely rectified. The headteacher now provides good leadership and is supported by a very effective team of senior managers. Of many impressive advances, possibly the most notable is the extent to which the school evaluates and reviews its own performance. Data is analysed thoroughly and the findings are having an impact on the planning of the curriculum and on setting targets for individual pupils, as well as monitoring their progress. Rigorous performance management of staff has eradicated weak teaching and created a forum for the sharing of effective practice. These improvements are having a positive impact on standards achieved by pupils and the quality of education the school provides. Responsibilities have been delegated successfully and personalised job descriptions are now in place. Also very effective has been the creation of teams to work on various issues – the reinvigoration of the school council is a good example – and positive relationships between staff are a feature of the school. The school has maintained the strong ethos of care that was its greatest strength at the last inspection but this is now overlaid with a culture of high expectations of pupils and high achievement. Although examination results have not improved significantly in the two years since that inspection there



are many indications that they will do so shortly, for instance the very good results achieved in GNVQ ICT by a Year 10 group in 2003.

33. Strategic planning has improved significantly since the last inspection but could do so further. A detailed plan to which staff have contributed is in place, together with an outline long-term strategic plan to which the governing body has contributed. These are useful documents. The school plans to apply for specialist school status in 2004. Planning for this change has been less successful. Governors and some staff are unaware of the full implications for the school. Inclusion is taken seriously and the appointment of a deputy head with overall responsibility and a new special needs co-ordinator have greatly strengthened provision in this area. Action should be taken to ensure that the importance of these responsibilities is understood throughout the school. There are some areas that remain to be fully addressed, such as the preparation of a disabled access plan, but the school is aware of this and other minor improvements needed to make the school fully inclusive.
34. Governance is satisfactory. The governors have received training and now offer an appropriate degree of challenge to the school by monitoring standards and contributing to strategic planning. They now have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have made great efforts to meet their statutory responsibilities, for instance the Annual Report to Parents is exemplary. These efforts have largely been successful although all pupils do not experience a daily act of collective worship, due to constraints imposed by the accommodation. As stated above, the governors are not fully aware of the implications of specialist school status.
35. A range of staff analyse data and contribute to the school's self-evaluation. Performance management of staff is very good. The school is a very active member of the newly-established Swindon School-based Initial Teacher Training Centre and also provides very good induction to new staff. The professional development of staff is monitored and evaluated. The appointment of a business manager is strengthening the link between strategic and financial planning and has ensured that planning for future improvements to the accommodation is robust.
36. The headteacher, his senior team and the governing body are to be congratulated on the very good improvements to leadership and management that have been made since the last inspection. In this they have been supported well by officers of Swindon Local Education Authority. The headteacher now needs to take an active role in leading the school to its next stage – revisiting the plans to apply for specialist school status gives an opportunity to do this.

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

| Income and expenditure (£) |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Total income               | 2,532,949 |
| Total expenditure          | 2,493,359 |
| Expenditure per pupil      | 2,792     |

| Balances (£)                        |         |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Balance from previous year          | 148,391 |
| Balance carried forward to the next | 39,590  |

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

##### **English**

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- Standards are well above average at the end of Years 9 and 11, representing very good achievement.
- Teaching and learning are very good: lessons are carefully planned with varied activities to sustain pupils' interest.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good: Pupils work hard and respect others' views.
- Leadership and management are very good: the department is united in its commitment to raising standards still further.
- The extent to which ICT is used could be increased to add a different dimension to the way in which pupils learn.

##### **Commentary**

37. Results in the National Curriculum tests in 2003 were well above average and represent very good achievement. They have improved each year over the past three years. In the GCSE examinations, results in 2002 were well above average in both English language and literature, with boys doing better than girls. Pupils achieved very well. In 2003, results were a little lower in language, though still well above average. This represents very good achievement compared with these pupils' national test results two years previously. In literature, results dropped to average. This reflects the high level of entry compared with some schools that only enter more able pupils for literature.
38. Achievement in English is very good. Standards are well above average in the current Years 9 and 11. Pupils speak confidently using a wide vocabulary and listen very well. They read with understanding of implicit meaning, and by Year 11 they can analyse challenging texts. In writing, pupils show considerable creativity, as in Year 8 Gothic work. They can write in many different styles, with a high level of accuracy. By Year 11, pupils structure lengthy literature essays and all but the lower attainers are good at supporting their views with quotation and explanation. Presentation of work is very good, sometimes helped by computers, but ICT is not used sufficiently to add a new dimension to learning.
39. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this enables them to ask telling questions to assess what pupils have understood. Basic skills are well taught with particular emphasis on language analysis. Class management is very good. Teachers provide a wide variety of activities to keep pupils interested. As a result, attitudes and behaviour are very good. Teaching assistants give well-focussed support and help pupils learn more rapidly. Many lessons end well with a review of what has been learnt, but sometimes the review is too brief and this lessens the impact of what has been taught. A strong feature is the group work, which actively involves all pupils in the lesson and gives them the opportunity to share ideas. Pupils listen to others and respect differing views. This has a very positive effect on learning. Teachers' marking is thorough and constructive, so that pupils know what they need to do to improve. Assessment overall is good. The head of department carefully analyses the GCSE results and the findings are well used when modifying schemes of work.

