

INSPECTION REPORT

NEWLAND SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Hull

LEA area: Hull

Unique reference number: 118070

Headteacher: Mrs A Mathews

Lead inspector: Terence Parish

Dates of inspection: 17th-19th May 2004

Inspection number: 258713

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

Expressions often used in the text of the report

Key Stage 3 – the Years 7 to 9 in school

National Key Stage 3 Strategy – planning made available from central government to help improve, amongst other things, teaching and learning.

Key Stage 4 – the Years 10 and 11 in school

CCI, Cross-Curricular Issues, is this school's name for what is called personal, social and health education in most other schools. CCI is not taught in the calendar month in which the inspection fell.

The School Forum is a pupil body with elected members most often called a School Council in other schools.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll:	860
School address:	Cottingham Road Hull
Postcode:	HU6 7RU
Telephone number:	01482 343098
Fax number:	01482 441416
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Jean Fenwick
Date of previous inspection:	19/10/1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a little smaller than average and serves an area that is poor both socially and economically. As it is the only girls' school in the locality, it attracts pupils from significant distances, or from areas from which bus travel is difficult or time-consuming. The cost and time of journeys appear to be factors in attendance problems. Pupils' level of attainment on entry tends to fluctuate to some extent, but, coupled with social problems and the above average turbulence – almost a fifth of girls in Year 11 did not enter the school in Year 7 - it is well below average. The number of pupils on the special educational needs register has fluctuated widely and is currently above average. Special needs include learning and behavioural problems. A rising number of pupils are from ethnic minorities; the proportion is close to ten per cent at the moment. The largest minority is Bangladeshi. The number of pupils at an early stage of learning English is small, but above average as it includes the children of parents who have sought asylum. The school has gained several awards: Gold Artsmark (2003), Basic Skills Quality Mark (2002), Investor in People (2002).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15465	T Parish	Lead inspector	
31243	P Dodd-Racher	Lay inspector	
12003	A Marfleet	Team inspector	English
17923	M Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics
27503	M Foulds	Team inspector	Science
18542	G Griffin	Team inspector	Design and technology
32230	W Alexander	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
17404	J Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
8873	C Evers	Team inspector	History
15576	D Nebesnuick	Team inspector	Geography
30901	S Schofield	Team inspector	Art and design
31850	D Nevens	Team inspector	Music Citizenship
20192	T McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education
31135	R Hobson	Team inspector	Religious education
27803	J Clark	Team inspector	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA
Herringston Barn
Herringston
Dorchester
Dorset
DT2 9PU

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is satisfactory overall. By the time pupils leave, the standard of their work is below average overall, but better than when they started school. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Historically poor attendance in Years 10 and 11 has significantly limited the school's overall performance in GCSE examinations and, hence, how well pupils achieve. The school is better than satisfactory in many ways. Teaching is good and those pupils who choose to attend regularly learn and achieve well. Most pupils behave well. Leadership and management are good. Much work is done to try and improve attendance, which appears to be having an effect on younger pupils, and there is a good focus on improving pupils' learning. The headteacher has been particularly effective in making the school a civilised community, where care of pupils and their participation in what is available are both very strong features. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils are achieving well overall by Year 9 and many continue to do so in Years 10 and 11.
- The learning and achievement of a significant minority of older pupils in particular, are hindered by those parents who condone unnecessary absence and who rarely communicate with or visit the school.
- English test results were above those in similar schools in 2003 and are consistently better than those in mathematics and science, but below average literacy skills adversely affect pupils' written and oral communication. Mathematics results are relatively weaker than those in the other subjects.
- The school is very inclusive. Pupils with special educational needs and more able pupils achieve well overall. Ethnic minority pupils and those learning English achieve at least as well as most other pupils.
- Provision for cultural development, including both local culture and an appreciation and understanding of other cultures, is very good.
- The provision for citizenship education is very good in Years 7 to 9; the school forum is a very good practical example of this and is currently involved in school initiatives about healthy eating.
- Child protection arrangements in school are very rigorous and pupils are very well cared for.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Although GCSE results and attendance have not risen significantly, attendance is showing signs of improvement, and the quality of teaching has improved substantially and is in line with that of other schools. New developments to move things on are well under way.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. They achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily overall by the time they leave school. Pupils who attend regularly generally achieve well between Year 9 and leaving. The very significant minority of older pupils whose attendance is poor achieve unsatisfactorily and some do not gain any qualifications. Standards of pupils' work are below average overall across all years, but improve from when pupils start school. English Year 9 test results were below average, but above those for similar schools in 2003; they are consistently better than those in

mathematics and science. Performance in mathematics is weakest. English GCSE results are better than those in similar schools, but below average literacy skills adversely affect pupils' written and oral communication across the school. Pupils with special educational needs and more able pupils achieve well overall. Pupils achieve very well in citizenship and in religious education by the end of Year 9. Pupils achieve well in art and design, history, music, performing arts, physical education and religious education by Year 11.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good overall. They know how to behave, look after the school's facilities well, enjoy lunch and break-times in a civilised way, understand the meaning of citizenship very well and treat each other fairly. The behaviour of pupils in Years 7 to 10 is good overall, and their attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Year 11 pupils were absent from school on study leave during the inspection. Poor attendance by Year 11 makes attendance unsatisfactory overall.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good overall. Teaching is good across all years. Learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Year 10. Poor attendance by pupils in Year 11 hinders their learning. Teaching and learning in English are good in all years, whilst they are satisfactory in mathematics. Teaching in science is good in all years; whilst learning is satisfactory overall, it is hindered by weak literacy skills and pupils' difficulty in retaining facts. Teaching in citizenship, performing arts, religious education, and art and design encourages independent learning, which is also now being fostered by new resources. The curriculum is satisfactory and the school is due to offer more vocational courses in September 2004. Care and welfare of pupils is a very significant need in this school and is very well done. The school tries hard to work with parents, but the response does not match the effort made. Links with the community and other schools and colleges are good and increasingly broaden pupils' experiences.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. Leadership, including that of the headteacher, is good. Management is good. Leadership and management by senior staff have led to a very inclusive school that has a good ethos for learning. Effective leadership and management at subject level means there is no unsatisfactory provision. The work of governors is satisfactory. Almost all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Few parents attended the meeting and only a small number returned questionnaires. Most responses were positive about the school. A minority expressed some concerns about behaviour. Pupils were questioned and talked to prior to the inspection and during it. All were spontaneously happy with their lot, and found nothing of significance to criticise. Year 11 girls said they would miss the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to work hard to improve attendance and ensure that improvement is maintained through Year 11.
- Seek new ways to engage parents and carers in supporting pupils' education.
- Improve standards and achievement in mathematics.
- Make further efforts to improve literacy standards.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

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

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall; well in Years 7 to 9, satisfactorily by the end of Year 11. Achievement is hindered by historically poor attendance in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although the most recent Year 9 national test results indicate pupils underachieve, inspection reveals that pupils are currently achieving well overall by Year 9.
- GCSE examination results are effectively lowered by poor attendance, courses that carry different accreditation and the adverse effect of the number of pupils who join the school late.
- English test results were above those in similar schools in 2003 and are consistently better than those in mathematics and science; mathematics performance is relatively weaker than in the other two subjects.
- Below average literacy skills adversely affect pupils' written and oral communication.
- Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall by the end of Year 11. Pupils, who attend regularly, including those with special educational needs and more able pupils, achieve well overall.
- Pupils achieve very well in citizenship and religious education by the end of Year 9. More limited evidence suggests that this is also the case in performing arts.
- Pupils achieve well in art and design, history, music, performing arts, physical education and religious education by the end of Year 11.

Commentary

1. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average overall and represented a dip in an otherwise rising trend over five years. Statutory targets were not met in English, mathematics or science; science targets were least well met. Inspection evidence indicates that improvement is rising again. English results have always been better than mathematics and science, and science results generally better than mathematics results. Inspection confirms a similar pecking order in the standards of work seen. In the 2003 tests more able pupils did better in English and in science than they did in mathematics and that is the most significant reason for the relative performances of each subject. English results overall were to the national and girls' averages, mathematics well below and science below their averages. When the 2003 results are compared with those of pupils elsewhere who began in Year 7 with similar attainment, then English results were above average, mathematics well below average and science below average. Results were below average overall. However, value added calculations for Year 9 in 2003 show that pupils' performance was satisfactory overall. Care has to be taken in interpreting all such results. Typically, a relatively high proportion of pupils enter this school without much data on their previous attainment as they were absent when tests were taken. In addition, social problems are generally worse than similar schools' categories suggest. Inspection evidence indicates that, by Year 9, girls are achieving well in English and satisfactorily in both mathematics and science.
2. In Years 7 to 9 pupils follow many more subjects than English, mathematics and science. When they start in Year 7, national test data to determine how good they are in any of these, for example, art and design, is not available. However, inspection reveals that standards on entry are well below average across the board and tending towards poor for a minority of pupils. Some girls have difficulty in communicating, some lack basic skills expected of youngsters, such as how to run. Standards are most often below average in all subjects by Year 9; but they are average in English, art and design, religious education and citizenship. Standards remain

well below average in geography and in modern foreign languages. Good teaching, leadership and management mean that pupils achieve at least well in most subjects by the end of Year 9. In citizenship and religious education they achieve very well; in geography and modern foreign languages satisfactorily. Drama and performing arts are important features in Years 7 to 9, but inspection time limited the depth at which they could be inspected, so no full judgement can be made. Inspection evidence suggested that pupils achieve very well, some attaining standards above average, and anecdotal evidence about school performances supports this view, as does the judgement on citizenship, which is taught through the performing arts.

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

Standards in:	School results	Girls' National results
English	33.8 (33.4)	34.6 (34.8)
Mathematics	32.7 (33.1)	35.5 (34.7)
Science	31.4 (31.5)	33.6 (33.3)

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

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

	School results	Girls' National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	31 (27)	57.8 (56.6)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades including mathematics and English	79 (81)	88.8 (89.2)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (95)	95.7 (95.7)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	27.4 (26.5)	36.9 (36.8)

There were 172 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average overall, for the proportion of pupils attaining five or more A*-C grades and for five or more A*-G grades. The proportion attaining one or more A*-G grades was below average. These results are typical and were similar to those at the time of the last inspection, although standards of attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 now are typically lower than standards on entry then. Statutory targets were not met in any categories. Compared with girls' examination performances nationally, all measures are worse. Value added from the end of Year 9 to the end of Year 11 is poor. This very bleak picture would usually be mirrored by weaknesses in teaching, leadership and management. However, teaching, leadership and management are all good and analysis of attainment data between Years 7 and 11 shows that pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. There are several reasons for this apparent mismatch between examination results and the good quality of education pupils receive:
- Attendance between the end of Years 9 and 11 has historically been poor; a significant minority fail to complete coursework or attend so seldom that they are not entered for examinations. In Year 11, 2003, 38 pupils had below 80 per cent attendance, 22 below 50 per cent and 11 below 20 per cent.
 - Long-term poor attendance means that significant numbers have low results at the end of Year 9 and such girls are provided with a reduced GCSE spread of examinations. The other qualifications for which they are entered do not contribute to the school's 'points' score and do not get picked up in comparison statistics. Typically, around 30 girls are in this category.
 - A higher proportion of pupils than average join the school after Year 7; in 2003 around 18 per cent of girls in Year 11 joined late. Usually such girls have been poor attendees in their previous schools.

