

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**HURWORTH SCHOOL**

**Hurworth-on-Tees, Darlington**

**LEA area: Darlington**

**Unique reference number: 114316**

**Headteacher: Mr D Judson**

**Lead inspector: David Darwood**

**Dates of inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> January 2004**

**Inspection number: 258668**

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

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### **Terms used in this report**

*Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).*

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' **achievements** reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.*

## 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:	647
School address:	Croft Road Hurworth-on-Tees Darlington County Durham
Postcode:	DL2 2JG
Telephone number:	01325 720424
Fax number:	01325 721788
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Robin Mair
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in the small village of Hurworth-on-Tees, three miles from Darlington. The overall socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are average. The school has been identified by the local education authority (LEA) as a centre providing for autistic pupils. This centre is currently being developed. It is a high achieving school, listed as the 10<sup>th</sup> most improved school in the country in 2001. The school has won a Department for Education and Skills achievement award for the last three years and secured specialist college status in mathematics and computing in September 2003. The school has recently formed a federation with a neighbouring school in order to share good practice and raise standards. There are 647 pupils on roll, 25 more than at the time of the previous inspection. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average as is the percentage of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need. The numbers of pupils for whom English is not their home language and those on the special educational needs register are below the national average. Most pupils on the special educational needs register have specific learning difficulties relating to behaviour, learning, hearing impairment or autism. Few pupils leave or join the school during the academic year as the school is significantly oversubscribed. The overall attainment of pupils when they begin in Year 7 is around the national average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3552	D. Darwood	Lead inspector	
13786	S. Walsh	Lay inspector	
27984	A. Whitehall	Team inspector	Mathematics
11975	T. McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	English
4922	M. Driver	Team inspector	Science
30690	G. Allison	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Geography
8744	R. Whiteley	Team inspector	Art and design Music
2491	D. Beaumont	Team inspector	Design and technology
22695	R. Cardinal	Team inspector	History Citizenship
11838	D. Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
22906	B. Hodson	Team inspector	Physical education
32328	N. Donkin	Team inspector	Religious education
4676	M. Griffiths	Team inspector	Special educational needs.

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Hurworth Comprehensive School is a **very good** school. It has many strengths which have led to a significant improvement in standards since the previous inspection. The school's results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are above the national average and those of similar schools. By the end of Year 11 results GCSE examinations are well above the national average and those achieved by similar schools. Very good leadership and good teaching have led to good improvement since the previous inspection. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The high standards attained and the very good progress made by pupils in Years 10 and 11
- There is a strong commitment by the governing body and all staff associated with the school to improving the opportunities for all pupils in order that they achieve as well as possible.
- Teaching is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. It is a key factor in raising pupils' aspirations and overall achievement.
- The headteacher and senior managers of the school have a very clear vision of future developments and provide very effective and dynamic leadership. There are rigorous school self-evaluation procedures that very clearly identify strengths and provide information for future development.
- Relationships and behaviour within the school are very good. The school gives very effective support to pupils' personal and academic development.
- Parts of the school's accommodation are poor and in many areas this limits the range of learning activities.
- The provision and the achievement in art and design and information and communication technology (ICT) are excellent.

There has been good progress since the previous inspection; most significantly in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A\*-C grades. Excellent procedures to monitor teaching have led to more consistent practice and the sharing of good ideas across the school. The statutory requirements identified in the previous report have now been addressed with the exception of the provision of a daily act of collective worship. Governors provide a detailed and informative annual report to parents but there are some omissions of statutory requirements. The school has recently achieved mathematics and computing college status. Accommodation remains an issue for the school although there are plans to make some improvements. The library in particular is poor. The level of support staff has improved.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

**Overall standards are above the average.** Standards by the end of Year 9 are above the national average and above those of similar schools. They are well above average by the end of Year 11. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A\* to C grades has increased from 37 per cent 1998 to 70 per cent in 2003. The overall achievement and progress of all pupils by the end of Year 9 is good. By the end of Year 11 it is very good.

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

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

The reasons for the increase in standards are good teaching, rigorous monitoring procedures and the creation of a secure but challenging environment and high expectations. Standards of work by the end of Year 9 are well above average in mathematics, music, art and design and ICT. They are

above average in English, geography, history, design and technology, citizenship, modern foreign languages, physical education and music, and average in other subjects. By the end of Year 11, standards are very high in art and design and ICT, well above average in design and technology, mathematics, business studies, geography, history, and music. They are above average in all other subjects. Pupils' achievement in ICT is excellent. It is very good in mathematics, music, art and design, design and technology and history. They achieve well in other subjects with the exception of science, where progress and achievement is satisfactory.

**Pupils' personal development is good.** This is as a result of the overall good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the school.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The overall quality of education is good.** Teaching is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. The school's very good range of strategies to raise the quality of teaching has led to a greater consistency within and between departments. Staff have high expectation of pupils both in terms of work and behaviour. They also use a range of teaching strategies to interest and motivate pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons, achieve well from Years 7 to 9 and achieve very well in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum offers a good range and choice of subjects and extra-curricular activities. The level of care is very good. The school's pastoral provision is very effective. Pupils feel safe and secure and have very good attitudes towards school.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** The overall quality of governance is good. A significant strength is the excellent leadership of the headteacher. He is well supported by an effective senior management team. The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction. There are very effective monitoring and evaluation systems in place to identify good practice and areas for development. The overall quality of middle managers is very good. They have clear priorities to raise levels of attainment and improve teaching and learning. They contribute significantly to the very strong team ethos within the school. The school also has excellent support from the chief executive of the local federation. As a former headteacher of the school, he has left a strong legacy of high standards and continues to support and contribute to the school's development. Both the headteacher and the chief executive have a deep commitment to the staff and pupils and their success. They have played a major role in developing the reputation of the school in the community.

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

**Parents' attitudes towards the school are good.** They recognise and value the high expectations, welcoming atmosphere and improving standards. The school has a high reputation in the community. Pupils also value the strengths of the school, in particular the relationships and purposeful atmosphere in which they learn. They are, however, rightly concerned about the poor state of the accommodation in some areas of the school.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- To improve the accommodation, particularly the library area, which does little to support research and investigative work or develop independent learning skills.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- An act of collective worship.
- Ensuring that the governors' annual report to parents includes reference to staff development, safety and the admission of disabled pupils.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is **good** and in Years 10 and 11 it is **very good**. Overall standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are **above** national average and well above those of similar schools.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSEs at A\*-C grades has shown a significant rise in the last few years.
- Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above national expectations. They are also well above by the end of Year 11.
- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Pupils are good at using ICT for a wide range of tasks.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress.

### Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school is average. Overall pupils achieve well and reach standards above the average. The school places great emphasis on improving standards of literacy across all subjects of the curriculum. As a consequence, all pupils make good progress and standards are good.
2. By the end of Year 9, overall standards are above the average. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 tests in 2003 showed the school to be above the national average and above similar schools. In mathematics, standards were well above both the national average and those of similar schools. In English they were above national averages and those of similar schools and in science they were similar to the national average. Standards of work in these subjects, seen during the inspection, matched these results. In other subjects standards of work are above national average in history, geography, design and technology, citizenship and well above in art and design, ICT and music. In all other subjects standards are average. Given the attainment of pupils on entry in Year 7, this represents good achievement
3. Boys' results have improved since the previous inspection and are now comparable to girls. This is one of the reasons why the school became involved with a national project with the University of Cambridge. This project focused on boys' achievement, with an emphasis on developing and disseminating more appropriate teaching and learning strategies.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.3 (33.5)	33.4 (33.3 )
mathematics	37.7 (37.3)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.9 (35.3)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 128 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

4. GCSE results are well above average and pupils achieve very well from the end of Year 9. There is no significant difference in the overall attainment of boys and girls. This was an issue at the time of the previous inspection. In 2003 the GCSE results were the best achieved by the school. The percentage of A\*-C grades rose from 37 per cent in 1998 to 70 per cent in 2003 and the average point score from 39.2 to 45.4. The school's results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend. Results in all subjects were above the national average but



significantly so in art and design, design and technology, English literature, mathematics, religious education, ICT and business studies. The high standards are the result of very good teaching and the creation of a secure but challenging atmosphere in lessons where pupils are expected to succeed. They are also due to the effective deployment of staff to give maximum encouragement and support to pupils in Year 10 and 11 and the rigorous monitoring of individual pupils' targets. Standards of work seen during the inspection indicate the school is maintaining the high level of performance shown in the 2003 results. Indeed, the targets for GCSE and GNVQ results in 2004 are higher than previous years.

5. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their targets in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 to 11. This is due to good teaching and classroom support, and planning of work which is appropriate for their individual needs. Pupils work hard and achieve well and are encouraged to make the best possible progress. Very good levels of support and care help to promote pupils' confidence and self-esteem and ensure that they are happy to come to school.