### Example of outstanding practice

**This was a Year 11 lesson for pupils of average and above average attainment. The class had read Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* for their GCSE examinations.**

Planning of this lesson was excellent and from the outset, all pupils were actively involved. Pupils began by noting on their individual whiteboards their thoughts about first George and then Lennie. Several came out to the main board to record an idea and the teacher used the resulting list as a basis for brisk discussion. Pupils' wide vocabulary and high motivation led to very good speaking and listening. Next, pupils formed groups of 4 to examine different passages from the opening chapter and to highlight key phrases revealing George and Lennie's relationship. The careful planning and fast pace enabled pupils to show a high level of responsibility, boys and girls working together productively. The teacher asked one pupil from each group to visit others to see if new ideas had come to light. Pupils showed a very keen understanding of the novel and a sensitivity towards Lennie's plight at the end. The teacher timed activities expertly, used a variety of resources, and gave the class opportunities to take the initiative. Learning was very rapid, so that pupils left the lesson with a much deeper appreciation of George and Lennie's situation.

40. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is a highly skilled teacher who leads by example. There is a good team spirit, with all teachers fully committed to helping pupils do their best. Monitoring of the department's work is very good. Teaching observations are recorded in detail and used to support staff in the classroom. Since the last inspection improvement is very good. Teaching and learning are better, and the quality of speaking and listening is higher. Leadership and management are more effective because the monitoring of teaching has significantly improved.

### Language and literacy across the curriculum

41. The standard of literacy is very good. Although there is no whole school literacy policy, the school has given emphasis to literacy by providing whole school training on this. There have been various initiatives since the last inspection. For example, each department has taken responsibility for a particular style of writing and displays key words relevant to each subject. Very good attention is given to literacy in English, drama, science, art, design and technology and history. This is helping to raise standards of literacy not only within the subject but across the school. In science, there is a literacy policy, and very good instructional writing is produced. In art, support sheets including specialist vocabulary helped Year 9 pupils with special needs to write about Dali. Although extended writing is well developed in English and history, there is insufficient in religious education and in GCSE physical education, where – as in maths – spelling and grammar are not corrected. In the last inspection report, attention to literacy was described as 'piecemeal and unco-ordinated'. The school has made a considerable effort to rectify this. However, there is still inconsistency in that not all departments have a literacy policy and, consequently, do not support the development of pupils' literacy as well as they should.

### Modern Foreign Languages

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of all groups of pupils is good by the time they leave school.
- Writing does not always receive the emphasis it should in Years 8 and 9 but pupils write well in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good, because of good management and teamwork.
- Effective assessments keep track of pupils' progress and clear targets help them see how to improve.

## Commentary

42. French is the first foreign language studied, taken by pupils of all abilities. Since 2002 German is taken by the higher attainers from Year 8. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. They achieve well overall and in Years 10 and 11 for at least the last two years - results in GCSE have been above average at grades A\*-C in French and well above average in German. All candidates attained at least grade G.
43. Teaching and learning are good. Thanks to carefully planned lessons and teachers' high expectations that the foreign languages be used as the main means of communication within the classroom, pupils' skills in listening, speaking and reading develop in a balanced way. There is less emphasis given to writing than to the other skills in Years 7-9, partly due to the limited lesson time of 90 minutes or an hour per week per language for some classes. In consequence standards overall are average and achievement is satisfactory by Year 9. The strength of the curriculum in making two languages available from Year 8 is balanced by the time available to each, so it is satisfactory overall. This is redressed in Years 10 and 11 where more time is available and pupils write well. Throughout the school pupils word-process some of their work but there are no computers in the language classrooms, which limits regular ICT activities.
44. Leadership of the subject is good. During the last inspection provision in German was good but the teaching of French was inconsistent and there was insufficient attention given to assessment and guidance help raise standards. Provision was therefore judged to have been unsatisfactory. This is no longer the case. Teachers of both languages work as a strong team, sharing good practice because lessons are monitored both by departmental and school managers. Pupils' books are regularly checked to make sure that all pupils are doing as well as they can. Although some classes are shared by two teachers, all work is well co-ordinated so that pupils learn well.
45. The revised assessment systems in both languages are thorough. Data is now analysed and all pupils have clearly presented targets. Pupils themselves are also becoming involved in evaluating their own progress. Although day-to-day written marking tends to focus more on the identification of errors rather than advice on how to avoid them, pupils themselves praise the good quality of the individual feedback they regularly receive through talking with teachers, saying that it gives them confidence.
46. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Key Stage 3 National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced well in lessons, supported by a new differentiated scheme of work.
- Assessment procedures are well established and analysis of national and departmental data is good. Marking is thorough and systems are in place to inform pupils of how well they are doing and what to do to improve.
- Teaching and learning are good; knowledge of the subject is good and teachers are aware of the next steps in pupils' learning.
- Leadership and management are good, though formal monitoring and evaluation of policy and practices are not routine.

## Commentary

47. Standards in the Year 9 national tests in 2003 were well above average with girls performing slightly better than boys. Pupils' achievement was very good and this represents year-on-year improvement since the last report. Standards in GCSE mathematics in 2003 were above average though this is a decline in standards compared to the previous year. Pupils' achievement compared to prior attainment in Year 9 for the same group of pupils was satisfactory. Overall, pupils' achievement from Year 7 to Year 11 is good. Current standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE are overall above average and pupils' achievement is good.
48. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 7 to 9 and as a result pupils achieve very well. Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in their planning, exposition and explanation. There is a good balance between theory and practice. Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond well, supporting the brisk pace of most lessons. For example, pupils in Year 7 working on representative values when handling data were able to determine a missing value from a set of data given the mean. In Year 9, pupils successfully investigated the surface area of a sphere, making very good use of previously taught skills. Pupils benefit from the initial 'quick-fire' questions linked to the main learning objective as part of the National Numeracy Strategy, though the end of lesson review to give some understanding of how well pupils have progressed is underdeveloped. Opportunities in lessons for pupils to take part in their own learning are limited, particularly for lower-attaining pupils who would benefit from the use of 'bite-size' activities. Homework is issued regularly and marking is up-to-date. Pupils are aware of the assessment criteria and secure systems are in place to inform pupils of the progress they are making and the level they are working at. Good use is made of the few teaching assistants available to the department, to support pupils with special educational needs in achieving as well as their peers.
49. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 10 and 11. Some teaching methods are innovative and lead to a high level of interest from most pupils. For example, Year 10 higher-attaining pupils investigated a geometric sequence of numbers and derived both linear and quadratic expressions from within the sequence. The current focus of effort by Year 11 pupils is on learning gaps in their knowledge as part preparation for the GCSE modular examinations. For example, reviewing the rules of indices in algebra. Work is often intellectually demanding and pupils record their work in a variety of ways that support their learning well. The recording of key words and statements by average and lower-attaining pupils to support revision is infrequent, and means that achievements are sometimes not as good as they could be. The relationship between pupils and teachers is very good and the 'open door' practice of providing extra support is valued by the pupils.
50. Leadership and management of the department are good. Issues raised in the last report have largely been addressed. The Key Stage 3 National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced, well supported by differentiated schemes of work and ICT. Standards have improved since the time of the last report. The match of teachers to the curriculum is good and there is a clear commitment from an effective team to raising standards further. Assessment is well established though centralised computer record keeping is not firmly in place. Clear policies, practices, roles and responsibilities need to be explicit in a department handbook as a benchmark for monitoring and evaluation, together with planned opportunities for sharing good practice. Accommodation is adequate.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

51. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well in mathematics lessons, and other departments have systematically planned for the development of numeracy. In geography, design and technology, ICT and science schemes of work identify what pupils are likely to know, understand and can do. There are particular strengths in handling data, use of calculations, and applying the rules of algebra. Overall, the contribution of lessons to mathematics across the

curriculum is good though unco-ordinated, with little or no reference to numeracy in most schemes of work. Numeracy is included in the School Development Plan and discussion continues following whole staff training on raising awareness. No action has occurred to conduct an audit across the curriculum of existing practice, establish a school policy and monitor and evaluate the quality of provision. Currently, pupils' skills are developed sufficiently in departments to ensure all have full access to the curriculum.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is led and managed very well.
- Assessment procedures and practice are very well developed.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The curriculum is good.
- Some aspects of pupils' scientific enquiry are relatively underdeveloped.

### Commentary

52. Current standards in Years 9 and 11 are above average. Standards of Year 9 pupils during recent years have been at least above average. Their performance has been rising more than the national trend. In 2002, the increase was substantial, pushing up results to well above the national average. In 2003, like 2002, pupils achieved better than what is normally expected when compared with their prior attainment in Year 6. There is no significant gender difference in pupils' attainment in Year 9. Results of double science as well as of single science award GCSE were above the national average in 2002. Results in 2003 are also above the national average. Attainment of boys and girls is similar. The overall above average results achieved by the pupils are the product of very good leadership and management, very effective assessment arrangements including target setting, tracking and support, good teaching and learning and a good curriculum. Achievement is good throughout the school.
53. Teaching and learning of science in the school are good. Although predominantly good, the quality of teaching and learning varies from satisfactory to excellent. Lesson planning is thorough and aims at high achievement. The activities are highly purposeful with a focus on helping pupils to make substantial gains in knowledge and understanding. The pace is highly productive. Learning is assessed thoroughly and pupils are left in no doubt what they need to do to achieve the grades they deserve. Pupils reciprocate with a high degree of concentration and commitment, and collaboration when demanded. In one lesson, Year 10 made excellent all-round progress. In another lesson, Year 9 pupils made very good gains in developing skills of how to plan an experiment. In most lessons, there is a good focus on developing pupils' skills in mathematics and subject specific vocabulary. Most successful lessons devote a lot of time to key vocabulary. Consequently, the pupils make substantial gains in knowledge and understanding of key scientific ideas. Weaker elements of some lessons include missing opportunities for developing pupils' investigative skills and scientific vocabulary. A few lessons are deficient in matching tasks to pupils' prior skills, knowledge and understanding. This hinders progress of the most able and the least able pupils in mixed ability classes or in sets where the range of ability is wider than expected. Insufficient support in a lower ability class created management difficulties and led to less successful learning and achievement. Teachers invariably focus equally well on boys, girls and minority ethnic pupils. This results in these groups of pupils making similar progress. Teachers are conversant with individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. As a result these pupils also make good progress overall. The very few pupils who are learning English as an additional language make good progress, especially when they receive focused support. At other times, the progress is satisfactory, for example when matching scientific terms with phrases. Though satisfactory

overall, the use of ICT could be better. Technical staff make an effective contribution to pupils' learning.

54. Leadership and management of science are very good. The use of assessment is very well geared to help pupils do well. For example, pupils in a Year 7 class knew their Year 6 results and what they were expected to achieve at the end of Year 7. The department provides effective guidance on what pupils need to do to achieve different National Curriculum Levels. Marking is consistent with the department policy and provides effective guidance on how to improve. Year 10 and 11 are very clear about grade boundaries and what they need to do to realise their potential. The department reflects on what it provides for its pupils and brings about necessary changes when warranted. For example, a triple science course has been introduced this year. The national strategy for science in Years 7 to 9 is now well established, for example in providing effective starter activities as well as effective endings of lessons with a review of what has been learnt. Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning in the department are pursued with rigour. This has resulted in improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, which is now good compared with the last inspection when it was satisfactory. The quality of accommodation is also much better now compared with what it was at the time of previous inspection. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are now above average by the end of Year 11.
- Very good resources and accommodation create good conditions for learning.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils support learning well.
- Pupils show good attitudes to their work.
- The quality of marking, assessment and target setting needs to be developed further.
- Work is not always suited to the individual learning needs of lower attaining pupils and those who are gifted and talented.