4. Inspection evidence shows that pupils who attend regularly achieve well overall by the end of Year 11, for example, pupils with special educational needs and more able pupils. Year 11 attendance has been poor overall, so that this year's examination results are likely to be adversely affected again. However, school assessment data indicates that examination results are likely to be a little better this year and statutory targets approached. Inspectors are wary of confirming this as Year 11 was on study leave during the inspection. Standards by Year 11 are below average in most subjects, average in physical education and religious education and well below average in French and geography. Standards could not be judged in citizenship, as such work is not in progress at this time of the year. Pupils achieve at least satisfactorily in all subjects; well in art and design, history, music, physical education and religious education. Performing arts were not inspected in Key Stage 4, but examination results show pupils achieve very well.
5. Standards of literacy and numeracy remain below average by the time pupils leave, despite some extensive work by special educational needs staff and by subject teachers supporting all pupils. Whilst weak numeracy skills do not appear to affect the majority of pupils' work, weak literacy skills do mean they are often unable to communicate clearly either in writing or verbally.
6. The school has an increasing number of girls from ethnic minorities and the school notes that these pupils tend to do better in tests and examinations than their peers. Inspection revealed they achieve at least as well in ongoing work. Better attendance and fewer instances of intractable behaviour or poor attitudes mean, as a group, that they do better. Support for girls at the early stage of learning English is good overall and is well managed; girls achieve satisfactorily overall. Where they receive in-class support they achieve very well. However, not all girls receive support in all lessons and in some lessons, where there is no support, some pupils' progress is unsatisfactory because their English is not good enough to understand what the teacher is saying.
7. Most girls with special educational needs attain the standards of which they are capable and make good progress. Year 7 girls with special educational needs achieve very well in English, science, art and design, religious education, history, geography, music, citizenship and performing arts because of the very good teaching they receive in these subjects. At the end of Year 11, most girls with special educational needs are entered for GCSE examinations where they achieve creditable grades in a range of subjects. In 2003, for example, four out of five girls obtained a pass in English and almost half gained at least five GCSE passes across a range of subjects. A small number of girls who are taught by specialist teachers from local support services, make very good progress due to the very good teaching they receive. Girls with emotional and behavioural difficulties who attend the learning support unit make good progress in learning to manage their behaviour more effectively, improving their attendance and raising their self-esteem.
8. Strong 'setting' arrangements mean that more able pupils are most often in classes of their own and they achieve well, as shown by the often respectable A*-C performance figures in English and in subjects chosen by pupils for GCSE. This performance in English, performing arts, history, art and design and physical education is in line with national standards. Gifted and talented pupils are well identified and often are within the more able classes. Extra provision for them, including masterclasses (specialist teaching, generally by subject experts who are not teachers) and additional subjects such as German and Latin, help them to achieve well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The behaviour of pupils in Years 7 to 10 is good overall, and their attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Year 11 pupils were absent from school on study leave during the inspection. Attendance is unsatisfactory. Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is unsatisfactory, mainly because a large minority of Year 11 pupils are often absent and this adversely affects their learning and achievement.
- Most pupils, notably in Key Stage 3, are polite, friendly, show interest in their work and are keen to do well. A minority, especially in Key Stage 4, appear to lack interest in learning.
- Staff promote very good relationships across the school.
- Provision for cultural development, including both local culture and an appreciation and understanding of other cultures, is very good.

Commentary

9. Newland School is a peaceful, harmonious community where the large majority of pupils maintain very good relationships with each other and with staff. The high number of temporary exclusions, 91 in the year preceding the inspection, is not an accurate reflection of behaviour standards. The school resorts to temporary exclusions when all other methods to persuade parents or carers to come into school to discuss pupils' problems have been exhausted.
10. Most younger pupils and a majority of older girls value the many opportunities the school provides, including sport, music, drama, art and homework clubs at lunch-times and after school. Older pupils have an important role as 'pupil assistants', in helping the school to run efficiently. They take turns to help office staff, volunteer to befriend Year 7 pupils and to help them improve reading skills and assist in the library. Pupil assistants work calmly, unobtrusively and effectively. The school forum is a well-respected group of girls and involves pupils in relevant concerns such as how to raise the quality of food and drink from the vending machines.
11. The attitudes of girls with special educational needs are good. In lessons with specialist teachers, attitudes are nearly always very good and often they are excellent. Girls show a willingness to learn, can sustain concentration throughout the whole lesson and rarely give less than their best. They co-operate with their teachers and get on well together. Behaviour in class is nearly always good and is often very good. Even girls with the most severe emotional and behavioural problems generally show respect and consideration for their teachers, learning mentors and teaching assistants. Across all years, girls with special educational needs mix well with other girls and are fully integrated into the daily life of the school.
12. Praise and rewards for good behaviour and effort, matched by a well-understood sanctions system using 'red cards', contribute effectively to the sense of order in the school. The learning support unit caters very well for pupils who need intensive mentoring to help them improve their attitudes to school. Pupils from ethnic and other minorities are very well integrated into the life of the school. Pupils who spoke to inspectors and those who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire, say Newland is a good school to attend; a few had some concerns about bullying and behaviour. The inspection found that the learning support unit is reducing the amount of annoying behaviour in classes and very little was seen during the inspection. There is a well-publicised system for pupils to report any bullying, and no harassment of any kind was evident during the inspection. If and when incidents do occur, pupils agree that staff deal with them swiftly.
13. Behaviour was judged good overall in the last inspection, and remains good in 2004. Attendance has risen since 1998, but is still unsatisfactory, due mainly to poor attendance in Year 11. Between September 2003 and the inspection in May 2004, Years 7 to 9 recorded over 90 per cent attendance in each term, and Year 10 in two terms out of three. Year 11's highest attendance was 84.1 per cent in autumn 2003, fell in the spring term of 2004, and at the start of this inspection term, was only 76.3 per cent. In the spring term, one Year 11 pupil in every five recorded some unauthorised absence. Very few came in to the revision classes held during the inspection.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	10.5
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.5
National data	1.1

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

14. Most absence is authorised, although not always justified. The school reports that the local education authority requires the school to treat ethnic minority pupils' extended leave to their families' homelands, as authorised absence. Absence condoned by parents who are willing to provide excuses and family holidays taken in term time, contribute to the lacklustre attendance statistics and slow pupils' progress, limiting attainment, especially in GCSE examinations. Among the 11 pupils in 2003 who left without any GCSE success, only three achieved over 30 per cent attendance. The reasons for many Year 11 pupils' lack of engagement with school include:
- Low attainment resulting from interrupted attendance in past years.
 - Insufficient support from some parents and carers.
 - Responsibilities outside school, for example, caring for other family members.
15. The school works closely with the education welfare service to follow up unexplained absence immediately, but often the families of the poorest attenders are hard to contact. The school asks for doctor's certificates from pupils whose frequent absences are attributed to illness or injury.
16. Once inside school, pupils are punctual to lessons, but morning arrival is protracted. Some factors, such as late buses, are beyond pupils' control. A minority of pupils use the 15 minutes between 8.45am and 9am, when they are supposed to be working with their tutors, to arrive. Pupils who reach school after 9.10am, 25 minutes after the official start of the day, have to report to the office, where lateness is logged. During the inspection, between ten and 20 pupils a day arrived after 9.10am, but numbers were higher the previous week when Year 11 pupils were still in school. Procedures for recording lateness have been tightened since the last inspection, and are now good, but the generous time allowed for registration and the lack of organised activity in some tutor groups combine to suggest to some pupils that it is not absolutely necessary for them to be present by 8.45am. Management has provided a framework of activities for tutors to work to.
17. Pupils' personal development is good and supported by very good citizenship and performing arts in Years 7 to 9, the good provision for activities at lunch-time, and the increasing use of the learning centre for self-study. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is satisfactory, with strengths in English and particularly in religious education. Moral development is better provided for and is reflected in the positive attitudes and behaviour seen around the school. Moral issues are dealt with effectively in lessons, whether in discussions on rainforests in geography or in the study of topics such as slavery, racism and the Holocaust in history. Group work makes a good contribution to social development in many subjects, and social issues are discussed widely. Provision for cultural development is very good – in performing arts, art and design, and English, for example. The small proportion of pupils from minority cultures are not ignored here, and cultural diversity is celebrated. A recent event, involving the Kathakali dance group from India and a display of Chinese art, was followed up in an assembly to keep the experience fresh in pupils' minds.

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	758	89	2
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	12	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	11	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	23	1	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – African	6	0	0
Chinese	6	0	0
Any other ethnic group	11	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. The curriculum is satisfactory; care and welfare are very good; guidance and support are good; links with parents are satisfactory, and links with the community and other schools and colleges good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is good in all years. Learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and good overall in Years 10 and 11; pupils' absence in Year 11 means their learning is inconsistent. Year 11 pupils were not seen during the inspection as they were on study leave prior to examinations. Assessment is good in all years.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high rate of absence in Year 11, continuing from unsatisfactory attendance when those pupils were in Year 10, means a significant minority of pupils did not learn, acquire knowledge and understanding well enough; otherwise pupils learn well overall.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- Both the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and the school's newly established learning strategies are improving standards of teaching and learning.
- Teaching in citizenship, performing arts, religious education and in art and design particularly encourages independent learning and, in addition, pupils are being encouraged to help themselves learn through new facilities and resources.
- Teaching and learning in English are good in all years.

- The use of homework to extend learning is not as consistently well used as other teaching methods.
- Assessments of the standards pupils are reaching are accurate and reliable across the school, but the marking of work does not always give enough information to pupils on how to do better.

Commentary

18. Most parents and all pupils who replied to questions think that teaching is good overall. Inspectors agree. The two lessons graded as excellent in the table below occurred in art and design and in religious education. The lessons graded as unsatisfactory or worse are spread across five different subject areas. Mathematics contributed two lessons, ICT, physical education, modern foreign languages and citizenship contributed one each.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 107 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2%)	25 (23%)	47 (44 %)	21 (20 %)	4 (4 %)	2 (2%)	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.

19. There are no departments that are unsatisfactory because of teaching. Unsatisfactory learning over time occurs when large numbers of pupils miss lessons. If pupils are not present in school, they are not learning what they need to learn, and this affects achievement. This has been a particular issue for pupils in Year 11 and, historically, for the school. This is one of the two significant reasons why the school 'earns' a poor grade in the public 'PANDA' report when GCSE examination results are considered; teachers teach well, but too many pupils are not present frequently enough to benefit. The learning for those who are present, however, is good.
20. Unsatisfactory teaching in mathematics occurs when the methods employed by the teachers do not meet the needs of all the pupils. This comes about when planning is weak, with insufficient opportunities being built into lessons for pupils to engage actively in their own learning. When pupils are not challenged enough, or talked to too much, learning becomes unsatisfactory. Limited planning and a lack of challenge are also features of the other unsatisfactory lessons. Such unsatisfactory lessons are not necessarily a regular feature of pupils' experiences. Both inspection evidence and effective school monitoring reports indicate that teaching is at least satisfactory.
21. In contrast, almost a quarter of all lessons were judged to be very good or better. There are several reasons for this; the school has a stable and able teaching force; teaching and learning methods are a major feature of the school's development and work on them is co-ordinated and led by a 'learning' group. This group is made up of enthusiastic and proficient senior staff, under the guidance of a dynamic and well-informed deputy headteacher. Other staff are attached to the group and all subjects are advantageously supported by it. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been well embraced in most subjects, and the 'three-part lesson' (introduction, planned activities, plenary) is now the norm. The very best lessons had very high expectations of pupils' performance and ability, backed by exemplary planning and very good use of resources. Lesson objectives were shared with pupils, a variety of tasks met different pupils' needs and, perhaps most importantly, pupils were directly involved in their work and encouraged to contribute to the lesson, consequently, gaining personal confidence. Relationships between teachers and pupils were excellent in these lessons. The characteristics of these excellent lessons are also shared by very good lessons, the difference being the level of interaction between teacher and pupils. Very good learning is also often associated with the use of teaching assistants. Teaching assistants working in many departments make a good contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs. They have good knowledge of the needs of these pupils and know when to stand back and let the pupils learn on their own. This ensures that pupils do not become over-reliant on others.

