

INSPECTION REPORT

PHILIPS HIGH SCHOOL

Whitefield, Manchester

LEA area: Bury

Unique reference number: 105360

Headteacher: Mr Chris Trees

Lead inspector: Michael Merchant

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th January 2004

Inspection number: 258729

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

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Terms used in this report

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

*At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**).*

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' **achievements** reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those in which pupils attained similar results in tests taken at the end of Year 6.*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 – 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 856

School address: Higher Lane
Whitefield
Manchester
Postcode: M45 7PH

Telephone number: 0161 7662720
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr A Walton

Date of previous inspection: 26th January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Philips High School is a smaller than average sized comprehensive school educating 856 boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years. There are similar numbers of boys and girls at the school and the school roll has grown steadily over the last five years. The school is situated in Whitefield, a suburb in the north of the greater Manchester conurbation. The school is over-subscribed and many pupils travel long distances to it. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school has been consistent from year to year and is above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and average in most other subjects. The pupils who joined the school in Year 7 in 2003, however, had attained average standards overall. There are pockets of significant social and economic deprivation in this urban area and many pupils come from comparatively disadvantaged backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The majority of pupils are of white-British origin and there are significant numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. The number of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, is average. Special educational needs include dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, multisensory impairment, physical disabilities and autistic spectrum disorders. The number of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual times of the year is average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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32077	Alan Edwards	Team inspector	Mathematics
32384	Eddie De Middlear	Team inspector	Science
19096	Sylvia McClean	Team inspector	Design and technology
15163	Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
22046	Jo Joliffe	Registered inspector	French English as an additional language
28101	Andrew Lagden	Team inspector	History
33002	John Woodhouse	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship
30518	Mike Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design
30675	Helen Rudeforth	Team inspector	Music
32225	Christine Hough	Team inspector	Physical education
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The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Philips High School has many good features and provides a **satisfactory quality of education** for its pupils. It is an inclusive school; pupils are happy and have good attitudes to learning. Standards overall are above average and most pupils achieve satisfactorily. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory with much that is good. The headteacher and senior staff provide sound leadership. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' achievement is very good in modern languages because of very good teaching.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, overall.
- There are good opportunities for curriculum enrichment.
- The school's leadership team is small, which means that rigorous and consistent monitoring is difficult to achieve.
- Attendance rates are unsatisfactory.
- The school provides a good quality of care for pupils, particularly those with medical needs.
- The school is good at listening to pupils' views and involving them in the work of the school.
- The school has very good links with parents, the local community and other schools and colleges.

Since the last inspection in 1998, the school has made satisfactory improvement. Standards have been maintained at above average: teaching and learning remain sound and there is more that is good or very good. The key issues from the previous inspection have been partly met: approaches to monitoring teaching and learning are better, though still not consistent enough, the school now makes better use of performance data to help pupils move on, and sufficient time is allocated to religious education and ICT.¹

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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.

Standards in work seen are above average and this represents satisfactory achievement.

Boys and girls achieve equally. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Pupils' English and mathematical skills are above average, but their ICT skills are average. By the end of Year 9, standards seen overall are above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils' achievement is very good in modern languages, the outcome of very good teaching and learning and very effective leadership. Good teaching in history, GNVQ ICT and physical education is leading to good achievement in these subjects. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall. In no subject is achievement unsatisfactory.

Attendance rates have declined recently and are below average. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, overall, despite the high number of exclusions. **Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory, overall.**

¹ Information and communication technology

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and the use of assessment is satisfactory and improving. In Years 10 and 11 there is a high proportion of good teaching and none that is unsatisfactory. The most effective teaching and learning are seen in modern foreign languages, where they are very good; in history, GNVQ ICT and physical education teaching and learning are consistently good. However, teaching in science is less consistent. Planning is mostly sensitive to pupils' individual needs and teaching is carefully matched to pupils' capabilities. Teachers generally use a wide variety of interesting and relevant activities in their lessons. However, in some lessons, teachers do not expect enough of pupils with the result that they acquire new skills and knowledge at a slow pace. Learning is sometimes held back because accommodation is limited and resources inadequate. Attendance throughout the school is below average, often interrupting the continuity of pupils' learning and holding back achievement.

Standards in Years 10 and 11 have been enhanced by the introduction of a range of vocational courses and the curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stages in their education or employment. The good range of enrichment activities has a positive impact on pupil attitudes and relationships. There is very good support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governance, leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Although governors support the headteacher and staff well, they do not play a sufficiently influential role in creating a strong strategic direction for the school. Statutory requirements are fully met. The headteacher is totally committed to the school. The deputy headteacher, who works tirelessly, supports the headteacher very well, but the size of the leadership team is too small to ensure consistent improvement across all aspects of the work of the school. Approaches to the monitoring of teaching and learning are not always rigorous enough.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Both parents and pupils display a good level of satisfaction with the school. On the basis of the very small number attending the parents' meeting and the limited response to the parents' questionnaire, parents feel the school is accessible, that they are welcomed and that members of staff are approachable. A minority of parents responding to the questionnaire had concerns with homework arrangements. The inspection team's judgement supports this view and homework is inconsistently used across the subjects. The overwhelming majority of pupils are happy at the school and feel that they are making good progress.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Increase the size, and thus improve the effectiveness, of the senior leadership team.
- Improve attendance rates.
- Ensure that approaches to the monitoring of teaching and learning and whole-school planning are rigorous and consistent.
- Improve teaching and learning where they are weaker, giving particular attention to science.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards in work seen are above average and this represents satisfactory achievement because most pupils enter the school with above average standards of prior attainment. Boys and girls achieve equally. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Pupils' English and mathematical skills are above average, but their ICT skills are average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is very good in modern languages; achievement is good in citizenship, history and physical education.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Results in the national tests in Year 9 and in GCSE examinations over the last four years have been above average overall compared with all schools nationally.
- Work seen during the inspection shows an improvement on last year's test and examination results.
- The underperformance of science has now begun to be turned around.