#### **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	70 (64)	52.6 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (93.9)	86.6 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	94.6 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	39.3 (N/A)	34.7 (39.8)

*There were 129 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

Pupils have **very good** attitudes and behaviour although exclusion rates are relatively high. Attendance rates are **good**. **Good** provision for social, moral and cultural development supports good personal development. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory.

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

- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and this helps them to achieve well. Very good procedures for monitoring attendance have resulted in attendance rates improving significantly.
- Regular attendance ensures very good continuity of learning which supports very good achievement.
- There are high standards of behaviour. Exclusions are not, however, effectively recorded or monitored at present.
- There are missed opportunities for developing pupils' spiritual awareness

#### **Commentary**

6. The consistent application of very good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance, including very effective early contact with parents, has resulted in attendance rates improving significantly. Over the same period the school has seen significant improvement in examination results as more pupils have experienced better continuity of learning. Parents are now aware of the importance of good attendance and ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time.
7. Pupils are eager to come to school. Very good relationships between pupils and teachers ensure that pupils feel secure and confident. They respond extremely well to being treated in

an adult manner and there are very high levels of mutual respect. Pupils are well mannered and considerate and behave consistently well, even in the narrow and very crowded corridors and stairways. Break times and lunchtimes are pleasant and relaxed. Pupils have very good attitude to their schoolwork. They concentrate very well and are very enthusiastic about their work. They work very well independently and in groups. Very positive attitudes and hard work promote good achievement.

8. Minor incidents of bullying, such as name calling, can arise with younger pupils but parents and pupils report that the school deals very effectively with these issues. Racism is very rare and school provision, including religious education, citizenship and personal, social and health education lessons, ensures that pupils learn to respect differences and relationships are very harmonious. Exclusion rates are high, as the school does not tolerate inappropriate behaviour. However, exclusions are not monitored effectively.
9. Pupils get good opportunities in religious education to become self-aware and develop a good understanding of religious ideas. They are able to discuss complex issues, such as abortion, in a very mature way. However, there is limited time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and this has a negative effect on pupils' spiritual development. Other subjects make a lesser contribution to pupils' spiritual development. This reflects missed opportunities, including a lack of drama, for developing pupils' aesthetic understanding. Moral development is strong; pupils can clearly distinguish between right and wrong and value justice and fairness. Pupils learn to work well in groups but many classrooms are very small and this places constraints on activities such as role play and group work. Cultural provision promotes a good understanding of the views of others. Subject planning often includes opportunities to extend pupils spiritual, moral social and cultural education, however in practice these opportunities are sometimes missed. For example, in a design and technology lesson about batik, pupils were not told about the cultural origins of the technique.
10. The school is very successful in developing pupils' independence. In lessons, other pupils are very supportive of those with particular needs. They willingly work alongside them, offering help when required. Teachers and support staff work well together continually improving pupils' social skills, ensuring that they enjoy their lessons and respond well to the challenges they are set.

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.6	School data	0.5
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

## 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	617	116	2
White – any other White background	9	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	1	0

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall the quality of education is **good**. Teaching, learning and the school's assessment procedures are **good**. The support given to all pupils is very good. There is also an appropriate curriculum for the pupils and this, together with the range of extra-curricular activities, is also **good**.

### Teaching and Learning

Teaching overall is **good**. It is **very good** in Years 10 and 11. This is a significant improvement from the previous inspection. The assessment of pupils' work and the use made of assessment information are both good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which enables them effectively to clarify and explain issues.
- Planning is very good and ensures work is structured appropriately for the needs of all pupils.
- High expectations, combined with challenging and engaging work, ensure good levels of achievement and progress in Years 7 to 9, and very good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are very good. This contributes to a relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere in lessons where pupils can enjoy their learning and feel secure and confident in asking for, and receiving, support.

### Commentary

11. The high priority the school has given to raising standards of teaching and learning has been very beneficial. There is a shared view of what constitutes high quality teaching and an effective monitoring and evaluation programme. These have increased both the consistency and level of teaching across the school since the previous inspection. There were examples of very good teaching seen in all subjects and only rarely were any lessons judged unsatisfactory. The school has worked hard to improve standards in Years 10 and 11 and, in part, this explains the slightly better quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11.

12. Teaching is very good in art and design, ICT, history, religious education, design and technology, mathematics, and music. It is good in all other subjects with the exception of science, where it is satisfactory.
13. Very good lessons are characterised by productive working relationships. Pupils also have very good relationships with each other. Teachers often encourage speaking and listening as part of their teaching. They also ensure that care is taken with questions to involve and encourage pupils. As a consequence of this, pupils have the confidence to develop and express their own ideas and opinions as well as responding to the views of others.
14. Teachers' very good planning results in a variety of activities. Resources are appropriate to the pupils' abilities and chosen to motivate and generate interest. Very good use is made of external speakers. This is particularly so in careers and the personal, social and health education programme.
15. Specialist teachers have good subject knowledge. This allows them to include a variety of sources, anecdotes and extension material so that they are able to extend pupils' understanding and capture their interest. For example, in an excellent Year 9 English lesson on *Macbeth*, the teacher was quickly able to capture the pupils' interest by focusing upon the simple truth that the play was about 'good versus evil.' The lesson challenged them to unpick some of the more complicated episodes in the play and try to understand the character of Lady Macbeth. They then undertook independent work and shared ideas. This promoted a very high level of debate as they categorised good and evil characters. Teachers also have high levels of expectation with regard to attitudes, behaviour and work. Pupils respond positively to this challenge. For example, in a Year 11 ICT lesson, careful planning and very effective questioning skills led pupils to recognise, and show, the importance of using verifiable and valid information when putting proposals forward for the management of a leisure centre. On those very few occasions when the work lacks challenge and interest, or when expectations are not clear enough, pupils drift off task and learning is unsatisfactory.
16. All of the strengths referred to above are a reflection of the importance attributed by the school to raising teachers' expertise and increasing the range of learning opportunities offered to pupils. Teachers clearly understand what is required for teaching to be effective. A culture of evaluation has evolved whereby there is regular monitoring of classroom practice and discussion about new strategies. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy principles are well used in lessons and good use is made of training programmes and visits to other schools.
17. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. It is very good for those pupils who are on the autistic spectrum. Most teachers are sensitive to the particular needs of pupils and plan their work accordingly. They make good use of available learning support assistants. Challenging tasks maintain good levels of interest. In art and design and music, for example, pupils achieve particularly well. In these lessons, expectations are suitably high and teachers are rewarded with some outstanding work. In many lessons, relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. This has the effect of boosting pupils' confidence and producing a happy and productive working environment in most classrooms. Very occasionally, the pace of lessons in Years 7 to 9 is too slow and pupils are not sufficiently challenged. As a result, they become bored and this is when behaviour can deteriorate. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and frequently progress as well as other pupils. Very good specialist teaching is available to pupils who are withdrawn from lessons for specific help. There is a range of useful information on pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. Teachers make good use of this information to provide appropriate learning activities and targets.

## Assessment

18. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress are good. Clear records, which are updated regularly, enable careful tracking of pupils' progress. Teachers and support assistants play a prominent part in these procedures. Records are informative and are used effectively to set future targets.
19. The quality of assessment is good overall. In most subjects, marking is thorough and gives pupils good information about how the standard of their work can be improved. In a few subjects, there is inconsistency in marking between teachers, and little guidance on how to improve. Most teachers actively involve pupils in self-assessment activities, but in a few subjects this aspect of assessment requires greater emphasis.
20. Assessment is well used as a tool for lesson and course planning. It is used to monitor progress and achievement in relation to the targets that have been set for individual pupils. The school has placed a high priority on the collation and analysis of assessment data. The information is very well used to set targets for the school, for subjects and for individual pupils. These targets have provided a clear focus for improvement overall and for particular groups of pupils. The pupils have a good understanding of their targets because marking and assessment of work is directly linked to the standards they are achieving. The systematic programme of monitoring is underpinned by a very effective mentoring scheme in Years 10 and 11. A similar approach is now being used in Years 7 to 9 but is not yet fully in place due to time constraints on senior staff. The quality of information given when reporting to parents lacks consistency between subjects and between teachers

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 111 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (4%)	46 (41%)	34 (31%)	23 (21%)	4 (4%)	0	0

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

## The curriculum

The school provides a **good** curriculum. Opportunities for enrichment are **good**. Resources for learning are **satisfactory**, but accommodation is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of subjects and courses provides well for pupils' aspirations and abilities.
- Strong self-evaluation in subject areas is at the heart of review and forward planning.
- Very good provision of careers information prepares pupils well for the next stage in their lives.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities enriches pupils' learning.
- Statutory requirements are met, except for a daily act of collective worship.

## Commentary

21. The school provides courses in all National Curriculum subjects in Years 7 to 9. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, a largely academic curriculum has been expanded since the previous inspection by the addition of vocational courses. There are plans to extend this provision further. This improvement is evidence of the efficiency of unusually rigorous systems for evaluating the curriculum and its delivery. Each subject area has to evaluate its provision and performance, produce action plans, and review progress twice yearly with senior

management. This level of accountability is instrumental in raising standards of attainment and ensuring equality of opportunity.