22. The quality of teaching in mathematics is inconsistent in both key stages and learning is, therefore, only satisfactory. This is because the work set sometimes lacks challenge and does not always meet the needs of all pupils well enough. This causes pupils to become bored and disinterested in learning, although the behaviour of most pupils remains good. Teaching and learning in English are of good quality in all years; although teaching is good, learning in science is satisfactory. In both subjects there are some issues that continue to or currently affect pupils' achievement. In English, staff turnover in recent years has caused classes to have several teachers, and cohesion and direction within the department have been lost. Good new appointments are now addressing these issues, but have yet to have full effect. Work is now well planned by expert teachers, and meets the needs of all pupils, but there is much ground to be caught up. In science, very knowledgeable teachers plan their work carefully and use a good range of teaching methods and a wide variety of activities to ensure that pupils learn well. Interesting work is regularly and systematically marked and the pupils know how well they have done, but there are not always enough comments that tell pupils specifically what they need to do to get better marks and higher grades. Pupils' weak literacy skills and difficulty in retaining facts mean learning in science is hindered, despite teachers' good support.
23. In general, pupils do not always learn independently as well as they could. This is apparent in two ways; their sparse contribution to lessons that are otherwise satisfactory or even good, and the underuse of homework, particularly in history, mathematics, modern languages, and in music and English in Years 7, 8 and 9. However, independent work is relatively strong in Years 7 to 11 in physical education, performing arts and citizenship, and in Years 10 and 11 in art and design. This is because teachers in these areas foster it well. Also the school is encouraging significant independent work within and outside lessons through the use of a very well-equipped and staffed learning centre in the form of a room full of computers with able and efficient technical support. Teachers and pupils can access this room throughout the day, booking in lessons, or taking advantage of learning software that helps pupils get on by themselves. This has only been in operation for a few months, but records show that Year 11 pupils present made heavy use of practising exercises related to past examination papers and Year 9 have used test revision papers extensively. The current Year 10 will have a year of access before their examinations. In addition, the library has much improved since the time of the last report and a very good librarian helps pupils select books and software, both to help them learn and to read for pleasure. During the inspection the weather was warm and sunny, but pupils made good use of the library nevertheless.
24. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. In Year 7, teaching of these pupils is very good in English, science, art and design, religious education, history, music and citizenship and performing arts. This is because in these lessons teaching is enthusiastic, energetic and committed to finding methods of helping girls learn more effectively. Overall, girls are well managed so that little time is wasted getting down to work. Relationships are very supportive and encourage girls to want to learn. Lessons are well planned, with a suitable range of teaching methods and using a variety of resources. Teachers make effective use of teaching assistants who provide valuable support both to teachers and individual girls. However, in some lessons, the lack of support inhibits girls' learning. There is not enough planned use of ICT to help girls learn more effectively. Good teaching of literacy in small classes matches work closely to the needs of pupils. Pupils respond well and gain confidence from the success they are making. All special educational needs staff know pupils well and good relationships underpin the gains in confidence and self-esteem they make. The work and needs of pupils with levels of literacy well below average are carefully and thoroughly assessed. Teacher assessment is well combined with the use of standardised tests to measure progress and to ensure that work is set at the correct levels.
25. Higher attaining pupils, those with gifts and talents, are well catered for. These pupils are carefully identified subject by subject, and appropriate extension work is carefully planned in school time and provided outside school hours. Many enrichment activities have also been arranged to ensure that a wide range of skills and interests are covered so that the full potential

of individual pupils can be met. The progress these pupils make is carefully tracked, and ambitious targets are set. Pupils who are learning English for the first time are most often well provided for and achieve appropriately, although support is not possible in every lesson and, at such times, little progress is made.

26. The school's assessment policy is clear and helps monitor the progress of all pupils, but is less explanatory about how to accelerate that progress. The assessment practices of most departments are well established and give a reliable picture of where the pupils stand in relation to national benchmarks. There are some innovative self-assessment practices, notably in art and design and in religious education. Most teachers across the curriculum mark and assess pupils' work consistently, and most pupils are aware of their National Curriculum attainment levels and examination target grades. Most understand how well they are doing. However, pupils are less clear about what they have to do to make a piece of work better, many thinking that working harder is a sufficient answer. The aspect of marking that tells pupils what to do to improve is not used to best effect in most subject areas. This weakness is particularly significant in science, citizenship, and ICT in Years 10 and 11. However, in art and design and in religious education, the reverse is true, and these subjects clearly tell pupils what to do to get better. The school is currently encouraging opportunities for further improvements to be made, through in-service training and the sharing of good practice.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and has some good features. Extra-curricular opportunities, such as those for learning and sport, are good. Accommodation, resources and staffing are good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall. Aspects of it can hinder achievement, but extensive planning is leading to a new curriculum for September 2004.
- 'Effective learning' initiatives have contributed to a good curriculum in Years 7 to 9.
- The provision for citizenship education is very good in Years 7 to 9, but apparently much weaker in Years 10 and 11; it was not possible to make all appropriate judgements during the inspection.
- The 25 minutes at the beginning of the day, 'tutor time', are not used effectively enough.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Opportunities for work outside normal lessons are good and participation in lunch-time activities is very good, although this does not fully address the short time available for physical education provided by lessons.

Commentary

27. The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory overall and enables girls to achieve satisfactorily. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is good; it is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Statutory requirements for religious education and for the sex and relationships, alcohol and drug misuse, aspects of the cross-curricular issues course, are all met. The statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met.
28. The organisation of the timetable enables all subjects to organise their own teaching groups in Years 7 to 9 according to girls' aptitudes and capabilities. In Years 10 and 11 this continues where enough girls choose to follow a subject. This 'setting' is effective at providing well for the most and the least able, both of which groups achieve well overall. There was limited evidence during the inspection to suggest that some girls slipping into average attaining sets due to attendance or attitude problems may underachieve, for example, in Year 10 science. Setting, early measures of attainment and attendance also dictate, to an extent, which courses girls will follow, and significant numbers have followed non-GCSE courses, such as Certificate of

Achievement and ASDAN. Inspectors judge that too many may have gone down these routes in the past. However, following a major curriculum review, new courses will be provided from September 2004 and this concern fades as a result. Two other concerns remain. The 25 minutes available before lessons at the start of each day as 'tutor time' is most often wasted and used as a catch-all for otherwise late arrivals to school. This time could be better used for reading and other literacy-related activities in Years 7 to 9 and for personal education and citizenship in Years 10 and 11. Although physical education provision is good, the range of activities available to pupils in lesson times is limited by a shorter than average allocation of time; interested girls take full advantage of activities outside lessons, but these do not necessarily encourage less-motivated girls.

29. The curriculum has been evaluated and modified to take account of new national developments, for example, the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and the changing national requirements in Years 10 and 11, so improving its relevance to pupils in Years 7 to 11. The extensive work done by the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning and provide a more relevant curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is clearly having a positive effect upon curriculum planning and teaching in most subjects, especially in Years 7 to 9. The school has worked hard with its staff and pupils to explore effective learning styles through the 'Effective Learning Week'. Pupils are still talking about this and can tell teachers which type of 'learner' they are and how they need to think. Subjects such as science, geography, performing arts and citizenship place more emphasis on practical work linked to gains in knowledge and understanding. In history, teachers have chosen topics that engage pupils' interest more effectively thus enabling them to achieve well. The provision of a wide range of expressive arts in Years 7 to 11 has a positive impact upon girls' personal development and contributes to their achievement. The school has been singled out nationally for its good practice in teaching citizenship in Years 7 to 9, although this provision apparently peters out in Years 10 and 11. It was not possible to determine how effective it is in these years during the inspection.
30. Although girls achieve satisfactorily overall at the end of Year 11, the school has recognised the need to modify the options available to girls in Years 10 and 11. The school currently works well with local colleges to provide work-related courses for a small number of girls in Years 10 and 11. The school ensures that the pupils who take these courses continue to receive their entitlements to English, mathematics and science on their days in school. The college-based courses provide a relevant and worthwhile experience for pupils who are involved in them. The organisation of this co-operative provision is efficient and effective. In collaboration with local colleges, a much wider range of vocational courses will be provided from September 2004. It is anticipated by the school, following much management work, that these courses will better meet the needs and aspirations of a significant minority of pupils and improve historically weak attitudes towards learning in Years 10 and 11. Inspectors agree that such a curriculum change can only reduce a major barrier to better achievement, that of poor attendance.
31. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Girls with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum and all statutory requirements are met. In Years 7 to 9, a small number of girls are withdrawn, effectively, from some lessons for extra help with basic literacy skills. A useful lunch-time club offers girls the chance to discuss homework issues, develop basic skills such as handwriting, or work on the school's independent learning system. In Years 10 and 11, in addition to full GCSE subjects, girls with special educational needs can study for Certificates of Achievement and the ASDAN award; in the absence of other opportunities these options are probably appropriate for these girls. A small number of girls attend work placements and the city learning centre and achieve appropriately, as well as demonstrating improved attendance. There are no paired reading opportunities with more able pupils and few planned opportunities to use specialist computer software out of lesson times to help improve literacy and numeracy skills. There is good provision for girls who attend the learning support unit through programmes to help raise their self-esteem and bring about an improvement in their behaviour and attendance and give them some measure of success.

32. The school offers a good range of clubs and activities at lunch-times and after school and these are well attended. Teachers give up their lunch-times to enable pupils to experience many of these activities. This is unusual and underlines the level of care provided by teachers who realise that few pupils can remain after school due to bus journeys. Participation in sport and the arts outside lesson time is very good. The school enriches the curriculum well through events such as art gallery and theatre visits, field courses, 'master classes' through links with the neighbouring university and visits abroad. Good support for study outside the school day is provided through revision clubs, coursework help groups and summer schools. Cross-curricular days with citizenship themes such as democracy and Amnesty International further enrich the curriculum. Pupils also have the opportunity to study German as a second language outside the normal school day; Latin taking place on Saturday mornings. The latter two 'extras' are part of the very good attention paid to more able, gifted and talented pupils.
33. There is a good match between teachers' qualifications and experience and the subjects they teach. Teachers are usually specialists in their subjects and many are very experienced. The school has a good number of technicians in ICT, science and technology, but too few classroom assistants to support pupils' special educational needs with consistency.
34. Textbooks and equipment are sufficient and suitable. The number of computers is above average and ICT resources in music are very good. The library is well stocked and is well used by pupils, particularly those in Years 7 to 9.
35. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, with some significant strengths. The study support centre is an innovative room available to all pupils and teachers and helps pupils to achieve. The new technology block provides very good facilities for the expansion of computer-assisted design and manufacturing. The ICT rooms are large and provide areas for pupils to plan their work before using the computers. Some rooms in the main school, a listed building, are too small and this is hampering teaching styles in English and modern foreign languages. Accommodation is not available for regular acts of collective worship. There are many good displays around the school that add to the sense of achievement and celebration of learning. Inspectors were impressed by the mixture of well-built and styled older buildings and the very good quality of the latest buildings, including the dining room. All are very well looked after, respected by pupils and add greatly to the ethos of the school. The buildings and rooms are places where learning is meant to take place and the pleasant areas in between provide chances to relax.

Care, guidance and support

Newland gives very good attention to pupils' care and welfare. Good support, advice and guidance are provided and pupils' views are used well to help the school improve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Child protection arrangements in school are very rigorous, but staff report some difficulties in maintaining contact with social workers.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well cared for.
- Careers and further education guidance in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- The very positive relationships in the school mean that pupils have access to adults they trust.
- The school forum is a very good practical display of citizenship in action.

Commentary

36. The school takes child protection issues very seriously and has effective procedures. All new staff receive child protection training, and in 2004 training was extended to the non-teaching staff. Supply teachers are directed to read the child protection policy. The child protection officer has a deputy who is also fully trained. The maintenance of close communications with social services can be difficult because of the need to liaise with teams all over the city and beyond, and because of changes within those teams.
37. The caretaker and other support staff keep the buildings and grounds very clean and tidy. Access for the disabled is being improved and is very well planned, although the listed status of the principal buildings makes progress expensive. Essential health and safety policies are in place. Subject departments, including science and design and technology, give very good attention to pupils' safety.
38. Year heads and other staff with pastoral responsibilities have good knowledge of individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses, advantages and problems, and give valuable advice and guidance. The advice that staff give to pupils is well informed by good assessment of their previous attainment. There is a strong emphasis now on developing pupils' capacity for self-assessment. The current focus on effective learning is helping pupils to understand the ways they learn best and to evaluate their own progress. Individual behaviour and attendance support plans, devised in consultation with parents whenever possible, set pupils appropriate improvement targets. Behaviour management training for all staff is planned for autumn 2004. This should help to motivate those pupils whose reluctance to co-operate in class interrupts learning for others. Tutors tend to stay with their classes as they move up the school. This is more beneficial for pupils whose tutors use the morning time constructively than for the pupils for whom the 25 minutes are no more than arrival and homework time.
39. Procedures for identifying girls with special educational needs and to bring any concerns to the attention of the learning support department are good. Individual education plans and behaviour plans are of good quality and are regularly and effectively reviewed. The work of the school's teaching assistants is good. They are well deployed and know the girls well. Their careful monitoring and recording of girls' progress provides them with valuable support. There is good provision in the learning support unit to help girls manage their negative behaviour. Learning mentors provide valuable support, particularly in improving girls' attendance, behaviour and self-confidence. A system for tracking girls' progress as they move through the school is in place.
40. The transition programme for new pupils in Year 7 is already good and is to be further enhanced in September 2004 with a full induction programme. Seventy per cent of Year 11 leavers move on to further education, and receive very helpful advice on courses and future work options, including engineering, the armed forces and medical and scientific careers. About one pupil in five does not proceed to further education, training or employment. These pupils often have poor attendance histories and depart with few or no qualifications.
41. Pupils report they have every confidence in the support available to them and feel that their views are well regarded and acted upon where possible. The school forum (school council) is a very good, practical example of the very good citizenship education pupils enjoy in Years 7 to 9. Members of the forum are motivated to gather opinions and speak out on behalf of their peers. Recent work has involved healthy eating options and the availability of drinking water.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are satisfactory overall; the school makes intense efforts to build effective partnerships, but a significant minority of parents do not respond. Links with other schools, colleges and the wider community make a good contribution to pupils' education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The substantial number of parents who rarely communicate with or visit the school, or who condone unnecessary absence give insufficient support to the school's efforts to educate their children.
- Links established with the parents or carers of pupils with special educational needs are good.
- Staff prepare copious and relevant information about pupils' attainments and attitudes to share with parents and carers, although the reports on progress may be a little difficult for all parents to understand with ease.
- The partnerships for further education with Wyke, Wilberforce and Hull colleges are well planned to help pupils transfer to suitable courses.
- Employers give good support in some areas of the school's work, but there is scope for more to be done.

