

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLDEN LANE HIGH SCHOOL

Stoke-on-Trent

LEA area: Stoke-on-Trent

Unique reference number: 124385

Headteacher: Mrs L Hardcastle

Lead inspector: Mr A Haigh

Dates of inspection: 26th – 30th April 2004

Inspection number: 258664

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 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1190
School address:	Milton Road Sneyd Green Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST1 6LG
Telephone number:	01782 234449
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr S Buckley
Date of previous inspection:	18 - 22 January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Holden Lane High School is a larger than average sized 11 to 16 mixed, comprehensive school situated in the north of Stoke-on-Trent. It is a specialist Sports College. There are 1190 pupils, with slightly more boys than girls. Pupil mobility is well below average. About 15 per cent of all pupils are eligible for free school meals, an average proportion. The socio-economic circumstances of the area the school serves are below average. There are two pupils whose mother tongue is not English and the overwhelming proportion of pupils are from white United Kingdom heritage families. The proportions of pupils identified as having special educational needs and those with a statement of special educational needs are above average. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is fully comprehensive but below average, particularly in English. About three-quarters of all pupils continue in full-time education after leaving the school. The school has received a range of awards in the past few years. These include the School Achievement Award and the Sportsmark Gold in 2003 and Healthy Eating Award in 2002. The school benefits from Excellence in Cities funding. It has experienced difficulties in the recruitment of teachers, and this remains the case in religious education.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2630	Alan Haigh	Lead inspector	
13448	Dawn Lloyd	Lay inspector	
3758	Anthony Barringer	Team inspector	English, drama
2491	Douglas Beaumont	Team inspector	Design and technology
2628	Jim Edwards	Team inspector	Citizenship, physical education
10448	Michael Elson	Team inspector	Religious education
8873	Charlotte Evers	Team inspector	History
17868	Eileen Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art
10782	Henry Moreton	Team inspector	Mathematics
3930	Roy Pitcher	Team Inspector	Geography, special educational needs
20767	Jerry Royle	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, music
24887	Yvonne Salmons	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is **good** and improving; much of its work is very good, and some is excellent. There are some areas in need of improvement. The school provides good value for money. Standards are average and achievement is good in all years. Pupils progress well in the main. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils like school, are excellently cared for and work hard. The headteacher provides very good leadership, and management overall is good but governance is unsatisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The 2003 GCSE results for five or more A* to C grades were the best ever and much better than those in similar schools.
- The upward trend in results at all stages is faster than the national upward trend.
- The English results of 14 year olds were much better than those in similar schools in 2003 but their mathematics results were much poorer than those in similar schools.
- Standards are above average in English and art at 14 but below average in design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), modern foreign languages and religious education.
- Pupils are well behaved, thoughtful and responsible reflecting the excellent care and very good support provided for them; the Behaviour Improvement Project works very well.
- The inclusive curriculum has very good breadth and the innovative nature of provision for 14 to 16 year olds is helping to improve the unsatisfactory attendance figures.
- The very good links with the community and with other schools and colleges are greatly enhanced by Sports College status.
- The statutory requirements to provide religious education for 14 16 year olds, to teach citizenship and to ensure that all pupils attend a daily act of collective worship are not met.
- The headteacher's very good and innovative leadership ensures improvement and enables the school to achieve a deservedly high reputation.
- Governance is unsatisfactory but is improving because an increasing number of keen and supportive governors hold the school to account.

The school is more effective than at the last inspection (January 1999) and continues to improve. Very good leadership and efficient management are driving up standards more quickly than nationally in all years. Teaching is better than it was. Most of the key issues raised in the last report have been addressed satisfactorily but the provision for religious education for older pupils has deteriorated. Recent problems in mathematics have largely been resolved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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' **achievements** are **good** by the ages of 14 and 16. The standards of work are average overall. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds show that pupils' standards were above average in English, below average in mathematics and average in science when compared with all schools. Compared with similar schools (measured by pupils' prior attainment), English results were well above average, mathematics results were well below and science results were below. The school's targets were met in English and science but not in mathematics. The

upward trend is faster than the national one largely because of the improvements made by girls. There are now clear improvements in mathematics.

The GCSE results, measured by pupils' average points scores in 2003, were below the national average but better than those of similar schools. The proportion gaining five or more GCSE passes with grades A* to C was much better than that in similar schools. There is a faster upward trend than nationally and the school's targets were exceeded for A* to C grades but not for A* to G grades. Boys have done relatively less well than girls in the recent GCSE examinations. Standards are above average in English and art for 14 year olds but below average in design and technology, ICT, modern foreign languages and religious education at that age. They are also above average at age 16 in history but well below in religious education. Pupils are achieving very well in English at 14 but unsatisfactorily in design and technology at that age. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are in line with those of other pupils. The gifted and talented pupils' achievements are also good. Pupils' **personal development** and their **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** are **good**. Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are good; most are respectful and sensible. Relationships are very good but attendance is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **good quality of education**. Overall, the **teaching is good** at all stages, being a little better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Teachers encourage and engage pupils very well. They manage behaviour skilfully, and very good planning together with good subject knowledge enables good learning. Pupils work hard and get on very well with fellow pupils and their teachers. The good curriculum has some strong aspects, notably its inclusiveness and the very good and wide provision for 14 to 16 year olds. There are significant gaps in religious education and citizenship. The school has recruitment difficulties in religious education. Care is excellent and support and guidance are very good. Careers and options guidance are good. There are very good links with schools, colleges and the community and good links with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher provides excellent vision and **very good leadership**, supported by very capable and hardworking senior colleagues. The senior team and other staff provide **good management** and satisfactory quality assurance. The governors rely too heavily on the headteacher and fail to meet some statutory responsibilities. They provide adequate support and some keen and hardworking governors challenge the school well. However, **governance is unsatisfactory** overall. The school is ambitious to sustain improvement and keen to learn. Relationships are very good – all staff and pupils are valued and respected.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with most of what the school offers and all who responded to the questionnaire said the school expected their children to try their best. Pupils agree with this and are genuinely proud of their school; most like attending. Parents like the induction arrangements. Parents and pupils say the school is run well and agree that teaching is good but expressed some concerns about behaviour. Inspectors, however, judged behaviour to be good.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards and improve achievements in design and technology, ICT and modern foreign languages for 11 to 14 year olds, and in religious education for all pupils.
- Improve attendance by persuading parents to value their children's education more.
- Ensure that religious education is taught to 14 to 16 year old pupils.
- Implement the National Curriculum requirements for teaching citizenship and ensure the governors fulfil all their statutory responsibilities, including those for collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils' achievements are good overall and are relatively better at age 16 than at age 14. Standards of work at 14 and 16 are in line with those in most schools and there have been clear improvements in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 recently. Girls' standards and achievements continue to be better than those of boys but the gap is narrowing.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The 2003 results for five or more passes at GCSE with grades A* to C were the school's best ever and much better than those in similar schools.
- The upward trend in National Curriculum test results at 14 and GCSE results at 16 is faster than the national upward trend.
- The English results at 14 were much better in 2003 than those in similar schools, but mathematics results at that age were much poorer.
- Pupils achieve very well at 14 in English but not well enough in design and technology at that age.
- The standards of 14 year olds are below average in design and technology, ICT, modern foreign languages and religious education.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.2 (34.2)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	33.9 (32.0)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	33.6 (32.6)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 232 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- 1 Pupils' standards on arrival at the school are below average overall and this is especially seen in their low standards in English. By the age of 14 standards of attainment are average overall. Recent results in National Curriculum tests indicate above average standards at 14 in English but below average standards in mathematics and average standards in science. Targets were met in English and science but not in mathematics in 2003. When compared with similar schools, as indicated by pupils' prior attainment, these test results show standards as well above average in English, well below in mathematics and below in science. There is an upward trend in test results at age 14 that is faster than the national trend although the *value added* measures from 11 to 14 indicate that pupils have not made sufficient progress. Girls outperform boys by a margin that is a little wider than the national one at age 14.
- 2 The achievements of 14 year olds are generally good although there is wide variation across subjects. Girls continue to do better than boys but the gap is narrowing. Pupils achieve very well in English at that age and better than expected in science, art, history, music and physical education. Their achievements are satisfactory in mathematics, drama, geography, ICT, modern foreign languages and religious education. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well overall but their progress is often restricted because there is too little in-class support in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. Gifted and talented pupils also achieve well.

- 3 The standards of pupils' work are above average in English and art at 14 but below average in design and technology, ICT, modern foreign languages and religious education. They are average in all other subjects. Staffing problems account for below average standards in modern foreign languages, ICT and religious education, and unsatisfactory teaching leads to below average standards in design and technology. Staffing problems have also held standards down in mathematics but these have been resolved and standards are now rising.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	49 (38)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	84 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	31.0 (34.7)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 207 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- 4 The GCSE results have been moving up in recent years at a faster rate than results nationally but again the *value added* measures indicate too little progress from age 14 to 16. However, the 2003 average GCSE points score per pupil, although below the national average in comparison with all schools, was above average when compared with similar schools. Half of all 16 year olds achieved five or more GCSE passes with grades A* to C, the school's best results ever, and four percentage points ahead of the school's realistic target. The A* to G grades results dipped in 2003 and targets were just missed. The school puts down this drop to boys' unsatisfactory attitudes to work and several failing to complete their courses and examinations.
- 5 The main reason for improving results is the girls' good performances; the gap between their results and boys' results is larger than the national gap although the school has employed strategies that are helping to reduce the gap. These are working well in science and modern foreign languages. Boys also do very well in history but not well enough in mathematics. The 2003 GCSE results were particularly good in English literature and history but not good enough in English language, science and geography. The average total points score per pupil, although below the national average and lower than in 2002, was better than that in similar schools.
- 6 Pupils' overall achievements at 16 are good and relatively a little better than at 14. Better teaching and a more mature approach to learning by the older pupils explain this. About three-quarters of all pupils continue in full-time education after leaving the school. This is well above the local education authority average. Pupils' achievements are good in all subjects except mathematics, drama and geography where they are satisfactory. There was insufficient evidence to judge achievements and standards in religious education and citizenship. Standards are average in all other subjects at 16 except history where they are above average. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well overall but in English and history they achieve especially well. The most able historians follow courses at age 16 that are normally taught to sixth formers.
- 7 Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well at this stage of their education although the assessment of their work does not link closely enough to their individual education plans. These pupils make good progress as, from Year 7, emphasis is laid upon developing their literacy skills. This is quite successful and virtually all pupils attain GCSE passes albeit with lower grades. For those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, progress in literacy is supported well by the school's excellent Behaviour Improvement Project. The progress of some pupils with less severe needs is not as good as might be expected because there is too little in-class support available.

