

INSPECTION REPORT

PARKSIDE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Crook, County Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114296

Headteacher: R Sterry

Lead inspector: Romy Markham

Dates of inspection: 2-5th March 2004

Inspection number: 258726

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary school
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	885
School address:	Hall Lane Estate Willington Crook County Durham
Postcode:	DL15 0QF
Telephone number:	01388 746396
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Nicola Parker
Date of previous inspection:	23 February 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Parkside is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years. The school serves Crook, Willington and other villages along the Wear Valley in County Durham. Two-thirds of the pupils travel to school by organised bus provision. There are 885 pupils on roll. Less than ten pupils are from non-white ethnic groups and none are in the early stages of learning English as a second language. When pupils start at the school their standards of work are well below the national average. The school population is very stable. Very few pupils leave before the end of Year 11 and there are no refugee or traveller pupils on roll. More pupils than usual have some form of special educational need and the proportion with formal statements of need is well above national figures. These pupils have learning or behavioural problems. The Wear Valley has very few employment opportunities and a significant proportion of pupils come from areas with high levels of deprivation and ill health. The school works in partnership with the local authority in providing community facilities on the premises. It gained the Sportsmark Award in 2003 and since 2002 has received additional funding as part of a national project to provide enhanced facilities for information and communication technology (ICT Test Bed project). A new headteacher was appointed in 2001.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1387	R Markham	Lead inspector	
19727	E Langford	Lay inspector	
11508	C Griffin	Team inspector	English; English as an additional language.
18886	F Ruggiero	Team inspector	Mathematics
32384	E de Middlaer	Team inspector	Science
19096	S McClean	Team inspector	Design and technology
2048	D Masterton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31649	R Marsden	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages; Citizenship
33002	J Woodhouse	Team inspector	History; geography
32329	A Stafford	Team inspector	Art and design
1520	A Briggs	Team inspector	Music
4454	I Kerr	Team inspector	Physical education
27803	J Clark	Team inspector	Religious education
22695	R Cardinal	Team inspector	Vocational education; special educational needs.

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. Pupils achieve well and their standards of work improve significantly during their time at the school. Pupils have good attitudes to their work. They learn well, in response to good teaching and good curriculum provision. Teachers and other staff work hard to develop an ethos of care and respect. The school's costs are typical for its size and it gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- School leaders share a clear vision to provide high quality education for all pupils; to improve and support their aspirations for further education and the world of work.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides a wide range of academic and vocational courses.
- Pupils of all abilities work hard and achieve well during their time at the school.
- Relationships and the ethos for learning are very good; this encourages pupils to become responsible young adults.
- The school has developed very good partnerships with other schools, colleges and community organisations and uses these to enhance teaching and learning.
- Teachers use information and communication technology provision well to encourage and motivate pupils and enhance learning.
- More rigour and consistency is needed in how the school evaluates teaching and learning and assesses the standards achieved by pupils.
- All departments need to develop and implement a planned programme to improve literacy and more consistency is needed in developing numeracy skills.
- The provision for drama and music is still underdeveloped; more improvements are needed so that provision and standards match those of other subjects.

The school has made good progress overall since the previous inspection. Good leadership continues to plan and implement improvements. Issues identified in the last report have been tackled systematically. There are improvements in teaching and learning and vocational courses, but provision for drama and music still has some weaknesses and collective worship still does not meet statutory requirements.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Overall, achievement in the school is good. Pupils make good achievements in Years 7 to 9 and in GCSE and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. Standards are average in national tests in English, mathematics and science in Year 9. Although results in GCSE examinations are below national figures, they represent good achievement for pupils who had well below average standards when they entered the school. These results are much the same as those of similar schools, based on how well pupils achieved in Year 9. There is no consistent pattern to the difference in achievements between boys and girls. Achievement overall is good in English, mathematics and science and other National Curriculum subjects except art, French, music and citizenship, where it is satisfactory. Pupils of all abilities achieve well, including the most able and those who have difficulties in learning. However, across many subjects, pupils' weak literacy skills affect their achievements because they cannot write effectively to show their knowledge.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Their attitudes and behaviour are good, their attendance is satisfactory and punctuality to school and to lessons is good. Moral and social development is very good; spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' positive attitudes are a key feature in the quality of their learning.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good. The best teaching has lively activities and interesting materials and teachers pose challenging questions to get pupils thinking. Curriculum provision is good overall, with particular strengths in the broad range of provision for older pupils. More could be done to improve self-evaluation and assessment procedures and to promote literacy and numeracy systematically across the curriculum. Procedures for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. The school has developed good links with parents and very good partnership arrangements with community organisations and other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are good overall. The headteacher and other senior staff provide strong leadership and strategies to improve teaching and learning. A particular strength is the determination of senior staff to provide opportunities for pupils to reach high standards and raise their aspirations. The work of the governors is good. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, but this omission is not having a significant detrimental effect on pupils' personal development.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils comment that the school makes good provision. Inspectors found that parents are right to seek additional information about how pupils are making progress throughout the year. Pupils are given opportunities to make their views heard and the school has acted on many of them, for example, in providing improved lunchtime facilities. Pupils concerns in questionnaires about bullying or poor behaviour were not supported by inspection findings; the school deals promptly and firmly with such incidents.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Use middle managers more effectively to develop consistent assessment and target setting for pupils and to ensure more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and sharing of good practice.
- Ensure implementation of whole-school strategies to improve literacy and numeracy.
- Ensure more rapid improvements in the provision for drama and music so that teaching and learning match that in other subjects.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Continue to review provision for collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is good for pupils of all abilities including the most able and those with learning difficulties. Standards are average in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11, and better than recent GCSE results suggest. There is no consistent pattern in the difference in standards achieved by boys and girls.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach above average standards in GCSE examinations in information and communication technology and physical education.
- Pupils of all abilities make good achievements during their time at school and many reach higher standards than expected from their attainment on entry.
- National test results for pupils in Year 9 are better than those in similar schools.
- Many pupils have weak literacy skills, particularly in writing, and this limits their learning in many subjects.

Commentary

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.5 (32.9)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	34.5 (33.3)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	33.1 (32.9)	33.6 (33.3)

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

1. In the 2003 national tests for pupils in Year 9, results were average overall and for each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Results have been average over the last three years, having improved from below average results in Year 2000. This trend of improvement is better than the improvement of schools nationally. The 2003 results are above the average for similar schools, based on their previous standards in national tests in Year 6. Boys' standards in Year 9 tests are close to the national figures for boys in all core subjects and overall. Girls' performance matches the national figure overall, but their performance in English is weaker than in mathematics and science. When pupils enter the school their standards are well below average with a particular weakness in literacy skills so these results indicate good achievement overall for pupils at the end of Year 9.
2. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations taken by pupils in Year 11 were below average for those gaining five or more grades A*-C and for the average point score. These results are the same as those over the last three years, a decline from the average results in Year 2000 and are below the national trend of improvement. However, these results were broadly average for similar schools, based on their attainment when they were in Year 9. Pupils gained relatively better results in design and technology, information and communication technology and religious education, and performed less well in science, English and modern foreign languages. Girls performed better overall than boys in this school, but not as well as girls nationally and there are considerable variations between subjects. Boys' performance was particularly weak in modern foreign languages.

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	39 (35)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	84 (87)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	29.6 (34.7)	29.8 (34.7)

There were 176 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 were below the school's target in 2003 and well below the average value added from Year 9 tests, compared with all schools nationally. The school reports that these pupils were affected by difficulties in recruiting and maintaining staff. The local education authority has agreed to a reduction in the target for 2004 because of the lower attainment levels of pupils when they entered the school.
4. From inspection evidence, standards overall are now broadly average for pupils of all ages. Standards seen in lessons and in pupils' work are much the same as in the 2003 tests for pupils in Year 9 and much better than the 2003 GCSE examination results. Standards for pupils in Year 9 are average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and information and communication technology, history, art and design and physical education. Standards in religious education, music and citizenship are below average and in French standards are well below average. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average overall, but there is considerable variation between subjects. Standards in information and communication technology and physical education are above average, standards in English, mathematics, design and technology, history, leisure and tourism and religious education are average. Standards in science, art and design, music and citizenship are below average and those in French, well below average. In these subjects standards are affected by pupils' low attainment on entry and weak literacy skills. Standards seen overall are similar to those in the last inspection report, despite the lower standards on entry, in response to good provision, especially good teaching.
5. Pupils develop above average skills in information and communication technology because resources are excellent and teachers use computer technology very well to motivate their learning. Standards in numeracy are broadly average, but these skills are used inconsistently. Numeracy skills are developed effectively in mathematics and used in some other subjects; for example, art and design and English. Literacy skills are below average and are preventing pupils from showing what they know, understand and can do. Although reading and speaking skills are broadly average, pupils are not able to write at length with accuracy and clarity. When pupils are in class and well supported by good teaching their achievements are often good, but under examination conditions many struggle to show their knowledge in writing.
6. Achievement is good overall. Pupils make improvements in knowledge, skills and understanding that are better than might have been expected from their standards on entry to the school. This is particularly so of pupils in the current Years 9,10 and 11 who had well below average standards on entry with particular weaknesses in literacy skills. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is at least satisfactory and mostly good in all the National Curriculum subjects inspected. By the end of Year 11, achievement is good overall and at least satisfactory in all subjects expected except art and design, where pupils have not made the progress expected from their Year 9 standards in 2002. However, standards are better in Year 10 in art and design and show satisfactory achievement.

7. Pupils of all abilities achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs make good achievement throughout the school. The majority of pupils make good gains in their reading by the end of Year 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good gains in self-esteem because of the good match between their needs and the courses offered. In 2003 Year 11 pupils with special educational needs gained an average of five GCSE passes and 20 per cent passes at grades A*-C. Pupils who are gifted and talented achieve well. An increasing proportion of pupils gain GCSE grades A* and A.
8. Improvements in test and examination standards are supported and monitored effectively by senior staff, for example, in reviewing outcomes by cohort or subject. Recent review has shown that there is no consistent pattern in the variation of results between boys and girls. The school is aware that more detailed analysis is needed and has planned considerable investment in staffing and facilities to improve assessment and evaluation procedures.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes to learning and to school life are good. Behaviour is good. Pupils are provided with good opportunities for their personal development. Social and moral development is very good; spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality in school is good with lessons starting on time.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good at all levels and contribute to the positive ethos of respect within the school.
- The good behaviour and attitudes to learning have a positive impact on the standards achieved by the pupils.
- Good opportunities are provided to help pupils build confidence, raise their self-esteem and develop a sense of personal responsibility.