Commentary

1. Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average overall compared with all schools nationally, a decline over 2002 when they were well above average. However, over the last five years the school's results in tests taken at the end of Year 9 have improved at a faster rate than that seen nationally. Results were above average in all three of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Boys did less well than did girls, but there was not as much difference between the results of boys and girls as was seen nationally.
2. When these results are compared with schools whose entry had similar results in Year 6 the school did less well. Overall results were below average compared with similar schools: they were average in English, below average in mathematics and well below average in science. The pupils' achievement therefore was unsatisfactory overall. Nearly all of this underachievement was the result of pupils' poor achievement in science. This subject had suffered from inconsistent leadership and management and very high staff absence for some time. The problem has been recognised by both the headteacher and the local education authority and a recovery plan put in place which is beginning to improve pupils' achievement.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.1 (36.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	37.5 (37.2)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.1 (34)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 168 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. GCSE results in 2003 were average overall but over the past four years, results have been above average. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was also average but those gaining five or more grades A* to G was above average. The proportion of pupils gaining one or more grades A* to G was, however, below average. When the schools' results are looked at in comparison to similar schools, they are well below average.
4. Although the comparison with similar schools shows poor achievement, the school also has data which enable the progress in cognitive attainment to be tracked from entry to the GCSE

examinations in Year 11. These data indicate that achievement was unsatisfactory rather than poor. As in Years 7 to 9, nearly all of this underachievement is accounted for by science (which counts as two subjects at GCSE) where very high teacher absence interrupted pupils' learning.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	51 (56)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (91)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	34.5 (35.6)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 163 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Work seen during the inspection shows an improvement on these test and examination results and the severe underperformance of science has begun to be turned around. Overall, throughout the school, pupils of all levels of attainment are achieving satisfactorily and there are no significant differences between girls, boys or ethnic minority pupils. This is because teachers are sensitive to the needs of all pupils. Pupils with special needs are achieving well in Years 7 to 9 because they are well supported and are fully included in lessons. The reasons for the improvement in achievement are:
 - The recovery plan in science is beginning to impact on standards, especially in Years 10 and 11. A new subject leader has introduced changes to the science curriculum and problems of long-term absence are being addressed. However, there is still more to do, especially in Years 7 to 9.
 - Recently appointed staff have re-invigorated approaches to teaching and learning, especially in mathematics.
 - The school has introduced a new approach to assessment, which sets clear targets for pupils, tracks their progress and so helps to redress underachievement. The school recognises the urgency to extend this entirely appropriate approach to assessment across the school and to ensure its consistent implementation.

6. By the end of Year 9, standards seen overall are above average. They are above average in English, mathematics, science, history music and modern foreign languages. Pupils reach average standards in ICT, art and design, design and technology, geography, physical education, religious education and citizenship.

7. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory overall. Pupils' achievement is very good in modern languages, the outcome of very good teaching and learning and very effective leadership, which is driving up standards rapidly. Consistently good teaching in history and physical education is leading to good achievement in these two subjects. In all other subjects the achievement of pupils is satisfactory. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average overall. Above average standards are reached in all three of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and in history, GNVQ ICT, modern foreign languages and physical education. In all other subjects, standards are average.

8. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall. In no subject is achievement unsatisfactory. Good teaching and learning lead to good achievement in history, modern foreign languages, GNVQ ICT and physical education. In English and science, learning is held back by insufficient learning resources and by inappropriate accommodation. An attendance rate that is below the national average is interrupting the learning of a minority of pupils and therefore holding back their achievement. Pupils with English as an additional language are achieving similarly to other pupils.

9. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well as a result of the extra support provided in literacy and numeracy withdrawal groups. Well structured and well organised learning support by the specialist teachers and support assistants is largely focussed on the early years in Philips. This ensures that pupils are successfully integrated and make good progress. The very good relationships between staff and pupils create a good atmosphere for teaching and learning. Careful programmes of study devised by the specialist teachers ensure that pupils improve their skills and abilities. The provision for pupils with physical disabilities ensures that they make good progress academically and also physically.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance rates have declined and are unsatisfactory. Pupils’ attitudes and behaviour are good, overall, despite the high number of exclusions. Pupils’ personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory, overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils’ attendance is below the national average and this is affecting the achievement of some pupils.
- The ‘zero tolerance’ approach used by school has resulted in a high number of exclusions, which does not accurately reflect the good attitudes and behaviour of most pupils.
- Extra-curricular activities and the life skills programme are very popular with pupils and support their social and moral development.

Commentary

10. Attendance is below the national average because some pupils have significant attendance problems which the school has not adequately addressed. Absence means large sections of learning are missed and this is adversely affecting what pupils achieve. The educational welfare officer is based in school three days per week and gives good support to the pupils and parents referred to her. However, there is no school system to monitor or analyse the attendance of all pupils, or the reasons for absence, therefore she relies on form tutors to raise concerns. There is an action plan to improve the support given to school by the educational welfare service.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.2	School data	0.8
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

11. Exclusions have risen from 33 at the last inspection to 169 in the last academic year due to the zero tolerance approach used by the school. Six permanent exclusions were for extreme violence or racism and these pupils joined the school after Year 7. Three quarters of all exclusions were given to pupils in Year 7 to 9, which shows that pupils do become more mature and co-operative as they become older. Approximately ten per cent of exclusions were for intimidation of other pupils but the vast majority were for non-cooperation, disruption of lessons and breaking school rules. For example, the school does not tolerate throwing, so if a pupil threw a rubber across the classroom they would receive the minimum three-day exclusion.