- 8 Pupils' English language and literacy skills are average overall across all subjects. Most are articulate and confident, and read well. Speaking and listening are good and this links to well-planned lessons and good attitudes to learning. Writing is more variable and teachers often accept poorly presented or incomplete work. The school's successful literacy thrust is well illustrated in science, with key words being stressed and displayed clearly, and in history, where articulate responses are expected and obtained.
- 9 Pupils have an average competence in their use of mathematics across the curriculum and the support for pupils in the development of their mathematical understanding is good. Teachers have received guidance on how to teach numeracy in their subjects and this is proving effective. A 'methods' booklet gives further support, and the teacher responsible for the co-ordination across the school is continuing to work with individual departments to raise the profile of mathematics and improve standards.
- 10 Pupils' competence in ICT is below average at age 14 but in line with expectations by age 16. At the previous inspection the provision for ICT and its co-ordination across the curriculum were judged to be unsatisfactory. Although there has been an improvement there are still some subjects where ICT is not being fully used to support learning. The co-ordination has improved and there is now good use in several areas, notably mathematics, geography, history and special educational needs provision, and satisfactory use in several others. It is used too infrequently in art, design and technology, science and music.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to learning are **good**. There are **very good** relationships between pupils and adults, which lead to **good** behaviour in Years 7 to 9 and **very good** behaviour in Years 10 and 11. Because attendance remains below the national median it is **unsatisfactory**, but it is improving steadily as a result of **very good** monitoring procedures. Provision for pupils' personal development is generally **good**, with provision for moral and social development being **very good** and provision for spiritual and cultural development being **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good procedures that encourage good behaviour and attitudes are consistently and successfully applied and are helping raise standards.
- Very good relationships between pupils and adults lead to effective, collaborative learning.
- Attendance is below the national median, unauthorised absence is still too high, but very good procedures to encourage good attendance are resulting in continually improving figures.
- The school is very good at enabling pupils to recognise the principles that distinguish right from wrong.
- Pupils are very good at accepting the responsibilities of living together in a community.

Commentary

- 11 The very good behaviour of the majority of pupils is a result of a comprehensive policy that teachers and support staff use most effectively. Pupils understand and follow the simple, straightforward rules that are prominently displayed around the school. They are aware of the consequences of misbehaviour, but are also motivated by a desire to please their teachers and to achieve well in their schoolwork. Tangible rewards, such as vouchers and certificates, inspire them to try hard. Additionally, the competitive element, part of the Sports College ethos, of gaining points for their form or house is also an important factor in promoting good behaviour and serious effort, especially amongst the younger pupils. For those pupils who find it difficult to behave well or to sustain their interest and concentration in lessons, the school has devised an innovative and extensive support system.

- 12 The Behaviour Improvement Project includes a detailed analysis of pupils' attitudes and conduct, which enables staff to identify those in need of support, often pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. A range of strategies is used to work with groups or individuals, sometimes with the help of staff from the school-based BEST team (Behaviour Education Support Team), who also work in the cluster primary schools. The establishment of this programme has meant that there are now no exclusions from school. Previously, the rate of exclusions had been a little above average. Instead, pupils are given a five-day placement in the Behaviour Improvement Centre, where they are helped to explore the reasons for their poor behaviour before returning to main school. Although the system is in the early stages of development, it has already shown successful outcomes and has attracted national interest as a possible model of good practice.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1149	90	7
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	5	2	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	7	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	6	0	0

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

- 13 Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils, teachers and adult helpers are one of the school's clear strengths. In lessons, pupils work very well together, for example, when working with a partner in physical education, or taking part in group discussions. In a science lesson, pupils quickly organised themselves into groups to set up equipment and co-operated very well when conducting their experiment. They show great respect for one another, always listening carefully to the contributions that others make; for example, in an English lesson, pupils listened appreciatively to the improvised dialogues that were being performed. Because there is such good rapport between pupils and teachers, they can answer and ask questions with confidence. This means that they are well-motivated learners. They maintain their interest and

concentration throughout lessons and consequently achieve good knowledge and understanding.

- 14 Relationships outside lessons are equally good. Pupils behave well in the narrow corridors, showing care and consideration for the needs of others. They are courteous and helpful to visitors and keen to talk about aspects of the school that make them proud, such as the wide range of sporting activities and the strong links with colleges. Adults who come into the school regularly, for example the community constable, primary headteachers, employers and college staff, are unanimous in their appreciation of the welcoming, friendly atmosphere that they find, which results from the pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour.
- 15 Attendance in the last academic year was below the expected national figure but had still improved significantly since the time of the last inspection. A steady improvement has been maintained over the last three years as a result of intensive efforts by the school to impress upon pupils the importance of good attendance and how this relates to good achievement. Positive incentives to attend well, such as certificates and prizes, with the added element of competition through the house system, motivate pupils to come to school regularly, while opportunities for pupils in the last two years of school to choose college courses as part of their studies have had a significant impact on their attendance.
- 16 A comprehensive monitoring system identifies those pupils whose attendance is not as good as it should be, so that careful procedures can be put in place to support them and their families, before referral to the Education Welfare Service becomes necessary. As a result of the very good systems that the school employs to promote good attendance, figures so far this academic year are well above those in previous years. The majority of pupils have good records of attendance, although the school is concerned that too many are taken on holiday in term time, in spite of strenuous efforts to convince parents of the detrimental effect that this has on pupils' achievement. Punctuality, especially when moving around the school between lessons, was criticised at the last inspection, but is no longer an issue.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.5	School data	2.8
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

- 17 At the time of the last inspection, the school's provision for pupils' moral and social development was good. Since then the school has continued to emphasise the value of each pupil and to develop ways of meeting every pupil's needs. Teachers treat pupils with respect and from their example pupils learn to understand and respect other people's feelings and values. Many initiatives have supported and developed the quality of the school's provision. Pupils have received particular benefits from inputs such as those of the Behaviour Education Support Team and of the Behaviour Improvement Project. Pupils now respond with increased maturity because they feel more strongly that they are valued and so come to value more what the school can do for them.
- 18 Because expectations of pupils' behaviour are high, the school is good at enabling pupils to be enterprising and to take responsibility. As a result, pupils show good interest and involvement in the life and purpose of the school. The school is very good at helping pupils to develop an understanding of, and ability to apply, the principles that distinguish right from wrong. The school council works well and engenders in pupils a sense that they have a role to fulfil within the school and, through the school, into the wider community. The care, support and guidance that the school gives to pupils make a very good contribution to their moral and social development.

- 19 At the time of the last inspection, provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development was judged in need of some improvement. Some aspects have improved. Intensive one-to-one engagement with pupils through mentoring and other programmes, such as anger management, have contributed well to development of pupils' self-knowledge. The introduction of *circle time* has taken this process further. In other respects provision has deteriorated. The absence of religious education in Years 10 and 11 is a major omission and leaves pupils uninformed about the role of religion in people's lives. Assemblies make a useful weekly contribution but the school does not fulfil its statutory obligation to provide pupils with the opportunity to engage daily in an act of collective worship. Tutors' use of the thought for the day is variable but generally makes little impact on pupils. Departmental documentation and schemes of work give little guidance to teachers as to how they may develop in pupils the capacity for reflection and spiritual awareness.
- 20 Provision for spiritual and cultural development is strong in art. During the inspection, teachers referred to Islam's preference for pattern rather than figurative representation and to the spiritual significance of masks in African tradition. The artwork by pupils displayed around the school is an impressive public presentation of cultural variety. School productions and concerts in the summer and at Christmas provide further opportunities for pupils. Despite these valuable individual opportunities, pupils showed little evidence that their perspectives ranged confidently from local to global dimensions. Although pupils in Year 7 had a Cultural Awareness Day recently, across the school as whole the effort to help pupils appreciate the diversity and richness of other cultures is still not systematic enough.
- 21 Without a school policy, aspects of pupils' personal development, such as the spiritual and cultural, are unplanned and may easily be overlooked. Similarly, without planning, pupils who have little direct personal experience risk growing up insufficiently prepared for the ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary Britain.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **good quality of education**. Overall, the **teaching is good**. Pupils work hard and learn well. The good curriculum has some strong aspects and some significant gaps. Care for pupils and for their welfare, health and safety is **excellent** and support and guidance are **very good**. Careers and options guidance are **good**. There are **very good** links with other schools, colleges and the community and **good** links with parents.

Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of teaching and of learning is **good** and the assessment of pupils' progress is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are a little better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- English teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9 and history teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in design and technology is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching is better now than it was in 1999 and in Years 10 and 11 it is all at least satisfactory.
- Teachers plan lessons well and engage, encourage and challenge pupils very successfully.
- Very good relationships and insistence on good behaviour are evident in all years but particularly effective in ensuring good learning with 14 to 16 year olds.
- The learning of pupils with special educational needs is generally good but is hampered by too little in-class support.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 151 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (3%)	35 (23%)	63 (42%)	44 (29%)	4 (3%)	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.