Commentary

9. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and most display good attitudes, some displaying very good attitudes, to their learning and work. Most listen well, demonstrate high levels of commitment to their work and show themselves to be self-motivated and keen to learn. Where good teaching takes place, many are able to sustain good levels of concentration during their lessons and collaborate well with each other in both group and paired activities. In a few lessons a minority of less motivated pupils distracted the attention of others in the class and, when not challenged by the teacher, had a negative impact on class learning.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.9	School data :	0.7
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

10. The school takes a very positive approach to improving attendance with first morning phone calls home to follow up pupil absence and a series of merit awards to celebrate improvement trends in pupils' attendance. The school has high expectations for behaviour and makes very good use of withdrawal techniques to ensure that the good class learning of the majority of pupils is maintained with those misbehaving being removed and refocused on the benefits of good behaviour and learning. The great majority of pupils display good standards of behaviour in and around the school, which enhances the very good relationships that exist between pupils and between pupils and adults.

11. Pupils display a very good level of commitment to the school ethos of respecting others. This is supported by the lack of permanent exclusions (compared with three last year) and the significant reduction in exclusions for misbehaviour in the current school year. However, the zero tolerance to smoking recently adopted by the school, and the automatic exclusion of any pupil caught smoking, has resulted in a similar number of fixed-term exclusions to last year being recorded. The school's well-structured system of behaviour rewards and sanctions is clearly understood and owned by pupils and is effective in supporting good behaviour and self-discipline. The high level of pupils' respect and regard for others is well exemplified by the marked absence of any graffiti, vandalism or excessive litter around the school.

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	867	137	3
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Chinese	1	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.

12. Many pupils, in conversations and questionnaire returns, expressed many positive features of the school. Pupils work together constructively, form good friendships and settle their differences amicably. They think teachers are fair, listen to their ideas and are very approachable. The inspection team was particularly careful in investigating the concerns of some pupils and parents about bullying. However, following checks of records and many observations and discussions with pupils, staff and parents, it was concluded that bullying was not an issue in the school. Parents and pupils report that any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with swiftly by staff.
13. The very good relationships that exist between pupils and between pupils and staff are a notable strength of the school and contribute in a significant way to the positive ethos of respect and care that pervades throughout the school. Year 10 volunteer pupils provide a very good and discrete peer mentor service for pupils with personal problems. Conversations with pupils show this service to be effective and well used; it is valued by pupils and enriches the opportunities for trusting relationships to be developed. During the inspection pupils were often seen offering to help others, to hold open doors and regularly say “please” and “thank you” in a natural way.
14. Good personal development opportunities are provided through the year and school council structures that offer pupils regular opportunities to show enterprise and responsibility and to influence school practice and routines. The pupil suggestion scheme generates a regular flow of ideas, with many being taken up by the school to improve aspects of provision. Examples include the improved toilet facilities and the extended 'healthy eating' food options available at lunchtime. Responsibilities offered to pupils are willingly accepted and undertaken with vigour and obvious pride. While pupils are sometimes asked to guide visitors around the school there are a lack of formal whole-school responsibilities for pupils to aspire to. There is no formal practice for class teachers to offer responsibilities to their pupils during their time in school.
15. The provision made for pupils' personal development is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies are well organised and weekly themes provide opportunities for consideration of issues and values, but they do not

always include opportunities for worship or reflection. Accommodation is limited and pupils do not attend assemblies each day. However, several subjects, such as English, religious education, and personal and social education, make a valuable and important contribution to pupils developing their own set of values and beliefs. The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral development and has high expectations of pupils that they will behave responsibly, have regard to the feelings of others and take responsibility for their own actions. Teachers' positive relationships with pupils are good examples of the principles the school promotes in respecting others.

16. Opportunities to develop social skills and values are very good. The school has a clear sense of community and pupils are encouraged to work co-operatively in lessons and take part in shared activities, for example, in the very good range of extra-curricular activities. Good opportunities exist for pupils to exercise leadership and take responsibility. The teachers and other staff, help pupils develop qualities of thoughtfulness, independence and self-respect. The personal and social education programme provides valuable opportunities for pupils to understand and debate social issues such as drug and alcohol abuse. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils participate in a good range of educational visits and social trips. Consideration of other cultures is well developed in religious education where pupils learn to appreciate the religious beliefs and values of cultures other than their own, such as Hindu and Muslim cultures. However, there are few visits to mosques, synagogues and temples and faith leaders from non-Christian religions are rarely invited to talk to pupils, for example, in assembly. The school recognises that more opportunities could be provided for pupils to appreciate the cultural diversity of modern Britain.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

17. The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good. Curriculum provision is good overall, with particular strengths in the broad range of provision for older pupils. Procedures for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. The school benefits from good leadership and management; senior staff know what needs to be done to bring about further improvements. The school has developed good links with parents and very good links with the community and other schools.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good and this helps pupils to achieve well. Assessment procedures are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good teaching across all age groups and most subjects; this consistency of good teaching is leading to good learning and helping to improve standards and achievement.
- Teachers are using information and communication technology very well to motivate pupils and make their lessons interesting.
- School procedures for tracking underachievement in Years 10 and 11 are good.
- There is considerable inconsistency in the way in which teachers assess work, set targets for improvement and share them with pupils.

Commentary

From inspection evidence, teaching is good overall with about one in five lessons being very good. This good quality teaching was seen in most subjects and for pupils of all ages, and leads to good learning. Parents and pupils mentioned good teaching in questionnaire responses and in discussions with inspectors.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 121 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (0.83)	25 (20.6)	55 (45.4)	33 (27.2)	5 (4.1)	1 (0.83)	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.

18. Teaching is good overall in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, although teaching is consistently good in English, it is noticeably better for pupils in Years 7 to 9 than for older pupils in mathematics and science. Teaching is good in all other subjects inspected except music and citizenship in Years 7 to 9, and French in Years 10 and 11, where it was satisfactory. Very few lessons were seen where teaching was less than satisfactory. These were scattered across different subjects, but a common weakness was the failure to plan appropriate activities for pupils so that all were engaged and motivated in their learning.
19. Teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs are good. Support staff have a very positive impact on pupils' learning. They are well used in the great majority of lessons, although occasionally they are underused by subject staff. They display a very good knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils in the degree of support given in lessons. They are skilled and effective in delivering information and communication technology programs in mathematics and English as well as literacy progress units. Teaching by specialist staff for pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9 varies in quality. In lessons seen it was very good in mathematics and satisfactory in English, with the management of relatively large groups of pupils a weaker area. In Years 10 and 11 pupils make good gains in skills, knowledge and self-esteem in college-based courses and in the XL club provision.
20. Good and very good teaching was seen throughout the school where teachers were well-qualified subject specialists. They know their subjects well and are able to explain facts and issues, answer pupils' questions fully and give a range of examples to clarify information. In some subjects, for example, English, mathematics and history, teachers used methods from the national strategies very well to make the best use of time available.
21. The improved resources for information and communication technology have transformed the way teachers use technology to enhance teaching and learning. The use of interactive whiteboards, laptop computers and voting tablets provide challenge, interest and motivation. Pupils are confident in using this technology in their learning, in the classroom or for homework. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory overall. Provision broadly meets the needs of different curriculum areas, although more could be done in some areas; for example, science. Teaching of literacy is well developed in English, but unsatisfactory overall because of a lack of consistency in planning to develop language skills, especially writing, across the subjects of the curriculum.
22. The best teaching used lesson time to the full; lively starter activities got everyone involved, materials were interesting and teachers explained clearly and posed challenging questions to get pupils thinking. Very good teaching was seen in practical activities, for example, in design and technology or physical education, as well as in written or oral tasks in English or history. In these lessons, pupils made rapid gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding and often showed good teamwork, enthusiasm and persistence to get their work right and, as a result, they achieved very well. Some outstanding teaching was seen in English, where the teacher had carefully planned interesting challenges so that pupils not only learned about texts, they also knew what they had to do to improve their work as the lesson progressed.

Example of outstanding practice.

Explicit learning methods helped well below average Year 9 pupils write opinions about characters in 'Twelfth Night' and achieve very well.

Seating near the interactive whiteboard established a co-operative and focused atmosphere. The fast starter quiz about the play's characters using wipe off A4 boards effectively limbered up pupils' thinking. Enthusiastic and competitive, pupils strove for higher marks through accurate use of letter cases. A clearly presented model showed the level they would receive for each statement they wrote. Pointing out a quotation made by Sir Toby attained Level 2. Going on to point out the purpose of the quotation and its implication for other characters resulted in higher levels. This model guided a shared writing task in which the pupils jointly composed opinions about other characters, with the teacher writing the response on the board. Now fully confident and engrossed, pupils individually applied the techniques they had learnt to different characters, using the model to achieve higher levels. Short connectives provided by the teacher ("I know this because..." and "This might show...") effectively structured responses. A support assistant, most pupils left with a secure response and close to average standards; a considerable achievement.

23. Learning is good overall. A key factor is the response of pupils to good teaching, but also because pupils bring their own positive attitudes to their work. Their behaviour and good relationships contribute to a good learning environment. Both teachers and pupils enjoy lessons.
24. The quality of assessment of pupils' work and the constructive use of data to set targets and improve learning are satisfactory overall. However, procedures operate inconsistently within and between departments and are wide ranging in their quality. There are good school procedures for tracking pupils who are identified as underachieving, when working towards their examination potential. Marking and feedback to pupils are of good quality in religious education, history, English, information and communication technology and physical education, and for those pupils with special education needs. Generally procedures for assessing pupils' progress are underdeveloped in art and design, music, citizenship and modern foreign languages.
25. The school currently uses data from national tests to set targets and to predict attainment by the end of Years 9 and 11. However, this data is not yet provided in a way that all departments and individual teachers can readily use. Involving pupils in self-assessment and setting targets is generally underdeveloped, as in many subjects National Curriculum Levels are not routinely shared with pupils. There are notable exceptions in history, physical education, and information and communication technology where there are significant strengths. In the upper school, through the use of examination criteria, regular tests and access to predict grades, pupils generally get better support for understanding their progress and how to improve. Pupils with special educational needs experience good target setting in their individual education plans and review procedures are secure. Overall, there is a lack of rigour and consistency in assessment across the curriculum and the current school policy does not provide comprehensive and concise advice for all departments to follow.