### **Commentary**

55. This is an improving department. The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 are now broadly in line with the national expectation. The GNVQ results in 2003 were well above the national average. Achievement by all pupils is good. Pupils enter Year 7 with average standards so they make good progress during their time in the school. Specialist ICT lessons were introduced for pupils in Years 8, 9 and 10 in September 2003 which means that pupils in all year groups have a taught ICT lesson each week. Although the impact of this improvement cannot be fully assessed at this early stage, there has been a marked improvement in developing pupils' basic ICT skills in the short term. In ICT lessons, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 develop skills in desktop publishing, using specialist software to present information to an audience and the Internet to research information. They use spreadsheets and databases successfully, although the depth and breadth of their knowledge is more limited than in most schools. Pupils following examination courses in Years 10 and 11 work closely to the examination marking criteria to complete their coursework, and this leads to good achievement. All pupils respond well to the high expectations of the teachers and show good attitudes to their work.
56. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers know the subject well, and provide a range of well planned tasks that actively involve all students well in the learning activities. They effectively support all pupils in lessons, though the range of strategies they use to meet the individual needs of pupils with special educational needs and those who are higher attaining and need more challenging work is too limited. Teachers make good use of new technology, for example

data projectors, to plan tasks and to demonstrate the processes to the pupils. The department has made a good start in supporting pupils in developing their numeracy and literacy skills, and they are now applying these skills with more confidence in lessons both in their work and when talking about their work. In Years 10 and 11, teachers structure the work well to enable pupils to follow the guidelines of the examination mark scheme, so that they gain good marks for each section of the work. Teachers provide a good range of additional support for pupils during lunch-time and after school. They encourage co-operation in lessons and this leads to good behaviour and positive attitudes.

57. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a clear vision for the subject, supported by a team of teachers with a shared commitment to maintaining and improving standards. There has been very good improvement in the standard of accommodation and resources and standards have risen from below average to above average by the end of Year 11. Although systems are in place, there is a need for them to be embedded in the work of the department. The next stage of development is to strengthen the marking, assessment and target setting procedures to enable the department to make better use more reliable data. There is very good technician support and this contributes well to the daily management of the resources in the school. The ratio of pupils to computers in the school is now better than the national average. Overall, there has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

58. Pupils are increasing their use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum and use is now satisfactory. In the majority of subjects work is planned and pupils are given the opportunity to apply a good range of skills. During the inspection, good use of ICT was seen in mathematics, where evidence in work showed focused tasks on using spreadsheets and the application of formulae, processing and presenting the resulting data and use a range of desktop publishing skills including screenshots to present information. Although hardware is limited in art, teachers have very good knowledge of ICT and encourage pupils to use scanners, the digital camera and specialist software to manipulate images to create effects. In design and technology, pupils experience work using specialist computer-aided design software, control technology, spreadsheets and computer-aided manufacturing as well as designing and testing electronic circuits. Work in science involves the use of desktop publishing and spreadsheets to log data and to present these in the form of graphs and charts. Less emphasis, however, is placed on the use of ICT in science Year 11 coursework. Satisfactory use of ICT was seen in English, modern foreign languages, history and religious education where pupils use mainly word processing for drafting and re-drafting work, use the Internet for research, desktop publishing to present work and specialist software to enable pupils to make presentations to an audience. However, in a number of subjects the use of ICT needs further development and some staff need further training. The recent lottery funded training for staff on the use of ICT was ineffective.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Very good teaching.
- High commitment and dedication of staff.
- The standards achieved by pupils.



- The need for more opportunities for geographical enquiries, independent learning and the use and application of ICT.
- The quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

59. Standards are above average and achievement is good. The standards pupils attain in geography are above the level expected nationally for pupils in Year 9. Geography is a popular and successful option subject in Years 10 and 11. In 2002, at the end of Year 11, GCSE results were well above average. The standards achieved by girls were higher than that of boys, especially at the highest grade A\*. Provisional results for 2003 show that standards are above average; the results of boys and girls are now closer.
60. Standards in the current Year 9 are above average. This represents good achievement for many pupils in relation to when they started at the school in Year 7, including those pupils with special educational needs. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate increasingly good factual knowledge and understanding of both physical and human geography. Use of technical language is good. They acquire a good range of skills in map work and with the analysis of information. Numeracy skills are used effectively. Written work of most pupils is good and lower ability pupils have appropriate support with their writing. There are some opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to undertake additional work that provides them with greater challenges.
61. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average. This represents good achievement by pupils who opt for geography. For example, in a lesson on Zimbabwe pupils worked in groups to deliver presentations on factors influencing economic development. Their work showed a very good understanding of the complex interrelationships of the human and physical environments. A notable feature of this lesson was the contribution it made to pupils' understanding of citizenship. Coursework is very good. Pupils are able to plan their work effectively and produce well structured assignments, which show very good use and application of geographical skills and techniques. The use of ICT a good feature of their work.
62. The quality of teaching and learning in geography is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge; they are enthusiastic and committed and use a range of effective approaches in the classroom. This is beginning to have an impact on achievement. For example, in Year 7 very good teaching and high quality resources promoted pupils' development of mapwork skills. Relationships in the classroom are good and pupils display positive attitudes to their work. The presentation of pupils' work is very good. Although good examples of geographical enquiry, independent learning and the use and application of ICT were seen, these areas require further development.
63. Leadership and management of geography are very good. The department has developed good procedures to identify its strengths and weaknesses. Good use is made of performance data to set targets and to plan work. Strong departmental teamwork is helping to raise standards. Teaching staff are very well qualified and learning resources are of good quality and meet the needs of the curriculum well. The curriculum is enhanced through fieldwork. However, the quality of the life-expired, temporary accommodation is unsatisfactory.
64. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, most notably with the development of assessment processes and procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the department.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good.
- Management of the subject is very good.
- The history curriculum is very good.
- More consistent and regular use of ICT is needed.