- 22 Overall, the teaching is good at all stages, being a little better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. More than a quarter of all lessons were very good or excellent and in excess of two-thirds were good or better. These figures are a clear improvement on the last inspection. All the teaching of 14 to 16 year olds was at least satisfactory. Three of the four unsatisfactory lessons were in design and technology and the other was in mathematics.
- 23 Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good in English and good in science, art, geography, history, music and physical education. It is unsatisfactory in design and technology and satisfactory in all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is very good in history. It is satisfactory in mathematics and ICT and good in all other subjects.
- 24 Teachers are particularly successful at engaging and encouraging their pupils. This is a direct consequence of their planning challenging work and insisting on good behaviour. Teachers avoid confrontations and rarely need to raise their voices. When pupils need to be admonished, this is done firmly and tactfully. Teachers' good subject knowledge gives them confidence to try a range of approaches, resulting in good learning. The recent move to four-part lessons is proving successful.
- 25 Pupils are particularly highly challenged in English in Years 7 to 9 and in history and physical education in all years. There is too little challenge in design and technology lessons for 11 to 14 year olds as planning and methodology are often unsatisfactory. Behaviour is especially good in science, art, history and physical education.
- 26 Pupils work hard and get on very well with fellow pupils and their teachers. Lessons usually start promptly and pupils are occupied for the full 60 minutes in the vast majority of lessons. The quality of learning is good overall and again is a little better with 14 to 16 year olds than with younger pupils. The older pupils' sense of purpose and added maturity are very evident. Although there is a boy-girl difference in results, the difference in attitudes and in learning was not apparent in most subjects. Boys learn less well in mathematics and geography but strategies employed in science and history are very effective in improving their learning.
- 27 The teaching of pupils with severe special educational and behavioural needs is consistently good and often very good. The detailed planning to meet the personal needs of pupils with the greatest needs is commendable but the teaching of others with fewer specific needs has not been adequately addressed yet. Many teachers make inconsistent use of pupils' individual education plans. The learning mentors and support assistants have a significant impact on their pupils but there are too few to meet the needs of most pupils in many subjects. The teaching of literacy to pupils with special needs is good. The counselling skills of mentors are good.

Assessment

- 28 The quality of assessment is satisfactory overall. Assessment data, including *value added* indicators, is systematically collected as the pupils move through the school. This is used to set targets for the school and for pupils and is made available to heads of department and form tutors to formally monitor pupils' progress twice per year. The data is used well for grouping pupils and ensuring that all teachers understand the ability profile and potential of their teaching groups. However, degrees of understanding and use of the data vary considerably at head of

department and individual teacher levels. The data is most effectively used in English, science, art, physical education and special educational needs. There is no consistency in the quality of the individual pupil reviews held for pupils who are kept back from school assemblies on a rota.

- 29 The quality and consistency of marking across the curriculum are only satisfactory, and in design and technology, history, geography and physical education they are unsatisfactory. In science, art and the special educational needs area they are good. In English, science and art marking is well linked to National Curriculum levels but not so in modern foreign languages. The school is committed to the Assessment for Learning project and this is proving effective in raising standards. In-service training is beginning to give teachers new assessment skills. However, the initiative is not yet fully established nor is it clear how these assessments fit within the framework of the school's assessment policy.
- 30 Assessment was a key issue for action in the last report. Some progress has been made through new initiatives but inconsistency of practice remains. Improvement since the last inspection is only satisfactory.

The curriculum

The breadth of opportunities is **very good** overall. The curriculum is very innovative, with the school providing a **very good** range of courses, especially for older pupils, clearly benefiting from Sports College status. Provision for religious education is poor. Provision for citizenship in all years is unsatisfactory, and aspects of modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory. Some aspects of the school's accommodation are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum overall meets the needs of all pupils very well.
- The school provides a very good range of academic and vocational courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The provision for religious education is poor and that for citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- There is a good range of enrichment activities for Year 10 and 11 pupils.

Commentary

- 31 The quality and range of learning opportunities throughout the school are very good. The school provides a very good breadth and balance of curriculum, which mainly meets statutory requirements. The exceptions are religious education and citizenship. In Year 9, grouping arrangements in modern foreign languages do not meet all pupils' needs. The curriculum is having a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes towards their learning, attendance and behaviour, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- 32 The school provides a good range of courses that meets pupils' needs very well. It goes beyond the usual National Curriculum pattern. It includes a very wide range of vocational subjects alongside the academic and applied GCSE options, several of which involve attendance at one of the local colleges. Pupils, including some with special educational needs, have opportunities to obtain qualifications in diverse areas such as health and social care, the built environment, construction, graphics and photography, hairdressing, horticulture and small animal care, motor vehicle and paint spraying, food and technology, engineering, child development and ICT.
- 33 The school monitors its curriculum to ensure there is appropriate breadth and provision for the full ability range of pupils. It carefully balances the needs of its pupils so that each is able to access courses that they wish, while at the same time ensuring that most pupils are also able to access the full range of opportunities within school. This is a significant undertaking and the school does it very well. It offers effective support to individuals and their parents so that

sensible choices are made. The school refines its work so that the 'best fit' is improving year on year.

- 34 Pupils receive appropriate sex education, and guidance on alcohol and drug misuse. A wide range of issues is covered through a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme, addressed through the tutorial system. The younger pupils respond to this provision more positively than the older pupils do.
- 35 The enrichment programmes outside of lessons are very good. Year 10 and 11 pupils are able to gain certification in a wide range of activities, or simply to pursue their interests for personal fulfilment. The range includes Duke of Edinburgh Award (Bronze and Silver), languages, Junior Sports Leaders, First Aid, Young Life Savers, Young Enterprise, The Prince's Trust, Community Awards and Initial Awards, photography and Millennium Volunteers. The many benefits of Sports College status include a very wide take-up of GCSE physical education and the successful introduction of a GCSE dance course.
- 36 Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education and employment. Most take advantage of a programme of work experience in Year 10. The careers programme, combined with very good links with local colleges, gives most pupils a good awareness of appropriate courses and job opportunities available to them.
- 37 The pupils with special educational needs benefit from the full curriculum. Some pupils are voluntarily disapplied from French in order to receive extra literacy lessons. The curriculum is very inclusive. Senior management have a very broad perception of inclusion, and are committed to ensuring that all staff take up this approach. The school has taken several successful innovative decisions in amending the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 to try to make it suitable for all its pupils.
- 38 There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum in all subjects except religious education and, temporarily, geography. The match between qualifications and subjects taught is good apart from in those two subjects. The lack of qualified religious education teaching is adversely affecting standards in the subject. There is a shortage of learning support assistants. Staffing arrangements in physical education are particularly good. The school has experienced difficulties in recruiting teachers of mathematics and still has problems in recruitment in religious education.
- 39 Significant improvements have been made to the school's accommodation since the previous inspection, and there is now sufficient suitable accommodation for almost all subjects. A new teaching block provides very good classroom accommodation, and the older parts of the school have been refurbished. Accommodation for English is very good and it is good for art. There is, however still some unsatisfactory accommodation. There are no practice rooms for music, the drama room is unsuitable, and the spread of rooms for religious education makes the co-ordination of the subject difficult. There are no social areas with seats for pupils to use outside lesson time, although the school is creating an outdoor area for the older pupils. The accommodation for physical education is unsatisfactory. It is restricting the range of sports that can be taught. This is a major weakness for a Sports College. The school's planned new Sports Centre is due to open in October 2004 and promises to improve the facilities significantly. The school's investment in a number of CCTV cameras has successfully reduced damage around the school buildings and helped improve behaviour and punctuality.
- 40 Provision of resources for learning is satisfactory overall and there have been significant improvements since the last inspection. Funding for books and materials in departments is adequate. An important innovation in all curriculum areas, which has had a beneficial influence on teaching, is the provision of interactive whiteboards in some classrooms. These are used very well and teachers are beginning to explore their full potential. One facility that has improved dramatically is the learning resources centre. At the time of the last inspection the library was

poor. Now, the excellent, purpose-built community learning centre provides an outstanding facility. It combines a good book stock, especially fiction, with generous computer provision.

- 41 Overall, the improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection have been good. Resources have improved, including those for ICT. Classroom support has improved with teaching assistants developing expertise in particular subjects, deployed by the departments to where they are needed most. Staff absences have halved. Above all, the school has moved the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 forward in a very innovative way. Some weaknesses remain, however. Provision in religious education has worsened, and citizenship is not taught systematically. Accommodation remains unsatisfactory in physical education, although there have been some improvements.

Care, guidance and support

The way in which the school cares for pupils and ensures their health, safety and welfare is **excellent**. The school not only gives **very good** support, advice and guidance to pupils but also involves them well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures to secure a healthy and safe environment for pupils are excellent.
- The school is very good at ensuring that each pupil has a good and trusting relationship with one or more adults in the school.
- Pupils have very good access to well-informed support, advice and guidance.
- The school's arrangements for the induction of new pupils are very good.
- The school is good at involving pupils in its work and development, through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Commentary

- 42 The previous report found that the school had successfully created a caring environment, in which pupils felt secure. The pastoral structure was clear and provided very well for pupils' support, welfare and guidance. Since then, the school has continued to develop the ways in which it cares for pupils and ensures their health, safety and welfare. Provision is now excellent. The school shows the highest regard for pupils' well-being and provides all, including those with special educational needs, with an environment that is consistently safe and supportive.
- 43 The operation of health and safety procedures is exemplary. The school has taken action to eliminate or minimise hazards and thorough maintenance ensures that buildings and equipment are clean and safe. The school is now in premises that are enclosed and secure. Preventable accidents in school are rare but when they occur members of staff trained in first aid deal with them. The school monitors accidents and incidents and uses them to evaluate and enhance its procedures. Teachers take pupils off site, for sports fixtures or field trips and outings, only after satisfactory completion of the required risk assessment. The site manager and the health and safety committee are very effective in ensuring that the school complies fully with its statutory requirements and with those of the local education authority.
- 44 The arrangements for child protection are comprehensive. The school's deputy head is a trained and experienced child protection officer. The school identifies vulnerable pupils and allocates to each a key worker. The deputy head meets with heads of year regularly and they meet regularly with their teams. Pupils assert with confidence that their form tutors and heads of year know well how each pupil is getting on at school. The school is very effective in ensuring that each pupil has a good and trusting relationship with one or more adults in the school.
- 45 Teachers have very good relationships with pupils, based on mutual respect and detailed knowledge of their achievements and behaviour. The use of frequently updated electronic data

banks ensures that subject teachers and form tutors have the information they need to monitor and enhance pupils' performance. Form tutors meet their pupils every morning and they mentor small groups of them once a week, although this work is not of consistently high quality. Form tutors progress up the school with their pupils so allowing a sustained and helpful relationship to develop. The school also has an unusually wide range of further programmes of support. These assist both parents and pupils and have had significant success in improving pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance.