Curriculum

The school's curriculum provision is good. There are good opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation, resources and staffing levels are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very good range of vocational courses in Years 10 to 11.
- The pupils' experiences are enriched through a good programme of extra-curricular activities.
- The school prepares the pupils well for the next stages of their education and/or employment.
- Personal, social and health education is good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Information and communication technology resources are excellent.
- Creative arts provision requires enhancement. Not all pupils in Years 8 and 9 can study drama; few pupils choose to study music in Years 10 and 11; the drama provision is new in Year 10 and facilities need upgrading.

COMMENTARY

26. There has been a good improvement in curriculum provision since the previous inspection. Vocational courses have been successfully introduced to meet the school aim of ensuring the widest possible range of provision to meet pupils' needs and aspirations. Information and communication technology opportunities have improved. The school has successfully increased its funding for resources. However, although there has been some improvement in the provision for the creative arts, the current level of provision is no better than satisfactory. Drama was only introduced in September 2003 and is not available in Years 8 and 9 for pupils studying two languages. The numbers opting for drama and music at GCSE are low.
27. There is a sound range of courses in Years 7 to 9. The wide range of courses in Years 10 to 11 is a strength. In addition to a good choice of academic courses there are opportunities for pupils of all attainments to take vocational courses. Applied GCSE courses are taught in school and National Vocational Qualifications are available through effective collaboration with a neighbouring school and college of further education. Accredited courses include leisure and tourism, health and social care and information and communication technology. In addition there are courses in catering, motor vehicle maintenance, hair, joinery and recreational studies. There is good accredited provision for lower attainers via ASDAN assessment. While taking these courses pupils still take GCSE courses in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This strong provision has a positive impact on attendance, attitudes and achievement. The provision will be enhanced in September 2004.
28. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Priority is appropriately given to English, mathematics and science in the deployment of support staff, although, as a result, other subject areas have less. All groups of the lowest attainers in Years 7 and 8 are taught English and mathematics by SEN staff. This targeted provision is further enhanced by computer-based programs in English and mathematics delivered weekly by support staff. These programs are new this year and still being refined. Development of the English program is more advanced in its match to individual needs. In both programs pupils and staff receive regular feedback on progress. Provision in subjects is good in the majority of subject areas. It is less well matched to individual needs in music and information and communication technology.
29. The curriculum for older pupils provides good opportunities for pupils with special educational needs. Through their own determination and the quality of the provision, individuals gain confidence and self-esteem through a variety of experiences including extended work placements and off-site college courses. The school's XL club provides very good opportunities for pupils to achieve through planning and carrying out a variety of activities. The course develops key skills, including teamwork, very effectively.
30. There is a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. The programme reflects the school's principled approach to enhancing the experiences of all pupils as a basis for securing better achievement and self-esteem. This priority is underpinned by the appointment of co-ordinators with established roles and responsibilities. Consequently, there are good opportunities for sport, other physical activities, clubs, residential trips and educational visits.

Opportunities for sport extend to recreational activities as well as representative sport. There are good opportunities for study support. The library is open for an hour before school. There is effective collaboration with local libraries. Different groups of pupils such as the gifted and talented are targeted through events such as the weekly reading club. Evaluation and monitoring of the overall enrichment provision needs to be more systematic to promote and assure the inclusion of all pupils and to evaluate the impact on achievement.

31. The school provides a good programme of careers activities. The tone is set by opportunities for Year 7 pupils to visit a college of further education, so promoting aspirations. Work experience opportunities occur in both Years 10 and 11. Pupils have full access to guidance from other institutions and to specialist career advisers via the Connexions agency. The personal, health and social education programme is well planned and provides comprehensive coverage of sex, drugs and health education. There is good coverage of citizenship in Years 7 to 9. Following a thorough audit, any gaps in subject provision are covered in tutorial time. Coverage is less consistent in Years 10 to 11. Not all pupils participate in active citizenship activities.
32. The school has an appropriate number of teachers for the curriculum it offers. They work effectively together in departmental teams. There is some shortage of expertise in English and modern languages and the school has had difficulty in recruiting a head of the mathematics department. Teaching support assistants are well used and their work makes a considerable contribution to learning in the classroom. Their time is concentrated in Years 7 to 9 and to support core subjects and information and communication technology. Additional support would be effective elsewhere in the curriculum, for example, in design and technology.
33. The school buildings are of good quality and used intensively. Most subject areas are satisfactory or better, but accommodation for English and information and communication technology requires improvement. The dispersed nature of teaching rooms undermines cohesive development in English. Three information and communication technology suites are located in an open-plan hall and this leads to many difficulties for teaching and learning. The school does not have a space large enough to accommodate everyone so the school cannot provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Assemblies are held on a rota in the sports hall, gym and dining hall in year groups. The Test Bed project has led to an unprecedented investment in information and communication technology throughout the school and general resources for any related area of work are excellent. The library is well resourced with an attractive and wide ranging selection of books. It is a popular facility with pupils making good use of it before school, and during break and lunchtimes. As a whole, the school is an attractive learning environment, very well maintained by the caretakers and cleaners.

Care, guidance and support

The school ensures pupils' care and welfare very well. It provides them with good support and guidance and makes very good provision for their involvement in all aspects of the school's work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality child protection and related procedures ensure pupils' best interests.
- Very effective involvement of pupils has led to significant school improvements.
- Staff provide good quality pastoral support so that pupils feel valued.
- Lack of formal tracking of pupils' personal development inhibits target setting and reporting on progress.

Commentary

34. High quality care and support have been maintained and improved since the last inspection. There are very good child protection and care procedures in place. Staff have received training and are aware of the need for vigilance in monitoring the well-being and welfare of pupils. Risk assessment techniques and good health and safety procedures are well embedded into school routines. There are an adequate number of staff trained in first aid, however, there is no room set aside for pupils who feel ill during the school day.
35. Teachers know their pupils well and provide them with a high level of pastoral support. They are kindly and sensitive to their needs. Trusting relationships between staff and individual pupils develop well so that pupils with significant needs, such as communication difficulties, can be appropriately supported. The great majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and value highly the advice and guidance they receive from staff. However, a lack of formal systems to track and report on the pupils' personal development hinders the ease with which personal targets can be agreed, shared with parents and monitored to show progress being achieved. The careers guidance, work experience and vocational opportunities provided to the older pupils are very good and prepare them well for their life after school.
36. New pupils and parents are quickly introduced to the routines of school life by very good and effective induction procedures. The cross phase activities planned each term with the primary schools are very good and a strength of the school. The close collaborative working between pupils in Years 6 and 7 on joint learning programmes have a significant impact on the ease with which the young pupils are introduced to a whole range of secondary school experiences. Of worthy note is the use of colourful and pupil-friendly posters around the school, which promote good conduct and lifestyle skills through a range of subtle message displays.
37. Consultation with pupils is very well developed through the year group councils and the school council structure and these, and the pupil suggestion scheme, have raised a number of good ideas that have been willingly acted upon and implemented by the school. The school is right to celebrate the positive influence made by pupils towards improving the school facilities and their learning environment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are good. A significant improvement since the last inspection is the very good partnership arrangements developed with the local community and with other educational establishments.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good community links are of great benefit to pupils and the wider community at large.
- Very good liaison with other educational partners enriches the pupils' learning opportunities.
- Parents are supportive and have confidence in the work of the school.
- The good level of information keeps parents up to date with school activities and pupil successes.
- A small minority of parents do not support school or their child's learning.

Commentary

38. The school's good relationship with parents is demonstrated by the many positive views expressed in the parents' questionnaire, at the parents' meeting prior to the inspection and in conversations during the inspection. Most parents consider staff very approachable and responsive and are pleased with the school's high expectations for behaviour and their children's good progress. Discussions with staff and pupils show that there are good arrangements for regular contact opportunities with parents. Many parents value the pupil

planner system as a means of monitoring how their child is progressing at school and some make use of this to communicate with teachers about their child.

39. Parents are provided with regular newsletters on a half-termly basis and the prospectus and Internet web site provide a range of useful and informative data about the school. End-of-year progress reports on pupils are well detailed, easy to read and provide parents with appropriate levels of information about what their children know and areas for improvement. Annual consultation meetings are arranged to discuss pupils' progress and are attended by some half of all parents. A number of parents would prefer more regular mid-year opportunities to meet with teachers in order to monitor and influence their child's progress. The inspection team supports this view. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved in reviews of progress and kept informed of provision made. Information from feeder schools is well used to inform planning of provision on entry.
40. The school actively seeks parents' views on important issues through an annual survey and values their suggestions and comments. During the inspection examples were provided of teachers and parents working together as partners in the development of strategies to help pupils improve their attendance, behaviour and attitudes to their learning in the home and school environment. The inspection team does not support the concerns expressed by a minority of parents about unsatisfactory behaviour and bullying in the school.
41. The very good partnership working with other local schools enriches pupils' learning and provides them with high quality social links through a wide range of shared learning and sporting activities. In particular, the planned cross phase activities programme has a significant impact on developing the social skills of primary age and Year 7 pupils and the ease with which primary pupils are successfully integrated into secondary school routines. Older pupils gain significant benefits from the very good employment 'taster' opportunities and career advice offered as a result of the school's close partnership working with the local further education college and the Connexions agency.
42. The very close working relationships developed through the Parkside Community Association enhance the pupils' learning environment and have a positive impact on how pupils and adults in the community regard learning and the world of adult education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good overall. Governance and management are both good; senior staff and governors plan improvements in teaching and learning and seek to overcome the low expectations of some pupils and their families. Governors have ensured that the school meets statutory requirements, except for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the headteacher is good, with a clear drive for improvement.
- Leadership of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is innovative and raises standards.
- Managers need to develop more rigorous self-review and improvement.
- Governors are well informed, well organised and they know what the school needs to do to improve, but the statutory requirement for collective worship is not met.
- Available funding is used well to improve the facilities and support curriculum and staff development, especially involving information and communication technology.