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	715	159	6
White – any other White background	13	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	16	1	0
White – White and Black African	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	8	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	13	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	24	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other background	4	0	0
Black or Black British Caribbean	6	0	0
Black or Black British - African	3	0	0
Chinese	7	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	33	1	0

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

12. The overwhelming majority of pupils like their school. Behaviour is good in most lessons, particularly when the level of challenge is appropriate and the work is interesting. They work well with others when required to do so. Relationships with staff are generally good and pupils feel confident they have someone to turn to with any concerns. A number of pupils, through the questionnaire, say bullying and behaviour of others are of concern. When interviewed, however, pupils of all ages said that any issues that do arise are dealt with immediately.
13. Pupils attend assemblies and each class contributes to these over the year. They are used to promote self-belief and achievement but do not provide sufficient spiritual content such as music, praise singing or time for reflection.
14. The very good relationships between staff and with pupils with special educational needs create a good atmosphere for teaching and learning. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour within the learning support department are positive. Pupils are courteous and respectful. In withdrawal groups they are eager to learn and appreciative of the help being given. Pupils' relationships with staff within the learning support department are very good.
15. The promotion of pupils' personal development permeates all the school's activities and this is well developed during their school life. Members of staff are good role models and their reinforcement of moral standards is reflected in pupils' good understanding and respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others, for example, the open and sensitive discussion of pupils' personal situations in relation to lesson topics. The school's ethos is inclusive and caring. The school celebrates the different ethnic and cultural backgrounds of pupils in the school, so that pupils appreciate the positive benefits from this diversity with a total lack of tension. There is good promotion of pupils' cultural development. This is particularly so in the expressive arts, for example, the exploration of aboriginal art and blues music. However, spiritual development is not always well planned for across all subjects.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as is the school's use of assessment. The curriculum overall is good, as is provision for extra-curricular activities, and enrichment is good. The school cares for and guides its pupils well.

Teaching and learning

Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 10 and 11 there is a high proportion of good and no unsatisfactory teaching and learning.
- The most effective teaching and learning is seen in modern foreign languages; in history and physical education, teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Though achievement is satisfactory in science, there is some unsatisfactory teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9.
- In some lessons, teachers do not expect enough of pupils with the result that they acquire new skills and knowledge at a slow pace.
- Learning is sometimes held back because accommodation is limited and resources inadequate.
- Planning is mostly sensitive to pupils' individual needs and teaching is carefully matched to pupils' capabilities.

Commentary

16. Within the overall picture of satisfactory teaching and learning, the picture is better in Years 10 and 11, where there is a high proportion of good, and no unsatisfactory, teaching and learning. The quality of teaching and learning remains sound, as at the time of the last inspection, but the proportion of good and very good teaching has increased. This has been achieved despite the school's income being so low (in the lowest 25 per cent of schools in the country) so that not enough time has been able to be given to subject leaders to check on the quality of teaching and learning in their departments. In addition, because the senior leadership team is so small (just the headteacher and deputy headteacher), they have had to concentrate their monitoring of teaching and learning on subjects that have caused concern, such as science. The identification of best practice and sharing this with colleagues have thus not been as good as they could have been.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 109 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	13 (12%)	44 (40%)	47 (43.1%)	4 (3.6%)	1 (0.9%)	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.

17. The most effective teaching and learning is seen in modern foreign languages, which has improved impressively since the last inspection because of the drive and inspiration of the subject leader; here teaching and learning are very good overall. As a result standards are high and pupils' achievement very good. In history and physical education teaching is consistently good and pupils learn well so their achievement is good. In science, achievement is now satisfactory (a big improvement since last year) because the changes brought in by the new subject leader, such as a stronger focus on advising colleagues on approaches to teaching and learning and a better use of assessment to help pupils make progress, are starting to have

a positive effect. The school is working tirelessly to redress problems caused by long term staff absence in science. In all other subjects teaching and learning are satisfactory.

18. In the most effective lessons (especially in modern foreign languages, history, GNVQ ICT and physical education) pupils learn well because planning is sensitive to their individual needs and teaching is carefully matched to pupils' capabilities. This careful and thoughtful planning leads to challenging, enthusiastic and focused teaching and to good learning. Teachers ensure that pupils learn at a good pace through having high expectations of what they should be able to achieve, actively engaging their interest and ensuring that prior learning is taken into account. Therefore, in these lessons, many pupils make better than expected progress and pupils of all levels of attainment, those with special educational needs, girls, boys or ethnic minority pupils achieve at a good rate.
19. Learning is accelerated where teachers use a wide variety of interesting and relevant activities in their lessons. In mathematics, lively starter activities are very well used to focus the pupils' minds for the main teaching of the lesson. In history, teachers use contemporary documents that capture pupils' attention and so ensure that concentration is kept at a high level throughout lessons.
20. In the least effective lessons, including some in science, lesson objectives are not precise enough and are not made explicit to pupils. Here, teachers do not expect enough of pupils with the result that they acquire new skills and knowledge at a slow pace. Where teachers' explanations are too long or where tasks are less challenging, pupils become restless and inattentive. Often, the questioning of pupils in lessons, to find out more about what they are learning, is not used enough by teachers. Learning is further held back because the use of ICT in lessons is limited due to lack of hardware, although there are plans in hand to improve this.
21. Learning is sometimes held back because accommodation is limited; classes are large and there are not enough desks. Teaching methods, especially the use of group work and role-play, are therefore severely limited. A lack of resources means that some pupils share books and are not able to use them for homework and this holds back their learning. Attendance throughout the school is below average. This severely interrupts the continuity of learning and holds back achievement.
22. Teaching mostly takes account of the particular needs of pupils with English as an additional language. Whilst most pupils speak English fluently, some pupils have a satisfactory range of 'colloquial' English language but need to be provided with subject specific vocabulary and support that will enable them to reach higher levels of attainment. The school does not specifically monitor the attainment of pupils with English as an additional language.
23. The quality of assessment in the school is satisfactory and improving. Most teachers assess what the pupils know, can do, and understand in their different subjects fairly frequently and carefully (though most do this much more effectively at the end of a unit of work than during it). Increasingly, the teachers' use of assessment data is being used to help them recognise and try to meet individual needs. Assessment results are now, under the guidance and direction of a senior member of staff, being shared with the pupils so that they are clear how well they are doing and how to do better. This new approach to using assessment, however, is still in its early days and there is still a degree of inconsistency in its application. The quality of assessment systems and use of data are very good in modern foreign languages and in the case of pupils with special educational needs; on the other hand, the teachers of some subjects such as design and technology do not show sufficient familiarity with the meaning of the National Curriculum levels.
24. Subjects in which teaching and learning are good or better make good use of assessment to help pupils learn. Teachers carefully track the pupils' progress and quickly deal with any underachievement by providing extra help and support. In the best lessons, pupils are clear about their progress and know just what they have to do to improve. However, there is