- 46 The very good links throughout the school and with other schools and colleges ensure smooth transitions. The local initiatives have developed relationships with primary schools and assisted the successful programme of induction for pupils coming into Year 7. Parents are very complimentary about these arrangements. The school now plans to develop further the continuity of the curriculum from Year 6 to Year 7 by appointing a transition manager.
- 47 The school has a planned programme of careers education with specialist teaching on the timetable for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Provision is more limited in Year 9 but the school sets time aside for pupils and their parents to help them make the right decisions. The school has constructed a curriculum that is finely tuned to meet a wide range of needs and so tries very hard to ensure that pupils choose the course that is right for them. The school proposes to extend specialist careers teaching to pupils in Year 9.
- 48 The minutes of the elected representative council of pupils show that they discuss serious issues responsibly. The council takes and records votes so that the pupils' opinions are clear. The arrangements for lunch are a good example of the value of the council to the school. At midday pupils eat their lunch together and behave well, enjoying what is clearly a pleasant social occasion for them. The catering arrangements are the direct result of the school consulting with the council and then acting on pupils' collective view.
- 49 An assistant head currently chairs and minutes meetings but the council has established a committee to consider new terms of reference. The proposed next stage of development is for the council to become more autonomous by, for example, electing its own officers. The school is good, and getting better, at involving pupils in its work and development through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Most parents are pleased with the education that the school provides, and links with them are **good**. There are extensive, fruitful links with other schools and colleges, many of them as a result of the school's Sports College status. Links with the local community are also **very strong**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good links with other schools and colleges extend pupils' learning opportunities and create rewarding partnerships in the local area.
- Extensive links with the local community enrich pupils' educational experiences and contribute positively to their personal development.
- The quality and range of information provided for parents are very good, but school reports are too complex and not informative enough.

Commentary

- 50 Links with other schools, colleges and education establishments play a major part in the life of the school. Sports College status has a significant impact on the way the school works in partnership with primary and secondary schools in its cluster group. Regular visits from Holden Lane staff have enabled teachers in other schools to develop their own skills and to extend the range of sporting activities offered to pupils. In addition, continuity is being developed in physical

education and also in other areas of the curriculum, such as ICT, so that pupils build on their previous learning when they enter the secondary school.

- 51 Pupils who have gained their Junior Sports Leader Award help with activities at the primary schools, which boosts their own self-esteem and helps to develop relationships with the primary pupils that will aid their move to the secondary school. Familiarity with the high school teachers and with the building, through visits and use of the facilities, means that the transition from primary to secondary is not stressful. Parents agree that arrangements to help pupils settle into their new environment are very good. Another beneficial link with primary schools is seen in the work of the recently established Behaviour Education Support Team (BEST), which provides help for individuals, for families and for teachers.
- 52 Curricular links are also being developed with the further education and sixth form colleges, so that courses can meet the needs of pupils effectively. The school works closely with the colleges to provide enhanced option choices for pupils in their last two years. The success of these links is clearly seen in improved attendance and behaviour among the older pupils, and in the high numbers who choose to continue in full-time education or jobs with training after the age of 16.
- 53 The school is justifiably proud of its links with the local community, many of which derive from Sports College status. The school's sporting facilities are in regular use by local organisations and the intensive activity on the site is encouraging more and more local people to become enthusiastically involved. Parents and other adults have opportunities to qualify as coaches and sports officials and are offering their expertise to sports clubs in the area. Pupils also benefit from the school's links with other sections of the local community. For example, the community police officer takes part in formal discussions with the school council, and local employers support the school's Young Enterprise company, provide work experience placements and speakers for the careers education programme. Pupils make their contribution to the local community through a range of voluntary work, fund raising for charities and taking part in dance, drama and musical performances. A Summer Sports Award evening, sponsored by a local firm, is held for the local cluster of schools.
- 54 The school communicates with parents in a variety of ways, making very effective use of new technology to keep them up to date with developments and changes, achievements of pupils and information about individual pastoral matters. The well-presented website allows parents to join in the celebration of pupils' successes, while text messages alert them immediately to any problems related to attendance. Regular newsletters are interesting and useful. They strongly encourage parental involvement in their children's education and help to reinforce the social and moral values that are an intrinsic part of the school's ethos. Other written information includes leaflets that give parents specific guidance on how they can help pupils to achieve, for example, by supporting their coursework and their approach to examination revision.
- 55 A wide range of activities is arranged for parents, from traditional consultation evenings to special courses to help them cope with behavioural problems, led by the Behaviour Education Support Team that is based in the school. Most parents feel that pupils are expected to work hard and think that they are taught well. However, parents feel that they are given insufficient information on the progress that pupils are making. The inspection team finds this criticism justified: school reports are presented in a format that is too complex, which does not describe what pupils know, understand and can do in each subject area.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher provides **very good** leadership and management is **good** but governance is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's excellent clarity of vision and sense of purpose are driving the school forward well.
- Senior staff are very capable and effective in enabling the school to meet its aims.
- Governors have not ensured that several statutory curricular requirements are met.

Commentary

- 56 The headteacher's vision for the school is excellent and her dynamic, purposeful approach has welded a very effective senior team and a hardworking, united staff who demonstrate a clear sense of purpose in their work. Strategic planning is good and improving; there is now a realistic number of targets, reflecting the school's aims well. The Sports College ethos permeates the whole curriculum and gives staff and pupils an additional sense of pride and purpose which drives them on to try harder.
- 57 Leaders inspire others well – the management structure is clear and simple and there is a shared understanding of what the school is about. Roles are defined well and there is much mutual support within the senior team. Subject departments are largely well led and a positive team spirit and very clear vision are very evident across the school. The school's commitment to inclusion and the promotion of equality of opportunity are very good. The headteacher and her senior colleagues are very successful in providing good role models for staff and pupils.
- 58 The effectiveness of management is good and the school monitors its performance well. Action, such as half-termly department reviews, is largely effective. Much data is gathered and analysed and used to raise standards, demonstrated, for example, by innovative strategies to improve boys' performance. Standards are rising and teaching is improving. Improvements in some areas criticised at the time of the last inspection, assessment practice for example, have been too slow. Subject management is good overall but is unsatisfactory in design and technology, physical education and religious education. Assessment is only satisfactory, attendance remains unsatisfactory, and morning registration time is rarely used well. There has been a deterioration in the religious education provision for 14 to 16 year olds. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory overall.
- 59 Governance is unsatisfactory. Governors rely heavily on the headteacher and have not made the school sufficiently accountable for some aspects of its work. Curricular gaps in citizenship and religious education have not been fully acknowledged or remedied and collective worship requirements are not met. There are many experienced and committed governors and new blood is helping governors to be more involved in shaping the vision and direction of the school. This aspect of their work is satisfactory at present and is improving. Some governors have an insecure grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- 60 The provision for pupils with learning and behavioural problems is well led and organised by the deputy headteacher and the Behaviour Improvement Project manager. Their vision for the development of particular teaching skills amongst teachers is notable and proving to be effective. The special educational needs co-ordinator spends too little time monitoring the general teaching of pupils with special needs.
- 61 The school is very good at supporting new teachers, especially those who are newly qualified. There is a comprehensive programme of induction. Training needs are identified well and largely met, addressing whole-school, departmental and individual needs. There are

recruitment difficulties that are hampering progress – in religious education for example – but all reasonable steps are taken to minimise these problems.

- 62 The performance of teachers and support staff is closely monitored and classroom observations take place. Senior management undertake departmental reviews. Much good training takes place within school on closure days. Six teachers are undertaking research projects and the outcomes of these are already starting to be of benefit to other teachers. The school is very successful in retaining staff and staff absences have more than halved this past year.
- 63 Financial management is good and funding arising from Sports College status, the Excellence in Cities initiative and the Leadership Incentive Grant is used well to promote the school's aims. There are clear procedures to allocate funding in accordance with the educational priorities defined in the school development plan. Once essential costs have been met there is little flexibility in the basic budget, but the school is able to enhance facilities and resources for pupils by seeking additional funding from external sources. The large budget balance is earmarked for the building project that is just starting. Principles of best value are applied well in relation to the purchase of supplies and services, and close monitoring of expenditure ensures that money is spent wisely. The school provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,400,570
Total expenditure	4,130,950
Expenditure per pupil	3492

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	275,882
Balance carried forward to the next	545,502

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN 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

- Achievement by the end of Year 9 is very good, and good by the end of Year 11.
- Teaching is very good in Years 7, 8 and 9, and good in Years 10 and 11.
- Results in national tests in 2003 at the age of 14 were above the national average and well above average compared with similar schools.
- In the GCSE in 2003, results in English overall were well above those for similar schools but results for English language were below the national average.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

- 64 The results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above the national average and were well above those of similar schools. Girls did better than boys. Bearing in mind very low levels of literacy on entry, the achievement of pupils of all abilities is very good by the age of 14. There has been a clear upward trend over the last three years. Results in the GCSE in 2003 for English language were below the national average with boys performing markedly worse than girls. In the literature examination, however, results were above the national average with girls and boys performing better than their respective national averages. Performance in English overall was well above the national median for similar schools. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well by the age of 16. The gifted and talented pupils achieve especially well.
- 65 Standards of work at the end of Year 9 are above average and match closely recent results in national tests. Work in literature at the end of Year 11 is above average. Standards in language are average and are higher than those reflected in the GCSE results of 2003, which were untypical.
- 66 The overall standard of speaking and listening at the age of 14 is above that found nationally. Pupils listen attentively both to teachers and to classmates when working together in pairs. They answer questions willingly and fluently. Their confidence springs from the frequent opportunities provided in class to discuss issues and from their views being valued and respected by teachers. By the end of Year 9 almost all pupils use standard English. In group work, pupils listen patiently and take turns sensibly to make contributions. One group in Year 7, for example, responding to excellent teaching, described articulately how they allocated responsibilities when working together to make good progress. By the age of 16, the quality of oral work is above that in most schools. High attaining pupils in Year 11, for example, were sensitive and mature in their discussion of complex themes in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.
- 67 General standards of reading comprehension throughout the school are above the national expectation. A significant number of pupils, however, join the school with a reading age well below their actual age. These pupils receive intensive specialist support and make rapid progress. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils study with understanding and enjoy a wide range of literature. A high attaining class in Year 9, for example, gave a spirited group reading of a famous speech from *Henry V*, with boys making a particularly robust contribution. Pupils are encouraged to extend their reading through regular use of the excellent learning resources

centre with its very good stock of fiction. By the age of 14, pupils can identify and describe accurately such features as plot, themes and characters in plays and novels. In Years 10 and 11 pupils study more complex and challenging texts in great detail. High attaining pupils in Year 11, for example, revising their work on the poetry of World War I, discussed perceptively the powerful emotional impact of poets' beliefs and use of language.