## Commentary

65. GCSE results in 2003 show that all pupils passed at grades A\*-G. Eighty per cent passed at A\*-C. This is well above the national average and also represents very good achievement by the pupils in relation to their passes in other examination courses. Nearly all pupils achieved or exceeded the grades expected of them. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that pupils attained above the national average.
66. Achievement by pupils is very good by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. By the end of Year 9 lower attaining pupils are able to scan historical sources to develop their knowledge of conditions in early nineteenth century factories. Higher attaining pupils are able to assess the usefulness of a range of sources to decide how they might support different interpretations of factory conditions. By Year 11 pupils are able to use their skills in interpretation and their wider knowledge of political and economic change to offer reasons for developments in surgery during the nineteenth century. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as lessons are well planned to support their needs. Gifted and talented pupils are known to their teachers and the pace of lessons in Years 9 to 11, together with stimulating resources, supports their need for challenge and depth of study.
67. Teaching and learning are both very good across the age range. Learning is best when pupils are set a challenging enquiry question, for example in a Year 8 lesson when pupils had to assess the success of Henry VII, and when planning allows for both a rapid pace of learning and time to consolidate new ideas, for example in a Year 10 lesson which presented contrasting images of eighteenth century urban conditions. Teaching which makes very good use of new technology helps pupils to learn very well, for example in a Year 11 lesson which enabled pupils to revise their knowledge of developments in surgery through a multimedia display of high quality images and text. Teaching is very effective in promoting collaborative working skills, for example in Year 7 group work on aspects of Roman society, and in the development of ideas to support citizenship education as seen in a Year 8 lesson that analysed social class in Tudor England.
68. Leadership and management are very good. Standards at GCSE have remained consistently well above average due to the very effective teaching of pupils across the range of attainment. Flexibility as to the choice of coursework topics successfully uses the interests and strengths of staff. There is a very good contribution made to the development of literacy skills, for example in the promotion of historical terminology and support for pupils' writing through sentence starters and the use of connective words to link ideas. History makes a very good contribution to the pupils' social development as pupils study a very wide range of societies over time and often work in pairs or small groups. Their cultural development is effectively promoted through a wide range visits to historical sites in Britain and in a well planned course on Islam in Year 8. Spiritual and moral provision is good, for example in raising awareness of the scale of death and bereavement in World War One through an annual visit to Ypres and in study of the Holocaust in Year 9.
69. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. There is rigorous use of performance data within a very effective assessment policy. Pupils understand how well they have achieved against national criteria through regular assessment tasks and detailed feedback from their teachers. Teaching is now very good across the school and its monitoring and evaluation is planned and implemented. Areas for development are the more regular and consistent use of

ICT to support independent learning and provision of more challenging learning opportunities for higher attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8.

## Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality of teaching.
- High level of commitment of staff.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils.
- Insufficient time for teaching religious education in Year 9.
- Unsatisfactory quality of accommodation.
- Further development of the scheme of work and assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 is needed.
- Teaching needs to be developed to ensure that it addresses the needs of all learners.

### Commentary

70. The standards attained by pupils when they enter the school at the beginning of Year 7 are average. However, by Year 9 teachers' assessments show that standards are above what is expected in the locally agreed syllabus. In Years 10 and 11 pupils have not followed GCSE courses, but teachers' assessments show that standards are above what is expected by the syllabus. In 2004, pupils will be entered for the GCSE short-course examination and in 2005 pupils will be entered for the full GCSE.
71. Achievement in religious education is good. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those designated as gifted and talented is good. By Year 9 pupils have developed a good knowledge and understanding of the origins, beliefs and practices of Christianity, and the other principal religions of the world. Their skills in making a personal response to religious questions are also good. In Year 10 achievement of pupils on the newly introduced full GCSE course is very good. Pupils have developed a very good understanding of conflict resolution in their study of war, violence and peace. The achievement of pupils on the short GCSE course is good. Pupils in Year 11 show a good understanding of the differences between the Christian and Islamic views on creation.
72. Teaching and learning are good. Good teaching is responsible for improving standards in the subject. Although much teaching, especially in Years 10 and 11, is delivered by non-specialists, their experience and commitment are strengths of the department. The specialist teacher has good subject knowledge and provides effective support to her team of non-specialists teaching GCSE courses. Teachers use a range of effective approaches in the classroom and pupils' learning is supported by good quality resources. Relationships are good and pupils respond well to the subject. Across Years 7 to 11 pupils' learning in religious education makes a good contribution to their social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. However, in Years 7 to 9 there is a need to plan and deliver a curriculum that meets the full range of pupils' needs. There is also the need for further development of assessment procedures and guidance for teachers.
73. Leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. The head of department does not find it easy to co-ordinate a large team of senior staff who have major responsibilities in other areas of the school. She has no specialist support with developing the work of the department. Planning has improved and procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department have been established. Resources to support the curriculum are good but the quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory as religious education is taught in a variety of rooms throughout the school.

74. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. In Years 10 and 11 more time has been allocated and religious education is now taught as a separate subject. More time has been made available to teach the subject in Years 7 and 8 but currently there is insufficient time to deliver curriculum requirements in Year 9. If the provision were improved achievement would become very good. There have been improvements with the use of data and target setting.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- GCSE results in design and technology are well above average.
- The use of ICT is developing well in the subject and this is extending pupils' learning.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils create a very good learning environment.
- Pupils show very good attitudes to their work.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use computer-aided manufacture.