22. Curriculum development and innovation has enabled the school to rectify weaknesses identified in the previous report. Above all, the provision for ICT is now a strength, reflected in the school's new status as a specialist mathematics and computing college. Curricular links with feeder schools have improved in English, mathematics and science, where the implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is beginning to have a positive impact on learning. Low time allocation for religious education in Years 10 and 11 does not affect standards, but this, and the continuing lack of a daily act of collective worship, means that pupils' spiritual development is not as good as it might be. Currently, there are limited opportunities for delivering drama, restricting strategies to enhance pupils' communication, performance and aesthetic skills. The school plans to rectify this situation when a new building is added.
23. The quality of careers information is very good. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 receive early guidance in tutorial time, often enhanced by the input of visiting speakers provided by the Durham Business Enterprise. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have a timetabled lesson taught by a specialist teacher. This provision is again enhanced by very good links with local colleges and universities, who support an annual careers day in school. Pupils benefit from individual interviews and work experience. The quality of placements is good because the school makes all its own arrangements, based on strong community links.
24. A good weekly programme of extra-curricular opportunities, at lunchtimes and after school, supports learning well, with a range of sporting, academic and creative activities available. Provision is particularly strong in ICT, where very good use is made of the school's facilities, and in humanities, where visits and fieldwork trips are provided in both history and geography for pupils in every year. Many subjects organise visits, for example to theatres, galleries and mosques, and abroad. Despite the lack of drama, pupils can participate in an annual production. It is hoped that twinning with schools in Krakow and Granada through the Comenius project will provide further opportunities in a range of subjects.
25. There is a very high quality relevant programme of personal social and health education with a particular focus on health and social education. There is very good use of outside speakers who bring high levels of expertise and interesting activities that promote good learning. Both drug and sex education meet statutory requirements, however, the school is not complacent and work is continuing to further develop and improve sex education. There are times when lack of space constrains the variety of teaching methods when delivering personal, social and health education lessons and makes group work and role play very difficult. This has a negative impact on learning. Religious education lessons make a very significant contribution to personal and social education.
26. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. It caters well and is relevant for the majority of pupils because individual needs are taken into account when teachers plan their work. The bulk of the curriculum is delivered within the mainstream classroom, although pupils are occasionally withdrawn individually or in small groups for specific, corrective teaching. Good planning by the great majority of teachers identifies and takes into account the needs of all pupils.
27. There is a satisfactory match of teachers to the curriculum, and there are sufficient teachers to cover the subjects taught. Teachers receive adequate support from technical staff. This support is particularly good in ICT and in design and technology, although there is insufficient time allocated to support art and design. Specialist teachers and learning support assistants are well qualified to support a wide range of needs. They work effectively as a team and are valued by the school. Despite an increase in support staff since the previous inspection, numbers are only just about adequate.

28. The accommodation in the school is unsatisfactory. Many classrooms are too small, which results in restricting pupils' movements in classrooms. This means that there is some limitation in a range of teaching styles, particularly group work. There has been some progress since the previous inspection. Science laboratories have been refurbished, and, through some innovative use of existing space, some teaching areas have been created. Around the school and in classrooms there are good displays of pupils' work and in the entrance foyer, press cuttings and photographs celebrate pupils' and staff achievements. The library/resource centre is totally inadequate for a school of this size. The lack of shelf space has led to many reference books and texts being stored in departmental areas. There is very limited space for pupils to work in the library independently. The planned arts block, due to open in September, will go some way to improving the quality of accommodation, but will not solve it. The lack of practice rooms for music, the small ICT rooms, the lack of a dedicated space for drama, and only one indoor area, a gym for physical education, remain issues. Accommodation is unsatisfactory for special educational needs. The learning support base is too small and, at present, also has to cater for pupils who are part of the autistic unit provision. Storage facilities are at a premium and cramped conditions do not help the learning process.
29. There are sufficient learning resources in the majority of departments. They are particularly good in ICT, with a pupil to computer ratio of 3:1, which is better than that seen in most schools. Interactive whiteboards have now been installed in some departments and are well used. ICT resources within the special educational needs base are used effectively to support pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy and as a tool to combat dyslexia. However, in music and physical education there are limited ICT resources and this reduces opportunities for individual investigative work.
30. There is good induction of newly qualified and experienced staff arriving at the school. They are well supported by heads of department and senior staff. Staff have good access to a range of courses to support their continuing professional development. The outcomes of training are discussed by staff and, when good ideas or innovations are identified, they are built into school procedures or department schemes of work. This has been a key factor for improvements in both teaching and curriculum provision

## Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care welfare health and safety are **very good**. Very effective support, advice and guidance are provided based on rigorous monitoring of pupils' academic achievements. The school has **satisfactory** arrangements to involve pupils in its work and development.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very well supported and cared for by subject teachers and pastoral staff.
- The mentoring system in Year 11 helps pupils to achieve very well in GCSE examinations.
- Provision for careers education is very good.
- Pupils do not view the school council as effective.

## Commentary

31. Good arrangements for child protection are in place. Procedures are well known to staff and are followed effectively. However, there are staff, who pupils confide in, whose role would be enhanced by access to child protection training. Although accommodation is extremely tight and the school is overcrowded in many areas, effective action has been taken to try and minimise hazards and to ensure that the building is safe. Decisions concerned with health and safety are based on well thought out risk assessments. The school works effectively with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils' welfare needs are effectively addressed.

There are good arrangements to control the use of the Internet and there are heavy sanctions should pupils try to breach these safeguards. There is good work in the personal, social and health education programme to promote a healthy lifestyle.

32. The school's pastoral system successfully provides effective care and support despite the multiple responsibilities of the heads of year. They are provided with very good support from the pastoral support assistant and this ensures that pupils' behaviour and attendance are effectively monitored and that vulnerable pupils are supported when heads of year are not available. Systems for dealing with pupils with challenging behaviour are limited by lack of accommodation. Additionally, an ineffective system for monitoring and evaluating exclusions has contributed to high exclusion rates. There is a very effective system for monitoring pupils' academic achievement that results in focused support for individual pupils delivered through the mentoring system. This is extremely successful in promoting examination success in Year 11 and pupils appreciate this extra support. Subject teachers are also extremely supportive and access to extra classes, in subjects such as ICT, supports very high achievement. The induction programme supports effective transition from primary to secondary school. Pupils' worries are soon addressed and they settle quickly into secondary school life. Provision for careers education is very good. In addition to a strong programme of careers lessons in Years 10 and 11, pupils have access to a very wide range of visitors from industry, local colleges, and employers such as the armed services. Many students visit a good range of local universities which helps to raise aspirations. This, together with good individual support from Connexions and the school, results in many pupils having a very clear idea of career opportunities and pathways.
33. The school has sought pupils' views via bi-annual questionnaires. The responses are very positive. Pupils feel that individual teachers do value and act upon their views but regard the school council as ineffective. Last year the school council brought about little change but there are indications of improvements this year. For example, the school council was used as a forum to seek pupils' views regarding the arrangements for delivering sex education.
34. Support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs is good. Consistently good monitoring procedures ensure that they achieve well, both academically and in terms of their personal development. Targets on pupils' individual education plans are realistic and achievable and, where necessary, relate well to the recommendations of Statements. Regular monitoring also provides a clear indication of how well pupils are doing. Access for disabled pupils and adults remains restricted and has not improved since the previous inspection.

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

The school has **good** links with parents and the community. Links with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is popular and oversubscribed; parents appreciate the high quality education that their children receive.
- The school makes very good use of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum. The school is keen to share good practice, both locally and nationally.
- The quality of reports is inconsistent.



## Commentary

35. The school is popular, oversubscribed and enjoys a good reputation in the local community. The school regularly seeks parents' views, which are generally very positive. Parents' concerns are quickly acted upon. Many parents support their children's learning in meaningful ways and this helps their children to achieve well. There is an active Parents Association that raises valuable funds and organises social activities. Parents receive good information about the life of the school through very lively newsletters and a very full and interesting Governors' Report to Parents. However the Governors' Report does not meet statutory requirements because of several omissions, including information about staff development, security and the admission of disabled pupils. A significant minority of parents were concerned about the information they receive about their children's progress. Reports to parents about their children's academic achievement are very variable in quality, depending upon the author. In many reports, there is too much emphasis on children's attitudes and not enough subject-specific information, including strategies for improvement.
36. Good links have been established with the majority of parents of pupils with special educational needs. Most parents are supportive of what the school is trying to achieve and appreciate the "open door" policy. Parents are well informed at all stages of the special educational needs process. Attendance at review meetings and at annual reviews is generally good.
37. The school is outward looking and is developing good links with the community, facilitated in part by its specialist status. The school makes very good use of expertise in the local community and a wide variety of visits and visitors helps to ensure a high level of interest and enjoyment. People from the local community visit the school and use its facilities for information technology classes or to take part in a reading group. Year 7 pupils are actively involved in the local community and arrange an annual party for older local residents.
38. The school has developed very good links with other local schools and colleges. It generously shares its very good practices and passion for education within the local area and further afield. Effective links with primary schools, including a very good information technology programme, ensures smooth transition. Involvement in the Federation has allowed the school to influence practice on a wider stage and encouraged the school to examine and refine its own procedures. The careers education programme, which includes talks and visits to local colleges and universities, helps pupils to make informed decisions about the next stage in education. Good links with colleges and involvement in local initiatives regarding the 14-19 curriculum has strengthened pupils' continuity of learning.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management are **very good**. Governance is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. He has captured the enthusiasm of the staff so that there is a strong sense of a team working together to raise levels of achievement.
- Strategic planning is very good and focuses on raising standards and pupils' expectations and self-esteem.
- The school's self-evaluation procedures are excellent and enable quick identification and sharing of best practice as well as potential areas of concern.
- The school's middle managers are very good and they are a significant factor in raising achievement.
- The governance of the school is good. The governors know the school well and have a perceptive view of its strengths and areas for development. There are, however, two areas where the school does not fully comply with its legal requirements.