Commentary

43. The leadership of the headteacher is good, as is that of other key staff. The headteacher has established a clear vision, is principled and has led a drive for improvement. He has developed a shared purpose with staff who make an effective contribution to school aims. Leadership of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very good and has produced an inclusive vocational

curriculum and improved achievement. Members of the senior team are respected and relationships with staff are constructive and purposeful. Standards in Year 11 examinations match those of similar schools; standards in national tests for pupils in Year 9 are better than those in similar schools.

44. The leadership of heads of department and heads of year is good overall, yet variable across subjects. Where it is good, leadership creates effective teams that use assessment and target setting well to raise pupil achievement and inform subject planning. Leadership and management of provision for pupils with special educational needs are good. Provision is well organised and targeted according to need.
45. Strategic planning is good and addresses the key issues of the school, with short, medium and long-term plans. Most areas of management are effective. The school diagnoses strengths and weaknesses, plans for improvement and has a detailed, useful and well-structured school development plan. However, self-review is not rigorously embedded across the school and planning for improvement reflects this. Although there is some very good practice, for example, in history and information and communication technology, the scope of most departmental planning is restricted. Objectives are broadly linked to school priorities, but most plans do not include arrangements for monitoring progress or detailed criteria against which success can be quantified and measured. Subject and pastoral leaders have not had the opportunity to follow a dedicated programme to develop leadership and management, which would help to create even more effective teams to carry out this self-review.
46. The school makes use of examination and assessment data at the beginning of each year to check on the school's performance and to compare its performance with other similar schools. It sets targets for individual pupils and reviews progress made in different subjects. The data, however, provides more than specific departments require and this detracts from its effective use in some areas. The school's targets for national tests in Year 9 are reasonably accurate, but for GCSE, performance falls short.
47. Governance is good overall; there are significant strengths in the vision, organisation and strategy of the governing body. Governors are well informed about the work of the school. They receive regular reports from key staff and learn information first hand during school visits. They have developed effective strategies to challenge while providing support for school improvement. They monitor regularly the implementation of the school development plan and they know that the school needs to be more consistent and rigorous in monitoring teaching and learning, so that best practice is shared across the curriculum. The governing body has kept up to date with statutory policies, for example, in assessing how the school could provide disability access, but one statutory requirement is not met. Collective worship is not provided daily for all pupils because the school does not have sufficient space for a whole-school meeting. Assemblies are organised by year or groups of years and other opportunities for spiritual development are provided through the curriculum and tutorials. The school ethos makes very good provision for pupils to respect the beliefs, values and feelings of others in lessons and daily routines. This alternative provision means that the omission is not having a significant detrimental effect on pupils.
48. Staff development is good. The induction of new staff is well organised and new teachers and middle managers are well supported. The school is also effective in initial teacher training. Performance management contributes to providing support and training for individual and school development. The good provision for training and development is well managed, but lacks the overview that a whole-school needs analysis would provide. Satisfactory progress has been made in workforce reform with support staff being used effectively so that teachers focus on teaching.
49. Monitoring and evaluating teaching occurs through the formal performance management process, and from the beginning of this year a single deputy head is also observing all teachers. Although this aspires to bringing about improvement and consistency, it does not

compensate for the lack of formal lesson observations by some heads of department. These arrangements can sometimes result in a delay in the check on quality.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,937,468.14
Total expenditure	2,908,507.43
Expenditure per student	2,422

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	162,440.83
Balance carried forward to the next	191,401.71

50. Financial management is good and there are clear links between planning and spending. Competent budgeting ensures that each year the existing curriculum is adequately resourced and there are sufficient funds available for developments. The carry forward in April 2003 was much larger than most schools, but was used to balance the budget as base funding was reduced. Standard funding is supplemented by substantial supplementary money that has been successfully bid for or raised. Day-to-day management of finances is careful and efficient. As a result of the headteacher's leadership and the bursar's effectiveness, the school's financial position is improving. Its facilities are upgraded and well maintained, staff training is funded well and curriculum innovations continue to be implemented. The school also incorporates the principles of best value well, as is evident from the recent ITC Test Bed project. The school has average costs and gives good value for money.
51. Enhanced teaching and learning, information and communication technology provision and increased standards on entry to the school are leading to improved test and examination results, but weak literacy skills are preventing some pupils from showing that they know and understand. The school has been particularly successful in developing effective partnerships with other schools and organisations, but some pupils and their parents still have low expectations of what can be achieved. The school continues to seek ways in which to improve staffing and overcome difficulties in the recruitment and retention of key staff.

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English and French were inspected in full and German was sampled. In German, GCSE results have been well below national averages and staff absences have severely affected standards. In the two lessons observed, however, teaching and learning were good, and pupils made good progress in their learning.

English

The provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall teaching is good, especially when its planning and methods are informed by the principles of the National Literacy Strategy.
- Achievement in Years 7 to 9 has been consistently good in recent years. It is now good in Years 10 and 11.
- The head of department provides an excellent role model and good leadership.
- There are good systems for tracking pupil progress.
- The best practice in teaching and assessment needs to be more consistently applied across the department.
- Staffing needs to be less fragmented and accommodation less dispersed.

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Progress since last inspection	Good	

52. The average results gained in the 2003 national tests were much better than might have been expected given the pupils' well below average test results at the end of Year 6. Results have been consistently average in recent years and better than the results in similar schools. Boys have tended to match boys nationally, but girls have not done as well as girls nationally. In 2003, GCSE English and English literature examinations results were below average, as in 2002. They were just in line with what would have been expected given these pupils' Year 9 test results. In contrast to Year 9, girls tend to do better than boys at GCSE.
53. Standards in the current Years 9 and 11 are average. Achievement is good from a typically well below average attainment on entry. In Year 9 the highest attainers consistently speak, read and write at a level that is well above average. They write accurately, use varied vocabulary and sentence structure well, and use evidence effectively to analyse texts. Average attainers write with clarity, but lack the accuracy, impact of language and analysis of higher attainers. Others are below, and even well below, average because of inaccuracies and less clarity in writing and reading. In Year 11 more pupils are reaching grade C standards or better than in recent years. This results from a more explicit teaching of required skills and from better target setting having a positive impact on expectations. As in Year 9 there is a wide range of standards. Some

coursework reaches the very highest grades. Those not reaching grade C standard are too inaccurate in writing and do not use their usually secure understanding of a text to answer directly essay and examination questions. A small proportion is well below average because of frequent writing errors. Appropriately pitched assignments help gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs to achieve well overall.

54. Teaching and learning are good. However, the current fragmented nature of staffing undermines the consistency of good or better teaching. Several members of staff teach in two departments and cannot give all their efforts to English. In the best lessons pupils of all attainments make real gains. They are fully involved. They work hard, both independently and with others. Methods match their abilities such as a series of short, purposeful tasks for less confident and less motivated pupils. The pace is fast and time used well. The planning and methods in these very effective lessons draw heavily on the explicit teaching methods of the National Literacy Strategy. This has a positive impact on learning. In contrast some lessons are too slow. Planning does not take enough notice of the pupils' abilities, motivation and concentration. There are weaknesses in the effective use of time. Tasks do not challenge and engage the pupils. The department is introducing some very good assessment practices. In some lessons marking is thorough and specifies strengths and weaknesses. Pupils know their grades or levels and the criteria they need to fulfil to improve. This strong practice is not fully embedded. Teachers use their information and communication technology facilities well, but pupils require more 'hands on' experience during lessons.
55. Leadership and management of the department are good. An outstanding teacher, the head of department, presents an excellent role model. She understands the department's strengths and weaknesses. There are good systems for tracking pupil progress. Teachers track progress towards targets identified by prior attainment through formal recording of assessment grades. Monitoring, evaluation and support require more time. The dispersed nature of teaching rooms undermines cohesive development. Medium-term planning is good, but requires more guidance on teaching and learning. Good achievement, against a background of lower standards on entry, represents good improvement since the previous report.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

56. Overall, pupils' literacy skills are below average. Standards are average across all subjects in speaking and reading. However, in a number of subjects weakness in writing skills undermines the pupils' progress. Too many pupils do not transfer the average or better writing skills they secure in English to other subjects. A recent survey carried out by the school's literacy co-ordinator revealed that pupils are not receiving enough opportunities to develop extended writing. Neither do they receive enough explicit guidance on how to write effectively in different subjects. Good practice is emerging, for example, in history. Most subjects also place an effective emphasis on helping the pupils to use key subject vocabulary well. Some subjects such as science and design and technology have a literacy statement to support their work. However, there is little evidence that an effective school policy either guides or evaluates improvement.
57. One very successful development is the teaching of the National Literacy Progress Units for below average pupils in Year 7. Learning support assistants are very skilled in delivering these units, enhancing their impact through very assured use of the interactive whiteboard. Pupils made very good progress in consolidating their understanding of the rules governing the adding of an 's' to words ending in 'y'. Teaching in groups of up to 12 instead of the recommended six is extending this good provision to more pupils without compromising the effectiveness of the units.

French

The provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is satisfactory overall, but weak literacy skills hamper the progress of many pupils and results in GCSE examinations are well below national averages.
- Teachers work hard to motivate pupils and make lessons interesting.
- Teachers and pupils make very good use of information and communication technology.