- 68 The standard of pupils' writing is above that found nationally. Final drafts of work are carefully presented and neatly written. Good use is made of word processing, especially with the revising and editing of work. Pupils write successfully for a range of purposes and readers, especially to persuade and influence others. Lively and stimulating assignments arise from analysis of broadsheet and tabloid newspapers. Most pupils, regardless of their level of attainment, enjoy writing because of imaginative and interesting teaching. The best work of high attaining pupils matches high National Curriculum levels and is carefully planned, interesting to read and, in the main, accurate in detail. Lower attaining pupils, although writing enthusiastically, tend to make frequent errors with paragraphing, sentence construction and details of spelling and punctuation. By the end of Year 11 many pupils develop more skilled and accurate writing. They write most effectively in personal reflective pieces and in response to their study of literature. The best work of high attaining pupils is carefully considered and accurate in detail and has a sense of individual style. Some coursework on the character of Lady Macbeth showed very thorough knowledge of the play as well as shrewd critical understanding of characters, expressed in the appropriate language of literary appreciation.
- 69 The quality of teaching and of learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 is very good. It is never less than satisfactory and is very good or excellent in two-thirds of lessons. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are good in almost all lessons. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good. They plan lessons carefully and objectives are clearly explained so that pupils know exactly what to do. Teachers use questioning skilfully and draw a lively response from the willing pupils. Tasks are set at an appropriate level to match pupils' level of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs are taught with great expertise and care and make good progress. The pace of lessons is brisk and a stimulating variety of approaches is used which sustains pupils' interest and motivation. An outstanding feature of teaching throughout the department is the high quality of relationships in classrooms. Pupils are confident because they know that their contributions will be valued and taken seriously. In a Year 9 class, for example, pupils were very well prepared for their forthcoming national test by excellent teaching in which they were praised, encouraged and taught how to justify critical judgements by close reference to the text. Pupils' attitude to learning is positive because of the strong, supportive ethos of all their teachers. Work is marked consistently and conscientiously and pupils' progress is assessed and recorded in great detail. Clear targets are set for improvement.
- 70 Members of the department share a clear sense of vision and purpose. There is a strong team identity and dynamic. This strength is all the more praiseworthy as the majority of the staff have been appointed comparatively recently and are not very experienced. Standards and achievement are on a strong and sustained upward trend. Much of this success is the direct result of very strong leadership and very efficient management.
- 71 Since the last inspection performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 has improved. Results in the GCSE literature are markedly higher. Pupils' writing is now above the national expectation overall. All these improvements reflect the higher quality of teaching, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9. Another important contribution to the excellent morale in the department has been the impact of the new accommodation with the very good suite of rooms in the new block. Improvements overall have been very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

- 72 In other subjects across the curriculum provision for language and literacy is satisfactory and skills are average but there are significant differences amongst departments. Pupils generally listen attentively and the overall quality of speaking is above that found nationally. In science,

history and geography pupils' response is articulate and fluent. Group work is planned in some subjects but, as yet, not sufficient use is made of discussion as an essential way of learning. Levels of oracy, which are above the national expectation, are not being exploited fully to enhance pupils' learning.

- 73 Almost all pupils read well enough to understand textbooks and other printed materials. In many subjects they are not sufficiently encouraged to read aloud, which they can do well. There is little evidence that pupils are helped with strategies to improve reading for information. Not all departments make sufficient use of the excellent learning resources centre as a regular routine source for research and information. Display of key words is widespread and effective in many curriculum areas.
- 74 Pupils, on the whole, present written work carefully. In the majority of departments marking is unsatisfactory, with too little precise, diagnostic comment and too few specific targets set and little guidance on how to improve. There is a whole-school literacy policy and much staff training has taken place. Some departments or sections, such as science, geography, graphics and history, have developed the initiative to the benefit of pupils' learning. In general, however, practice is inconsistent and patchy but there have been clear improvements in literacy since the last inspection.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in French and German is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staffing difficulties have disrupted pupils' continuity of learning, especially in Years 9 and 11.
- In the middle groups in Years 7 and 8, able pupils and pupils with special needs make too little progress.
- Teachers plan lessons well with clear objectives, and teach enthusiastically.
- In Years 7 to 9, able pupils in the top groups in French, and those studying German make particularly good progress.
- Boys respond well in lessons and, in 2003, boys achieved better GCSE French results than the girls.
- National Curriculum levels are not used routinely as a measure of pupils' progress.

Commentary

- 75 In 2003, the GCSE results in French were broadly average, with the small numbers of boys gaining better results than the girls. In German, comparisons with national averages cannot be made reliably as entry numbers were low. The absence of senior staff, and difficulties recruiting suitable teachers, have disrupted continuity of learning in the current Years 9 and 11 in both languages. Staffing problems are now fully resolved.
- 76 All pupils study French and the ablest pupils also study German from Year 8. By the end of Year 9, standards in French are below average, but pupils' achievement is satisfactory, given the limited time pupils have had for study. Pupils are currently grouped according to their ability in history and this holds back the middle ability pupils. Able pupils in the top groups reach average standards and achieve well. However, in the wide ability middle groups, able pupils make slower progress than others because their learning needs are not always fully met, despite the best efforts of the teachers. Additionally, lack of in-class support for pupils with special needs results in their slow progress and poor concentration. Most other pupils achieve satisfactorily and make sound progress. In German, although standards at the end of Year 9 remain below average, pupils' achievement is good; they learn quickly and respond well in class.

- 77 By Year 11, standards in both languages are broadly average and pupils' achievement is good; accelerated schemes of work and very good guidance have ensured good GCSE preparation in both languages. Pupils understand challenging reading texts and successfully identify key language in recordings of native speakers. In speaking, boys respond well to teachers' questions, but pupils generally lack opportunities to fully develop spoken responses. In writing, pupils in Years 10 and 11 confidently use a range of verb forms and vocabulary appropriate to their ability, but in Years 7 to 9, pupils have few opportunities to write at length. Formal assessments are clearly linked to national standards and regular informal testing supports pupils well; however, routine marking of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 is inconsistent, and National Curriculum levels are not used in day-to-day learning; consequently, pupils are not fully aware of their progress. Gifted and talented pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
- 78 Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Overall, they are good. Most of the lessons seen were good, with two very good lessons. In two lessons in Years 7 to 9, despite satisfactory teaching, some pupils' poor behaviour contributed to unsatisfactory learning. However, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally satisfactory. In all years, teachers plan lessons carefully, with clear objectives and a good range of tasks; they use the foreign language consistently in lessons, and teach enthusiastically. Occasional over-use of textbooks contributes to some pupils' poor motivation and ICT is not sufficiently integrated into pupils' learning.
- 79 Leadership and management are good, and give good direction to the dedicated team. Numbers of boys opting for languages in Year 10 are increasing; assessment data is thoroughly analysed, and positive action outlined in clear planning. Areas for improvement are clearly identified. Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory; pupils' reading skills, and boys' achievement have improved. Weaknesses in speaking still need to be addressed.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11 are improving steadily.
- The GCSE standards are only just below the national average and bearing in mind the low standards on entry and staffing difficulties over the years this reflects good achievement.
- The most able Year 10 pupils have the opportunity to achieve a GCSE in statistics.
- Girls achieve well in GCSE statistics and their very good attitudes enable them to achieve much better than boys in GCSE mathematics.

Commentary

- 80 Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. The results of the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were in line with those in similar schools, as defined by free school meals, but well below similar schools that are measured by their prior attainment. In the same year, the GCSE results at grades A* to C were only just below the national average. Overall, this represents satisfactory achievement by the end of Year 11 given the below average attainment of pupils on entry to the school. The achievement of girls is better than that of boys. The most able Year 10 pupils are entered for GCSE statistics. In 2003 the A* to C pass rate was well above the national average and girls performed particularly well but few boys or girls gain the very highest grade.
- 81 The standard of pupils' work in Year 9 and Year 11 is broadly average. Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work show satisfactory progress is being made. Girls make better progress than boys. Boys show less interest in the subject and can become distracted when

they find the work unchallenging. Standards have generally been maintained since the last inspection even though the department has suffered from some significant staffing problems.

- 82 The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all years. There are many good features. There are a few weaknesses too. The atmosphere in most lessons across all years and ability groups is well ordered. Relationships are mostly positive and respectful. Lessons are usually well planned and the activities usually provide a good structure for pupils' learning. Marking is regular and often gives a clear indication as to how pupils can improve. Assessment records are detailed and pupils are involved in evaluating their own work and encouraged, in the best lessons, to become independent learners. The use of ICT is good, with effective use of the three interactive whiteboards, including by pupils. Pupils learn less well in lessons where they – especially the boys – are not enthused by the activities and the work set, and where the teachers fail to manage their behaviour. In these lessons teachers are not planning well enough to meet the specific learning needs of individuals or groups of individuals. This means that the progress that they make is too often no more than satisfactory.
- 83 Leadership and management are good. There is a strong team ethos and a positive drive to raise standards. The head of department sets a good example. Effective use is made of assessment information to group pupils into classes by ability. Reports to parents are not clear in setting out what standards pupils are working at. Accommodation is good; most teaching is done in specialist mathematics rooms. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning have identified ineffective teaching and learning and positive actions have been taken, such as trialling single sex classes. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. This has been achieved in spite of considerable difficulties in the recruitment of teachers

Mathematics across the curriculum

- 84 Pupils' mathematical skills are below average when they enter the school. The support for pupils in the development of their mathematical understanding is good. Teachers have received guidance on how to teach numeracy in their subjects. A 'methods' booklet gives further support, and the teacher responsible for the co-ordination across the school is continuing to work with individual departments to raise the profile of mathematics. In terms of pupils' mathematical skills, they are satisfactory and broadly as expected. For example, pupils weigh and calculate costs in design and technology, use their knowledge of shape, space and proportion in art, and their understanding of notation and timing in music, while in science they interpret speed and time graphs.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2003 the proportion of GCSE passes with grades A* to C was above that in similar schools.
- The vast majority of pupils achieve well and make good progress because of their very positive attitudes and the good teaching. Curriculum innovation is raising standards.
- The subject is well led and managed. Staff are deployed effectively but good practice is not disseminated adequately.
- Assessment is good but the quality of marking is not consistent.
- Not enough use is being made of ICT to support learning and to develop pupils' skills.