## Commentary

39. The overall leadership of the school is very good. There is a very positive atmosphere in the school within which all pupils can learn and feel secure. All staff, including support staff, play a significant role in creating this through the way they work with pupils and parents. The headteacher has only been in post for a relatively short time and inherited a strong legacy of high achievement and standards from his predecessor. He has already begun to build upon this and has the skill, energy and determination to ensure that the school continues to be successful. To this end, there is also a clear strategy to further move the school forward. This includes not only plans to improve the provision for the arts, but also to develop strong and effective partnerships with other schools. The headteacher is well supported by a good senior management team. There is a strong team approach amongst all the senior and middle managers and a shared view of the challenges, priorities and possibilities facing the school and of the way forward.
40. The middle managers are seen by the school as being at the heart of its drive to further improve standards, both in terms of academic success and personal development. The headteacher encourages and supports innovation. A good example has been the introduction of transition units to facilitate the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary school. One of these units, on ICT skills, is particularly effective and has enabled pupils to quickly re-enforce and develop quite high level ICT skills. All subject and pastoral leaders have clear job descriptions and are both responsible and accountable for their areas. Challenging targets are set and rigorously monitored. Heads of department generally respond positively to the devolved autonomy they are given. Indeed, leadership in ICT, mathematics and art and design is excellent. It is very good in citizenship, design and technology, geography, history, music and religious education. It is never less than satisfactory in any area.
41. Management of the school is very good. There is a hardworking and dedicated support staff team who serve the school well. The school functions very effectively on a day-to-day basis as a calm and orderly community. Communications are effective, particularly with parents who can be assured of a rapid response when they contact the school. A major vehicle for improvement is the excellent self-review programme, which rigorously examines all aspects of the school. All staff are involved in the process. It has led to far greater consistency of practice within and between departments; particularly in the use of effective and appropriate teaching and assessment strategies. The review process also enables individual departments to gather relevant information to contribute to subject action plans. These in turn complement the overall school development plan. The review programme is closely linked to the school's performance management systems. Appropriate training opportunities are provided in line with identified priorities. All members of staff have fulfilled the statutory requirement to set and work towards performance targets.
42. The governance of the school is good. The governors have a good knowledge of the school and are actively involved in monitoring its work, either through careful scrutiny and evaluation of the school reports and results, setting and checking of budgets or advising on areas such as the development of the school's autistic unit. The quality of the Governors' Report to Parents is very good but fails to meet legal obligations. The school also fails to meet statutory obligations to provide a daily act of collective worship.
43. The financial management of the school is good. There are effective procedures in place for monitoring expenditure and making informed decisions about school priorities. The managers of the school, supported by an experienced bursar, work closely with the governors of the school to ensure that the principles of best practice are applied. The school is also very effective in seeking additional resources for the school and uses these effectively to improve its overall provision. The school provides good value for money

44. The school is involved in a local Federation with a neighbouring secondary school. The arrangement is mutually beneficial allowing the school to both share and bring back development ideas. The Chief Executive of the Federation has considerable expertise and provides very good support and advice to the school. As the former head of the school, he has a very good understanding of its strengths and needs; he works well with the headteacher, both of whom have done much to promote the school within the local community.

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,967,348	Balance from previous year	47,656
Total expenditure	1,956,348	Balance carried forward to the next	46,351
Expenditure per pupil	3,033		

*The balance carried forward contains £45,000 input in by the LEA for the development of the autistic unit*

## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

### Development of the autism unit

The provision for pupils with autism is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a clear commitment to meeting the needs of autistic pupils.
- The plans for introducing the autistic unit are thorough and include appropriate procedures for training staff.
- Although currently few in number, pupils with autism are well integrated into the school.
- Very good leadership and management ensure that pupils are well supported.
- The special educational needs link governor is very active and effective in giving support to the school in developing the autism unit.

### Commentary

45. The local education authority recently identified the school as part of its inclusion strategy to develop a wide range of provision for pupils on the autistic spectrum. Staff and some resources are already in place but the building programme is not sufficiently advanced to have established a base within the school, which will ultimately cater for 12 pupils. Talks between the school and the education authority have established a high level of commitment to this venture. The unit manager, teachers and governors are committed to the philosophy of inclusive education. They see the social and emotional advantages of these pupils receiving their education within a mainstream setting. Arrangements are already in place to ensure that all staff have access to appropriate professional development and training. It is intended that outreach services will operate through partnerships with other schools, health and support services.
46. At present there are three pupils in school requiring specialist provision of this kind. A large proportion of their time in school is spent in the mainstream setting. The unit manager and learning support assistants work closely with the special educational needs department and other teachers to ensure that these pupils' needs are fully met. They are well qualified to meet the needs of the pupils currently in school and the quality of their teaching is very good.
47. Pupils are fully included in the life of the school and are accepted and valued. They take a full and active part in the life of the school and are well supported, particularly by their peers.

Pupils' social development is a prime concern and the school works hard to encourage their independence and confidence. Pupils often progress as well as others in the class and achievement is good. Very good direction and preparation enables good learning to take place under the guidance of the teacher and support assistant. Plans to further develop the knowledge of class teachers will help to increase what is already a good level of productivity. Work is clearly focused to deal with the particular needs of individual pupils when they are withdrawn from lessons.

48. The autistic provision manager provides very good leadership and management. She has a clear vision of what should be provided for these pupils and is confident of the school's ability to play an active part. The establishment of the unit has the full support of the governors and senior management. Good systems already in place will ensure that unit staff and pupils will be an integral part of this school. At present, the use of specialist resources is restricted due to unsatisfactory shared accommodation. This is likely to be remedied before too long when the current building programme is complete.

# 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 for English is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching & learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are above average
- Teaching is good and, as a consequence, pupils achieve well.
- The mentoring system is successful in improving pupils' literacy skills.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to discuss and organise their thoughts and ideas before undertaking written work.
- Marking and assessment are not used in a sufficiently constructive manner.
- Good development of literacy across the curriculum underpins pupils' achievement in other subjects.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is no adequate library and drama is not taught.

#### Commentary

49. Attainment in the GCSE examination in English in 2003 was average. Girls' results were slightly higher than boys' were, but the gap between boys and girls was smaller than the national norm. Results in the examination in English literature were well above average numbers for grades A\*-C for both boys and girls. For all pupils, the trend is rising. Results in Year 9 national tests in 2003 were above average, with almost twice as many pupils at a higher level than is found nationally. Boys, whose results have improved steadily over recent years, attain at a higher level than boys nationally, while girls' attainment is in line with the national picture.
50. Standards of attainment seen during the inspection were above average for pupils in Year 9, and in Year 11. Given their average attainment on entry to the school, pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils are able to match their writing to take account of different requirements. They enjoy discussing and explaining their understanding of texts they are reading. As a result, they are developing insight into human dilemmas, and are acquiring good critical and analytical skills. More able pupils understand nuance, and express their thoughts and opinions in a lively, sophisticated manner, both orally and in writing. Many pupils, particularly boys, do not place a high enough priority on accuracy and presentation in their written work, and do not scrutinise their work closely enough before offering it for marking. Nevertheless, very good improvement in these aspects was observed in the work of pupils in a Year 11 class of average ability, whom the department was mentoring. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and talented, achieve as well as other pupils. However, there is no outlet for those talented in drama, because of lack of accommodation. This reduces opportunities for pupils to improve their oral and performing skills.

51. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are well informed and highly committed, and their expectations are high. The best teaching is charismatic and communication is effective and, in these lessons, pupils make rapid progress. The department has successfully employed some innovative strategies, including access to Internet websites, to improve boys' attainment. However, learning objectives are not always explained clearly enough so that pupils understand fully what is required. They are not always given sufficient strategies to write answers in a systematic manner, and marking does not consistently contain constructive comment.
52. The post of head of department was vacant at the time of the inspection, and two members of staff held temporary appointments. Nevertheless, as a result of good collaboration amongst staff and with the support of a local authority adviser, leadership is satisfactory and the management of the department is good. All maintain high levels of professionalism, and are very good role models for pupils. The acting head of department ensures the implementation of school policies. Pupils' work is monitored, assessments take place regularly, outcomes are carefully reviewed, and pupils who are struggling to fulfil their potential are identified for mentoring. However, there is not enough use made of assessment information to identify areas of under-achievement and ensure that teaching strategies are linked to pupils' specific needs. Because marking is not consistent, pupils do not always know what they must do in order to improve. Resources are satisfactory but accommodation is unsatisfactory. The congestion occurring in larger classes prevents teachers from moving freely among groups, limiting the effectiveness of their on-going assessment of pupils' work.
53. The department has ensured that the school's literacy policy, which was at an early stage of development at the previous inspection, is now firmly embedded and implemented across all subjects. By its programme of theatre visits, community events such as the Bohemian Café poetry evening, and visits from local writers and poets, the department provides enriching experiences outside the classroom. However, as at the previous inspection, the lack of provision for drama inhibits pupils' personal and aesthetic development.
54. Since the previous inspection, standards have risen, the action taken to combat under-achievement by boys has been successful, and the quality of teaching is more consistently good. Improvement in English is good.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

55. The policy has been developed since the previous inspection and is now firmly in place in the teaching of all subjects. In most subjects, pupils develop a good knowledge of technical terms, are encouraged to discuss their work, and are given opportunities to read aloud. Particularly effective practice was seen in religious education, where pupils were prompted to include appropriate vocabulary and reminded how to organise their presentation of extended writing. In art and design, pupils' written accounts of independent research and evaluation of their work are of a high standard.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2003 were well above average in French and above average in German. Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 when expectations are high.
- Learning and teaching are good because teachers provide a wide range of activities that engage pupils of all abilities and ensure progress.
- Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good, supporting learning. In Year 9, however, some pupils do not work hard enough because they do not intend to continue language study in Year 10.
- Good leadership provides teachers and pupils with clear guidance and establishes high expectations.
- Some classes are too large for the accommodation available, and this rules out desirable activities involving movement.

## Commentary

56. Teachers' assessments for 2003 show that standards exceeded expectations and are rising. Girls do better than boys, but by less than nationally. GCSE results in French were well above average, and above average in German. The number of pupils taking the subject is, however, dropping. Girls did better than boys, whose results fluctuate.
57. Inspection evidence shows that attainment by the end of Year 9 is average. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 and 8, but pupils' progress slows in Year 9 because new arrangements allow them to drop languages in Year 10, and they make less effort as a result. This explains the difference between inspection findings and teachers' assessments and why achievement is only satisfactory. Standards improve more rapidly in Years 10 and 11, and all pupils achieve well as long as expectations are high. In both languages, pupils develop writing skills steadily, so that the quality of coursework is often very good. Pupils write in different styles, varying tenses and adding opinions and justifications routinely. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 speak at length from memory, with good pronunciation and intonation. Lower attaining pupils speak and write well enough to convey information, but at a much less sophisticated level. From Year 7 onwards, pupils learn vocabulary well and this enables them to understand much of what they hear and read in the foreign language.
58. The quality of learning and teaching is good. The outstanding feature in teaching is planning to provide activities that match the full range of individual needs and abilities. This enables pupils to do as well as they can. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to work independently, for example, by taking 'readers' home, or by researching topics on the Internet. Lower attaining classes, including pupils with special educational needs, learn through games and are able to sustain concentration throughout the lesson. Teachers show high expectations by their consistent use of the foreign language. Occasionally, they lapse into English too much, and it is in these lessons that pupils do not achieve as well as they should. ICT is used in creative ways to improve learning. Teachers use different forms of organisation to vary routines, for example, pair and group work, and class surveys. Unfortunately, some classes are far too large, and cannot participate in energetic oral activities in cramped classrooms. A strong focus by the department to use National Curriculum level descriptors and GCSE assessment criteria enables pupils to understand their progress. However, inconsistency in providing helpful

comments in marking and reports means that they do not all appreciate how to improve to the next level.

59. Leadership is good. Thorough documentation and personal encouragement give departmental staff good guidance and support. Very good displays provide a stimulating learning environment. Management is less effective, although satisfactory overall. Lack of lesson observations means that good practice is not well shared. Good assessment procedures do not yet have impact on development planning. However, issues raised in the previous inspection have been effectively addressed, so that improvement has been good.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved significantly since the previous inspection with standards in Years 7 to 9 rising faster than the national trend.
- Teaching is very good and, as a consequence, pupils' achievement is very good.
- Strong leadership and management provide clear educational vision.
- Interactive whiteboards have provided an effective new learning experience.
- The use of ICT is too limited, restricting its use as an aid to learning.

### Commentary

60. Pupils in Year 9, in the national tests in 2003, achieved results well above the national average and well above the results of schools in similar circumstances, with boys performing better than girls. Pupils enter the school with average standards, consequently their achievement is very good. The trend in results is rising faster than the national trend. Pupils in Year 11 in their GCSE had results well above the national average. The trend is rising steadily with no significant difference in the standards of boys and girls. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good. The standard of work seen during the inspection in each year is well above national standards confirming the achievement judgments. For example, higher attainers in Year 9 are introduced to basic concepts of trigonometry. These ideas are developed in Years 10 and 11 to include analysing problems using sine and cosine rules. Investigations and the use of mathematics to solve problems are less developed. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers and boys and girls perform equally well.
61. High standards are as a result of very good teaching resulting in very effective learning. Very good use of the interactive white board in many lessons has added to a wide variety of teaching and learning styles seen involving well-focused interaction between teacher and pupil. There is a mutual desire to succeed with many pupils keen to learn. Lessons are planned and structured well, delivered briskly and present an appropriate level of challenge. Pupils respond with interest. However, reviews of lessons are often hurried and not always used to assess the



quality of learning in the lesson. The use of ICT is not developed sufficiently and this restricts aspects of investigative work in mathematics

62. Excellent leadership and management provide a very secure basis for this high quality teaching. Clear educational vision and high levels of attainment assisted the school in achieving Mathematics Specialist School status and the action plan is well focused on raising standards. The GCSE statistics course has provided additional challenge for very high attaining pupils. The detailed schemes of work allow the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment. Assessment procedures are good and display an overview of individual and group performance. The limited accommodation has been managed well but does restrict some teaching and learning strategies. Access to ICT facilities is limited and will be improved when additional mathematics accommodation is in place. Standards, including those of mental mathematics work, achievement and teaching have all improved significantly since the previous inspection but the impact of ICT has not yet been fully exploited.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

63. A whole-school policy for numeracy is in place. Pupils demonstrate at least a satisfactory range of skills in all subjects with skills involving three-dimensional objects particularly strong in art and design. Collection, analysis and display of data, frequently using ICT techniques, are also strong features throughout the school.

#### An excellent Year 11 mathematics lesson in which pupils were required to use mathematical formula to solve problems

Year 11 pupils were immediately confronted with a series of tasks to identify the appropriate mathematical formula to solve a variety of problems. This starter task provided additional advantages: revision for the pupils and assessment of the level of understanding of work previously undertaken for the teacher. Clear and concise explanations, assisted by effective use of the interactive white-board together with well-focused questions involving all the pupils proved the value of the sin of angle applied to two angles. The fluency of the teaching and the pace of the lesson influenced the effectiveness of the learning with each pupil taking an active part. Worksheets targeted at three levels of ability consolidated this and other trigonometrical ideas. The plenary was used to assess the effectiveness of the learning and showed the teacher that the pupils lacked confidence in applying the knowledge gained.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Unsatisfactory

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are above the national average.
- Procedures are being put in place by the new head of department to ensure greater consistency of teaching. This is beginning to have an impact.
- There is insufficient use of ICT and limited opportunities for extended discussion. This restricts pupils' learning opportunities.
- Assessment procedures have improved significantly but are still not fully developed to maximise pupils' progress.