Commentary

42. A significant minority of parents condone absence, rarely attend parents' meetings and are reluctant to contact the school to discuss attendance or educational problems. No parents help regularly in school. Only six came to the pre-inspection parents' meeting. There is no parent-teacher or friends association. Pupils come from all over Hull, so many parents face relatively long and expensive journeys to school and this adds to the difficulty of creating effective home-school partnerships. Pupils' school diaries are intended to be a communication link between home and school, and some parents do sign that homework has been completed.
43. In contrast, learning mentors make regular contact with the parents of girls who attend the learning support unit and parents of girls with special educational needs are kept well informed about their children's progress and are fully consulted and involved in annual reviews.
44. The minority of parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire are broadly supportive of the school. They say that staff expect children to work hard and do their best, they do not think their own child is bullied or harassed, they feel their child is making good progress, that there is a wide range of activities and that transition from primary schools is effective. A small number have reservations about standards of behaviour, the information they receive from school and the school's response to suggestions and concerns. Inspection confirms parents' positive views. The school has started to seek parents' views regularly. The learning support unit caters well for pupils whose behaviour disrupts others' learning, and there is plenty of information on the curriculum, school life and pupils' attainments, although for parents with scant knowledge of education, the reports on pupils' progress can be a little daunting to interpret. Many staff work hard to create links with parents.
45. The head of Year 7 gives up her own time to contact and visit parents of new pupils in the weeks before admission. Liaison with primary schools is difficult, because in many years, pupils join Newland from more than 40 separate schools, but all new pupils meet each other and teachers during a summer induction day, and there is good continuity of pastoral care. Pupils in Year 11 receive helpful information on post-16 education and training, and meet staff from the major local colleges, Wyke, Wilberforce and Hull. Two careers advisers are based at the school and contribute to the very effective careers guidance given to pupils. The new curriculum commencing in September 2004 for Years 10 pupils will extend college links as there will be extensive shared teaching of girls choosing some vocational courses.
46. Hull University, adjoining the school, provides, at a cost, sports facilities that greatly extend girls' opportunities in games. Some other subjects, for example, mathematics and science, also benefit from extension work available from lecturers. The 'Aim Higher' scheme also enables some pupils to expand their horizons by attending summer schools at Hull and other universities.
47. The police, health services and other community organisations make a big contribution to citizenship and personal, social and health education. Employers give good support to the

work-related learning and work experience programmes in Key Stage 4. There is scope for more industrial and commercial companies to give direct support to the school by providing mentors, resources, placements for staff and curriculum enrichment. Newland is trying to raise enough funds from business and the community to apply for status as a specialist school in mathematics and computing, but is finding sponsorship difficult to obtain.

48. There has been little change since the last inspection in the impact of partnerships on pupils' progress. Links with parents remain problematic, while partnerships with educational and community organisations are still good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. Leadership, including that of the headteacher, is good. Management is good. Governance is satisfactory. Most statutory requirements are met, apart from the requirement for daily collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governance is satisfactory overall, but governors need to participate more in strategic planning and direction.
- Leadership and management are good overall and this is true at all levels, from headteacher to middle managers.
- The headteacher has been particularly effective in establishing a school in which it is possible for pupils to learn well.
- The school has received national and local recognition for some of its better work.
- Staff management is good and has led to an essentially stable staff able to participate in good staff development provision and to use its results in the classroom.
- Financial management and best value procedures are good.
- Despite good management, external factors and curriculum necessities have adversely affected pupils' achievement and GCSE scores.

Commentary

49. There are barriers to raising achievement in this school, which the leadership and management recognise and take good steps to address. Historically poor attendance by pupils in Key Stage 4, which has occurred despite very good efforts by the school to improve matters, adversely affects examination results and, hence, pupils' achievement. In addition, to reduce stress on an often significant number of pupils with difficult backgrounds, the number of GCSE examinations entered by them has been reduced. Both non-attendance and reduced examination entry combine to produce similar schools' comparison 'mark' representing the school as well below average. This does not reflect the good work the school does.
50. Governance is satisfactory. Governors attend regular governors' training provided by the local education authority. They participated recently in a self-evaluation exercise and deemed themselves satisfactory; inspectors agree. Governors are mostly experienced and know the social context of the school well. They have ensured that the school's ethos has improved. They have supported the headteacher in the pursuit of new buildings and resources and in her winnowing out of less successful teachers. In short, they have seen the school improve in all but examination standards and, until comparatively recently, attendance. Governors have ensured that the school meets all statutory responsibilities, except for providing a daily act of collective worship, which is not possible to achieve in the accommodation. They have promoted well the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and the very good cultural development that embraces and reflects the diverse cultures within the school and region. Governors do what they can to ensure that they understand and recognise strengths and weaknesses within the school. Some are school staff, others visit regularly, a few work with pupils, and they invite teaching staff to present information about developments in the

curriculum areas on which they are working. Procedures for the performance management of the headteacher are good. Governors are 'rotated' so, whilst there is always a governor with experience, others gain insight into what has to be done. Governors obviously support a headteacher accomplishing good things, which are evident from pupils' good behaviour, well-cared for buildings and the good relationships between hard-working staff. They have not made as much contribution to strategic planning as they might or taken full account of how public documents, such as the 'PANDA' may be unfavourably interpreted. They are aware of the need to be more active in planning and in the assimilation of data.

51. The headteacher has a clear sense of purpose. She wants girls to work in a good environment, far better than many have to contend with elsewhere, to get good teaching and the resources they need to learn effectively. She has managed these things with determination, taking whatever action is necessary to achieve them and leading on extensive planning for the future. She has been selective about what support she asks or pays for and has continued the good framework for staff development and appraisal that existed at the time of the last inspection into the current model of performance management. She is good at creating effective teams and enabling others to do so, for example, the learning group, senior managers funded by the national leadership incentive grant, which is having such a positive influence in the school. She has used the strengths of deputies, particularly in supporting substantial curriculum development. Through judicious appointments by herself and the governing body, and through staff development, most subject areas have good or better leadership and management; leadership and management in mathematics, modern foreign languages and citizenship in Key Stage 4 are satisfactory. The headteacher continues to teach across several subject areas as need arises, and has taken on the role of head of English in extremis. This has given her a clearer insight into work at classroom level and is viewed positively by other staff.
52. Other leaders, including those in the senior management group, work hard and lead and manage their respective duties well. Some of these have led to local and national recognition for good practice, for example, learning development and citizenship. The school also achieved a gold Artsmark award, recognition of exemplary work in the arts. Pupils' work in science and mathematics includes CASE and CAME (Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education, Cognitive Acceleration through Mathematics Education), with the work in science led by a CASE tutor for teachers elsewhere. The leadership and management of the learning support department are good. The interests of girls with special educational needs are positively promoted and there is a shared sense of purpose both within the team of specialist staff and throughout the school. Links with external agencies and primary schools are well managed. The learning support department provides good role models for its pupils and makes a valuable contribution to girls' personal development. External examination results are not routinely analysed to gauge girls' achievements.
53. Management is good overall, particularly in response to ensuring a competent and consistent staff and inducting new ones into their roles. There are a few weaknesses in staffing, satisfactorily covered at the moment. Staff, including support staff, are also well deployed and the very good quality of technical and administrative support helps reduce such burdens on teachers as well as helping pupils learn, in the learning centre, library and laboratories, for example. The school also reviews its work well through extensive lesson observations, work scrutiny and peer review of subject areas as a whole. This work has certainly contributed to improving the school's middle management, which is now good.
54. The school receives slightly less money for each pupil than is generally found. This money is spent judiciously. Expenditure is carefully planned to support the school's development plan. Spending is closely monitored so that the school can take action to counter potential difficulties. Much of the financial work is carried out effectively by a deputy headteacher. The school complies well with the principles of best value. For major expenditures, comparative prices from a number of suppliers are obtained, for example, to insure against teacher illness. A major consultation exercise with stakeholders was carried out through the commissioning of a survey by a commercial company, informing the school well about how it is perceived by parents and

pupils. Excellence in Cities funding is being used well to provide for more able pupils and the gifted and talented. Leadership improvement grant money is being very effectively used to support the learning group. Local recognition of this will mean the school will be the 'hub' of LIG activities for five schools.

55. With all the good work the school does, pupils' achievement should be better than satisfactory and certainly better from the end of Year 9 to the end of Year 11. However, poor attendance, particularly in Year 11, reduces overall achievement. The school also sits within poor socio-economic circumstances and many girls have significant personal problems. This contributes to their low prior attainment and frequent absence. A management decision to enter such girls for fewer GCSEs and use other accreditation, which did not contribute to the school's performance figures, may have been right at the time it was made, but has reduced an outsider's perception of the nature of the school. Very hard work appears to be beginning to pay off in improving attendance, if it can be continued into next year's Year 11. The school's good self-evaluation has resulted in a better curriculum being offered to pupils from September 2004, which takes on board the National 14-19 Strategy to help pupils access employment, further education and higher education.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,970,357
Total expenditure	2,976,418
Expenditure per pupil	3,394

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	130,069
Balance carried forward to the next	61,008

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In spite of recent unstable staffing, teaching and learning are good, leading to good achievement.
- Standards are below the national average, but are improving; they compare well with those in similar schools.
- There is very good subject leadership and good management.
- Accommodation is cramped; rooms are too small for the larger classes.
- There is not enough emphasis on the use of ICT or on independent reading outside English lessons.

Commentary

56. National test results in English at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were close to the national average overall, although this was due to the fact that a high proportion of pupils reached higher levels than those expected; the proportion reaching at least the expected level was slightly below the national average. Although the results were slightly down on those of 2002, the trend over the past few years has been upwards. The standard of work seen during the inspection reflected this trend. Test results are better than those in similar schools because of the good quality of teaching and learning.
57. GCSE results in 2003 showed an improvement on those in 2002, but were below the national average for girls in English in terms of the proportion gaining the higher grades, A*-C. All those entered achieved at least a grade G and results were better than those in similar schools. Results were above the national average in English literature for pupils achieving grades A*-C, and similar to the average for grades A*-G; however, only two-thirds of the year group were entered. Those who were entered performed better in English literature than in English, especially in terms of the percentage achieving A* or A grades, where they exceeded the national figure.
58. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average. This represents at least good achievement, because pupils typically join the school with well below average skills in English according to their Year 11 test results. The current Year 9 pupils were a little better, below average, on entry, but significant numbers are now speaking confidently and can write with reasonable accuracy and at length.
59. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average, in speaking and listening, reading and writing, but this represents satisfactory achievement, as they were below average at the end of Year 9 and have progressed in line with expectations. Achievement overall has been affected by the poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils in Year 11, and this masks better achievement by the rest. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, overall, achieve as well as others, although there are a few pupils at an early stage of learning English who would struggle without the extra help they are receiving. Pupils with special educational needs achieve at least as well as others; they do better than might be expected at GCSE.

60. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. The lessons seen were never less than satisfactory and most were good or very good. Two teachers are still in training; they have helped fill a gap this year, and they, like the experienced staff, have a very good rapport with pupils, who thrive on the encouragement they are given. Lessons are well planned and a range of varied teaching methods maintains pace and pupils' interest in their learning. Teachers are prepared to set challenging tasks. Good use is made of questioning techniques, with pupils being encouraged to extend their responses and to speak more fluently and precisely. The use of starter activities consolidates word and sentence length work and helps pupils to acquire knowledge of basic skills whilst relating well to the main topic of the lessons. In a lesson on media forms, for example, Year 9 pupils responded by writing on mini-whiteboards the expectations they had from the opening sequences of 'The Matrix'. This gave them increased confidence as the lesson proceeded. Resources, such as books, videos and worksheets, are used well. In a GCSE lesson on poetry from other cultures, the teacher had brought in a range of clothing and artefacts to demonstrate cultural identity. The way a learning mentor showed how to put on a sari was just one example of how teachers and other staff work well together in lessons, although some classes with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs do not have enough extra support.
61. There is now strong leadership in the department after a period of instability. The head of English has been in post since January, and already shows good management skills and very good leadership. Her vision and sense of direction are apparent and she has identified which areas need the most urgent attention. For example, she has recognised that, although higher attaining pupils do well in tests and examinations, those in the middle range of ability have been underachieving: plans are now in place to overcome this. For example, transition programmes to avoid the traditional dip in achievement when pupils move to the next key stage have been introduced and all pupils will be able to sit GCSE English literature next year. The impact of the leadership and management can already be seen in the quality of teaching and learning and the department's predictions of better results this year, which inspection evidence supports.
62. Cramped accommodation for English remains a problem; it affects what can be attempted in lessons, for example, ICT cannot be used easily. The library is well stocked, especially with fiction, and is in close proximity; more encouragement of independent reading, perhaps in tutor time, would improve literacy. Satisfactory improvement has been made in the English department in spite of understaffing and the hiatus in leadership this year. Although little improvement in standards has been made since the previous inspection, the pace is now quickening, and good staffing has been secured.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

63. Pupils join the school with literacy skills that are well below average. This is apparent from the writing seen in Year 7, where, initially, even higher attaining pupils make elementary spelling mistakes, use only short sentences and are insecure in their use of paragraphs. These problems are more pronounced amongst lower attainers, who are also limited in their skills of speaking and listening; explanations in science, for example, are quite basic. Standards of literacy improve as pupils move up the school, with more lengthy writing being done, but remain below average by the end of Year 11.
64. It is clear that literacy needs are being addressed effectively by teachers. There is a widespread awareness of the National Literacy Strategy. Individual whiteboards were seen being used to good effect in geography and English, for example, and many teachers use starter activities to focus on language matters. Pupils are given frameworks to assist their writing, and longer pieces of work are encouraged. Sequencing and prediction exercises are used in religious education, for example, which contribute to the development of literacy. Science lessons often include a literacy skill, for example, letter writing, such as telling a gardener how to change the colour of hydrangeas. In many lessons, such as history and English, pupils are encouraged to read aloud and wider reading to research a topic for homework is encouraged.

65. The absence of a head of English has not been allowed to affect the literacy strategy in the school adversely. The headteacher has ensured that all staff are aware of its importance. There has been whole-staff training; handbooks and policy documents not only express aspirations, but give detailed guidance on what can be attempted in different curriculum areas. The librarian plays an important role: the well-stocked library is a good resource, which could be better used by some departments.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE examinations are low and have been hampered by unsatisfactory pupil attendance and staffing issues; pupils are currently achieving satisfactorily.
- Teachers use assessment well to meet pupils' needs and involve them in tracking and planning their own progress.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive, they have good relationships with their teachers and behave well.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they work well as a team.
- Extra-curricular provision is good.
- Practical opportunities for pupils to use the language themselves and for real purposes are limited so that pupils lack confidence in speaking and responding.

Commentary

66. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average compared with those in all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was low. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was average. When compared with similar schools, GCSE results are lower than might be expected. The proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades was particularly low whilst the proportion gaining A*-G grades was as might be expected.
67. In 2003 there were too many pupils who got low grades because of pupil absence. Results in 2003 are poorer than in 2002. The trend in results from 2000 to 2002 was up overall because of improved teaching, but dipped significantly in 2003. The school enters a much higher proportion of pupils for examination in French than is the case nationally and, consequently, a higher number are likely to get low grades. The number entered for German was very low so that any comparison with national standards is not meaningful.
68. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are well below average. However, pupils achieve satisfactorily. By Year 9 pupils can take part in short dialogues, give opinions, describe events in the past and present and identify the main points and some detail from short texts and extracts of speech. However, they cannot easily communicate their ideas without reference to notes and models, and the majority lack confidence in speaking and responding. Literacy levels on entry were well below average and pupils knew no French. Consequently, they achieve satisfactorily.
69. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well below average, but progress has been made and pupils achieve satisfactorily. By Year 11, pupils can write at length on a variety of topics. Higher and average attaining pupils have a good understanding of grammar and are able to apply rules appropriately in writing and speech. Pupils respond appropriately to questions. However, they cannot do this easily and confidently without reference to notes and models. Pupils rely on the written word, and opportunities to use the foreign language for real purposes are severely limited and result in a lack of confidence.

70. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have a very good, and often excellent, command of French and German so that pupils benefit from very good role models. In many lessons the language is used effectively as the main means of communication and teachers' skilful questioning enables pupils to respond promptly and successfully. However, this is not consistent across the department and on many occasions English translations are given too readily, eliminating pupils' need to listen and thus missing opportunities to develop listening skills. Lessons are usually well planned to enable pupils to build effectively on previous learning and grammar is presented clearly so that pupils identify and apply patterns themselves in writing. Good teaching in some lessons allows pupils to gain in confidence and to enjoy manipulating the language. Working in groups and pairs and playing games motivates them to concentrate throughout lessons. When they are given opportunities to communicate with others, pupils make good progress. In a Year 9 French lesson, lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs achieved well because they were given very clear presentations of new language for expressing their preferences in food and drink and then opportunities to use the key phrases themselves in guessing games. They responded enthusiastically, with increasing confidence and were clearly proud of their achievement. They consolidated their learning effectively through reading and writing tasks that were very well matched to their capabilities. The activities and resources were well planned in short, manageable steps so that at each stage of the lesson pupils experienced success and their confidence grew as a result. In a Year 10 lesson, however, pupils did not achieve as well as they should because there were too many barriers to their learning; they found considerable difficulty in constructing role plays about a visit to a doctor or dentist because they had insufficient practise with key phrases beforehand and because the meaning of the language they had to use to do this was not made clear enough to them at the outset. As a result, many did not attempt tasks or failed to complete them without direct help from the teacher or by copying from notes.
71. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Following the whole-school focus on the development of teaching and learning the department is now working well as a team, and consistency across the department is improving because teachers are sharing ideas on a regular basis. Although progress towards this has been slow, this is now having a positive impact upon standards, especially in Years 7 to 9. ICT is being used to support and extend pupils' learning, although this is still in the early stages of development. The department provides good opportunities for pupils to explore other cultures further and develop social skills outside the school day through a variety of activities. For example, pupils have opportunities to meet native speakers, study German as a second language and to participate in trips abroad and language clubs at lunch-time and after school. Marking is regular and usually gives good guidance to pupils about how to improve. Assessment data is used effectively to check individual progress and in some lessons, in Years 7 to 9 in particular, to enable pupils to track and plan how they are going to move from one level to the next. Accommodation is satisfactory, although some rooms are very small and restrict the range of activities that can be provided.
72. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards are rising overall, broadly in line with the national trend. However, this has been hampered considerably by pupils' absence and recent staffing difficulties. The department has taken appropriate action to address the issues raised in the last report; opportunities for developing writing have improved, as has the use of the languages in lessons.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in national tests and in GCSE examinations are not yet high enough, although pupils across all years are now achieving satisfactorily and examination results are improving.

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but some teaching is unsatisfactory and younger pupils' learning is held back by weak literacy and that of older pupils by historically unsatisfactory attendance.
- A wider range of activities than normally found helps pupils learn and higher attaining and/or motivated pupils achieve well in statistics, for example.
- 'Target booklets' help pupils know the progress they are making.

Commentary

73. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were worse than those in 2002. The trend over the last three years is one of slow decline. Results in 2003 do not agree with the better standard of work seen because of differences in the standards pupils had attained on entry to the school. Test results in 2003 were much worse than in similar schools and much worse than those for girls.
74. GCSE results overall in 2003 were below average compared with those for all schools and well below average for girls' schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was also below average. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was broadly average. When compared with similar schools, GCSE results were as good as might be expected. There were too many pupils who got very low grades or were not entered for the examination because of high rates of absence so that they had not covered enough of the work. Results in 2003 were better than in 2002. The trend in results over the last three years is upwards because pupils are achieving better on a new course. About one sixth of the pupils opt to take an additional GCSE in statistics in their own time. Their standards are above average and they achieve well. In 2003, GCSE results for statistics were average. Pupils enjoy this course and it is a useful addition to their curriculum.
75. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily. By Year 9, pupils can draw a range of graphs and use the basics of algebra. However, they cannot yet construct an appropriate sample to carry out a statistical investigation.
76. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily. By Year 11, pupils can use standard form and know the angle properties of triangles. However, they cannot analyse an investigation in depth and do not readily suggest ways in which such explorations might be extended.
77. A considerable minority of pupils, especially in Year 11, have low rates of attendance and this severely restricts their achievement. Pupils who attend school regularly achieve significantly more than those who do not. Many pupils have great difficulty in recalling work done in previous years. This slows their learning. Standards of literacy are well below average. Many pupils have restricted vocabularies. This hinders their explanations of their work, both orally and in writing, so reducing their understanding. Pupils do not use ICT with confidence and frequently make errors when using calculators.
78. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because they are often assisted by support staff in class and frequently taught in smaller classes. The most able pupils make good progress because they rise to the challenge of their work and benefit from 'masterclasses' run by university students. Pupils who may not use English as the first language at home make satisfactory progress because they take a full part in lessons.
79. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In Year 9, a good lesson was delivered to pupils on understanding what makes an effective question on a questionnaire. Pupils' interest was grabbed from the beginning of this lesson by the performance of a short play written and performed by pupils. Pupils exchanged opinions in pairs to develop ideas about bias and leading questions. In contrast, in a poor lesson, Year 7 pupils did not develop multiplication skills because the work was too difficult for many of them. In a good lesson, Year 10 pupils quickly learnt how to change the subject of a formula because the teacher continually checked

learning. As soon as one step was grasped, she introduced the next, more difficult, step and so pupils developed their skills throughout the lesson. In contrast, in a poor lesson Year 9 pupils were often waiting for the next task. The lesson was not well planned and so the different sections of the lesson did not fit well together. At times, pupils were not sure of what they were supposed to be learning. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are satisfactory overall, although pupils who attend school regularly display good attitudes to their work. These positive attitudes are well reinforced by a manifest desire by teachers for their pupils to succeed. This helps develop pupils' confidence.

80. Assessment is satisfactory. Most, but not all, exercise books contain helpful comments, explaining errors. Recently, pupils have started using 'target booklets'. These show pupils the progress they are making on a lesson-by-lesson basis. This motivates many pupils. Whilst pupils regularly record their learning, many are not yet able to write targets that will help them. Currently, many targets are too general.
81. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. There is a clear vision of how to develop the subject and good extensions to the curriculum have been made. These include the GCSE statistics course, regular mathematics 'clinics' at which pupils gain one-to-one support and work by mathematics students from a nearby university. However, work remains to be done to remove some of the inconsistencies currently in the quality of teaching in order to raise standards. The attainment of each pupil is carefully recorded, but available data is not always used to the full. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The subject also makes a satisfactory contribution to citizenship education, for example, when pupils develop a consensus when designing questionnaires. However, pupils are not always made aware that such a contribution is being made. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Teaching has improved, with a consequent gain in achievement. Target setting has been introduced, but standards have not yet improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

82. Recent training has ensured that teachers in all subjects are able to contribute to the development of pupils' mathematical skills and they do so satisfactorily. Despite pupils having below average levels of mathematical skills, in no subject does this hinder their learning. For example, they measure with appropriate levels of accuracy in physical education and in design and technology. Pupils interpret and use graphs correctly in geography and history. In science, pupils are presented with fewer opportunities to use their mathematics than are normally found.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and well organised to promote good learning by many, but learning, overall, is just satisfactory, either because of weaknesses in literacy and retention of facts or, for older pupils, poor attendance.
- Assessment is very well organised and pupils' progress monitored thoroughly, but pupils do not always fully understand how to improve their standards of work.
- Leadership and management are good and the good or better work done in the department is beginning to take effect.
- There is insufficient use of ICT within the curriculum.