inconsistency across some subjects in the presentation of work and its day to day marking. Often, teachers' marking does not give clear enough advice to pupils about how they could improve, and is not used consistently enough to set clear targets for improvement. The result is that some pupils are not all aware of their standards and are therefore not sure how to improve.

25. Systems for testing pupils' literacy and numeracy make use of the LEA² scheme. This does not provide definitive reading ages and therefore denies teachers simple evidence of how much progress has been made. The test also requires pupils to attain low results in all three aspects of the test for both literacy and numeracy in order to qualify for extra support from the LEA. This in turn denies assistance for pupils with disparate difficulties in either literacy or numeracy.

The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum. There are good opportunities for curriculum enrichment. The school's accommodation is satisfactory but the adequacy of its resources is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 10 and 11 have been enhanced by the introduction of a range of vocational courses in partnership with the local further education college.
- A lack of resources in English and science is holding back learning.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stages in their education or employment.
- The good range of enrichment activities has a positive impact on pupil attitudes and relationships.

Commentary

26. Overall, the school provides good curriculum opportunities for pupils. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the pupils at Philips. All subjects of the National Curriculum are included. There is good provision for ICT and all pupils follow two modern foreign languages. The curriculum for citizenship has been planned most effectively. Curriculum links with primary schools are not sufficiently developed to enable teachers to plan for continuity in learning in the core subjects.
27. In Years 10 and 11, pupils take a broad range of courses that contribute to the subjects of the core National Curriculum. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have been enhanced by the introduction of a range of vocational courses. In partnership with a local further education college, vocational GCSE courses are offered in health and social care, leisure and tourism, engineering and applied business. In addition, a vocational links project enables pupils to obtain a range of vocational qualifications in hairdressing, business, engineering and catering. Currently, over 60 pupils are following such courses. These courses have made a big contribution to pupils' more mature attitudes to learning, better relationships between pupils and teachers and thus better standards of learning. At the same time, there is a satisfactory range of courses for pupils who prefer the more conventional school examination routes.
28. The curriculum offered prepares pupils well for the next stage of their lives. In addition to the vocational and work related options now offered by the school, the life skills course in all years and the key and work related skills course in Year 10 encourage the development of pupils' problem-solving and enterprise skills as well as giving them an insight into the world of work. The work experience programme enables all pupils to find their own placements in a wide range of commercial and community organisations. Pupils are also involved in fund-raising activities for local and national charities.
29. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall and good in Years 7 to 9. Classroom support assistants are deployed more commonly in classes in

² Local Education Authority

Years 7 to 9. Here they have a big impact on pupils' learning and help ensure that pupils achieve well.

30. Personal, social and emotional development is taught in all years, in subjects and as a separate course. Teaching is good and teachers are enthusiastic and committed. Pupils enjoy lessons and all aspects of health and relationships are adequately covered. Careers education and guidance enables pupils to make appropriate decisions in Year 9 for courses to study in Years 10 and 11 and at the end of Year 11. Links with local colleges and Connexions are purposeful. All pupils undertake work experience and there is adequate preparation for the world of work.
31. The wide range of clubs and activities (to which many teachers give freely of their time) helps pupils to grow in maturity and responsibility. They take full advantage of the very good number of extra-curricular activities available with nearly a half of all pupils in the school attending clubs such as sports, music and drama. The planned programme of visitors who support the life skills programme provides pupils with the opportunity to learn about the world of work and the wider community, sex and drugs education and healthy living and pupils find these lessons interesting. This good range of enrichment activities has a positive impact on pupil attitudes and relationships. In sport, many extra-curricular activities encourage a high level of pupil participation. Pupils enthusiastically support the opportunities provided for team sports and individual activities. There are strong sporting links with the local community and national bodies that have created additional funding and given pupils access to professional coaches. Pupils participate well in arts activities by taking part in theatre visits and producing a school magazine. Additionally, there is a range of musical groups, including an instrumental group and choir, together with activities that support pupils' learning outside the school day such as revision classes, a homework club and opportunities for extension work provided through subject departments.
32. Overall the match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory. In design and technology, technical support is not equally available across each aspect, which exerts pressure on the teaching staff. Staffing for the school library is unsatisfactory as there is no librarian. Although a teacher has designated responsibility there is insufficient time for cataloguing or supervision and the library is not open as often as it could be. In physical education, the number of staff does not match the increased number of pupils in Years 7 and 8, with class sizes often in excess of 30 pupils. Consequently these year groups do not have equality of access to the physical education curriculum. New staff are supported satisfactorily through the school's induction programme.
33. Accommodation is safe and generally adequate for its purpose although shortage of space is still an issue in some subject areas. In English, science, religious education and ICT cramped accommodation and limited resources are a barrier to learning. Improvements have been made since the last inspection most notably in the areas of art and design, design technology, and in the provision for a learning resource area and disability access around the school site. Accessibility has improved substantially since the previous inspection when the only facility was a single toilet for the disabled. There is now full access to most rooms with some modifications to specialist areas. Some modification is needed in science laboratories and access to music rooms. The facilities in physical education provide additional equipment to assist pupils, improving their physiotherapy needs as well as giving alternatives to pupils who cannot participate in aspects of sport.
34. The number of modern computers in the school is close to the national average. However, there are constraints in access to the use of computers by many subjects, which prevents pupils from taking full advantage of modern technologies to support learning. Accommodation for special educational needs is good and well organised, having a positive impact on learning. Facilities in some science laboratories are not satisfactory for pupils in wheelchairs and at present wheelchair access to the music rooms is not possible. The school allocates its scarce resources carefully and in most subjects, learning resources are just about adequate.