## Commentary

64. Results in the end of Year 9 tests dipped in 2003. They were, however, similar to the national average and those of similar schools. Results indicated satisfactory achievement and progress when compared with standards achieved by pupils when they began in Year 7. Results at GCSE in 2003 were average.
65. By the end of Year 9, standards of pupils' work are average in terms of their understanding of particle theory and balanced forces and their ability to use formulae, for example to calculate speed. Pupils make satisfactory progress and their achievement is satisfactory. At the end of Year 11, standards are above average, pupils understand atomic structure and electron arrangements and are able to calculate the percentage composition of compounds. Achievement is good.
66. Teaching is satisfactory overall and pupils' learning and achievement is satisfactory as a result. There is a significant amount of good teaching but the quality of teaching and learning is not consistent. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers use a variety of activities to engage pupils, including practicals, demonstrations, investigations, problem-solving activities, model-making, card sorts sequencing activities, ICT, video, games and some writing for a purpose. There is not, however, a consistent approach between teachers in terms of the amount of investigative work. Opportunities for discussion are too limited and this restricts time for pupils to share and develop their understanding. Technical problems have meant there has been insufficient use of ICT. Good, or better, lessons are well structured, involve suitably challenging activities and are conducted at a good pace. Pupils' attitudes in these lessons are good. They respond positively, make good progress and achieve well. Where there is unsatisfactory teaching, some activities are pitched at too low a level and the pace is too slow. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy is having a positive impact but is not yet fully or consistently implemented. Tracking of pupils' progress is very good but assessment information is not used to ensure consistently high levels of challenge in all lessons. Work is marked regularly but there is variation in the use of diagnostic comments. This makes it hard for pupils to identify how to improve.
67. Leadership and management of the department are both satisfactory. The new head of department has a clear appreciation of the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise standards. There are plans to increase monitoring of teaching and to introduce peer observation. Schemes of work are being revised to provide more detailed guidance for all teachers, particularly non-specialists. Some areas of the curriculum currently offer insufficient progression from earlier work, including that done in primary schools. The department has recognised the need to provide a more appropriate curriculum in Years 10 and 11 for middle and lower attainers. Progress since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory in terms of standards attained and the overall quality of teaching. The reasons for this relate in part to significant staffing changes since the previous inspection. These have only recently been resolved with the appointment of a new head of department.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **excellent**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Excellent
Teaching & learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outstanding leadership of the department has led to excellent provision for pupils to develop and use ICT skills.
- The very high standards at the end of Year 11 are the result of the very good teaching that pupils receive between Years 7 and 11.
- Pupils want to learn; this contributes significantly to their excellent achievement at the end of Year 11.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory as it limits the range of teaching methods and some pupils have to share computers.

### Commentary

68. Examination results in 2003 were well above average and have been so for several years. A particular strength was the very high proportion of pupils who attained the highest GCSE grade.
69. All pupils follow appropriate courses from Years 7 to 11. This level of continuity enables them to become very capable and discriminating users of ICT. By the end of Year 9, pupils' ICT skills are well above average. Most pupils' presentations show a very good understanding of the needs of a particular audience when designing newsletters and posters. They evaluate their work very well and seek to improve it because of the high standards expected of them from their teachers. Pupils choose appropriate software for particular tasks because teachers encourage them to seek their own solutions.
70. By the end of Year 11, pupils are very independent users of ICT. Their work is often immaculately organised, both on the computers and in their files. Their design skills are well developed so their presentations are relevant and effective. Their understanding of how databases are used to manage information for a leisure centre is well above average. Higher attaining pupils use databases to produce high quality reports specific to a particular need. Pupils use ICT very well for graphing data. Lower attaining pupils are less adept at producing written evaluations of their work.
71. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 is very good. This leads to excellent achievement. Teachers are enthusiastic and know their subject very well. As a result, pupils are very motivated and want to learn. Tasks are challenging as teachers do not readily supply answers but encourage pupils to think the problem through. Lessons are very well planned, often in specific short sections that maintain pupils' interest. They move at a very good pace appropriate for all pupils. Teachers use interactive whiteboards very well for demonstrations and discussion. Teachers are constantly on the move checking and supporting pupils. This is especially effective for pupils with special educational needs who achieve very well. Teachers are continuously assessing pupils' work and giving pointers for improvement, which pupils act upon. Pupils also assess each other's work very effectively,

which also helps them to raise their level of achievement. As a result of these very good assessment systems, pupils know their current level of attainment and the steps they need to take to improve. Pupils' behaviour is very good.

72. Excellent leadership by the head of department and the senior management team, provides a clear sense of purpose, shared by all teachers, focused on improving standards. There are well-defined plans to improve provision still further since becoming a specialist computing college. The department is very well managed. Teachers evaluate their own work and monitor the progress of pupils very effectively. The very good resources are well maintained by a skilled technical team. However, book resources in the library are inadequate. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Rooms are too small, which means that some pupils have to share computers and the range of teaching methods that teachers can employ is restricted. This was an issue at the previous inspection. Apart from this, there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. Pupils use their well above average ICT skills in many areas of the curriculum. The Learning Resource Centre is especially well used by pupils for research and subject-related work. Pupils use e-mail with confidence to transfer work to and from home. Geography uses ICT very well for investigative work, presenting information and analysing trends using graphs. Most other subjects use ICT well to enhance pupils' learning. For example, pupils use ICT effectively in mathematics to explore data handling. Music software is used for composing. Websites are designed in German. Presentation and communication software is used well in English and art and design. Pupils with special educational needs use ICT effectively. Specialist school status has led to well-formulated plans for the further extension of ICT into other areas of the curriculum. For example, science is developing data-logging, using recently acquired equipment. The network will be extended to include all areas of the school and allow physical education to access ICT resources. Planning for ICT use in design and technology is good but its use, especially in Years 7 to 9, is not yet fully developed.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well at the end of Year 11 because of the very good teaching.
- Pupils work hard and are interested in the subject so they achieve very well.
- Pupils' geographical skills improve as they move through the school because of the very good fieldwork provision.
- Insufficient comments are given on marked work to show pupils how they can improve.

## Commentary

74. Results at GCSE in 2003 were average when compared to national figures. However, results over the previous three years were above average. Standards at the end of Year 9 are also above national expectations. Overall, the level of achievement is good.
75. By the end of Year 9, pupils develop above average skills in the practical use of maps and locating places. They analyse and present information well using graphs and ICT. The good teaching they receive places great emphasis on the development of these skills. The very good fieldwork provision throughout Years 7 to 11 further enhances pupils' understanding. Higher attaining pupils explain features well, such as the causes of soil erosion and how it can be prevented. In Year 11, most pupils use their skills very well to explore hypotheses in their coursework and to explain their findings. Coursework is very well presented and illustrates pupils' high levels of interest and hard work. Very good teaching reinforces and consolidates pupils' learning so that they understand geographical terminology and use it well in examination answers.
76. Pupils benefit from the well-planned lessons and energetic delivery by their teachers. Teachers show very good subject knowledge in the probing questions they pose and in the effective individual support they give to pupils. This is especially so in the way they help pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. Pupils' use of ICT is very good. The best lessons have a variety of tasks that are challenging, engage pupils' interest and move at a good pace. Homework is used well to further develop work done in class and is regularly and thoroughly marked. However, especially in Years 7 to 9, few comments are given to show pupils how to improve. Pupils behave very well because of the high standards that their teachers expect. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good with appropriate humour being an integral part of lessons.
77. The department is well led and managed. There is a distinct focus on seeking ways to improve pupils' attainment. The good resources are used well. The department reviews its own performance regularly and effective measures are taken to improve provision for the pupils. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection as pupils' attainment has improved, they make better progress and accommodation is now good. However, opportunities for pupils to research, using books in the library, remain unsatisfactory

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good due to very good teaching.
- Leadership and management impact very positively on achievement.
- Assessment procedures enable pupils to receive very good feedback on their learning.

- Pupils respond very positively to very well planned lessons.
- Classrooms restrict learning opportunities because they are too small.
- There are insufficient resources for gifted and talented pupils.

## Commentary

78. GCSE results were average in 2003. Girls' achievement was better than that of the boys but the difference was less than the previous year, when results were above average. The striking feature of pupils' achievement is the strong development of subject and literacy skills. Year 7 pupils, for example, select and combine a wide range of information to assess why the Roman army was so successful. Skills in organising information in extended writing develop well, including the work of lower attainers. By the end of Year 9, pupils are confident in using a variety of sources, for example, to assess whether Richard Arkwright was a hero or a villain. As well as developing their essay skills, pupils write in a variety of other styles. For example, they produce newspaper reports of events at Pompeii, express the opinions of key figures at the execution of Charles I, and create coal miner's songs. By the end of Year 11, pupils can synthesise information from a wide variety of sources, for example, they identify the key beliefs of the Ku Klux Klan and assess the impact of propaganda in Nazi Germany. Pupils confidently examine cause and effect, for example, by speculating on the possible impact on the course of events had changes been made to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
79. Overall, teaching is very good. Lesson planning is thorough and ensures that there is a very clear structure for learning. Class discussion is used very well to recall previous work. Lessons develop pupils' historical and literacy skills very effectively. Pupils work very productively because they know how to approach tasks, whether it be analysing sources or planning an essay. Very thorough assessment procedures ensure pupils know what they have achieved and what they have to do to improve. Self-assessment methods involve pupils very well in their own learning. Methods used are very well matched to the needs of particular groups, including pupils with special educational needs.
80. Leadership and management have been very successful in focusing on a range of strategies to raise achievement, including changing the GCSE syllabus, the use of self-assessment and implementing a literacy policy. A wide range of resources has been developed within the department, although these are currently insufficient to meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils. Classrooms are too small for some large teaching groups. The school library is unsatisfactory as a location for resources. Improvement from the previous inspection has been good with higher standards and achievement. There have been improvements regarding the use of ICT.