Commentary

- 85 The results in the national tests for 14 year olds in 2003 were in line with the national average. They were below those of similar schools. Apart from a dip in 2002 the results have been

moving upwards following the national rising trend. Girls have performed better than boys over the past five years. The GCSE results in 2003 were significantly below national average but above those of similar schools. Pupils did not do as well in science as in their other subjects; girls did significantly better than boys.

- 86 The vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress as they move through the school. By the end of Years 9 and 11 standards are now average. Pupils in Year 7 soon learn how to co-operate well with each other and to work safely and productively in a laboratory. Skills required in practical investigations develop well to reach the expected levels by the end of Year 11. Pupils' numeracy skills enable them to perform scientific calculations and to process their experimental results. They present them in various graphical forms. They are careful to use correct terminology and units. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and are given extension tasks and opportunities to participate in other extra-curricular activities. They also achieve well.
- 87 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. All the teaching was at least satisfactory; most was good or better and over half was very good. It was better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. A particular strength is the quality of relationships based on genuine mutual respect between pupils and teachers. Pupils behave very well, listen carefully and respond willingly. These are major factors in helping pupils to learn well. Lessons are very well planned and cater well for the differing needs of all individual pupils. Teachers know their subject well and make it comprehensible often by using examples to which pupils readily relate. Questioning is skilful and teachers draw out information and check understanding very well. Pupils are managed extremely well and they respond very well to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and effort. In the best lessons a starter activity engages pupils right from the start. Objectives are clearly shared with pupils. A wide range of activities follows, including demonstrations, lively exposition and discussion, group work, role-play and videos. In the final part teachers carefully check understanding. Very occasionally a task does not provide sufficient challenge or pupils are given more time than is needed to complete it. The learning support assistant works well with the teacher in planning the lesson and promoting good learning. Teachers do much to develop pupils' literacy skills. Key words are frequently emphasised and the meanings of new ones carefully explained. Pupils' work is marked regularly but the comments do not always suggest how pupils could improve. A few teachers make very effective use of computer programs projected onto a whiteboard.
- 88 The subject is well led and managed. Following staffing difficulties in recent years an effective team of teachers, technicians and other support staff has been established. There is a common commitment to raising standards. Teachers are deployed well, making good use of specialisms and expertise with particular groups. Most teachers see very little of the teaching of their colleagues and very good practice is not shared. However, the newly qualified teacher receives very good support. Assessment is good and much use is made of the data obtained but not enough is done to ensure consistency in the quality of marking. Pupils know how well they are doing but do not always know what they can do to improve.
- 89 Curriculum innovation is good. The performance of the boys has improved considerably because of successful curriculum initiatives in Year 10. A good course on fitness, funded from the Sports College grant, has been introduced in Year 9. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop ICT skills. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. Public examination results have improved. The provision for pupils with particular needs is much better. Five of the six laboratories have been refurbished but a significant number of lessons are still taught in rooms lacking specialist facilities.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in the GCSE and GNVQ groups is good as a result of consistent teaching by specialist teachers.
- Standards in Years 7 to 9 are not high enough.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the communication element of their work.
- Plenary sessions are often too brief to establish and consolidate pupils' understanding.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of control technology are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

- 90 Teachers' assessment of 14 year olds in 2003 showed that standards were below the national average and these judgements were confirmed during the inspection. The results in the 2003 GNVQ ICT course were higher than normally seen. No pupils took a GCSE course. Pupils enter the school with a below average understanding of ICT and although achievement is satisfactory and most make sound progress, pupils do not reach the expected level by the time they are 14. This below average attainment links to staffing difficulties in the past resulting in inconsistent teaching. Pupils present information well, confidently using a range of applications that include word processing, desktop publishing techniques and slide show presentations. Pupils have a good knowledge of spreadsheets and understand how to use formulae for mathematical calculations. However, understanding of how to construct these formulae is insecure. Pupils' understanding of control technology is unsatisfactory because they do not study this element in sufficient depth.
- 91 The GCSE groups achieve well, having benefited from consistent teaching by subject specialists since the beginning of the course. Pupils are working at the expected level. They have a secure understanding of handling data. They appreciate that the data has to be entered into certain areas in order to be able to select and filter certain information. Higher attaining pupils use more advanced procedures such as validating a method used to make sure that the information entered is correct. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and the gifted and talented do well in the express GNVQ group.
- 92 Teaching and learning are overall satisfactory. A particular strength of the teaching is the way teachers move around class keeping pupils focused on the task, intervening when required and ensuring a good pace of learning. Teachers have good relationships with pupils creating an ethos where pupils are confident to seek help. Teachers have good discipline, dealing sensitively and promptly with potential behaviour problems thus allowing learning to proceed without interruption. Although lessons conclude with a session to establish pupils' understanding these are often too brief. There are too few opportunities for pupils to present their own work and there is insufficient questioning by the teacher to ascertain pupils' learning to guide future planning. Learning is better when teachers use the digital projector to demonstrate procedures. The planning of lessons in the GCSE and GNVQ groups is systematic, successfully supporting pupils' progress and learning. The schemes of work in Years 7 to 9, however, lack challenge and do not build on pupils' existing knowledge.
- 93 The overall management and leadership of the subject are satisfactory. The head of department has had responsibility since the beginning of the academic year and has provided good support for the non-specialist teachers in the department. She has a clear understanding of the weaknesses in the subject and there are now strategies in place to raise standards. Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory. The improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

94 At the previous inspection the provision for ICT and its co-ordination across the curriculum were judged to be unsatisfactory. Although there has been improvement there are still some subjects where ICT is not being fully used to support learning. The co-ordination has improved but the competence of 14 year olds remains below what is expected although that of 16 year olds is satisfactory. There is good use in several subjects. Mathematics lessons use the interactive whiteboard successfully, for example to help pupils find the central point of a mathematical shape. Interactive whiteboards are also used well in geography to demonstrate the effects of coastal erosion. ICT is frequently used in the dedicated area for pupils with special educational needs, effectively supporting their literacy skills. In a history lesson the use of a slide show presentation to explain the effects of inflation in Germany kept pupils very focused, contributing positively to their understanding. Use in other subjects is generally satisfactory except in art, science, religious education and music where it is unsatisfactory due mainly to a lack of appropriate resources.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management are very good.
- The decline in standards of attainment has been halted.
- The teaching is good overall and teachers are becoming increasingly creative.
- Teachers do not use assessments sufficiently to set targets for pupils.

Commentary

95 The GCSE results for grades A* to C in 2003 were considerably below the national average but the steady decline in pupils' attainment over recent years has now been arrested. Pupils are now producing work in Years 9 and 11 that is of average standards. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall but that of boys is less good than that of girls. Pupils with special educational needs find the subject difficult in Years 7 and 8 but are making good progress by the end of Year 9 and achieve satisfactorily by Year 11. The highest achieving pupils are making consistently good or very good progress and achieve well. The number of pupils opting to study GCSE geography has doubled recently.

96 The highest standards were seen with a Year 9 group studying cliff formations at Spurn Point. Pupils' previous knowledge was used well and their understanding was very secure as they assessed each other's work. A Year 10 class used development indicators in a country of their choice and achieved very well in making judgements and displaying a good knowledge of their country of choice which included Somalia, Nigeria, Denmark and the United Kingdom.

97 The quality of teaching is good; all is at least satisfactory and much is good with some very good or excellent. Learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in higher attaining sets have good attitudes and the older ones learn well. Younger pupils, especially those with limited literacy skills, demonstrate poorer attitudes and learn less well. The new schemes of work and a generally co-operative team spirit provide a good foundation for consistent teaching. Teachers produce challenging ideas for the most able pupils in Years 9 and 10 that stimulate good quality learning, particularly with the older pupils. The confident manner in which ideas are being developed out of the teachers' original materials and developing 'mystery and thinking skills' activities is improving the quality of teaching and learning. In particular extended writing is being well developed through writing frames. Often, however, low attaining pupils find that the work is very difficult and do not have any additional

support from teaching assistants, again hampering learning. Increased fieldwork opportunities and new resources are enriching the teaching but teachers do not share ideas sufficiently. The use of ICT is being developed gradually, and the interactive whiteboard and electronic projectors are stimulating the teaching methods.

- 98 The leadership and management provided by the new head of department are very good. This is the key to the rapid improvement in geography. Staff are supported well and a radical and energetic review of provision is raising standards and expectations. His frequent monitoring of his colleagues and the development of detailed records of pupils' progress have had an immediate effect. Assessment procedures and examination revision are now being improved. Improvements since the last inspection have been good because the new schemes of work and innovatory teaching methods have given the subject a new sense of purposeful optimism.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good teaching promotes very good learning.
- The standards pupils reach in GCSE examinations are above average.
- Most pupils show considerable interest and enthusiasm in lessons and achieve well.
- The department is led very well.
- The marking in pupils' books does not always show pupils clearly enough how to improve their work.