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory	

58. Results in recent GCSE examinations and standards seen during the inspection for pupils in Years 9 and 11 are well below national averages. They are also below those of most subjects in this school. In 2002 and 2003 no pupil gained higher than grade B. In 2003 more pupils gained grade F than any other grade. Girls performed better than boys; only one boy gained a grade C or better. This represents a deterioration since the last inspection. Teachers' absences, and difficulties in recruiting teachers, have had a severe impact on the continuity of provision and on pupils' progress, and, despite the school's best efforts, have kept standards down.
59. Achievement is satisfactory overall, but pupils' weak literacy skills hamper their progress. They often hesitate when giving spoken responses. Inaccurate spelling in French and English lowers the quality of their work. Many pupils do not retain material between lessons, so that even after several years of learning French, pupils still have to cover basic ground. Pupils see French as unimportant. Numbers choosing to take French in Years 10 and 11 are very low and many pupils who would benefit from studying the language do not do so. French has a low profile in the school. There is no up-to-date reading material in the school library, for example.
60. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and much is good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers work very hard to motivate pupils and to provide interesting and purposeful lessons, and achievement within individual lessons is satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils practise a good balance of the skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing and teachers provide a good variety of activities in lessons. They use group work, pair-work, visual aids, games and hands-on activities to bring lessons to life. Grammar is clearly taught and now provides a solid basis for progress – an improvement since the last inspection.
61. Work is marked regularly and pupils are shown clearly where they have made mistakes. They are less clear about how to improve and what to do to achieve target grades, however. Teachers gave clear explanations, but learning notes in pupils' exercise books are often muddled with exercises and rough work so that it is not clear to pupils from what they should revise. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and teachers tailor lessons to the needs of individuals. There are too few opportunities for the most able pupils to work towards the highest GCSE grades, however.
62. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader motivates the work of other teachers, and teachers have undergone training, for example, on how to raise the achievement of boys. This has begun to make improvements in the classroom. However, the use of assessment information to influence planning is underdeveloped and lacks focus. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. There has been considerable improvement over the past year, despite staffing and recruitment difficulties. Teachers make very good use of

information and communication technology to present information in an engaging way. They, and the pupils, use it very creatively in all years to enliven lessons and promote the use of French. This has increased motivation, particularly amongst boys. The number of boys choosing to take French in Years 10 and 11 is roughly equal to that of girls, which is in healthy contrast to the situation found nationally.

MATHEMATICS

The provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improved lesson planning and teaching are raising the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Interim leadership provides an excellent role model for teaching and learning.
- Monitoring and self-evaluation by the department are not always rigorous or systematic.
- Provision for pupils in Years 7 to 9 with special educational needs (SEN) is very effective.
- Teachers use information and communication technology very effectively in their teaching.
- Curriculum development and innovation are helping to raise standards.

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since last inspection	Good	

63. In the national tests taken in 2003 by Year 9, results were average when compared nationally with all schools, and above average when compared with similar schools. Taking into account the prior attainment of the pupils, these results represent good achievement. They were the same as English, but better than science. Results have improved steadily over time in line with national trends. Boys performed better than girls, compared to national averages. The GCSE results for 2003 at the higher grades taken by Year 11 were average when compared with all schools nationally and average for similar schools based on pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. The results are an improvement from 2002 and over time the trend of improvement is close to the national average and represents satisfactory achievement. These results were better than in most subjects, including English and science, and girls performed better than boys.
64. In work seen, by the end of Year 9, pupils' work in number, algebra, shape, space and measures is average. Most pupils can perform accurate calculations without using calculators and sometimes mentally. Achievement overall is good and is best in the highest and lowest sets where the teaching is very good. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 and 8 achieve very well. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of work seen was average and achievement was satisfactory. Standards seen in the new optional GCSE statistics course were above average and pupils achieve well on this course. Overall, throughout the school achievement is good with boys and girls achieving similarly. Standards of spoken English are average, but insufficient opportunity is taken to develop writing in some topics and coursework.
65. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good and in Years 10 and 11 it is satisfactory. Overall, it is good with more than one third of lessons seen being very good, mostly in Years 7 to 9, and with one unsatisfactory lesson in Years 10 and 11. The good teaching in Years 7 to 9 is the main reason for pupils' good achievement. The main features of good teaching include very good planning that incorporates the National Numeracy Strategy well; the very good use of information and

communication technology by teachers, especially in the introduction of lessons, and in skilful interactive presentations; the highly effective specialist teaching and good support provided for pupils with special educational needs; pupils' positive attitudes, nurtured well through good relationships and behaviour management, to promote good learning. Detailed marking by almost all teachers provides useful feedback, but only some use assessment information well to regularly review set targets for pupils. Other weaknesses include some teaching that is not well matched to the needs of pupils; not all pupils use information and communication technology enough in their learning; and some methods used to respond to bad behaviour are ineffective.

66. Overall, the acting head of department, who is an excellent role model for teaching, provides good leadership that is well supported by teamwork and a deputy head. There is frequent sharing of good planning of information and communication technology presentations, which contribute well to the raising of achievement of pupils and a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. Effective initiatives and curriculum innovations also help to raise the achievement of pupils. They include a good induction programmes for new pupils, accelerated learning in Year 9 to facilitate early entry to GCSE examinations, the introduction of a new GCSE statistics option and providing interventionist programs to support pupils with special educational needs. The management of the department is satisfactory. Delegation and organisation are good, but developmental priorities are limited and reflect the interim circumstances within the department. This insufficient monitoring of the department's work and limited self-evaluation prevents improving the achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11. Schemes of work would be more effective if they included more references to supplementary provision for differing abilities. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection: standards and achievement in Years 7 to 9 have risen, information and communication technology resources have increased substantially and the culture of change and innovation is becoming embedded.

Mathematics across the curriculum

67. Overall, standards are average. In mathematics, pupils' skills in calculations, use of graphs and the basic use of algebra and formulae through mental, oral and written approaches are average. There is also good whole-school guidance on consistent approaches to teaching areas of mathematics and some departments have included this in their current planning. There were also a few good examples of pupils using mathematics seen in lessons of other subjects; younger pupils in art and design used mental arithmetic, they accurately divided circles into sectors and used proportion in drawing portraits; in design technology they weighed and measured, used bar graphs to illustrate research outcomes and worked with geometrical shapes to produce key rings; and in English, emotion or tension graphs were used to plot contrasting developments in texts. Older pupils also used graphs in English and spreadsheets for analysis in design technology. However, because of insufficient whole-school monitoring and coordination there is lack of planning in some subjects, and missed opportunities for strengthening learning in others – for example in science, when Newton's Law is taught to older pupils.

SCIENCE

The provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and this leads to good achievement.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons are good, and relationships with staff are very good.
- Teachers have a good command of the subject, which has a good impact on standards.
- Gifted and talented pupils would benefit further from a targeted programme to enhance their achievement
- A more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and achievement would raise standards.

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching & Learning	Good	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory	

68. In the 2003 national tests taken at the end of Year 9, pupils' results were average compared with all schools nationally, but above average when compared with similar schools, based on prior attainment. Boys performed better than girls. The recent trend of improvement in Year 9 is above the national trend. At the end of Year 11, examinations results were below average with all schools nationally. Girls performed better than boys in dual award science. Trends in recent years reflect the national trends.
69. Overall, pupils' achievement is good, and pupils make better than expected progress. When pupils enter school, their attainment is below average, with particular weaknesses in literacy skills. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 were average. Pupils show a good understanding of science processes and can apply this accurately. In a Year 9 biology lesson, pupils understood and could readily explain life processes of plants and apply this knowledge to establish links to plant organs. They were engrossed and achievement was high.
70. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are below average. Pupils demonstrate a breadth and depth in their knowledge of science processes in describing phenomena and a significant number can apply these to a range of systems. A Year 10 lesson on forces enabled pupils to make links between different situations, using their knowledge and understanding of processes. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall, with pupils making the progress expected of them. However, lower attaining pupils do not progress as other pupils and gifted and talented pupils would benefit from a targeted programme of development to enhance their achievement.
71. Overall, teaching is good, and particularly so in Years 7 to 9, where it leads to good achievement. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge, understanding and command of the subject and there are good literacy links in science. Attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good, relationships with staff are very good and pupils enjoy the subject. Where teaching is good, lessons are planned to match the needs of pupils of different abilities; teachers provide good pace and challenge; they actively engage and interest pupils and ensure that prior learning is taken into account, so pupils know what is expected of them, work well and make better than expected progress. The use of information communication technology needs further development as provision is excellent. Marking is regular and to a purposeful subject policy. However it does not give pupils a clear enough idea about how they could improve, nor does it set clear targets for improvement.

72. Leadership is satisfactory. The head of department has a clear and appropriate vision for the subject and is a good role model. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The department runs smoothly, staff are clear about their roles and there are considered approaches to development. Plans are appropriate and data reviewed to set meaningful targets. However, self-review needs to be more formalised and rigorous to improve teaching, learning and achievement further, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Accommodation is satisfactory and resources are good. New laboratories due in April 2004 will provide better accommodation. Improvement since the last inspection has been broadly satisfactory.

Information and communication technology

The provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Information and communication technology facilities in the school have been transformed through participation in the national Test Bed project and resources are excellent.
- Curriculum provision is good for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and for those pupils in Years 10 and 11 studying accredited courses.
- Standards are broadly average in Years 7 to 9 and rising.
- Standards at GCSE level are above average and pupils are enthusiastic learners.
- Although there is much good teaching, there is some weakness.
- The school does not monitor rigorously enough how well pupils achieve in information and communication technology if they do not take an accredited course in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Very good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory	

73. The standards reached by pupils in GCSE examinations in 2003 are above average for those gaining grades A*-C. A greater proportion of pupils study the subject in this school than is usually seen. Boys' achievement is better than girls. Results in 2002 were similar. Pupils' work seen demonstrated standards of work commensurate with good GCSE grades; achievement is good and many pupils have a remarkable pride in their work. Year 11 pupils develop their coursework portfolios with maturity. In one lesson seen pupils were researching and writing up examples of the impact that information and communication technology is now having on the way people work. Working independently, with guidance from their teacher and very conscious of the quality needed for good examination grades, pupils worked purposefully to exemplify key changes to work patterns in the contexts they had chosen. The achievement of these pupils is very good. The examinations standards attained, the development of pupils' knowledge and the quality of their coursework point to two years of rapid progress in their knowledge, understanding and productivity.