However, in English and science, the shortage of textbooks and other reference materials is holding back learning. The school does not receive a specific grant to support the additional needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a good quality of care for pupils, particularly those with medical needs. Satisfactory support and guidance is provided for pupils based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development. The school is good at listening to pupils' views and involving them in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs.
- Very good procedures for the care and safety of pupils with medical or physical needs are in place.
- Very good consultation with pupils by the modern foreign language department helps them achieve well.
- The inconsistent management of the pastoral system does not always meet the needs of all pupils.
- Good involvement by pupils in the school's work supports pupils' responsibility in the school community.

Commentary

35. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported. All pupils with a statement of special educational needs are supported in accordance with their statement. The school also works closely with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. For instance, there is a mentoring and counselling service available to all pupils. Effective liaison with outside agencies ensures that pupils receive appropriate help and guidance promptly. A classroom assistant has been trained to meet the care needs of pupils who have particular medical and physical needs.
36. The modern foreign language department consults with pupils twice a year through questionnaires and discussion, which helps staff and pupils to understand the way pupils learn best, what they find difficult and how they can achieve their full potential. This has paid dividends as teaching and standards in the department are strengths of the school.
37. The pastoral system is currently under review as the school has recognised it is not effectively meeting the needs of all pupils. The senior pastoral teacher left the school at the end of last year and the post no longer exists. At present no-one has the overall responsibility for ensuring procedures are in place to monitor and analyse all pupils' personal development, such as attendance, behaviour and exclusions or what needs to be in place to bring about the best improvement. Each year group has a pastoral head who works with the form tutors to provide support and guidance for pupils' needs but they also have a full teaching commitment and responsibility for other areas of the school's work, which means not enough time is available to be proactive in bringing about improvement as most of their work is reactive and responding to incidents. The school has planned to be part of the Key Stage 3 behaviour management pilot initiative.
38. The school council meets regularly to discuss issues that concern pupils, such as uniform, sponsored activities and movement around school. The school is developing this area further and moving to year group council meetings to allow fuller discussions on issues affecting different year groups, such as Year 11 prefects' privileges or a designated graffiti wall. There are 84 Year 11 pupils who are currently serving the school as prefects. They make a good contribution to the orderly running of the school. They supervise the school corridors during

break and lunch times, support teachers with school clubs and act as mentors to Year 7 pupils.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with parents, the local community and other schools and colleges. This aspect is a strength in the school's overall provision.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents receive good quality information about the school and its work; however reports on pupil progress are not as clear as they should be.
- The school appreciates the good support most parents give to its work but not all parents ensure pupils attend regularly.
- Very good links with the community enhance pupils' physical education curriculum and contribute to the good links with the feeder primary schools.

Commentary

39. Parents receive a good range of information that keeps them up to date with what is happening in school at different stages of their child's education. The induction pack is particularly helpful for new parents and pupils and was produced after consultation with Year 7 pupils. It includes a parent booklet which outlines everything a parent needs to know about policies and procedures and the role they have in partnership with school; a pupil booklet with a map of school, a list of all staff and their area of responsibility; guidelines on homework and self organisation; helpful leaflets about learning in different subject areas, such as literacy and physical education; a questionnaire to consult pupils on how they learn best; and a personal profile so staff know their strengths and weaknesses before they start secondary school. Parents are happy with what the school provides and how their children are doing.
40. Parents receive an interim report in November which lets them know any concerns the school has about pupils' effort or achievement. The end-of-year reports meet statutory requirements with comments on all areas of the curriculum, which is an improvement since the last inspection. However reports do not focus sufficiently on what pupils know, understand and can do and what they need to do next to raise their achievement. If an area for development is given it is generally to do with attitude rather than subject specific knowledge, understanding or skill that requires improvement. Reports do not always include National Curriculum levels of attainment in each subject so parents can monitor progress each year and know their child's weakest and strongest subjects. Partnerships with parents of children with special educational needs are very good. Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress.
41. The "Friends of Philips" (the parent teacher association) raise substantial amounts of money each year and make a very good contribution to the work of the school by providing extra resources for teaching and learning, such as computer equipment and library books. Most parents support pupils with homework and have contact with staff through the homework diary when necessary. Not all parents support the school by ensuring pupils attend regularly.
42. The school's very good links with the community enhances pupils' standards in physical education. Community use of the sports facilities at school is very good. This has enabled the school to provide a more varied programme for pupils' physical education curriculum through the improved facilities and access to specialists, such as the trampoline coach for Year 11 GCSE pupils. The development of cricket within school includes the feeder primaries using the same professional coach and a tournament held for them at Philips, which contributes to the good relationships the school has with Year 6 pupils when they join Year 7.
43. The involvement of parents in the monitoring of the progress of pupils with special educational needs is exceptional. Parents are fully involved in the regular reviews of individual educational