## Religious Education

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

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

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

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching leads to very good learning and good achievement.
- Relationships are very good and this helps pupils develop positive attitudes and enables them to learn well.
- Leadership and management are very good and provide good support to non-specialist teachers.
- The restriction on the time provided in Years 10 and 11 restricts achievement and makes it difficult to adequately cover the locally agreed syllabus or the short course GCSE programme within normal lessons.

## **Commentary**

81. Pupils' achievement overall is good in religious education. The standard of their work on entry into Year 7 is generally below expectations. By Year 9 it has reached expectations. By the end of Year 11 GCSE results are above national expectations.
82. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers prepare well for their lessons. Interesting starter activities are used to capture attention. For example, the question "are you a lucky or an unlucky person?" introduced work on charity in a Year 10 lesson. Pupils are enthusiastic and take part willingly in the varied activities prepared for them. Oral work is a very strong feature of lessons. The teachers' skills in questioning and in chairing lead to pupils speaking willingly to the class. Pupils listen to and learn from each other. The teachers add comments based on their very good subject knowledge and this leads to very good learning in class. Homework and coursework, in Years 10 and 11, are used well to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.
83. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and are based on mutual respect. No disruptive behaviour was seen in lessons. The department is inclusive and works hard to ensure all pupils are appropriately provided for in terms of activities, tasks and resources. This supportive ethos contributes strongly to pupils' personal development. In one excellent lesson, it allowed the teacher to undertake a very difficult activity, which needed pupils' trust. Pupils responded and their learning and personal development were excellent. Opportunities are provided for reflection in Years 7 to 9 where the subject contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual development. These opportunities are, to some extent, limited in Years 10 and 11 by the shortage of time.
84. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is committed to helping pupils succeed. He has a clear vision for the department's future. He supports his non-specialist colleagues by providing a detailed scheme of work and monitors their teaching and pupils' work. He has collaborated with the senior leadership team in an evaluation of the department and has produced a detailed action plan to develop it further. The head of department has completed work to ensure that Year 7 pupils are assessed on entry to the school so as to ascertain the level at which they are working. His plan is to extend this to Years 8 and 9. The department's improvement since the previous inspection is good. All pupils have the opportunity to do the GCSE short course and some choose to do the full course. The support to the non-specialist teachers has been extended.

### **An excellent Year 8 religious education lesson in which pupils were shown how it felt to experience discrimination**

The teacher's short starter activity got all pupils involved in suggesting plus points about the school. She moved quickly to divide the class into a larger and a smaller section to continue the work.

She lavished attention and quality materials on the groups in the larger section, before giving curt instructions to the other pupils to work individually. She gave them scraps of paper and a pencil to work with. Pupils worked as instructed though those in the smaller section were clearly mystified by their treatment.

After 10 minutes, the teacher thanked all pupils for working as she had asked. By her skilful probing questioning, she enabled pupils to: name the process they had experienced as discrimination; describe their feelings; and to identify the basis upon which discrimination is built. Then, the teacher presented pupils with a definition sheet and key questions to reflect on, asking them to complete part for homework and to talk to their parents about the lesson. She provided pupils with 5 short case studies and gave five minutes to talk together about them. In the plenary that followed, the pupils were able to generalise and apply their experience in the lesson to the types of discrimination in the case study. Their learning was excellent.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE standards are well above the national average.
- Very good teaching and learning leads to good standards of achievement by pupils of all abilities.
- Very good leadership and management supports a strong teaching team committed to high achievement.
- The use of ICT as a tool for learning in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

85. Formal teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are above the national average and rising. In lessons, achievement is good overall and in a good proportion, achievement is very good. Standards are high in resistant materials, graphics, electronics and food technology. They are above average in textiles, but limitations in accommodation and resources restrict what very good teachers might achieve. The use of ICT in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. There is detailed planning for the use of ICT in schemes of work and in teachers' lesson plans, but learning through the use of appropriate software is not yet fully established in any material area.



86. GCSE examination results have improved year-on-year and are now well above the national average. Girls produce outstanding results. Boys are also beginning to achieve standards at the highest level, through very good teaching, target setting and assessment practices that give clear advice on how to improve. Talented pupils are well served and a high proportion are able to obtain A\* grades. Analysis of individual courses indicates that standards are very high throughout the subject. Provision for equality of opportunity and inclusion is very good. All pupils have opportunities to do very well.
87. Practical skills are carefully and systematically developed in the early years, and all pupils get a very good grounding in using the design process. This is because pupils have the benefit of continuity in teaching in all aspects of the subject. Consequently, pupils have the confidence to express their ideas and the practical skills to carry them out, with very good support from their teachers.
88. Teaching and learning are very good overall. All lessons were graded at least good. This is due to a very good team of subject specialists who demand very high standards. Planning for lessons is very good, focusing directly on learning. High quality resources are made available and these stimulate pupils to produce quality products. For example, in a food technology lesson, the provision of a wide range of decorative media and associated application techniques stimulated imaginative finishes for a range of different biscuits. Assessment is well planned and linked directly to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, as well as to pupils' own targets. Assessment is particularly strong during the formative stages of GCSE projects, and this is one of the most important factors in the systematic improvement in standards.
89. Leadership and management are very good. Very good documentation supports a clear direction for the subject and sets high expectations for the teachers. Very good analysis of examination and other data provides information that is used to set targets, to modify the curriculum and to focus teachers' attention on the assessment of pupils' achievement. All pupils and teachers have a clear understanding of their targets. However, when completing reports for parents, there is insufficient subject guidance on what needs to be done to achieve even higher standards. The subject improvement plan is comprehensive and challenging and fully supports whole school plans. Accommodation is adequate but not compatible with the current needs and demands of the subject. Facilities for ICT have improved recently, but require a greater range of both hardware and software. These limitations, together with restricted access, combine to limit the use of this essential equipment as a tool for learning. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have improved, as has the quality of teaching.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

### Art and design

The provision in art and design is **excellent**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Excellent leadership and management have provided a clear vision to inspire others and to raise standards.
- The emphasis on independent learning leads to the production of highly individual and creative work.
- Warm, caring and sensitive relationships are developed in the department. This provides a safe and supportive learning ethos in which pupils can learn.
- There is excellent use of annotation and written commentary in pupils' sketchbooks.
- There is insufficient technician time for the department.

## **Commentary**

90. Overall, the achievement in art and design is very good. Pupils make very good progress from Year 7 to Year 9 and standards achieved are well above average. Standards achieved at GCSE are very high. In 2003, at the end of Year 11, 81.4 per cent of pupils achieved levels A\* - C which is well above the national average of 65 per cent.
91. By Year 11, pupils produce highly distinctive and creative pieces of artwork. They have a mature grasp of techniques and work successfully in a wide variety of media. The large-scale artwork and three-dimensional sculptures are impressive and demonstrate a well-developed understanding of both natural forms and grotesque imagery. The preparation in sketchbooks is stunning and the pupils' evaluation and analysis in the written commentaries on their preparation are incisive and penetrating. By Year 9, pupils also annotate their work carefully, are bold in their use of colour and demonstrate very good control and development of form, texture, tone and composition. They are not afraid to experiment with shape and natural forms in preparation for their three-dimensional work.
92. Teaching, overall, is very good. Lessons are well planned and paced, and discussion and sharing of ideas is encouraged. Challenges are set which are appropriate for all pupils and this ensures their commitment to, and enthusiasm for, their work. Independent learning is encouraged but this is underpinned by a strong emphasis on the development of skills. This approach helps pupils to recognise appropriate pathways to be explored and develops a sense of pride and ownership in their work. Skilful demonstrations by teachers are much appreciated by the pupils. In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher's well-paced illustrations of the techniques to be used when creating a montage image, fired the pupils' imaginations. They were able to use some of them to add depth and interest to their work.
93. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. The vision of the head of art and design regarding the development of the department, the excellent day-to-day administration and the ability to inspire others, have resulted in a vast improvement of standards over time. The schemes of work are creatively designed, challenging and have built-in provision for pupils of all abilities. Assessment, including pupils' self-evaluation of work, is used successfully to inform them of their progress and set targets for future development. Monitoring of teaching is undertaken rigorously and assessment is standardised regularly within the department. The proximity of the two art rooms facilitates the sharing of good practice and pupils are able to move between the two spaces to benefit from the individual teachers' expertise. Since the previous inspection, standards and ICT provision has improved. Currently, there is insufficient technician time to support the work of the department. This means teachers have to spend extra time in preparing equipment and resources and, therefore, reducing the time teachers have to prepare and plan lessons

## **Example of outstanding practice**

### Example of excellent leadership and management

The head of the art department has a clear vision for the future, a sound understanding of the department's needs and strategies to move the department forward. The ability of the head of department to inspire others and provide positive leadership has led to an improvement of standards over time. Displays within the department are of excellent quality and are a source of valuable stimulus for the pupils who can rejoice in seeing their achievements celebrated. The exhibitions around school not only raise the profile of the department but also enrich the aesthetic environment of the building. The department has been a major promoter of literacy within the foundation subjects in school. It has also provided examples of good practice in this area for all the Darlington secondary schools. It is promoting the gifted and talented by entering Year 9 pupils for GCSE early with the hope of offering them 'A' level courses in Years 10 and 11. Warm, caring and sensitive relationships are developed and promoted in the department, which allow independent learning and experimentation to flourish. This results in the production of highly individual and creative work.

## Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and this leads to very good relationships and positive attitudes towards learning.
- There is good use of ICT to reinforce learning.
- The use of pupil record sheets, which set targets and keep pupils informed of their progress, is good.
- Accommodation and resources for the department are inadequate.

### Commentary

94. Overall standards in music are well above average. Attainment by the end of Year 9 in 2003 was above the national expectation. No pupils opted to take the GCSE course in 2003 because of staffing difficulties. Standards seen during the inspection showed that pupils of all abilities make very good progress and achieve very well.
95. By the end of Year 11, pupils' listening skills are well developed and they are able to identify music from a wide variety of historical periods. They compose confidently, create good melodic pieces, are aware of repeated rhythms, can phrase well and use dynamics effectively. By the end of Year 9, pupils use music vocabulary accurately, work co-operatively with each other and, through expressive exploration, can produce effective programme music on a wide variety of instruments
96. The quality of teaching is very good. Learning is also very good because lessons are well paced and contain a variety of activities that ensure the commitment of the pupils. There is a very good rapport established within lessons. The teacher is skilful in taking pupils' answers to questions and observations and then expanding on them to move their understanding and

learning forward. The creative approach to music by the teacher was apparent in a lesson on rhythm and pulse. The pupils worked as an ensemble, conducted by the teacher, as they beat out the rhythms using the bottoms of their upturned chairs and used the chair legs to add different textures to their performance. This was much appreciated and enjoyed by the class.

97. The leadership and management of music are very good. The head of department has a very clear vision for the future of the department and has an ambitious development plan in preparation for the move into a new purpose-built music block in September. The schemes of work are creatively designed to meet the requirements of National Curriculum and the GCSE specification. There is good use of pupils' record sheets, which set appropriate targets and keep pupils informed of their progress. Inclusion is addressed in lessons through tasks set to meet different pupils' needs. There is a good range of ICT programs in the department, which enable pupils to sequence and edit their work as well as explore periods and styles of music. At the moment, the resources and accommodation for the department are inadequate for its needs, particularly the lack of practice rooms.
98. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The peripatetic teachers are more involved in the work of the department and the grading, recording and tracking of pupils' progress is much improved.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average/GCSE above
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory/Good
Teaching & learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement in GCSE examinations are above average.
- Pupils are interested in the subject, and work hard in lessons.
- There is good teaching and learning in the majority of lessons and this leads to good levels of achievement in Years 7 to 9.
- The poor indoor accommodation restricts the range of activities.
- There is insufficient use of National Curriculum levels in teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- There is little use of ICT in teaching.

### Commentary

99. Although GCSE results in 2003 were lower than in the previous year, the overall achievement of pupils was very good. The drop in the results was in part due to a higher proportion of lower attaining students. However, the results of 75 per cent A\*-C were well above national average. Standards of pupils' work in Year 9 are average. In soccer, pupils have skills and understanding of the game at the levels expected. In netball, pupils pass and receive the ball with confidence, and understand positions in the game. Pupils arrive in Year 7 with a range of skills, but in some instances at a lower level in games than might be expected. There is good achievement by pupils through Years 7 and 8, particularly in new activities such as rugby and hockey, to reach national standards. In Years 10 and 11 standards are satisfactory, although in girls' basketball and boys' rugby, standards are below expected levels. However, these

activities have recently been introduced into the curriculum, and there is satisfactory progress and achievement. In GCSE physical education in Year 11, standards are above average and achievement is good. Pupils are learning more about the theory of the subject, such as muscular and circulatory systems, and how different types of training bring about changes. There is good progress in their understanding of issues about staging large events, such as the Olympic Games.

100. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is well used to give detailed explanations and demonstrations, leading to good learning by pupils. Lessons are well planned and prepared with effective use of learning objectives at the start of lessons and plenary sessions at the end to reinforce learning. Classes are well managed and organised, particularly where there are large class sizes with 35 pupils and only one teacher. Work set, particularly for Year 9 pupils, could be more challenging so that higher level skills can be developed. Pupils are interested in the subject, they respond well to teachers, with whom they have good relationships. Currently little use is made of National Curriculum levels in teaching to help pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve. There is a range of teaching styles in GCSE but little use is made of ICT.
101. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting head of department has produced a good handbook, although units of work need to be more specific to ensure better progression. The day-to-day organisation of the department is satisfactory. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. GCSE has been successfully introduced with good results and the department has gained the 'Sportsmark' award. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The gym, which is cold and in a poor state of decoration, is the only indoor sports area, which restricts the range of activities available to pupils. There are opportunities in extra-curricular games activities for all pupils, including gifted and talented, with a range of school teams and clubs. There are some good developments in boys' and girls' rugby, and girls' soccer. Progress since the previous inspection is good. Standards have improved as has the quality of teaching

## BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

### Business studies

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Not applicable	Above average
Achievement	Not applicable	Good
Teaching and learning	Not Applicable	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above the national average.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils have very positive attitudes and achieve well.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is good and difficulties are quickly identified and acted upon.

## Commentary

102. Results in 2003 were well above the national average, with 78 per cent of pupils attaining grades A\* to C, compared to 55 per cent nationally. In the lessons observed, standards were above average. Pupils have a very good grasp of key terms and concepts. For example, pupils in Year 11 group were able to talk authoritatively about cash flow. In a Year 10 group, pupils were able to produce a job advert to meet specific criteria. Overall achievement of pupils is good.
103. Standards attained relate directly to the very good quality of teaching. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and use this to enthuse and motivate the pupils. Questioning skills are used effectively to check understanding. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and help create a positive atmosphere in lessons where pupils feel confident to seek help and contribute to class discussion.
104. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Schemes of work are thorough and there are very good procedures to monitor and evaluate the progress of students. Good use is made of ICT to improve pupils' understanding of the subject and to develop their ICT skills in different contexts.

## Health and social care

Lessons on health and social care were sampled. Standards were good and very good teaching enabled pupils to achieve well.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

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

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of learning opportunities has been created as a result of a very good whole-school approach to the development of citizenship.
- Provision is developing very well due to very good leadership and management.
- There are insufficient opportunities for extended writing within the core provision.
- The delivery of citizenship in subject areas varies in quality.

## Commentary

105. Pupils acquire a good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of citizenship themes, including abstract ideas. For example, Year 7 pupils are very confident in discussing the rights of a young child. By the end of Year 9, skills in discussion and the expression of reasoned

opinions develop well, for example, a lower attainer expressing views on anti-social behaviour. ICT skills in communication are good. For example, higher attaining pupils giving a PowerPoint presentation on the achievements of Nelson Mandela. By Year 11, pupils give well-reasoned opinions in discussing a wide range of social and moral issues including abortion, euthanasia and contraception. A weakness in work seen throughout the age range is in expressing opinions in extended writing.

106. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Class discussion in citizenship lessons is well managed and pupils develop good oral communication skills in expressing their opinions on a wide range of issues and problems. Class discussion provides valuable additional learning opportunities, for example, the high quality of discussion on prejudice and discrimination in a religious education lesson. Learning varies between subject areas because links with relevant themes are not always clearly made. Visiting speakers significantly enhance pupils' learning because they provide expert subject knowledge. For example, in developing skills in responsible action in relation to fire and personal safety. Pupils are highly motivated by such expertise and, as a result, they develop a very good awareness of both personal responsibility and responsibility to others. Learning is good as a result of the wider opportunities provided in addition to citizenship lessons. For example, all Year 7 pupils take part in the planning and organisation of an annual party for elderly people. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 took part in a local democracy week poster competition, with one school pupil being the eventual winner. All pupils are involved in the electoral process for the school council. Assessment is not sufficiently thorough, with pupils' records of discussions sometimes incomplete. In addition, there are insufficient opportunities in lessons for pupils to express opinions through extended writing.
107. The overall leadership and management of the subject are very good and a lot has been achieved in a very short time. The whole school involvement in the introduction of citizenship has been very effective in its impact on pupils' learning opportunities. The school's commitment is demonstrated by the core provision within the curriculum and by subject planning with all departments specifically including citizenship within their schemes of work. Furthermore, every effort has been made to enhance opportunities by linking citizenship to other aspects of the life of the school, including fund-raising, assembly themes and special theme days. The first edition of a community newspaper has been published, reflecting many aspects of the life of the school within the community. These activities enable pupils to recognise the needs of others and recognise ways in which they can help others. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning within the core course is very thorough so that targets for improvement can be identified. Assessment procedures are developing well. There is, however, currently, insufficient monitoring of the delivery of citizenship within subject areas.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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