74. The school is now also teaching information and communication technology Key Skills as an alternative to GCSE for some pupils. Here standards of work seen in classes were suitable for assessment, but overall the level is much lower and pupils' productivity is weak. The achievement of these pupils is currently unsatisfactory as they are not yet maturely engaged with their studies. Progress is made where teaching is good, but the standards are low and the complexity of tasks completed is sometimes no higher than is now expected from pupils in primary schools. Currently some 60 pupils in Year 10 have not chosen any assessed

programme in information and communication technology. They develop and use information and communication technology competencies in many other subjects, but the school does not monitor this provision closely enough to assure compliance with all National Curriculum requirements.

75. Currently the standards of pupils in Year 9 are about average, broadly similar to the results of teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2003 and their achievement is satisfactory. These pupils have not benefited greatly from the new methods introduced through the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for information and communication technology and they have only recently started to use new resources. Their taught time in earlier years was limited. The standards observed for pupils in Years 7 and 8 are better, reflecting new teaching materials from the national strategy, more teaching time and the influence of the Test Bed project investment. For example, pupils in Year 8 used commercial software with confidence to produce a leaflet about their school incorporating text they had written, illustrations taken from web sites and digital photographs they had taken. The language and style were very suitable for the target audience, which was younger pupils. This Test Bed project will require the school to develop further standards as pupils from associated feeder primary schools arrive with information and communication technology knowledge and skills that have formerly been acquired at the secondary stage.
76. Throughout the school pupils now display a remarkable general competency with information and communication technology. Using a computer with several different programs running at the same time, using passwords, searching the Internet for information and illustrations, producing word-processed materials and preparing simple presentations are all skills that most pupils now demonstrate effortlessly either in their lessons or on other occasions in school.
77. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching and learning of pupils studying GCSE information and communication technology are good. The outcome is coursework of high quality and good examination grades. The teaching of the Key Skills course is satisfactory and sometimes good, although much greater output is needed from pupils in this programme. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is generally satisfactory and often good. However, not all lessons are taught by specialist staff and there is some weakness here. Learning follows a similar pattern. Pupils are keen to engage with their work, want to succeed and gain satisfaction from the progress they make. Teachers use a range of techniques for assessing and recording pupils' progress. GCSE pupils, in particular, find the feedback they receive motivating and helpful. However, better recorded informative advice for pupils is needed on how their work can be improved and more use should be made of homework to supplement the effectiveness of school based learning with additional learning challenges. Teachers provide good role models for their colleagues in using the very new resources now in school particularly the interactive whiteboards, the voting tablets, laptop computers and the whole-school radio network.
78. The departmental management is very good with very comprehensive planning and policies. There is good vision or steer for the development of the subject across the school through the Test Bed project and this is helping to drive the improvement in standards. Resources are now excellent and there is no doubt that the Test Bed project has permanently changed the way teachers use this technology in their work. Improvement of the teaching of information and communication technology since the last inspection is satisfactory. Some difficulties remain. Teaching in the information and communication technology suites is sometimes difficult due to their open-plan nature. There are also ongoing technical problems with the use of suites of laptop computers in classrooms and they can distract teachers from their key focus in lessons. Currently for those pupils not studying an assessed course in Years 10 and 11, although they have many experiences of using information and communication technology, more needs to be done to track coverage to assure compliance with National Curriculum requirements.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

79. The government funded Test Bed project has given a very powerful boost to information and communication technology across the curriculum and it has already transformed the way teachers work with computer technology themselves, especially with their laptop computers and the interactive whiteboards that are installed in all classrooms. This use of information and communication technology is increasing pupil motivation and helping to raise standards. Good examples include work in history to prepare newspaper pages that might have appeared in the period leading up to and during the Great War. Teachers of modern languages and information and communication technology are using the voting tablets in classes with pupils to answer questions. This is encouraging the full engagement of all the class with their learning. There is extensive use of information and communication technology based methods in technology and in subjects such as leisure and tourism use is made of the Internet for research. Computer facilities are less well incorporated in some other subjects such as science and physical education.

HUMANITIES

History and religious education were inspected in full. Geography was sampled. Two lessons were observed in geography. The teaching and learning in both lessons were good due to effective planning and appropriate levels of challenge so that pupils achieved well. Recent examination results in geography are average.

History

The provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An effective and enthusiastic team of teachers, well led by the newly appointed head of department, is having a good impact on pupils' achievement.
- Well planned and appropriate lessons are suited to the needs of pupils of different abilities.
- Further development is required on evaluating the effectiveness of teaching on pupils' progress and standards.
- There are good assessment procedures so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Progress since last inspection	Good	

80. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades was below the national average. The percentage of pupils with A* grades was above the national average and there was a large proportion who obtained grade F. However, there has been a significant improvement in results from the previous two years.

81. From work seen and lessons observed, at the end of Years 9 and 11, the overall level of knowledge, skills and understanding of pupils is average. This represents good achievement considering that the overall standard of pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve well in relation to their capabilities as a result of good

teaching, the very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils and recent developments in the use of computers. Teachers plan lessons suited to the ability of high attainers and pupils with special educational needs, which promotes good progress. There is some good support from teaching assistants particularly in Years 7 to 9. For example, in Year 7, low attaining pupils working in small groups with a board game activity, could identify and explain the difficulties faced by medieval farmers. Pupils who needed the most help made good progress with the help of a learning support assistant. A class of high attainers using a more sophisticated version of the game was able to identify the difficulties in more detail and suggest solutions to these problems. In Year 11, high attainers were sufficiently challenged as they assessed the achievements of 18th-century medical pioneers and were able to discuss and evaluate their relative importance.

82. Overall, teaching and learning are good with some instances of very good teaching. Teachers show a very good knowledge of the subject and use a variety of teaching methods that maintain the interest of their pupils. Lesson objectives are shown on the electronic whiteboard so that pupils know what they have to learn. All teachers use the 'three-part lesson' effectively with a clear beginning, middle and end. Pupils need to be given the opportunity to develop a personal summary of the main points they have learnt in the lesson. Lessons are adapted to suit the needs of different abilities. Work is marked with constructive comments so that pupils know what they must do to improve. In general, pupils are made aware of the standard they have reached and their potential in the subject. A key feature of lessons is the emphasis on key words and their meanings. There is satisfactory use of number work although opportunities need to be highlighted in lesson plans and schemes of work. Pupils use a variety of computer applications, which is helping to raise standards.
83. Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed head of department has had the vision and enthusiasm to move the department forward in a relatively short space of time. Teachers work as an effective team and share good practice. The curriculum is appropriate and changes are only introduced after careful thought. Assessment systems are in place so that pupils are clear about their level of attainment and the progress they are making towards their targets. Further development is required in the monitoring of the impact of teaching on learning and also in the measurement of the effectiveness of the department's work on pupils' attainment using available data.
84. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Work is now matched to the needs of different abilities. The achievement of pupils has improved in view of the lower than average standard of attainment of the pupils on entry to the school. Examination performance is now improving after a period when staffing difficulties had a negative effect on results.

Religious education

The provision in religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Between Years 7 and 11 pupils achieve very well, improving standards of work from well below average to average.
- Boys' GCSE results in 2003 were above average.
- Teaching and learning are good with some very good features.
- The very good leadership and management of the subject are a major factor in raising standards and motivating pupils.
- Pupils have few opportunities to make visits to places of worship or prayer, to enhance their learning.

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Progress since last inspection	Good	

85. Pupils' well below average literacy skills make for a slow start in Year 7. However, by Year 9, because of good teaching and very good attitudes, standards are just below average. Pupils know about the principal religious beliefs and practices of the main world religions, particularly Christianity, Islam and Judaism. They have good insights into why people worship different gods and can recognise similarities in religions, for example, in the importance of initiation ceremonies for Jews and Christians. They are not able to articulate their views very well and cannot easily discriminate between fact, opinion and belief. By Year 11 standards are average. In relation to the well below average standards of Year 7 this represents very good achievement. Curriculum provision is very good and pupils may study for the GCSE short or full course or the Certificate of Achievement. The 2003 GCSE results were below average overall, but the proportion of pupils entered was 20 times the national average. When, in the previous two years, a smaller proportion of pupils were entered, results were above average. In 2003, pupils overall did significantly better in religious education than in the vast majority of their other subjects. Boys' results were above average at A*-C grades, but girls achieved a higher proportion of A* grades than boys and higher than girls nationally.
86. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, those who are gifted and talented and the small number of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, achieve very well because their teachers make the subject interesting and teach them effectively and because they themselves bring good attitudes to their work. Permanent teachers and temporary supply staff currently teach the subject. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching by permanent members of staff is consistently very good. Excellent subject knowledge ensures that what pupils learn is relevant and accurate. New technology has been harnessed to deliver lessons, with very good use of computer software in presenting materials for discussion and analysis. Relationships are very good and motivate pupils to want to learn and do their best. Consequently, religious education is a well liked and popular subject appreciated by pupils in helping them develop their own set of values and beliefs. In Years 10 and 11 pupils voluntarily stay behind two evenings a week for further GCSE study and attendance on both evenings is very good, a reflection of their commitment and dedication to the subject. There are not enough opportunities to enhance pupils' learning through visits to places of worship or prayer, particularly mosques and temples, and non-Christian faith leaders are rarely invited to come to school and talk to pupils. The use of information and communication technology by pupils in presenting work or using the Internet for research is underdeveloped.
87. This is a very good department. Through inspiring leadership and example, pupils develop a genuine interest in religion, ethics and philosophy. Consequently, they are receptive to good teaching and over the five years they achieve very well. Religious education makes a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development particularly through the promotion of pupils' spiritual and moral values, for example, by learning to evaluate the teachings of religions on right and wrong, and an appreciation of the right others have to hold beliefs different from their own. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Pupils' achievement is better because teaching and learning have improved. There has been no progress in providing more teaching time for the full GCSE course, which remains inadequate.

TECHNOLOGY

The provision in design and technology is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Progress since previous inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are experts in the different aspects of design and technology.
- Pupils receive a rich range of experiences in various materials, supported by the increasing use of information and communication technology.
- Pupils and teachers work well together in a very positive atmosphere.
- Against national trends, boys achieve well in GCSE examinations.
- Methods of assessing pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 need to be developed more fully to give pupils better information about their progress and targets.
- Systems to annually review the subject and to monitor teaching and standards need further development.