Commentary

- 99 By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall attainment is average, as reflected in teachers' assessment of pupils' work in the past two years. The standard of work seen is average; a significant minority of pupils reach the highest standards. Most pupils achieve well and make good progress. The highest attaining pupils sometimes make very good progress because teachers set appropriately demanding work. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs achieve well because teachers encourage them very effectively and provide suitable work.
- 100 Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 have good knowledge and understanding of the past. They usually recall very well work done in previous lessons so that teachers can quickly move on to new work. They understand well the feelings of people in the past and explain well changes over time. Both high and low attainers in Year 9, for instance, described in very effective and appropriate terms the emotions of evacuees and their parents in 1939. The highest attainers evaluate well the usefulness to someone studying history of sources such as film and they write well at length. The majority of pupils' oral answers are articulate and high attainers frequently provide lengthy responses.
- 101 The overall attainment of pupils by the end of Year 11 is above average. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were well above average. The boys' results were above the boys' national average. A third gained an A or A* grade. These standards are an improvement on those reported at the previous inspection. The work seen was above average overall and the majority achieve well. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have good knowledge and understanding of their work. The knowledge shown by some lower attainers is especially noteworthy. Most pupils make effective use of historical sources. They research topics competently; most use the Internet satisfactorily, although a minority uses the information indiscriminately without understanding. Their oral presentations are articulate and confident.
- 102 The very good, and occasionally excellent, teaching is a strength of the department. It leads to

very good learning. It is especially good in Years 10 and 11. The very thorough preparation of pupils for their examinations is a key factor in the above average standards at GCSE. The high quality teaching is characterised by very effective classroom management, high expectations of behaviour and hard work and a very brisk pace. Pupils are involved actively in their learning in almost all lessons. The department has very good ICT provision and uses it well. Very occasionally, in lessons which are otherwise satisfactory, opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding are missed and tasks are less challenging.

- 103 It is, however, the teachers' love of their subject which pervades the lessons and which leads to an extremely positive response by pupils. Virtually all pupils, whatever their ability, are enthused by their teachers and respond by working hard and showing a keenness to achieve their best. The pupils' clear respect for the very good teaching leads to very good behaviour and extremely positive attitudes to work.

Example of Outstanding Practice

Excellence in teaching was demonstrated well by one special lesson. The lesson began with a factual recall test – not an apparently inspiring activity. But these pupils, lower attainers in Year 10 taking GCSE, were desperately keen to do well. Their teacher reminded them of his '60 per cent target'. The pupils themselves calculated this meant they had to get 14 marks. In a challenging test, on Germany immediately post World War I, every pupil got at least 15 marks and three got full marks. The sheer delight amongst the pupils for their own and for others' achievement was clear. This is a class where success is 'cool'. This attitude is created by the teacher, who is liked and respected by the pupils, and who expects and indeed, demands, the highest standards the pupils can reach. They in their turn like to do well. In the main activity the teacher took the group through the splits in German political groupings, methodically building up and checking their understanding of terms such as communist and fascist. By posing careful and appropriate questions he enabled the pupils themselves to create a chart to record their findings. Such were the teacher's approach and relationship with the pupils that the activity became a game in which the pupils strove to succeed. Their homework was to learn the chart. For these pupils such a task was not mundane. For them learning about the past is fun, and they have a teacher who proves it is possible.

- 104 The department of enthusiastic and dedicated teachers is led very well and managed well. There is a willingness to innovate to try to raise standards still further, as seen in the teaching of AS history – normally a sixth form course - to the highest attainers in Years 10 and 11 alongside their GCSE work. The department's approach of making history both challenging and fun has led to significant improvement since the previous inspection in standards, in the quality of teaching and in pupils' attitudes. The quality of marking is still, however, a weakness. There are not enough comments which show the pupils clearly how to improve their written work.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors are unaware that the school fails to provide religious education in accordance with the agreed syllabus.
- Provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 has ceased to exist.
- The match of teachers to the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject and its contribution to their personal development have declined.

- Despite acutely difficult circumstances, the acting head of department provides a good role model for other teachers and pupils.

Commentary

- 105 The school, although providing religious education to pupils in Years 7 to 9, makes no provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11. On the timetable pupils in Years 10 and 11 have one lesson of religious education every two weeks. In fact, during that time pupils follow an entry-level course in life skills, not religious education.
- 106 In Years 7 to 9 achievement is satisfactory. Pupils come into the school below the standard expected but make appropriate gains in knowledge and understanding. They develop skills of thinking about religion and learning about themselves from their study of religion. The level of their speaking and writing skills, however, remains below expectation. They lack facility in the use of specialist vocabulary and do not speak or write at length. By the end of Year 9 they are not at the standard expected. Although they know some of the distinctive beliefs and practices of the religions studied, they have too little understanding of how they impact on life. They are also insufficiently aware both of differences within religions and of similarities across religions.
- 107 At the time of the last inspection, pupils in Years 7 to 9 were positive in attitude. Attitudes, although they remain generally satisfactory, have deteriorated. In two lessons observed pupils' attitudes and behaviour were clearly unsatisfactory. The contribution made by religious education lessons to pupils' personal development is poor.
- 108 The teaching and learning of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are, as at the last inspection, satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons soundly and engage pupils satisfactorily. They use appropriate methods and resources. They also use the full time available in lessons, with most teachers achieving acceptable standards of behaviour. Teachers do, however, show some lack of subject expertise. Their expectations, and consequently the level of challenge to pupils, are not always high enough. Pupils also lack opportunities to engage in collaborative learning and to speak and write at length.
- 109 Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers mark pupils' work and give encouraging comments. They indicate to pupils how well they are doing but not what they need to do to improve or how to achieve specific targets. The match of teachers to the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The school has no full-time specialist and the history teacher, who is acting as head of department, has been unable to maintain provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11. She also teaches in a room distant from the rest of the department. This is an unsatisfactory arrangement and has been a further barrier to the creation of an effective departmental team.
- 110 Leadership is satisfactory. Despite prolonged and severe difficulties in staffing, the acting head of department has been a good role model, maintaining clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations. Preparations for the introduction of the new syllabus from September 2004 have been appropriately knowledgeable and innovative. Management is unsatisfactory, however. Monitoring of performance and progress, through analysis and evaluation of assessment data, is at an early stage.
- 111 Improvement since the last inspection has been poor. While some things have stayed the same, other things have got worse. In particular, provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 has declined from not enough to none at all. Standards have fallen. The decision not to replace the previous head of department with a permanent appointment has had a direct and severe effect on the school's provision, of which governors are unaware. In their audit, they state that the school's provision fully meets all statutory requirements. It does not, and the situation needs urgent action.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the Year 11 graphic products course are above average.
- Standards in Year 11 food technology are improving as a result of well-targeted teaching.
- The subject lacks cohesion because leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils lack interest and motivation in Years 7 to 9 because the curriculum is unsatisfactory, particularly in the areas of electronics, control and use of ICT.
- There is a lack of challenge for pupils in Years 7 to 9 because some teaching is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

- 112 Formal teacher assessments at the age of 14 in 2003 indicate that standards are well below the national average. Lesson observation and analysis of pupils work shows that standards are below those found nationally, but not as low as the school assessment information states. The validity of these assessments is unreliable because the department's system for marking pupils' projects is weak and there is insufficient moderation of standards between teachers from the different material areas. In Years 7 to 9 pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory because the curriculum is not well matched to their needs and the quality of teaching is often unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make limited progress because they do not have access to help from a classroom support assistant, and curriculum materials are not planned to meet their particular needs. In Years 7 to 9 projects do not make sufficient use of ICT as a resource for learning, and pupils do not transfer knowledge and skills from one material area to another.
- 113 GCSE examination results in 2003 were below the national average for A* to C grades but slightly above the national average for A* to G grades. There has been a slight upward trend in grades in technology when compared with the same pupils' grades in other subjects. However, on individual courses there is no consistent trend over the last few years. Lesson observation and analysis of pupils' work show that standards are at the national average in the graphic products course and in food technology through improved standards in coursework. The standard of work in textiles is average. On all these courses achievement is good. The standard of work in resistant materials is well below average and pupils do not achieve to their full potential. Pupils' attitudes are good overall but better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.
- 114 Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11 but unsatisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9. In Years 7 to 9 there were three unsatisfactory lessons. In Years 10 and 11 there was a significant proportion of very good teaching. It is particularly strong in graphic products, food technology and child-development because teachers have a high degree of subject expertise. In Years 7 to 9, lesson planning is inadequate, teacher expectations are too low and the content does not engage and motivate pupils. Assessment is also unsatisfactory because marking is infrequent and not well linked to National Curriculum levels. Pupils do not receive sufficient advice on the next steps that would help them improve.
- 115 Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of vision and sense of direction for the subject. In Years 7 to 9 there is little team cohesion between the teachers, who do not build effectively on learning in one aspect of the subject, by making real connections for pupils in their work in a different material area. Self-review and evaluation do not impact on change or lead to improvement action plans that address the key weaknesses. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is poorly planned and undemanding. It is not thoroughly mapped to ensure good coverage of the National Curriculum. Monitoring and assessment systems are inadequate. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are very good in supporting all aspects of the subject.
- Pupils experience a wide range of work in two and three dimensions.
- There are inspiring displays of pupils' work around the school.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in the development of pupils' work.