plans whether the pupil has a statement of special needs or not. They participate fully in decisions made for future target setting together with pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governance of the school is satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher and that of other key staff is satisfactory. The school is satisfactorily managed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors support the headteacher and staff well.
- Governors do not play a sufficiently influential role in creating a strong strategic direction for the school.
- The headteacher is totally committed to the school and retains the loyalty and support of staff, parents and pupils. He is very well supported by the deputy headteacher.
- The school development plan is a limited instrument for raising standards. Medium and long term plans are insufficiently thought through.
- Although the headteacher and his deputy work tirelessly, the small size of the leadership team means that it is difficult to ensure consistently rigorous approaches to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Value for money is good.

Commentary

44. Governors support the headteacher and staff well, especially during the difficult times in dealing with problems in science. They are loyal and positive about the school and are increasingly beginning to hold it to account for its weaknesses as “critical friends”. Governors have a satisfactory working knowledge of the school’s strengths and weaknesses through developing links with subject departments. They do not, however, as yet, play an influential part in working with the headteacher and senior managers to create a strong strategic direction for the school. Governors clearly understand the challenges facing the school and are constantly striving for improvement. In the past year governors have begun to develop effective, frequent formal and informal contacts with staff at all levels.
45. A well-structured programme of departmental reviews and presentations, initiated this year, now ensures that governors understand clearly the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of the school. Hence, they are now well aware of how well pupils are doing compared to those in similar schools, and of the progress they are making.
46. The headteacher has completely won the loyalty and support of staff, parents and pupils because of his total commitment to the school. He is highly visible around the school takes a great personal interest in individual pupils and in the welfare of his staff. He has not shied away from difficult decisions and has worked sensitively to resolve some intractable staffing and management problems in science. The headteacher articulates a clear vision and overall direction for the school which is shared by governors and staff. This is not fully reflected, however, in the school development plan. As a tool to help raise standards, it is limited because its aims are not sufficiently well prioritised, and the means for judging whether they have been met lack clarity. The medium and long term plans for the school are sketchy.
47. The headteacher is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, who works tirelessly to ensure that the school runs smoothly. The small size of the leadership team (just the headteacher and one deputy headteacher), however, means that they are over-committed and there remains more to do, especially in ensuring a more consistently rigorous system for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning.
48. The overall quality of leadership and management of heads of subject is satisfactory. Leadership and management are very good in modern foreign languages; good in history and

physical education. They are satisfactory in all other departments. Standards are improving fastest in departments where the head of subject provides a clear direction for the subject, motivates colleagues, monitors teaching and spreads good practice. However, not all heads of subject consistently monitor pupils' academic standards and the quality of teaching and learning effectively. The driving up of standards, then, through the sharing of good practice, is uneven.

49. Leadership and management of the special educational needs department are good. The co-ordinator provides a very good role model for all who work within the department. However, her very heavy work load involves liaison with a wide variety of staff and there is insufficient time to liaise with subject teachers on how to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. The deployment of support staff ensures that pupils with statements are very well supported, enabling them to participate fully in lessons across the curriculum.
50. The school has worked hard to ensure that it is a fully inclusive, harmonious environment for learning. Pupils from minority ethnic background achieve equally as well as other pupils because teachers are sensitive to individual needs and readily exploit, to the benefit of all, the rich cultural diversity of the school. The school's commitment to the inclusion of pupils with physical disabilities and medical difficulties is very high.
51. Financial planning is satisfactory. Enhanced budgets, additional funds and grants are managed very well, particularly to ensure that the school's limited budget stays in balance. Because the school's development plan is not well costed, the link between curriculum and financial planning is not well developed. As a result it is difficult for the school to relate its spending decisions to their impact on pupil achievement. Value for money, however, is good because in spite of the very low income and expenditure of this small school, it is producing satisfactory achievement in its pupils. The school applies the principles of best value well. It consistently applies the principles of comparison, challenge, competition and consulting (especially staff) over major changes in the allocation of resources. The specific grants the school attracts are spent appropriately.
52. Routine administration of the school's budget is good. It is efficient and ensures that the school runs smoothly. The school makes effective use of new technology to monitor spending against the budget and to provide accurate up-to-date information. There are well-defined procedures to ensure best value purchasing.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,639,045
Total expenditure	2,634,915
Expenditure per pupil	3,129

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	32,707
Balance carried forward to the next	36,837

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been a gradual improvement in standards because of the strong leadership and vision of the learning area manager.
- Results in English literature at GCSE are well above average because of good and very good teaching.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and makes planning effective.
- Pupils do not have enough access to ICT and there are not enough books to support learning.
- Assessment is inconsistent and some pupils are not sure how to improve.