Commentary

83. In national tests, taken by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were below average. Following a rise in 2001, results have remained steady, relative to national benchmarks. Compared with pupils of similar prior attainment, results were also below average.
84. In the GCSE examinations, taken in 2003, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C was below average, but better than might have been expected, when compared with pupils of similar prior attainment. The proportion gaining A*-G was in line with national expectations. Results were much better than in 2002, although prior to that, had shown a falling trend. Poor attendance adversely affects examination standards.
85. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average. Relative to their attainment on entry, pupils achieve satisfactorily. By Year 9, higher attainers have a secure knowledge and understanding of scientific principles, which they are able to recall and apply in unfamiliar situations. They carry out practical work confidently and efficiently and most can write about their work fluently, using appropriate terminology. However, pupils in average to lower ability groupings have much weaker literacy skills and whilst they are able to answer simple scientific questions, their explanations lack depth and, often, coherence. For many, long-term recall is very limited. Spelling is a weakness across the ability range, although poorer amongst average to lower attainers. Investigative skills of predicting and fair testing are sound, but the ability to plan experiments and draw conclusions from results, is underdeveloped.
86. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average; pupils achieve satisfactorily, relative to their prior attainment. Achievement is adversely affected by the poor attendance of Year 11 pupils, although the attendance of Year 10 pupils is currently satisfactory. By Year 11, scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that the most able pupils have a good understanding of chemistry, biology and physics, to GCSE level. They produce good investigative work, handling calculations and presenting data competently. The scientific knowledge of average to lower attainers is less sophisticated; their written expression is often weak and lacks the precision necessary for higher grades in exams. Standards of graph work are sometimes below expectations and many girls are too easily satisfied with untidy work. Pupils following the Certificate of Achievement course produce good work and relate their science to every day life. Investigative skills of planning, predicting and measuring are appropriate to foundation level, although some need help. This course does not contribute to the school's GCSE 'points' score. Throughout all years, pupils who may not use English as their first language at home, benefit from very good extra support and teachers who are sensitive to their needs. In addition, most have good attitudes to work. As a result, the department is able to show that they progress as well as, and often better than, their peers. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of very good provision; the curriculum, teaching and teaching materials, are well matched to their needs and extra support, when available, is of a high standard.
87. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is good and a significant amount is very good. Learning is just satisfactory; in Years 7 to 9 due to weak literacy and poor recall by a significant number, in Year 11, in particular, historically poor attendance. Lessons are planned well to include a variety of activities that help to maintain interest. Explanations are clear and progressive. Very good questioning and interaction keep pupils engaged in lesson development very effectively and, as a result, they learn well. Good relationships between teachers and pupils also help learning. Teachers' very good command of their subject enables them to handle pupils' contributions and unexpected questions very effectively. There is good use of resources, including ICT, which helps to improve pupils' understanding of some difficult scientific concepts. However, because of a shortage of computers in the laboratories, ICT is not yet used sufficiently in experimental work. Work is appropriately matched to the ability range and there is much consolidation and day-to-day assessment that tests learning. Attention to literacy in lessons is especially good, but there are missed opportunities to develop pupils' mathematical skills. Homework is set regularly; it generally reinforces work done in class and is often graded in difficulty to challenge the whole ability range. However, marking of much work is

insufficiently constructive and many teachers do not demand high enough standards of spelling and presentation. Technical support is very good and makes a positive contribution to teaching and learning.

88. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are good overall, but better in Years 7 to 9 than in Year 10. Year 11 pupils were not seen, but their poor attendance reflects, to an extent, adversely on overall attitudes. In Years 7 to 9 pupils show interest, ask questions and often really enjoy science lessons. In Year 10, a significant number of average attaining pupils have less positive attitudes that impact on their learning. In Year 11, the poor attendance of a number of girls affects their achievement and examination performance.
89. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is an enthusiastic and very efficient manager. He provides clear direction and his focus on raising standards is shared by the team of teachers. Several strategies put in place recently are beginning to take effect. Pupils' performance is analysed well and appropriate action taken to improve the curriculum where necessary. Teaching and learning are monitored methodically and there is much sharing of ideas and good practice. Formal assessment is good. The programme is very thorough and pupils' progress is monitored well. Targets are set and the girls are aware of their attainment. However, they are not given a clear understanding of how to improve. The extra-curricular activities organised by teachers do much to enrich pupils' learning. The department also utilises CASE (Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education), although such lessons were not seen during the inspection.
90. Improvement, since the last inspection, has been satisfactory overall, as results in GCSE are just a little better. However, teaching has improved significantly. There has been a complete review of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and work is much better matched to pupils' ability. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is now very good. Recent refurbishment of laboratories and the provision of a new laboratory have provided an improved learning environment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 9, providing challenge for all pupils.
- Attitudes of pupils in Years 7 to 9 towards the subject are very good and pupils have developed good skills to work independently and collaboratively.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, their planning is effective and they use resources well to motivate pupils.
- Pupils' knowledge of their target grades is good, but they are often unaware of how to improve upon their current grade.
- Marking is not sufficiently informative, indicating how pupils can improve their current National Curriculum Level or GCSE grades.

Commentary

91. Results and current standards in Year 11 are below average, as reflected by the number of pupils achieving A*-C grades at GCSE in 2003. GCSE results were well below average compared with those in all girls' schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was in line with the national average for girls' schools.
92. In Year 9, teachers' National Curriculum assessments are below average. In Years 7 to 9 pupils' achievement is good in ICT, but this is not maintained in Years 10 to 11, where it is satisfactory. Pupils' ICT skills on entry to the school are well below average, with pupils from

different primary schools having had differing experiences, with varying areas of strength and many areas in which they need more practise. Pupils soon become confident users of ICT and they are quickly able to use the school network to save and retrieve their work from their own files. Whilst results in National Curriculum assessments last year were well below the national average, the work of current Year 9 pupils shows strengths in many aspects. The National Strategy for ICT has been successfully introduced in Years 7 to 9, where all pupils have discrete ICT lessons. The 'PowerPoint' presentations produced by Year 7 pupils reflect good use of colour, text and imported images. In Year 8, pupils are able to distinguish between fact and opinion, validity and bias when comparing and evaluating web sites. In Year 9, pupils are able to understand flow diagrams using appropriate symbols in preparation for controlling a set of traffic lights. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is good.

93. In Years 10 and 11, standards are below the national average. In the vocational ICT course pupils' portfolios demonstrate their ability to use different software packages. They are able to create storybooks for a specific audience by designing and importing images to illustrate their writing. In addition, they can use spreadsheets and databases to evaluate and analyse results by using appropriate graphs, tables, and search and sort facilities. In the GCSE courses, long and short, pupils' work is less sophisticated, in that they are able to create spreadsheets and databases, but fail to interpret or evaluate the data. This prevents them trying for higher GCSE grades. In Year 10, some pupils follow a text-processing course. They are able to create letters and are encouraged to proofread their work in order to develop their accuracy when entering text.
94. Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are very good whilst in Years 10 and 11 they are satisfactory. Pupils respond well and teachers ensure that all students are challenged. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to question, motivate and challenge pupils in order to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well planned and move at a brisk pace. Teachers use resources effectively and they engage pupils well at the beginning of lessons with short starter activities and then introduce main activities very clearly, often with effective 'PowerPoint' presentations. Good support materials are provided to encourage independent learning. In addition, pupils work collaboratively when undertaking research using appropriate web sites. Teachers end the lessons effectively and reinforce learning through good plenary sessions. In Years 7 to 9 pupils respond well and the very positive attitudes of many lead to them making good progress. In a Year 7 lesson, the teacher was extremely adept in maintaining the pace and challenge of a group with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. In a Year 10 text-processing lesson, pupils responded to the good use of resources and the challenge of proofreading a pre-prepared task. Where teaching was very occasionally unsatisfactory, too many pupils were not on task and they became disenchanted with the work, resulting in unsatisfactory achievement. In all years, assessment is good in that pupils are aware of their target grades, but they are often unaware how they can improve upon their current grade. Marking does not inform pupils how they could improve upon their current levels. In Years 7 to 9, resources are being produced that will help pupils to identify the targeted National Curriculum Levels of the task.
95. Leadership and management of ICT are good. The curriculum leader has developed effective systems in all years and has a clear vision for the direction of the department. Lessons are planned well and all teachers use the resources so that pupils are challenged. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching take place regularly and are helping to raise standards. The subject provides well for pupils of all abilities and their ICT skills are having a positive impact across the majority of subjects. The network manager and technicians provide effective support and they play a key part in the smooth running of the systems.
96. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school is well resourced, as there has been much investment in ICT equipment with a pupil/computer ratio of 1:4.2. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 now have one lesson of ICT each week. This is raising standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

97. All subjects have identified how they can contribute to ICT across the curriculum and such contributions are satisfactory overall. This is planned into their schemes of work, but some departments are unable to teach the programme fully due to lack of easy access to specialist rooms. The planned expansion of the network will enable more departments to be self-sufficient in ICT and this will allow pupils to utilise their skills in the context of subjects studied. There are many examples of good practice. In history pupils undertake research on the Internet, are able to evaluate source materials and produce a presentation on 'Jack the Ripper'. In technology and physical education pupils use digital cameras to evaluate and identify progress in their work. Individual departments assess pupils' ICT skills. In order for these assessments to make a contribution to National Curriculum Levels a more coherent approach across all subjects is required.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching provides an effective basis for good learning.
- The assessment strategy is well developed, particularly the setting of clear targets to help pupils improve.
- Most pupils have good attitudes towards geography.
- Good ICT opportunities help pupils to develop as good independent learners.
- Good fieldwork activities develop enquiry, analytical and presentation skills.
- Recent improvements have yet to raise achievement further.

Commentary

98. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average and the proportion of pupils gaining an A*-C grade was very low. The proportion gaining A*-G grades was average when compared to similar schools. The results in 2003 were worse than the previous year, however, the overall trend over the last few years is a positive one. The 2003 results were adversely affected by staffing difficulties and pupil absence.
99. Standards by Year 9 are well below average, however, pupils achieve satisfactorily because of the particularly low attainment pupils have in geography on entry to the school. Standards by Year 11 are similarly well below average overall, but reflect pupils' earlier attainment. Achievement is satisfactory overall. A significant number of pupils have gained good enquiry, analytical and presentational skills because of the improved range of fieldwork opportunities developed in the last three years. In addition, the extensive range of ICT activities throughout all years enables many pupils to become effective independent learners by Year 11 and much of their coursework is presented to a high standard. Absence dulls the achievement of a significant number of pupils.
100. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers plan lessons well, set clear learning objectives and engage pupils in a wide variety of stimulating activities. They create a lively and positive learning environment, characterised by good relationships and good attitudes to work. There are ample opportunities for pair and group work, which develop decision making and oral skills. For example, in a Year 9 class where pupils effectively exchanged ideas and hypotheses about different population structures. Pupils experience a very wide range of different methods of learning including games, case studies, and 'PowerPoint' presentations. Pupils interpret

statistics and data well and are confident in a wide range of different writing styles. Homework is regularly set and complements work in class and extends learning. Assessment strategy is well developed, with good use made of National Curriculum levels of attainment. Pupils are set individual targets for improvement and they also set their own. Record keeping is good and both teachers and pupils have good knowledge of pupils' progress. The wide range of extra-curricular activities provide many opportunities for pupils who attend them to develop good geographical skills.

101. Leadership and management are good and, following the resolution of staffing difficulties, examination results should rise. The head of department has a clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations for her pupils. She has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and has drawn up an effective development plan. The schemes of work have been thoroughly revised and fieldwork, coursework and ICT activities greatly strengthened. Many improvements have developed in recent times, but they have as yet not made a significant difference to the overall raising of standards because attendance levels, particularly in Year 11, have remained low, despite the many efforts of the department to improve them. However, other factors, in particular the quality of teaching and learning, the level of resources and the overall curricular experience, are significantly better, therefore, the improvement since the last inspection is good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good and promotes good learning.
- Pupils achieve well and attain good examination results compared to many others in the school.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their work are very positive and help them achieve well.
- Good leadership and management have led to very good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Very occasionally, teachers do not explain tasks clearly enough to pupils.