Commentary

- 116 Standards in GCSE have fluctuated from above average in 2002 to below average in 2003. There were serious disruptions in teaching for the 2003 cohort of pupils because of staffing problems. From below average standards on entry, pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 9, making good progress and achieving well. Work in a wide range of pattern and design is particularly good. Pupils do bold work in line and colour. Mask-making, based on studies of African art, is very good. However, a significant minority of pupils do not spend enough time on homework and some experiments in their sketchbooks do not have enough detail or finish.
- 117 By the end of Year 11 standards in GCSE are average. Almost half of the pupils, a much greater than average proportion, have chosen art in Year 11. Work on natural forms is particularly successful, especially that from direct observation. Work is generally bold and dramatic with some exquisite use of line, tone and texture. Achievement is good in all years. Pupils experiment well with ideas and build on their skills systematically. In GCSE coursework a significant minority do not spend enough time on homework despite being given good guidance to support their independent learning. A significant number of pupils are unable to attend all art lessons in GCSE because of a clash with their courses in the further education college. This has a detrimental effect on their standards and achievement. Girls' standards and achievement are better than boys' largely because they spend more time and effort in getting depth and detail in their work.
- 118 Teaching and learning are good at all stages. All teachers have very good specialist knowledge and expertise. They teach the basic skills of drawing and painting formally, and to a good standard. They create and maintain a good, disciplined climate for learning in all lessons. Planning is good and the teachers use inspiring examples from the work of major artists to engage pupils' interest. There is good use of ICT for research and illustrations but there is insufficient use of ICT in the development of pupils' work. All pupils get good one-to-one support from their teachers so that all, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, make equally good progress.
- 119 The leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision for improving provision and raising standards further. Documentation is good although areas such as ICT need further development. There is very good teamwork and excellent support for the newly qualified teachers. There is very good monitoring and self-evaluation of all aspects of the subject. There are ten hours of technician help that make a good contribution to teaching and learning.
- 120 The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly in studies of the spiritual and cultural aspects of African, Aboriginal, Indian and Islamic art. All the good features reported at the time of the previous inspection are maintained and sound progress has been made since then.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Pupils are well motivated and enjoy drama.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to the cultural life of the school.
- Results in the GCSE in 2003 were well below the national average.

Commentary

- 121 Standards in Years 9 and 11 are in line with the national expectation and achievement is satisfactory throughout. Results in the GCSE in 2003 were well below the national average but were much higher than targets set by the department. Those pupils who selected the drama course covered a very wide range of levels of attainment.
- 122 Pupils collaborate effectively in pairs and groups, working quickly to produce presentations. Pupils improvise lively, creative improvised dialogue. Boys particularly perform with confidence, energy and humour. In Year 7, for example, a group containing a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs worked well together in pairs and showed good standards of spatial awareness in their presentation. Throughout Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils develop a wide range of skills and are successful in control of movement, body language, gesture and facial expression. Pupils in Year 10 showed courtesy and sensitivity when watching the presentations of others and made constructive suggestions for improvement. They work together with commitment and enthusiasm.
- 123 Teaching and learning are good overall. Relationships are very positive and all pupils behave well in the studio. The teacher is creative and energetic and this communicates successfully to pupils, who enjoy the work. A class in Year 11, for example, working on the text of *Twelfth Night* worked hard at interpreting one scene and a group of high attaining girls showed sound grasp of the characters and themes represented. A handful of these pupils are working at potential grades A or B.
- 124 Documentation and schemes of work are good and the subject is well led and managed. The present accommodation is inadequate, particularly because of the lack of lighting and blackout. Through regular productions and visits the subject makes a valuable contribution to the cultural life of the school.

Music

The overall provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' good rhythmic skills are contributing positively to their performances.
- Good teaching leads to good achievement.
- Listening and appraising skills are not good enough.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and is hampering progress.
- The provision for ICT is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

- 125 Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 indicated standards slightly above the national average. In the GCSE examination in 2003 only two pupils were entered (and taught after school), both achieving C grades.
- 126 Pupils join the school with performance and composing skills that are below the average. However, with the benefit of good teaching they achieve well and by the time they reach Year 9 are at the level expected. In Years 7 to 9 there is a strong emphasis on the development of rhythmic skills; as a consequence the performance element of pupils' work is strong. Pupils' use of these good performance skills, their knowledge of primary chords and improvisational skills produce good quality creative work. Listening and appraising skills are less good. Although pupils have knowledge of the technical vocabulary they have an insecure grasp of the range of styles of music they have listened to and their key main musical features.
- 127 The good achievement continues in Years 10 and 11 and pupils are at the expected level by the end of Year 11. Again, performance is a strength, pupils being confident instrumentalists or singers. Pupils' good imagination and creative skills result in good standards of composition in a range of different styles that have structure and development, with higher attaining pupils including the correct harmonic progression for modulations. Listening skills are not so well established, pupils lacking in confidence to identify the ensemble and style of music.
- 128 The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and use their accomplished individual practical skills to demonstrate musical techniques and sequences. Lessons start briskly with clear explanations of the task. This approach quickly engages pupils' interest and attention, resulting in them starting practical tasks with understanding and enthusiasm. Teachers have good discipline, insisting on quiet during performances thus allowing learning to proceed with pace. Learning is, however, slowed on occasions during practical sessions due to the noise level in the main classroom. Although teachers use the available quiet areas for group or individual practice these are limited and as a consequence pupils experience difficulty hearing what they are playing. During practical sessions progress is slowed when pupils are given too long to practise a melody; some pupils quickly accomplish the task resulting in their 'coasting' and not making the appropriate progress.
- 129 The overall leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has a clear view about the development of the subject. The improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Staffing problems have been resolved and pupils now receive the full curriculum. The subject has gained in popularity resulting in increased numbers choosing it as an examination option for the next academic year. The provision for information and communication technology to support pupils' composing development is unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and relationships with pupils are very good.
- Pupils achieve well, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The Sports Co-ordinator Programme and community links are very strong.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities available to all pupils.
- Management is unsatisfactory and accommodation continues to be unsatisfactory.

Commentary

- 130 Results in the GCSE examination in 2003 were broadly in line with the national average, with girls performing better than boys. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of pupils studying the GCSE course. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated above average standards in 2003. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11 standards are now average. Pupils entering the school in Year 7 have benefited from the Sports Co-ordinator Programme and its links with primary feeder schools, resulting in average standards on entry. This is noticeable in dance in Year 7 and particularly athletics, where standards by Year 9 are above average. Pupils achieve well by the age of 14.
- 131 In Year 11 higher ability pupils produce standards at GCSE above the national average in theory work. Their knowledge and understanding of sports injuries and their treatment are very secure. The presentation of written work is unsatisfactory, and there is little evidence of graph work and interpretation of data and calculations. Dance has been successfully introduced into the curriculum and standards are in line with expectations; pupils have achieved well in a short time. The Junior Sports Leaders Award prepares pupils for working in primary schools and develops their confidence and overall personal development. They learn a range of management and organisational skills and many thrive on this responsibility. Pupils achieve particularly well in Years 10 and 11. Underachievement is noticeable in some GCSE groups however, where less able pupils show a lack of interest and ability in the course. A majority of pupils in a Year 11 group were unable to recall previous learning in their revision on muscle groups and many of these are ill suited for the GCSE course. Pupils with a special educational need are integrated well into lessons and achieve well.
- 132 The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout. Teachers plan lessons with clear learning objectives and share them with pupils but teachers do not match the programme of study of the National Curriculum. Teachers ensure good pace in lessons and high expectations and challenge are noticeable in the majority of lessons. Marking of pupils' work at GCSE is unsatisfactory and not consistent amongst teachers. There are no comments in some work as to how pupils can improve and although pupils are aware of predicted grades for GCSE, marking does not indicate the progress they are making compared to these grades. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and this contributes to the very good, sometimes excellent, attitudes of pupils, who arrive enthusiastically for lessons and work hard. They are appreciative of the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer and there is high participation. School teams are successful and many pupils have achieved success at regional, county and national level in a range of sports. There are strong links with the community who use facilities during the evenings and weekends. Pupils gain from coaching provided by some local sports clubs, especially hockey. A very good contribution from the dance artist in residence enhances opportunities for pupils to improve their dance skills and performance.
- 133 Leadership of the department is satisfactory and has established an effective team of teachers who are committed to raising standards. The director of sport offers very good leadership and guidance to the department and has a clear vision for the Sports College. Good progress has been made since the school obtained this status but this has been curtailed by the lack of accommodation. This has restricted the quality and range of the curriculum, especially for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Management is unsatisfactory. Schemes of work are out of date. Assessment overall is satisfactory, being better at GCSE, but levels are not used and pupils are not aware of the progress they are making, particularly in Years 8 and 9. There is no curriculum plan to ensure coverage of the programme of study in the activities taught and the National Curriculum has a low profile in the department. Some pupils follow an enrichment course in Years 10 and 11 do not study the programme of study of the National Curriculum. Reports to parents are unsatisfactory, as they do not indicate what pupils know, understand or can do in the activities taught.

134 The quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection and there has been a large increase in the number of pupils studying the GCSE. Dance has been successfully introduced for all pupils and resources are now good. Pupils evaluate their own and others' performance consistently but there has been insufficient progress in improving accommodation. The Sports College is developing well despite the poor quality of accommodation. The potential of its pupils is recognised by the staff, who are committed to providing a wide range of opportunities for all its pupils. This has resulted in the award of the prestigious Sportsmark Gold. Good progress has been made since 1999.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

135 The school has not yet implemented the National Curriculum requirements for citizenship and no discrete provision is made for this aspect of the curriculum. As a result there were no lessons observed during the inspection. An audit of provision across the school has been undertaken but there is no systematic teaching and co-ordination of the subject. Some aspects are identified in history, geography and careers education, but they do not match the three elements of the National Curriculum. Personal, social and health education makes a contribution and there is a clear policy for sex education and relationships and a drugs awareness programme. Outside speakers are used when appropriate. Pupils do not know what is entailed in citizenship but they conduct themselves well in the school, behave well and make a positive contribution to being good citizens. Their moral and social development is very good. They are very co-operative, obliging and hard working. The provision for citizenship across the school is, however, too patchy and as a result, does not meet National Curriculum requirements. There are no reports to parents on pupils' progress. The school is aware of these inadequacies and plans are in place to ensure that statutory requirements are met.

Personal and social education

136 The school teaches personal and social education in the second week of its two-week cycle and the inspection was in the first week. Consequently, it was not possible to observe any lessons. No work was available for scrutiny but pupils were interviewed about their work and those in Years 7 to 9 spoke with some enthusiasm about what they do. Pupils' knowledge and general standards were similar to those seen in many schools. It is not possible to comment on their levels of achievement. The older pupils showed less knowledge and enthusiasm about their work. Pupils receive appropriate sex education and guidance on alcohol and drug misuse. A wide range of issues is covered through a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme. Form tutorial time is not used for the personal and social education programme and this is a missed opportunity to improve the provision, which is satisfactory overall.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
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	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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