#### **Commentary**

75. GCSE examination results in 2002 were well above average and show a continuing trend of improvement. Girls attain better grades than boys, although both boys and girls achieve better than the national averages. Pupils attain better results in food and graphics than they do in resistant materials.
76. By the end of Year 9, pupils reach standards above national expectations. This does not fully match the well above average standards represented by teachers' own assessments of pupils in Year 9. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils showed above average skills in designing and making. They work in a good range of materials and produce well made products. They apply a good range of formal drawing skills as well as freehand sketching to show the main stages of product development. Literacy skills are above average. Pupils write in a variety of styles and use a range of technical terms well in their design work. There are good opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills, which enable them to work accurately when doing their own designing. Achievement at the end of Year 9 is good when compared to the average design skills pupils have when they join the school in Year 7. Year 11 pupils make rapid progress with the more open design opportunities for their GCSE coursework. Pupils attain well above average standards and as a result, their achievement is very good, both in Years 10 and 11 and overall. Pupils show confidence in applying a more complex design process and therefore gain marks at each stage of development. In the work seen, very good graphics skills help pupils to enhance the quality and presentation of their design portfolios in all material areas. The majority of pupils use ICT very well to support their coursework.
77. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall and this includes an excellent lesson seen during the inspection week. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is focused on establishing a wide range of basic skills in all material areas. This includes very good use of ICT in developing more complex drawing skills, work in electronics, computer-aided control and manufacturing. There are good opportunities for pupils to use the full design process. Teachers promote good quality and accuracy. Lessons are well structured and teachers ensure pupils' learning is underpinned with appropriate knowledge, which enables them to work through each task successfully. A good range of activities help to keep pupils' interest and provides the right level of challenge for them to master the skills they encounter.

78. In Years 10 and 11, teachers ensure pupils follow the examination mark criteria closely. Lessons are very well planned to provide pupils with clear guidance for coursework. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and pupils benefit from the specialist knowledge they provide. Classroom displays are stimulating and provide a very good range of examples of previous work to underpin pupils' learning. All pupils are encouraged to test their products at each stage of the making. They include a good variety of industrial processes and techniques. Overall pupils achieve very well.
79. The department is very well managed. The head of department has established very good working relationships within the department. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection and standards are now well above average by the end of Year 11 Teaching and learning are both very good. However, there are only limited resources for pupils to experience work in computer-aided manufacturing. The very good technician supports and complements the work of the department very well.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art**

Provision in art is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The head of department offers inspirational leadership, setting high standards and encouraging a purposeful atmosphere in which pupils can develop as competent and independent learners.
- Very good teaching in all years ensures that pupils are well informed and develop a good range of art skills.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to work, listen attentively, and enjoy exploring their creative abilities.
- There is a broad and challenging curriculum, including the traditional crafts of pottery and printmaking, along with digital art.
- Work is thoroughly assessed and pupils know how well they are doing and at what level they are working.

### **Commentary**

80. Pupils' skills in art on entry to the school are below average. In Year 9 they are average, and by the end of Year 11 they are above average. This represents very good achievement.
81. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is a little better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7-9. Teachers have a very good command of the subject and teach confidently across the wide range of media. On occasion the opportunity to develop pupils' critical awareness and understanding is missed, when lesson pacing shortens the planned plenary session. The use of computers in art is developing well. Year 8 pupils learn to prepare a multimedia presentation of their work, which they use in explaining their work to the class. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils are able to explore digital art software to very good effect. Pupils learn a great deal from the well-taught fine art lessons, usually supported by visual aids and very good reference material. They make very good use of Internet and reference book research for their work. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants and make the same good progress as others in their classes.
82. Leadership and management are excellent. The head of department works hard to ensure that pupils work to high individual standards across a very good, wide-ranging curriculum that challenges and motivates pupils to learn. Her leadership is an inspiration to others and ensures that pupils benefit from a positive and well-planned learning experience. She has steered the department to a very good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils are encouraged

to develop as independent learners, researching and developing their work along individual lines. This is particularly noticeable in Year 11 where GCSE projects cover a very broad range of media and artistic influences. The demands of annotation offer a very good support to the school's provision for literacy, as do the routine question and answer sessions, which enable teachers to check learning and build pupils' confidence in explaining their ideas and practices to the class. The planning for citizenship in art is well advanced.

83. The very positive attitudes that pupils bring to the lessons, and their very good behaviour, enable an enjoyable and purposeful atmosphere to build up, in which very good, uninterrupted progress can be made. They know how well they are doing in the programmes of study, because their work is thoroughly assessed against National Curriculum levels and assessment records kept on open files. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Extra-curricular and instrumental provision is good.
- The head of department has led improvements in teaching and learning – considerable progress since the last inspection.
- Pupils have good attitudes and enthusiasm for learning.
- Resources and accommodation are inadequate.
- Good practice is not shared within the school. The department works in isolation.
- Expectations are not high enough for some pupils in Years 10 and 11.

### **Commentary**

84. The music department is a hub of activity throughout the day, providing an outlet for many students of all abilities. Standards in music are above the national average with significant numbers reaching levels well above what is expected. In Year 9 standards are above average. In Years 10 to 11 a minority of students underperform while others reach the very highest standards. Pupils come to the school with a wide range of attainment but by Year 9 achievement is good. Pupils of all abilities are supported well. Pupils show good skills in performing improvising on a pentatonic scale in Year 7, playing a chord sequence with drum beat in Year 8 and creating a soundscape in Year 9. Music of other cultures is used widely and imaginative use of role-play increases awareness. Musical composition is often good and students have an increasing awareness when listening to music. Boys perform equally well as girls. In Year 11 there are excellent examples of high quality compositions and performances but targets need to be more rigorous for those with less ability. Students are well motivated and articulate their views and feelings clearly.
85. Standards of teaching are good. Lessons are well planned and adaptable, and teachers have good subject knowledge. Pupils are well managed and good use is made of limited resources. The standard of learning is good and good assessment procedures are now in place. Self-evaluation is a feature of the department. The most able are encouraged to extend themselves in many ways. Schemes of work have been developed and are linked to National Curriculum targets.
86. Considerable progress was observed within the different year groups. Lessons seen were all satisfactory or better. Year 7 listened and responded to Gamelan, while Year 8 demonstrated the ability to improvise and Year 9 were very articulate about the sounds they heard. The department is developing well but very much in isolation. Good practice needs to be shared within the school, particularly with other arts subjects.