Commentary

53. Results in Year 9 national tests were above average in comparison with all schools and average for similar schools. They were better than in mathematics and science. There was no significant difference in the results of boys and girls and achievement overall was satisfactory.
54. The GCSE results in English were above average when compared with all schools nationally and average compared with similar schools. Pupils' achievement was satisfactory. GCSE results in English literature were well above average. The trend over the last three years is one of gradual improvement.
55. Standards at entry are above average. Standards seen during the inspection reflect those in national tests for Year 9 in Year 11. They are above average because teachers systematically plan for the individual needs of pupils. Pupils in all years achieve satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress because of support and work that is matched closely to their needs. There is sufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils. Pupils speak confidently and enthusiastically to each other and relish the opportunity to talk to the class. Listening skills are well developed and pupils generally pay careful attention to the speaker. All pupils can read texts accurately, and most explore deeper levels of meaning. Writing standards are lower than those in reading, as they were when pupils entered the school, and some pupils have weaknesses in accuracy and organisation. By Year 11, pupils can analyse text and higher attaining pupils make sophisticated inferences, particularly in literature.
56. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but there is much that is good. Teaching is balanced, well thought-out and closely adapted to pupils' needs. This leads to effective learning and calm, positive relationships. This confirmed comments expressed by most pupils about their enjoyment of English. The best teaching is characterised by enthusiasm, variety and pupil involvement. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, the pupils were enthused and challenged by work on Romeo and Juliet to write and speak evocatively. They used present day comparisons and consequently were able to place the play in an historical context and analyse it in a mature and reflective way. Challenging, enthusiastic and focused teaching leads to good learning. Lesson planning and teaching is sensitive to the individual needs of pupils. This is leading to better learning and is confirmed by analysis of pupils' work – most is well presented and matched to their capability.

57. The work of the majority of pupils is marked in good detail, with a balance between the big picture and points of detail. However, some inconsistent marking of draft work does not prepare pupils enough for re-drafting. Pupils are not all aware of their standards and are therefore not sure how to improve. Attendance is below average and consequently a minority of pupils' work is incomplete. Homework is set consistently and extends learning. In many lessons teachers make effective use of ICT, but this is not available to all because access is limited. A lack of resources means that some pupils share books and are not able to use them for homework and this holds back their learning. Accommodation is limited and in large classes there are not enough desks and group work is therefore limited. Teachers make good use of display to show pupils' work and provide an attractive learning area.
58. Steps to improve standards have been helped this year by more systematic planning and targeting of individual pupils. The learning area manager is a strong leader and has a clear vision for developing the subject. Management is satisfactory because a lot of her ideas are at an early stage and have had insufficient time to have an impact on pupils' standards. Using performance data, however, to track progress is starting to have a big effect. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and improvement has been satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Literacy skills across the curriculum are above average. Writing standards are lower than those in reading, speaking and listening when pupils enter the school and teaching concentrates on this. Consequently pupils make greater improvements in writing. The literacy policy, however, has not yet made a consistent impact on pushing up literacy standards in all subjects. There are examples of good practice in English, special educational needs, history and modern foreign languages. There is a good emphasis in history lessons on developing writing and pupils are encouraged to speak fluently and confidently in modern foreign languages. In a minority of subjects the pupils' basic skills are not developed, for example science, and learning opportunities are missed.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching is very good because of the teachers' expertise and enthusiasm for the subject and their very good use of the target language.
- The leadership and management of the department are very clear and innovative and this is moving the department forwards.
- The quality of assessment, including the pupils' self-assessment, is very good and supports their progress.
- The best practice, of clearly setting out the objectives at the start of a lesson and reviewing what has been learned at the end of the lesson, is inconsistently adopted.

Commentary

60. GCSE results in German were above average, and in French they were well above average. Girls' results in the tests were better than boys' although boys in the school are attaining higher than other boys nationally.
61. Very good teaching and learning ensure that standards are above average for boys and girls in both French and German by the end of Years 9 and 11. Year 9 pupils have a good range of vocabulary. They understand written and spoken instructions and questions and can respond correctly. They can use the present and past tenses when writing and talking about

themselves, their families, and school and leisure time. The higher attaining pupils can write lengthier pieces of work.

62. Pupils in Year 11 are usually confident with the language they have acquired and are keen to express themselves in a range of situations. They produce extended pieces of writing and the highest attainers' writing is very impressive in its accuracy and expression. Some of the gifted and talented pupils have mastered some quite difficult grammar and have succeeded in incorporating it into their written work. Pupils of all levels of attainment are achieving very well and there are no significant differences between girls, boys or ethnic minority pupils. This is because teachers are sensitive to the needs of all pupils. Pupils with special needs are achieving very well because they are fully included in lessons.
63. Teaching is never less than good and is often very good. The teachers' enjoyment and knowledge of their subject are conveyed to pupils, who are very well supported by them. The use of assessment by teachers to improve learning is very effective. Teachers carefully track the pupils' progress and quickly deal with any areas of concern. Extra lessons are then provided for pupils so that they can improve in the targeted areas such as listening or writing. Marking is very constructive in helping pupils to know how to avoid mistakes and improve their work. Pupils are learning very well, supported by the very good teaching and their own very positive attitudes and behaviour. They are consulted about the ways they are taught and learn and are given opportunities for self-assessment. They settle down to work immediately and in the rare instances when they do not, the teacher's patience and persistence pay off. The pace and challenge of the lesson invariably lead to the pupils increasing their knowledge and ability to use the target language and teachers always provide plenty of opportunities to practise its use during lessons. These opportunities are enhanced by the visits to France and Germany organised by the department. Planning is satisfactory although lesson objectives are not precise enough. Where the objectives for the lesson are made explicit to the pupils, the review of what has been learned at the end of the lesson is very helpful to both pupils and the teacher.
64. The leadership given is very good. There is very clear direction underpinned by a commitment to give the best possible opportunities to pupils and the determination to lead by good example. Further improvement in standards is anticipated, for instance through measures already taken to improve boys' attainment. Very good procedures, for instance to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, have been put in place and these are mostly followed consistently. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been effectively introduced into lessons and is starting to have a big effect on standards.
- The relationships between teachers and pupils are good and this encourages learning.
- The marking of work is inconsistent across the subject.