Commentary

88. When pupils enter the school their standards are below average, with limited experiences of design and technology and well below average basic skills. In the work seen, and in teachers' records, pupils' designing and making skills are close to average by the end of Year 9. Few pupils, however, achieve the higher levels. Overall there is good achievement in Years 7 to 9 and this is because of good teaching, well-planned activities and the increasing access that pupils have to information and communication technology. Pupils develop a wide range of skills and knowledge, within activities like the Disney project. They are able to develop design briefs, use various research skills to develop their ideas, and increase their knowledge and practical skills in food, textiles, electronics and resistant materials. However, in Years 7 to 9 pupils do not fully know and understand how their work matches National Curriculum Levels. Pupils with special educational needs, because they are well supported in class, achieve as well as others.
89. Work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection was of average standards and similar to recent examination results. In GCSE examinations in 2003, pupils' results were broadly in line with standards achieved nationally. Pupils across the range of design and technology subjects achieved grades that compared well with other subjects within the school and against similar schools. Graphics grades are consistently high, but in all the areas some pupils achieve the highest grades. Against national patterns, boys achieve very well yet girls underachieve at the highest grades. Overall achievement is good. The success is due to teachers knowing their subject well, providing clear guidance for examination requirements and keeping pupils on track to meet deadlines. At the lower grades pupils have not developed a sufficient range of skills and confidence to tackle projects independently and often miss deadlines for completing coursework.
90. The quality of teaching is good for all age groups. Teachers are very well qualified and hardworking, endeavouring to give pupils the best learning experiences. They use the interactive whiteboards to make their teaching more varied and motivating. In the best lessons these are fully exploited to demonstrate how to use specialist design tools or by pupils to present their research tasks. All teachers set high expectations for behaviour and consistently set and check homework. A small proportion of lessons lack pace; learning is not shared

clearly enough with pupils or opportunities for pupils to learn together are lacking. Good teaching results in pupils who enjoy the subject, come to lessons with the required materials, are enthusiastic in lessons, complete homework and behave consistently well in class. Assessment of pupils' work is better in Years 10 and 11 where examination grades are used to track pupils' progress. Pupils are given grids to mark off their progress week by week, tips to help them succeed in examinations and clear information about their predicted grades. Projects in Years 7 to 9, however, are not organised clearly enough to help pupils understand what they will be learning and to provide challenge for the most able.

91. The department is well led and managed by an experienced head of department, who gets good professional support from other members of the team. There are shared views on high expectations for pupils' success and a clear plan for use of the Test Bed project funding. School and department policies are implemented effectively and the sizeable budget is well managed. Although there is annual evaluation of the work of the department, this process is underdeveloped as a tool to raise standards. The cramped and outdated accommodation in the food technology rooms requires an upgrade, and more technician support is needed to enhance teaching and learning. Progress since the last report has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected in full, drama was sampled.

Drama

92. Drama was introduced in September, 2003. In a Year 10 lesson standards were above average representing good achievement at this early stage. Teaching and learning were good, as they were in a Year 9 lesson. Standards in this low attaining set, however, were well below average. The accommodation, although a large work area, lacks facilities such as blackout, sound and lighting, which affects the development of a rigorous drama programme.

Music

The provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is characterised by strong subject knowledge and good planning.
- Assessment and the marking of pupils' work are unsatisfactory so pupils do not know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
- Musically talented pupils are good performers on their chosen instrument.

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Unsatisfactory	
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory	

93. By the end of Year 9 standards are generally below average, but pupils are achieving satisfactorily, given their attainment on entry. Musically talented pupils have well-developed performance skills and create short pieces that display a good understanding of basic musical elements. Lower attaining pupils perform simple pieces, but cannot add suitable rhythmic accompaniments to them and sometimes struggle to maintain their own part accurately within

paired performances. Pupils, including some higher attainers, have weak writing skills and their written work contains many spelling errors. Girls present their work better than the boys and their work is also organised more logically and efficiently.

94. Standards by the end of Year 11 are below average; all pupils achieve at a satisfactory level in relation to their work in Year 9. Theory and appraising work is less developed than performance and practical work, but still shows a good understanding of the examination requirements. Higher attainers can identify different periods of music and explain the characteristics associated with each one. Lower attainers have less skill at recognising different styles of music and do not fully understand the difference between classical and romantic styles of orchestral music. Coursework is generally well presented, but shows weaknesses in writing and literacy skills, particularly in descriptive writing work.
95. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory and this results in satisfactory learning. Lessons are well planned and teachers have secure knowledge of their subject, which they pass on adequately to the pupils. In the best lessons pace is maintained through a variety of well-chosen activities that keep the pupils interested. Teachers circulate the class well, passing on advice and supporting pupils' achievement. Relationships are good and pupils are keen to learn. In the weaker lessons work is not matched to the needs of the pupils, for example, those with special educational needs. In one lesson much time was spent colouring in the seating plan of a symphony orchestra, which was dull, unmusical and resulted in pupils becoming bored and restless. In Years 10 and 11 resources are used well and there is increasing use of up-to-date computers with music software. Until very recently pupils in Year 7 to 9 had very limited access to computers for music work, so they have not been able to create, refine and modify their compositions. Although computers are now available, it is too soon to see any impact in the quality of their work. Teachers do not make enough use of the interactive whiteboards; at times they are used only as a simple board to display lesson aims. Marking of work is not consistent and does not inform pupils of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
96. Support teachers are used well and contribute considerably to pupils' learning. During the inspection there were no instrumental lessons taken by peripatetic teachers and it is not possible to make a judgement on this provision.
97. Music does not have a high profile within the school and, as a result, there are fewer musical activities and very low take up for the subject at GCSE compared to other schools of similar size. The school has recognised the need to improve this area of the curriculum and has improved staffing and resources. Leadership is now satisfactory with a clear vision for the development of the subject by the recently appointed head of performing arts. However, management is unsatisfactory; the subject has not made the progress expected since the previous inspection. More needs to be done to monitor teaching, improve assessment strategies and make provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good lessons employ a variety of teaching strategies that lead to good learning.
- Standards rise when the influences of artists or movements in art and design are introduced.
- Insufficient formal monitoring of teaching and learning and assessment, and sub-standard departmental records and documentation are holding back improvement.

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Unsatisfactory	
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory	

98. Standards overall are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 2003 was well below the national average. This has been the trend over the last three years and reflects unsatisfactory achievement. The standard of work seen during the inspection, however, by pupils in Year 11 is a little better, at below average, and standards in Year 10 are already broadly similar, and indicate that results are set to improve even further, in response to good teaching and learning. Pupils research extensively, especially concerning artists' work. They do this by drawing from a variety of sources using a range of different media. Outcomes seen showed that pupils effectively manipulate the formal elements such as line, shape, colour and composition. Pupils are confident to experiment and to produce expressive work. Pupils use the Internet to research current issues and they use sketchbooks effectively to annotate their findings. This enables them to sequence their progress and develop technical language.
99. Standards in the current Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement in relation to their standard when the pupils joined the school in Year 7. This includes pupils with special educational needs. Pupils demonstrate the competence to illustrate poetry imaginatively using a formal style. This was seen in a Year 8 lesson. Pupils had prepared poems for homework and in class selected carefully which elements to illustrate. They enjoyed drawing with great care to achieve sufficient accuracy for others to recognise their intentions. Talented pupils get good opportunities to enrich their development through extension work using computers.
100. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. It is very good when a variety of teaching approaches are used in conjunction with time constraints that increase the level of demand and when tasks are influenced by the work of well known artists. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where pupils had to work quickly, but carefully, to construct a grid that contained a range of gradually reducing geometric shapes. The finished outcomes had an optical effect similar to that seen in the work of Bridget Riley. Pupils were seen to learn effectively because the teacher used the interactive whiteboard to demonstrate the procedure and enumerate the success criteria for pupils' outcomes. At the end of the lesson a review of what had been achieved engaged pupils in their learning and led them to do more independent work at home. The full potential of information and communication technology as a learning aid has not yet been fully developed. Some assessment is inaccurate because it interprets the National Curriculum level descriptors too generously for the standard of work seen. Assessment is inconsistent across the department. Procedures for setting targets and tracking pupils' progress are underdeveloped.
101. The leadership of art and design is satisfactory. The recently appointed head of subject has prioritised what needs to be done to drive the department forward, improve management strategies and raise standards. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards are now improving. The new schemes of work are an example of good practice, but weaknesses lie in the limited evaluation of pupils' past performance and the lack of established procedures that enable the teachers to know what targets pupils are set and how they are to reach them.

102. Extra-curricular activities, visits to galleries and contact with artists in residence have a positive effect upon the quality and range of pupils' work. The art and design department makes a substantial contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen over time and GCSE examination results are now well above average.
- Pupils have very good attitudes towards physical education and sport.
- Relationships in the subject are good enabling pupils to work collaboratively and achieve well.
- Leadership is very good.
- Overall learning and teaching are good. Some very good teaching inspires pupils to achieve very well.
- There is good provision in extra-curricular sport.
- Assessment is inconsistent and not always linked effectively to National Curriculum Levels.
- The department needs to develop more rigour in evaluating its work in order to raise standards further.

Commentary

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since last inspection	Good	

103. Teachers' assessments in 2003 showed that standards in physical education at the end of Year 9 were well above national expectations. The GCSE results in 2003 were also well above average and represent very good achievement. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment, but achievement by the end of Year 9 is good. In Years 7 and 8 some pupils' standards are exceptionally high, for example, higher attaining pupils showed that in a range of activities they are able to acquire and develop their skills, apply them in a range of contexts appropriately with good precision and control and use their knowledge and understanding to plan their own work. In games pupils can select tactics, skills and ideas and use them in group and team activities. Standards in how pupils evaluate their own and other's performances is at the level expected and at times above average. This has improved since the last inspection. Current standards in Year 9 and core physical education in Year 11 are average. In the work seen standards in the Years 10 and 11 GCSE groups are above average.