87. Good leadership by the head of department has contributed to raising standards and the enjoyment of music by many pupils. The school does not meet fully the requirement for ICT to be used in Years 7 to 9. The use of ICT has been addressed for Years 10 and 11. Resources throughout are limited with problems of space for group work and no soundproofing. The second teaching area remains under-resourced and music technology is under-developed.
88. Many students take part in extra-curricular activities. These groups (a big band, two choirs, two orchestras, two flute groups, a string group and a guitar group) have an impressive list of engagement in the school and the local community. The big band and choir are highly regarded. The numbers receiving instrumental tuition are above the national average with the capacity to expand. The music department has made good progress since the last inspection and has the capacity to improve. The enthusiasm and commitment of staff should ensure all pupils have the opportunity to enhance their musical skills and interest.

## **Drama**

Provision in drama is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good.
- Relationships are excellent, and all pupils contribute to lessons.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and limits pupils' achievement.

## **Commentary**

89. Although teaching is very good, accommodation is unsatisfactory and this restricts what pupils learn and achieve. GCSE results in 2002 were above the national average, though few pupils gained the highest grades A\*/A. In 2003, results were average. Both sets of results represent good achievement, in relation to pupils' capabilities. By Year 9, pupils quickly learn to control movement, use non-verbal communication effectively and work together showing consideration for others. Their achievement is good. In written assignments, pupils in Year 11 make helpful notes on the *Theatre of the Absurd* and perceptive comments on the characters in Pinter's *The Caretaker*. The work is excellently marked, with very good attention to accurate use of English.
90. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Relationships in class are excellent, with pupils of all abilities making valuable contributions to the lesson. Learning in the drama room is very good, but when drama is taught in a classroom learning is no better than good, despite the best efforts of the teacher, because conditions are too cramped for pupils to move around easily. The unsuitability of the accommodation and lack of resources, such as blackout, lighting and sound, are preventing pupils from learning as well as they should. Very good teaching is not being fully exploited and teachers' efforts are frustrated. While leadership of drama is very good, management is only satisfactory. This is because the school does not provide the accommodation needed to help teachers raise standards as high as they could be. The teacher in charge of drama is a highly effective and hardworking teacher who has the best interests of the pupils at heart. She leads by example, ensuring the teaching areas are used as well as they can be. Although the school now provides drama in Years 8 and 9, as well as in the other years, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory because the accommodation is no better; so learning is not as good as teaching.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality teaching and learning in many lessons result in good progress.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils in many lessons to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Assessment is not providing the appropriate information for pupils to help them improve.
- The most able pupils are not consistently challenged in some lessons.
- Lack of indoor accommodation is a constraint on time and choice of activities, especially for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The good attitudes and behaviour of pupils help promote a positive atmosphere in lessons.

## Commentary

91. Results in the GCSE examinations in both 2002 and 2003 were above the national average and pupils in physical education do at least as well as they do in their other subjects. Teacher assessments in 2003 for pupils in Year 9 indicate standards that are in line with national averages and this is supported by evidence from the inspection.
92. Standards for Year 9 pupils are average for the majority of pupils. In gymnastics pupils have sound knowledge of a range of vaults and jumps and are able to perform them with confidence in a sequence of activities they have devised. Their ability to analyse performance is good although this analysis is not yet having a significant impact on the quality of performance, which is below the national average. This was also the case in a Year 7 lesson on football where pupils developed a good understanding of the importance of varying the direction of their passing through some very good analysis but did not significantly improve their passing skills.
93. Standards for pupils in Year 11 are above average. In a Year 11 football lesson, passing over long and short distances was generally very accurate and pupils were able to create space very well to receive the ball. A significant minority of pupils had very sophisticated control and passing skills and were able to apply these very effectively into a competitive game situation. Work seen from GCSE pupils illustrates a good understanding of sponsorship in sport and the influence of the media in the development of specific sports. GCSE pupils also produce personal fitness programmes of generally good quality, which illustrate very effective use of ICT skills. The standards of pupils on entry to the school are average but by the time they reach the end of Year 11 they are above average. This indicates good achievement. Pupils in a Year 8 basketball lesson who had only been taught basketball for four weeks had made very good progress in developing basic handling and passing skills and had a good knowledge and understanding of the basic rules of the game. They were also able to referee with growing levels of confidence. Pupils in a Year 11 hockey lesson developed good passing and control skills and tactical awareness. Some of these pupils had basic skills which were significantly above the average but did not have the opportunity in the lesson to develop these skills. This was the case in several lessons where higher attaining pupils made some progress but were not consistently challenged.
94. The quality of teaching overall is good. Pupils in all year groups benefit from knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers. Teachers enjoy good relationships with pupils, who respond with enthusiasm to their teaching. Most lessons are well planned with a good range of activities. Teachers use their knowledge and understanding to intervene appropriately and this is a significant factor in the good progress made by most pupils. In many lessons there were very good opportunities for pupils to analyse and evaluate performance. Pupils in many practical lessons were encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and are provided with opportunities to coach and referee. In lessons that were not quite so good the planning did not identify clearly enough the targets for the lesson and the sequence of activities was inappropriate. In several lessons there were not enough activities to challenge the most able pupils. Assessment of work is beginning to provide useful information for staff but is not yet being used by pupils to set targets for improvement.