Commentary

102. GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national average, but below the girls' national average. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was below average. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was average.
103. Standards in Year 9 are below average. Most pupils begin Year 7 well below average. They achieve well overall. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils have good knowledge and understanding about the past, use and evaluate sources well and produce above average pieces of lengthy writing based on their own research. Lower attainers usually have sound knowledge, but their limited vocabulary prevents them from using sources effectively. Their written work lacks detail and depth of understanding. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress and achieve as well as other pupils.
104. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average. A large proportion of pupils begin the GCSE course with below average standards. Pupils achieve well overall. By Year 11, higher attaining pupils produce well above average quality coursework, use and evaluate sources very well and demonstrate above average standards of knowledge and understanding about past events. The lowest attainers have some basic knowledge, but their understanding is below average, and their use of sources is restricted by their limited understanding of vocabulary and their low literacy levels. For a significant minority achievement is hindered by their absences and/or failure to complete coursework.

105. Consistently good teaching is a strength of the department. It results in good learning. Teachers establish a pleasant working atmosphere in which hard work and good behaviour are the rule. They use activities that involve all pupils actively in their learning and that pupils find interesting. In a good lesson in Year 9, group work ensured that all pupils had to participate and that they worked as teams, supporting one another. Pupils respond very positively to this good teaching; they work hard, show interest and behave well and this helps them achieve well. Teachers usually use a series of short activities, each followed by a brief oral feedback in which they check what pupils have learned. Teachers make effective use of ICT in lessons. In a good lesson with pupils in Year 10, the teacher began the lesson with a fun quiz on the local area, in which he used a digital projector to show places that pupils were asked to identify. Pupils are encouraged to use ICT to present the results of their independent research. The preparation pupils receive for their GCSE examinations is very thorough. The department makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy through asking them to read aloud and to practise writing at length.
106. Leadership and management are good and have contributed to very good progress since the previous inspection. Standards by the end of Year 9 have risen. The quality of teaching has improved. Pupils' attitudes are now very good. The department work very well as a team to raise pupils' attainment as they move through the school. Teacher training opportunities have been used well to improve the quality of teaching. The department has good textbook and ICT resources.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Teachers plan a lively range of activities that interest and motivate pupils, which, as a result lead to very good learning.
- The department is very well led and managed with a clear focus on improvement.
- There is a small amount of time for the subject currently in Years 10 and 11, which limits what can be covered.

Commentary

107. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 are currently entered for the GCSE short course in religious education. In 2003, 46 per cent attained an A*-C grade. There are no national comparative data for the short course, but data does exist to compare performance with similar schools, which show that this group achieved well. Results were similar to the previous year, but the trend over time has fluctuated considerably as a result of unstable staffing in the past.
108. Pupils enter the school with weak literacy skills and a sketchy knowledge of religious education, and achieve very well overall in the subject. In Years 7 to 9 achievement is very good. By the end of Year 9 pupils reach average standards expected in the locally agreed syllabus. They acquire a secure understanding of the foundations of Christianity and Judaism as well as some aspects of Islam and Hinduism. A particular strength is the development of their own response to fundamental questions such as why God allows suffering. Higher attaining pupils write extended, detailed essays. For example, a particularly good essay by a Year 9 pupil was seen, showing very good knowledge and understanding of how the Bible came to be written. Average and lower attaining pupils also produce well thought out pieces, although they are less detailed and contain more spelling and grammatical mistakes. A very thoughtful account by a Year 8 pupil on the topic of pilgrimages explored her own 'special journey'. By the end of Year 11, standards are average and as expected in the agreed syllabus. Pupils' personal responses to religious ideas are especially strong and some particularly good work was seen exploring the

Christian view of forgiveness. Pupils learn to use technical vocabulary correctly, and they write in a variety of styles and use computers to produce newspaper articles and research topics. Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11, however, they only have one lesson a fortnight, and this small amount of time is preventing achievement from being even better. Teachers choose to cover a limited range of topics in depth, but with more time they could range more widely. This school plans to change the curriculum in September, when there will be more time for 'core' religious education, as well as the introduction of two GCSE full course groups. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in Years 7 to 9. Teachers plan very well for their needs and learning support assistants work very effectively with targeted pupils in lessons. There is insufficient evidence to judge the achievement of pupils with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 as Year 11 were not present and inspection time was limited. Pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress in line with others.

109. Teaching and learning are both very good throughout the school. Pupils learn very well, in depth, because teachers bring the subject to life very effectively. An excellent lesson was seen with a low attaining Year 7 group. The teacher used music and objects (such as crucifixes and a rosary) to help pupils to understand some of the ways in which Christians worship. The work was challenging and very interesting and pupils came to a deep understanding of how the emotions are involved in worship. The teacher gave them a vocabulary list to help them articulate their responses, but she also encouraged pupils to come up with their own words, and stressed throughout the lesson the importance of active listening. Teachers mark and assess work very well. They write helpful, often detailed comments, and identify ways in which pupils can improve. They also write probing questions to extend pupils' thinking. In lessons, teachers regularly refer to what pupils need to do in order to attain a higher level. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has been in post a year, and she has done a very good job in raising the profile of the subject after a period of staffing instability. She has prioritised the raising of standards and achievement through curriculum development in Years 10 and 11, and has got some very good plans in place to stretch the most able pupils. Teaching and learning are very well monitored and the head of department has very good procedures for tracking progress and identifying underachievement. The subject makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual understanding and a very good contribution to their personal development overall. The department has made good improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has improved, as has pupils' achievement.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are currently achieving well as a result of the good teaching they receive.
- Historically poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils in Key Stage 4, particularly in Year 11, means learning in Key Stage 4 has only been satisfactory overall and this adversely affects GCSE results.
- Pupils enjoy design and technology and work hard; their attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good.
- The curriculum offers exciting learning opportunities in Years 7 to 9.
- Leadership and management are good.

Commentary

110. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were an improvement over previous years and, overall, pupils attained their expected grades and their achievement was satisfactory. The proportion of

pupils attaining an A*-C grade was below average. Significant numbers of pupils with low prior attainment and poor attendance take a Certificate of Achievement course that does not merit GCSE 'points'. Results in this course were average compared with national data; pupils attained their expected grades and achieved satisfactorily. Poor attendance by a significant minority of pupils depresses overall examination results because their work is incomplete.

111. Standards in Year 9 are below average. However, pupils achieve well from a low starting point. All parts of the design process are understood by pupils, but work lacks specific detail. Folders do not show clearly how one stage of the design process links with the next. Research into techniques, such as lettering in graphics, is average, but skills using market surveys are weak. Pupils have a below average grasp of the features of different materials and structures, except in textiles where this is average. Pupils' practical skills are better than their designing skills and in some areas, such as electronics and textiles, they are average. Pupils always use a good range of hand and machine tools safely and with a fair degree of accuracy.
112. Standards are below average in GCSE classes. Pupils achieve satisfactorily from Year 9. Pupils' designing and making skills are of similar standard. All aspects of the design process are represented in coursework although many folders do not show evidence of surveys in research. Evaluations are generally superficial because pupils run out of time at the end of their coursework. Standards in textiles are average because pupils receive very good teaching. Standards in Certificate of Achievement classes are well below average compared to GCSE classes, but in line with national standards on such courses. Here pupils' making skills are better than their designing skills. The work of a significant minority of pupils is incomplete because their attendance is poor.
113. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Achievement is very good in textiles because the teacher expects very high standards from pupils. Achievement is best in Years 7 to 9 where the exciting curriculum engages pupils well through a broad range of relevant experiences including computer assisted design and manufacturing, electronics and marketing. The achievement of some pupils taking the Certificate of Achievement is unsatisfactory because they are capable of gaining a GCSE grade. The department is aware of this and has plans for more GCSE entries next year. In spite of good teaching, the achievement of a significant minority of pupils in Year 11 is unsatisfactory because they do not meet coursework deadlines because their attendance is poor.
114. Teaching and learning are good overall. However, the learning of a significant minority in Year 11 has been hindered because pupils missed too many lessons through absence. The attendance of Year 10 is satisfactory. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to focus work on key skills and this accelerates learning. Good planning enables pupils to bring a personal preference to designing and making and this is very motivating. Behaviour management is good, providing a calm atmosphere in which pupils work hard and enjoy design and technology. Students cover a lot of work in lessons because teachers move things along at a lively pace by setting challenging deadlines. Learning is well supported by regular homework that complements and extends lessons. A minority of lessons are very good because the teacher's enthusiasm is highly motivating. Here expectations are very high and pupils have to work very hard to solve challenging problems. In a minority of lessons work is too closely managed by the teacher and this restricts opportunities for group and independent work.
115. Leadership is good. Teachers share a joint commitment to raising standards. The new head of department is extending the curriculum and broadening the range of GCSE courses. Management is good. A thorough review of the department's work, including the analysis of examination data, has produced clear and realistic plans for future developments. Marking and assessment are good and used well to track pupils' progress.
116. Improvement since the last inspection is good because teaching is now good; designing is well established and computers are well used. Accommodation is now very good with the new rooms providing the scope to expand the curriculum.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The creative and performing arts course was not fully inspected as there was insufficient time to do so. It was sampled by:

- limited observation of lessons in Years 8, 9 and 10;
- discussions with staff and pupils;
- analysis of subject documents.

117. All pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have the opportunity to study creative and performing arts, mainly through drama and dance, for two lessons each week. The scheme of work successfully incorporates the Programmes of Study for citizenship, which is reported on fully as a subject. In Years 8 and 9, pupils are placed in sets according to their capabilities in art and design, performing arts and music. Over 80 per cent of pupils in Years 10 and 11 choose to continue studying creative and performing arts. This is well above the national average. They are able to take GCSE examinations in expressive arts or media studies or the creative arts awards validated through ASDAN. Recent GCSE results are close to the national average and are frequently amongst the best in the school.
118. Pupils gain additional opportunities to participate in workshops, theatre visits and a multicultural arts festival, as well as performances and presentations in the school. The school was awarded Artsmark Gold, the highest level, in 2003 in recognition of the high quality of its work in drama, music and art. Only 476 schools across the country have achieved the gold award.
119. By Year 9 pupils reach average standards in vocal and physical skills and develop good experience in working together, responding to each other, taking leadership roles and problem solving. As they enter the school with the minimum of prior learning in these areas and no drama or dance skills, their achievement by Year 9 is very good. This is because of:
- very good leadership and management of the curriculum and an able specialist teaching team, which has realised high aspirations and strong focus for the subject area;
 - in the lessons seen, all pupils' efforts and views were valued and teaching was flexible and adaptable to individual learning needs, providing challenge without restricting pupils' enjoyment and creativity;
 - pupils' good personal development through spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and understanding.
120. From one lesson observed in expressive arts in Year 10 it was clear that pupils had made satisfactory progress since commencing the course because their drama and dance skills were much more confident and secure than those of pupils in Year 9. Year 10 pupils have a high level of satisfaction with provision and feel that they were well prepared by the creative and performing arts they studied in Years 7 to 9. GCSE results are consistently in line with national averages indicating that pupils achieve well.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weakness

- Teaching and learning are good and lessons seen were often very good.
- The achievement of all pupils is good and for pupils with special educational needs it is very good.
- Leadership and management are both good and teachers show a strong shared commitment to improve.
- The use of assessment to help pupils improve is very good.
- There are too few activities available to extend pupils' learning further.
- Improvement from the last inspection has been very good.