104. Overall the quality of learning and teaching is good. All teachers are subject specialists; they set high expectations and pupils respond with equally high expectations of themselves. Teachers show a good command of physical education and sport, set a good example and they have very good relationships with the pupils. Pupils feel valued and respected and, as a result, a good environment is established for all to learn productively. Teachers choose activities to promote good learning, making sure they suit the purpose of the lesson in order to secure high interest and enjoyment. In a Year 7 gymnastics lesson where learning was very good, pupils worked effectively in pairs and groups with the teacher undertaking regular and accurate assessment of their capabilities in order to modify the learning tasks to meet the needs. All lessons include an appropriate warm up and pupils worked positively to develop an understanding of health and fitness as a result of the teacher's good example. Accommodation in physical education is good. The school provides a good level of provision in sport and

talented pupils are achieving well through their involvement in local and regional competitions beyond the statutory curriculum.

105. The leadership of the department is very good. Despite having been in post for just over one year the head of department has been instrumental in establishing a hard working and committed team. There is a clear vision aiming to achieve the best for the pupils and the head of department is well aware of what needs to be improved. Management is satisfactory. Assessment in GCSE is good and assessment information is used well to match work to pupils' needs. However, assessment needs to be more consistent in other provision. Self-evaluation should focus on assessment in Years 7 to 9 and core physical education in Years 10 and 11. Procedures to link assessment criteria to the levels and share criteria with pupils now need further development in order to raise pupils' awareness of their attainment level and to set targets.
106. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards have risen and there are improvements in the curriculum in both physical education and extra-curricular sport. The school is involved with the School Sports Co-ordinator Programme to work with primary schools to raise achievement. The department contributes positively to the personal development of pupils through a clear moral code and by helping pupils to develop a positive attitude towards themselves and others. There is a supportive culture of success, and teachers work sensitively to help the pupils when they have to cope with limitations in their performance.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

107. Leisure and tourism was inspected in full and work was sampled in health and social care and across a range of vocational courses available in conjunction with the local college and taught by college staff.

Health and social care

108. Teaching was good in the two Year 10 lessons seen in the health and social care GCSE course. In one lesson pupils used information and communication technology to give group presentations on different illnesses and the roles of health care professionals. Presentations were of high quality, pupils were engaged and motivated and learning was good. In another lesson pupils prepared questions for interviews to be conducted off site, including care homes and children's nurseries. They were confident in their use of key terms such as 'care values'. The learning process was good, in building pupils' knowledge of function and purpose in different care settings together with practical experience of conducting research.
109. Year 11 pupils were seen working with a British sign language tutor. They demonstrated excellent achievement. The level of challenge was very high throughout the session. In one circle activity pupils recalled previously learned vocabulary using sign language to 'speak' a sentence. Each person repeated the previous speaker's sentence and then added an extra item. Motivation and interest were excellent with no apparent difference between the achievements of higher and lower attainers.

NVQ courses at Bishop Auckland College

110. Year 10 pupils were seen following five different courses at Bishop Auckland College. In NVQ level 1 hairdressing course pupils made good gains in skills in applying colour mousse, having previously gained experience of a wide range of other techniques in a simulated workplace environment. In the sport and leisure course pupils completed work on the organisation and management structure of a leisure centre prior to participating in a practical skills session. In discussion they showed good awareness of health and safety issues relating to sport and leisure. Pupils following an NVQ level 1 catering course also displayed knowledge and awareness of health and safety issues. They had developed skills in a wide range of catering activities and learnt to work as a team. Some pupils are following a motor vehicle maintenance

course leading to a City and Guilds entry level certificate. They had undertaken a wide range of tasks including the removal and inspection of brakes and suspension units from vehicles. One pupil gave a clear explanation of the use of instruments to check vehicle tracking. Three pupils were seen following a wood occupations course leading to NVQ level 1. They were enthusiastic about the course and had related career ambitions. They were able to explain the similarities and differences between different joints by referring to drawings.

Other vocational provision

111. Year 11 pupils were seen undertaking XL club activities, which have a strong emphasis on developing key life skills, including working as a team. In the driving course, pupils were learning about the effects of irresponsible attitudes towards driving vehicles. They were clearly enthusiastic and displayed good social skills towards each other and staff. In the classroom other pupils were working on improving the quality of records in preparation for Asdan accreditation. They clearly valued the course, were proud of their achievements and nine of the 12 pupils in the group were being entered for the gold standard of the award.

Leisure and tourism

The provision in leisure and tourism is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because of good teaching that develops pupils' confidence in their own learning.
- The new course has been well planned so that pupils explore topics in depth including 'real life' aspects through off site visits.
- Pupils are very positive in their attitudes to the subject and are, therefore, well motivated.
- Written assessments do not give sufficient information on how to improve.
- There are insufficient opportunities for school visits by business and community representatives or observation of good practice in other schools.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards		Average
Achievement		Good
Teaching and learning		Good
Leadership		Good
Management		Good
Progress since last inspection		Not inspected at last inspection

Leisure and tourism is only provided in Years 10 and 11.

112. The double award vocational GCSE course was introduced in September 2002. Current Year 11 pupils will be the first group to complete the course. Standards are average and achievement is good. The course has attracted pupils from a wide range of ability including gifted and talented pupils. Girls are in the majority. Test results and provisional coursework grades show good achievement from different starting points across a wide range of GCSE grades. Over half of Year 11 pupils have a provisional coursework grade in the A-B range. There are no significant differences between girls' and boys' achievement.

113. Pupils show a good grasp of terminology and they apply new knowledge well to case studies, for example, to explore issues from a company perspective. They use analytical tools to examine the leisure and tourism industry, comparing and contrasting strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing two organisations within the industry. They use information and communication technology well, for example, to investigate sports centres or to produce

brochures advertising a visitor centre. They interpret graphical information accurately, for example, to examine the different categories of spending on tourism. The development of literacy skills is variable. Note taking and summarising are strengths. Pupils write well for a particular purpose, for example, a letter of complaint to a restaurant. Evaluation skills are a weaker area except for higher attainers. Overall, pupils including some higher attainers do not give sufficient emphasis in their writing to assessing impact when giving an explanation. This misses opportunities to gain higher marks. Lower attainers show weaknesses in examination technique by not providing sufficient detail, for example, in coursework.

114. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils' well organised notes show that topics are taught thoroughly and in depth. Pupils use a wide range of resources, including information and communication technology, to consolidate their learning. Relationships are very strong. Whole-class and group discussions build pupils' confidence very well and they in turn respond with very positive attitudes. They are keen to contribute their own knowledge and ideas. A number of pupils have career objectives linked to the course and this enhances their motivation. On occasions, discussion and resources used do not have sufficient challenge to move pupils' learning on beyond their own previously acquired general knowledge. Oral feedback on assessments is thorough, but there are insufficient written records in files on how to improve. Higher level literacy skills need a greater emphasis in teaching and assessment.

115. Leadership and management are good. A strong ethos for learning has been achieved. Off site visits have been incorporated very well into planning so that learning has a distinctive 'real world' dimension. Further development of this aspect is limited because visits from representatives of relevant outside organisations are not integrated into planning and there are few opportunities to visit other schools and share good practice. The course has been well resourced to ensure a successful start. It is well regarded by pupils and attracts a full range of ability in terms of option choice.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

All pupils attend tutorial lessons in Years 7 to 9 and lifeskills in Years 10 and 11, which cover the National Curriculum requirements for citizenship and aspects of personal, social and health education (PSHE). These lessons were inspected in full.

Citizenship

The provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction of citizenship has been well planned.
- Lessons are interesting and relevant.
- Teachers use a wide range of resources and this captures pupils' interest.
- Lessons do not sufficiently recognise pupils' differing needs and abilities.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Progress since last inspection	Not inspected in last report.	

116. The introduction of citizenship as a curriculum subject has been well planned. Detailed schemes of work show clearly how citizenship themes are covered across the full range of other subjects as well as in tutorials (Years 7 to 9) and lifeskills lessons (Years 10 and 11), and in assemblies and registration time in all years.
117. There is no external accreditation in citizenship, but from lessons seen pupils' work is below the standards expected in Years 9 and 11. This represents satisfactory achievement, given their well below standards on entry to the school. Pupils often respond well and show an understanding of issues in discussion, but their work is held back by weak literacy skills and they have difficulty in recording their knowledge.
118. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are interesting and relevant, and pupils say they enjoy them and find them useful. Teachers use a wide range of resources and methods, including videos, outside speakers, topical newspaper articles, group and class discussion, hands-on activities and written work to capture pupils' interest. One Year 11 lesson, for example, featured a teacher's particularly sensitive questioning technique on the subject of bullying and victimisation. The availability of a wide variety of materials, allows teachers to select materials to appeal to their particular pupils. Topics include, for example, peer pressure, democracy, human rights and government, and are chosen to stimulate and motivate pupils. Boys and girls show equal involvement in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Learning support assistants are very rarely used in tutorial or lifeskills lessons, but the emphasis on peer support and group involvement means that the pupils, nevertheless, are not held back. Pupils have opportunities to take responsible action, for example, through the school council, and community and charity events. Such opportunities are not all open to all pupils, however, and need to be developed further.
119. The use of assessment is underdeveloped, particularly as a means of tailoring teaching to the specific needs and abilities of pupils. This often results in a 'one size fits all' approach to lesson planning, which fails to take into account the different starting points of pupils or their own speed of learning. As a result, too little demand is sometimes made of higher attaining pupils and others are held back by their weak literacy skills. Many are not able to sustain discussions, for example, and give short often single-word answers to questions. They misspell key words and often need to have basic words explained to them, which slows the pace of learning. They do, however, co-operate very well with each other and their teachers. Lessons are characterised by good relationships and a purposeful atmosphere.
120. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for the development of the subject, good schemes of work and good resources to support improvements in teaching and learning. The subject leader monitors the work of teachers during tutorial time and other subject leaders monitor aspects of citizenship, where it occurs in other curriculum subjects. The subject leader has a sound grasp of the subject's potential as well as its strengths and weaknesses. As this new subject is established it is well placed to improve teaching, learning and standards.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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