95. Pupils also achieve well because the department is well led. Day-to-day organization is good and recent departmental evaluation is beginning to identify appropriate priorities and strategies for improvement. Staff in the department work very well together and communication within the department is good. Despite both male members of the department having significant other responsibilities, the department still provides a good range of activities after school where pupils can develop their skills in a variety of sporting activities. The head of department has been successful in involving staff outside the department and outside the school to help to run several of these activities. The school competes very successfully with other local schools in a range of sports. For Years 10 and 11 the curriculum also includes a very successful community sports leaders award where pupils from the school are very successful in helping to organize and coach sporting activities for pupils in local primary schools.
96. Although the lack of indoor accommodation is still a significant problem for the school, progress since the last inspection in other areas has been good. There has been considerable improvement in the development of assessment procedures and the time for pupils in Year 9 in lessons is now appropriate. The head of department is now receiving good support from the senior management team.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

Apart from business education and vocational ICT, which are taught in the school and reported on in full, the school offers an alternative curriculum for some pupils in Years 10 and 11 which comprises vocational courses taught at Swindon College and experience of work and community service. A leisure and tourism course at the college was inspected briefly and what was seen was very good. Potentially disaffected pupils were engaged and motivated by interesting and challenging teaching, and showed very good achievement. It was not possible to inspect the other elements of the programme.

Child development is also taught within design and technology. Provision is very good, with very good teaching leading to very good achievement.

### **Business education**

Provision in business education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards were above the national average in 2003 and pupils achieve well although few reach the highest grades.
- Teaching and learning are good and resources have been developed well.
- The department is well led and managed with clear strengths in developing business and curriculum links.

### **Commentary**

97. In 2003 results were above the national average although relatively few pupils were awarded the highest grades. This represents a clear improvement on 2002 when boys did significantly less well than girls and standards were close to the national average. There was no evidence of differing achievement between boys and girls during the inspection. The trend is for standards to be at least in line with those found nationally and standards in the present Year 11 are average. This represents good achievement as standards on entry to the course are below average. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving well as a result of the quality of available support.
98. Attitudes are good overall. Pupils in Year 11 work hard in lessons and during the inspection they benefited from well-structured revision tasks provided by their teachers. Both year groups have good ICT skills because of the good resources available; they use their skills well in producing

high quality course work. Year 11 understand marketing and pricing strategies well and in a lesson on stakeholders they made very good gains in learning because this was illustrated and taught very well. The highest attaining pupils explain why Swindon is well placed for business development and average pupils illustrate terms such as 'entrepreneur' very clearly. Year 10 pupils on the new applied course are making good gains in learning about marketing and sales promotion because of the high quality visits and business links organized for them.

99. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subject and some have the experience in business that adds an extra dimension to teaching about the business world. The department has good quality resources and they are well used but not all classrooms have ICT resources. Assessment is thorough and a good use is made of available data including information about pupils with special needs.
100. The good quality of teaching and learning are a result of the good leadership and management of the new head of department. Newly qualified teachers are supported well and curriculum and resource development have been prioritised so that all pupils can achieve well. The new applied GCSE course has been planned effectively, as have links with local business and industry that provide a valuable resource for learning. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership and management of citizenship are very good.
- The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been well planned.
- The school council is very effective in involving all pupils and with planning activities to promote involvement in the school and local community.
- The subjects where aspects of citizenship have been identified need to formally write them into their plans.
- Assessment procedures need to be developed.
- Approaches to monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning need to be implemented.

### **Commentary**

101. Limited evidence suggests pupils' achievement in citizenship is good. In the lessons seen the standard of pupils' work was above average. In the small sample of pupils' written work seen in Year 8 standards were average, work was well presented and showed a developing knowledge and understanding of democracy through the work of the school council and the election of Members of Parliament. Pupils in Year 8 PSHE lessons made very good progress developing knowledge and skills about conflict resolution and how to act as responsible young people. In lessons where aspects of citizenship had been identified as a focus, pupils' achievement was very good. In a Year 9 history lesson pupils acquired a very good understanding of employment rights through work on the factory system. In a Year 11 geography lesson pupils made very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of globalisation through a case study on Zimbabwe.
102. It was only possible to observe a small number of lessons where aspects of citizenship were being taught. In these lessons the quality of teaching and learning were very good. In the lessons seen teachers established very good working environments in which the atmosphere was positive and supportive. Very good relationships led to enthusiastic learning and effective group work with pupils collaborating well together. Teachers use questioning techniques

effectively and encourage pupils to use their own ideas to develop their learning. Lessons were well organised and the quality of resources was good.

103. The work of the school council is very effective in helping pupils to develop skills of participation and responsible actions. Pupils spoke positively about their involvement and the training they had received as council members. Good lines of communication are being developed with the wider school community, for example, the display of the work of the council around the school and the newly established year councils. Pupils are engaged with a good range of activities including charity events, work with the local community and the mentoring of new pupils.
104. The newly appointed deputy headteacher has responsibility for the co-ordination of citizenship. He has a clear vision for the development of citizenship education. He is a knowledgeable and innovative leader who is creating effective teams to deliver the curriculum. There has been a very effective audit across the school and opportunities to deliver citizenship have been identified within the PSHE programme, across other subjects and with the work of the school council. Subject planning now needs to formally identify specific learning objectives and activities to ensure that these opportunities are effectively delivered. He understands the need to develop effective ways of monitoring standards of teaching and learning and this will be implemented in line with the agreed school practices. Procedures for assessing pupils' skills, progress and achievements in citizenship need to be developed. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Provision for PSHE has been extended into Year 8 and citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been effectively planned across all year groups.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