Commentary

121. In 2003, GCSE results were below average overall compared to those in all schools and well below average overall compared to those in girls' schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was below average. The proportion of pupils gaining an A*-G grade was above average. Pupils did better in art and design than they did in their other subjects within the school and they achieved well. The trend in the results over the last three years has been upwards. Results in 2003 are better than in 2002.
122. By Year 9 standards of work vary greatly, but overall are very close to the national average. This represents very good achievement given that the majority of pupils arrive in Year 7 with a very low level of skills and understanding. Progress is rapid. They learn quickly as the structured course gives them a sound understanding of formal elements of artwork. From studying a range of artists' work from different cultures, they learn new techniques that they can apply to their work. In a project on surrealism, pupils' work demonstrates a sound understanding of scale and proportion. Higher attaining pupils' sketchbooks show a growing understanding of research techniques, but this is less well developed across all abilities. Good literacy strategies are in place to build on pupils' low level reading and writing skills, which often limit the analysis of their work. Where there is access to computers, teachers use ICT very well. Year 9 pupils competently researched pop art using the Internet to produce high quality 'PowerPoint' productions. However, lack of ICT resources within the department restricts the further use of computers.
123. By Year 11 overall standards of current work are just below average. Irregular staffing when the pupils were in Year 10 reduced pupils' achievement. Standards rose significantly in Year 11, but it has not been possible to pull them up to an average level. Current Year 10 pupils are working at an average standard. Teachers put a high emphasis on building on pupils' understanding of art and artists and this area of work is average. However, pupils' technical skills are not of the same standard, although their work in folders shows an improving trend. Achievement overall, from Year 9, is good for pupils who attend school regularly, particularly for those pupils who start the course with a below average level of skills and understanding. In spite of teachers' good efforts to improve pupils' literacy skills, the lower than average standard reduces pupils' abilities to analyse and develop work. Pupils are encouraged to take more responsibility for their work and the strategies in place to build on pupils' independent learning skills are beginning to have a positive effect, and behaviour and attitudes are good. This is raising standards.
124. Teaching and learning are good overall and in each key stage; in over half of the lessons seen, teaching and learning were very good. Consequently, pupils improve and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. In the very best lessons, teachers manage pupils very well and their high expectation of behaviour promotes very positive attitudes. In a very good lesson in Year 8, with low attaining pupils, about William Morris, pupils were lively and demanding. By involving them in challenging discussion, giving very clear explanations, and building in an element of humour, the teacher motivated the pupils to do their best. In most lessons pupils are given strong direction on what they have to do with exemplars and demonstrations of good practice frequently used to show them how to improve their work and achieve well. This strongly supports the learning of those pupils with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English; in both these groups, achievement is very good. Teachers have a very good command of their subject. In Year 10 classes, regular reference is made to the work of significant artists and cultures in order to raise creative and visual appreciation and awareness. Projects are well planned and lessons include a range of enjoyable and challenging activities for all levels of ability. Teachers put a high emphasis on pupils' personal development and citizenship is built into all planning. Learning is well encouraged by very good assessment and evaluation and a high level of individual attention, which gives pupils clear direction on how to improve.

125. Leadership and management are good. The head of department promotes a culture of high expectation and achievement, and the department has a strong commitment to raise standards. Schemes of work and policy statements are clear and informative and regularly subject to review in response to changing demands. Emphasis is put on pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development in planning and this is used very well. Extra classes are held after school, but currently 'artists in residence' and visits to art galleries are underused and this means the stimulus to extend work that is needed to gain the very top grades in examination classes is not adequately provided.
126. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have risen due to better staffing and good teaching. Projects are now well planned. The high quality of display within the classroom and school strongly supports learning and raises the profile of the subject. Numbers in option groups are rising as art and design is becoming increasingly popular.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management have improved pupils' learning and promoted good achievement.
- Good flexible teaching covers the needs of pupils of a wide range of attainment.
- Strong extra-curricular opportunities are enthusiastically supported by a large number of pupils.
- Although GCSE entries have increased the number of higher grade results is too low.

Commentary

127. The results of teachers' assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2003 were below average. This matches the standard of work seen. GCSE results in 2003 were below average for passes at grades A*-C, but average for passes at grades A*-G. These results were much better than those in 2002, but the number of pupils gaining higher grades (A*-C) is still too low.
128. On entry to school, pupils' attainment is not only well below average, but their previous contact with music is particularly varied owing to the large number of feeder schools. By Year 9 standards are below average and pupils' achievement is good. Almost all pupils of all levels of attainment have gained useful practical skills in performing and composing, are developing good standards of analytical listening and understand basic musical terms. Their knowledge of repertoire, style, theory and context are much weaker. Talented pupils are encouraged to be more ambitious in their work and many take advantage of the wide range of instrumental lessons subsidised by the school.
129. Attainment in Years 10 and 11 is overall below average, but a significant number of pupils in Year 10 show the potential to reach standards that are average or better and, consequently, achieve well. This is because they are the first year of pupils to have benefited from the improved opportunities and good learning put in place when they entered the school. In addition, their attendance record and commitment to study is much better than that of other recent GCSE classes. A new GCSE support strategy, including lunch-time and revision classes and specific opportunities to perform in public is helping to improve standards, but higher attaining pupils do not yet have sufficient learning skills to work independently and average attaining pupils are not stretched enough. Year 11 pupils were not in school and their skills in music could not be effectively judged.
130. Teaching and learning are good. The most positive aspect of teaching is its flexibility and adaptability to meet successfully the needs of pupils of widely differing levels of attainment in Years 7 to 9. These strategies mean that pupils with special educational needs enjoy positive

experiences and achieve as well as others. Pupils approach a topic from different aspects, for example, through listening, then performing and composing, which reinforces their understanding. They are involved in different activities using voices, acoustic and electronic instruments, audio and video resources. ICT provision is particularly good, and pupils from Year 8 upwards benefit from composing and notating software. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have very good opportunities to use ICT to produce competent and well-presented individual work. Pupils work together well in a secure framework where the subject code of conduct is clearly understood and followed almost without exception or the need for any prompting by teachers. Pupils enjoy their work and try hard, help each other, respect their teachers and treat equipment carefully.

131. Leadership and management and improvement since the previous inspection are all good. The head of department identified a number of priorities for development on her appointment, including a complete revision of the curriculum, adaptable and flexible ways to ensure that learning meets varied pupils' needs, open access to GCSE and the development of the enrichment programme. All these have been realised well and supported with improved resources, although accommodation remains inadequate where classes are timetabled in the library. Indicators of the success of these developments include GCSE classes with four times the number of pupils and thriving extra-curricular activities enthusiastically supported by a good proportion of pupils. Overall, music now has a strong focus in the school and is rated highly.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good specialist teaching ensures good learning, although some teachers' other duties in the school detract from work in the department.
- Pupils' good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour, ensure good progress in lessons.
- A varied and interesting curriculum, including opportunities outside lessons, engages pupils well.
- The progress made by pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11, is limited by the less than usual allocation of curriculum time.
- Reliable assessments measure pupils' progress accurately, although the recording of assessment information takes too much of the teachers' time.

Commentary

132. Standards at GCSE in 2003 were below average at the higher grades. Results over recent years are rising faster than the national trend.
133. Pupils join the school in Year 7 with standards well below national expectations. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments indicate that standards are below average. The records of regular assessments of all pupils are detailed and reliable, and inspection agrees with them. Although no Year 11 lessons were seen during the period of the inspection, there is reliable evidence to suggest that standards at the end of this year are broadly average. Pupils achieve well.
134. There is no noticeable difference in the progress of different groups of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are unobtrusively included in lesson activities and work is fully matched to their different needs. Higher attaining and talented pupils are well challenged. In lessons seen, pupils were able to modify their ideas and their performances in response to changing circumstances. They know how and why to warm up before strenuous activity. They are confident to express their views when asked. Pupils take full advantage of the many

opportunities presented to them to evaluate their own and others work against specific criteria, and they can readily and accurately suggest ways to improve performance.

135. Teaching and learning are good overall. The specialist teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and effectively use a wide range of teaching methodologies. This means that all pupils can learn well. In the best lessons, teachers plan their lessons carefully, and have high expectations of pupils. They give clear and precise explanations and demonstrations and pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn. Combined with pace and challenge, this ensures that pupils have the maximum opportunity to engage fully in learning. The best teaching encourages pupils to work independently and co-operatively, and they take this responsibility very seriously. For example, in a very good Year 9 athletics lesson, pupils learned to throw javelins competently and safely. In practise, pupils analysed each other's performances and suggested ways that improvements might be brought about. In competition, they measured and recorded their own throws, and celebrated good progress spontaneously and generously. When teaching falls below standard, planning is imprecise and the work set does not challenge pupils sufficiently.
136. Good use is made of ICT as a tool for learning, the use of digital imaging being particularly effective to help pupils understand technique and evaluate actions. There is a positive atmosphere of successful participation for all, based on mutual respect and interpersonal confidence. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities including fixtures with other schools. Very good use is made of accommodation for sports in the adjacent university. Both these features of the curriculum provide many opportunities for pupils of all abilities and interests to take part in activities that extend their engagement in healthy sporting activities at levels suited to their individual needs.
137. Leadership and management are good. The teachers form a well-balanced and experienced team. Their enthusiasm and skills are complementary and they support each other well, ensuring equal opportunity for all pupils. However, some experienced teachers have many additional responsibilities in the school, and this work distracts from the focus on learning in the subject. Teachers clearly place high value on personal standards of behaviour, fair play, and commitment, all of which pupils respond to very well. This underpins pupils' spiritual, social and moral development. Schemes of work are up to date and detailed, and assessments of pupils' progress are made module by module. The information derived from assessments is used effectively to inform curriculum development and the planning of teaching, but the recording of this information is inefficient and unsophisticated, taking up large amounts of teachers' valuable time.
138. Resources for learning are good. Accommodation is satisfactory, but indoor space is limited. Low staffing levels combined with limited teaching time for Years 9, 10 and 11, which is much less than that normally found in secondary schools, clearly limits the progress pupils are able to make. Staffing meets the demands of the curriculum, but precariously, given the additional responsibilities some of the teachers hold.
139. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Pupils now make good progress overall, the quality of teaching has improved and assessment is good. Changing rooms are clean and well ordered.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The only vocational subject seen was GNVQ ICT and this is commented on in the ICT subject section. Year 11 was on study leave and there was insufficient time to visit the few pupils on work related courses. Available evidence indicates these pupils achieve appropriately.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

No personal, social and health education lessons were seen as they are not taught at this time in the school year.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Citizenship education, which is delivered through creative and performing arts, is very good in Years 7 to 9. However, citizenship for pupils in Years 10 to 11 is as yet patchy, so lacks cohesion and planning is not sufficiently explicit.
- Pupils' good achievement by Year 9 is helped by the opportunities provided to explore and experience citizenship issues through practical activities, aided by good teaching.
- Pupils have good opportunities to practise being good citizens through their participation in the school forum, extra-curricular and community events.

Commentary

140. Pupils enter the school with no previous experience of citizenship. By Year 9 their standards are average and their achievement is very good. This is because they explore fully the requirements of citizenship Programmes of Study in largely practical activities, through creative and performing arts. This innovative and exciting curriculum offers pupils many opportunities to experience issues, such as leadership, cultural diversity, human rights, the law, prejudice, manipulation, finance and the effects of change, through drama, dance and music.
141. Teaching and learning are good and pupils respond positively and enthusiastically. Pupils improvise, devise and perform scenarios in which they can actually experience the emotional and relationship aspects of moral and ethical issues. They are guided by a specialist teaching team, which has been trained in citizenship work. Citizenship focus days, for example, on amnesty and democracy, involve pupils with specialists from outside the school or visits to relevant organisations. A multicultural arts festival made a significant contribution to the development of pupils' awareness of diversity. Pupils can extend their citizenship experience by participation in the school forum and through a good range of extra-curricular and community activities, including work-related experiences, charity initiatives and visits abroad.
142. Pupils are regularly assessed in the main subject attainment areas, although no attainment levels have yet been decided. Pupils also evaluate their own performance in the subject.
143. Although the school has identified that a majority of subjects in Years 10 and 11 have the capacity to contribute to citizenship issues and to develop pupils' skills, provision is not yet co-ordinated or monitored. Options to choose subjects at this stage mean the school cannot guarantee that all pupils gain a balanced curriculum in citizenship, and the cross-curricular programme that delivers personal, health and social education is already crowded. It was not possible to make judgements on standards and achievement for pupils in Years 10 and 11 or to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning they receive. Year 11 was not in school and Year 10 was not timetabled for the school's equivalent of personal and social education, which contains elements of citizenship. The school recognises that the citizenship curriculum in Years 10 and 11 needs further development to make it secure.
144. Leadership is good. Management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has realised well her ambitious vision for innovative and creative citizenship for pupils in Years 7 to 9. This has not, as yet, been extended to those in Years 10 and 11 due to other responsibilities the co-ordinator holds. Overall, the implementation of citizenship represents satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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