Commentary

65. The test results at the end of Year 9 were above the national averages for all schools, but below average for similar schools. The achievement for these pupils was unsatisfactory. There is no significant difference between the results of the boys and girls. The boys are doing much better than boys nationally. Pupils' results are better than those in science but not as good as those in English.
66. The GCSE results at the end of Year 11 are well above the national averages for all and for similar schools. The achievement of these pupils was good. The girls performed better than

the boys. The boys are doing much better than boys nationally. Pupils' results are better than those in science and are as good as those in English. Pupils have been prepared effectively for the tests and examinations at the end of Year 9 and 11. In a small minority of classes, the regular absence of a significant minority of pupils restricts achievement.

67. When pupils enter the school, their standards are broadly above average. In the work seen, by the end of Year 9, and by the end of Year 11, standards are above average. This is a similar picture to that of last year's test results in Year 9, but not as good as the GCSE results in Year 11. Pupils of all levels of attainment are achieving satisfactorily and there are no significant differences between girls, boys or ethnic minority pupils because teachers are sensitive to the needs of all.
68. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have a good knowledge of different types of number and have spatial awareness. They can carry out calculations relating to situations within their own experiences. By the end of Year 11, pupils are working towards the respective tiers of papers that they are sitting. They have experience of and are able to answer the various types of question that are appropriate. The higher attaining pupils are given additional examples that extend their knowledge and ability to solve problems. Pupils with special educational needs receive effective support in class and achieve well.
69. Teaching and pupils' learning are satisfactory across the school. The National Numeracy Strategy has been adopted and each teacher uses it appropriately to build on the knowledge and skills gained in previous lessons. Teachers use a wide variety of interesting and lively starter activities which focus the pupils' minds for the main teaching of the lesson. These include simple mental arithmetic, solution of number problems, and question and answer sessions that revise a topic or identify pupils' knowledge of a topic. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good and is used well to motivate pupils to think. The range of teaching method used is extensive and ensures that pupils have varied experience in solving different problems. Learning is made real because examples used by teachers are from within the daily life experiences of pupils. The different activities within a lesson cater for the range of pupils' attainment within each class. Teachers finish lessons effectively by targeting the extent of learning that has taken place in that lesson and this reinforces learning well. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their good relationships with teachers. There needs to be more consistency across the department in the presentation of work and its day-to-day marking.
70. In many lessons, learning is held back because not all pupils are aware of their standards and are therefore not sure how to improve. Also, attendance is below average and a large minority of pupils' work is incomplete. Most teachers make effective use of ICT, but this is not available to all because access is limited.
71. Leadership is good. The two newly qualified teachers receive helpful advice and support. There are clear aims and objectives. The teaching team share good practice and discuss difficulties. Management is satisfactory, although monitoring of teaching and exercise books occurs in a limited form, and there is no formal procedure laid down involving senior management. The planning of work is thorough and effective. Through the analysis and evaluation of results in examinations and tests, achievement is assessed and underachievers identified and offered extra support. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Numeracy across the curriculum

72. Although the National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented well in terms of mathematics lessons, few other departments have a systematic planned development. There is some good practice using graphs and formulae evaluation in science; in history and geography, there is effective use of graphs; and in design and technology, there is good use in the measurement of length and weight. However, there is a need for constructive development in this area.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment across the school are above average.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons are good overall.
- Action to check the quality of teaching and learning has been slow to be implemented, and thus teaching is too variable.

Commentary

73. In the 2003 national tests taken at the end of Year 9, pupils' results were above average compared with all schools nationally, but well below average when compared with similar schools. The achievement of this group of pupils was poor in relation to their standards at entry. Boys and girls performed to a similar level. Science results were similar to those in English but not as good as in mathematics. The recent trend in results is in line with the national trend, and results were higher than those in 2002.
74. At the end of Year 11, examination results were above average compared to all schools nationally but below average for similar schools. Pupils' achievement was unsatisfactory. Boys performed significantly better than girls in combined science. Trends in recent years reflect the national trends.
75. When the current Year 9 pupils entered the school, their attainment was above average. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average and a study of work and discussions with pupils demonstrated that pupils are attaining the standards of which they are capable; achievement is satisfactory. This is a big improvement over 2003 when achievement in the national tests was poor; a reflection of the influence of the new head of science and improved attendance of certain key science staff. Pupils show a good understanding of science processes and can apply this accurately. In a Year 9 lesson on gas pressure, lower attaining pupils were able to apply their newly acquired knowledge to explain how gas molecules would behave in certain conditions.
76. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. More stable staffing is helping these pupils to make steady progress. Pupils demonstrate a breadth and depth in their knowledge of science processes in describing phenomena and most can apply these to a range of systems. A Year 11 lesson on forces enabled pupils to hypothesise about the qualities of different materials when stretched and present this with confidence to other pupils. Boys perform and attain slightly higher than girls. Pupils of all levels of attainment, those with a special educational need, girls, boys or ethnic minority pupils achieve at the same satisfactory rate.
77. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although some unsatisfactory teaching and learning was seen in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection, a scrutiny of pupils' work over the year shows that overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory in these years. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding and command of the subject and there are good literacy and numeracy links in science. Attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good and pupils enjoy the subject. Where teaching is good, lessons are planned to match the needs of pupils of different abilities and so they learn well. Here, teachers provide good pace and challenge; they actively engage and interest pupils and ensure that prior learning is taken into account, so that many pupils make better than expected progress.
78. In some lessons in Years 8 and 9, teaching did not always extend pupils sufficiently and a significant minority made limited progress during these lessons. A few teachers do not always expect enough of pupils with the result that they acquire new skills and knowledge at a slower

pace. Learning can sometimes be held back because the use of ICT in lessons is limited due to lack of hardware, although there are plans to improve this situation. Learning is also held back for a small minority of pupils because their unsatisfactory attendance means that their work is incomplete and their progress interrupted.

79. Marking is regular and to a purposeful subject policy. It is beginning to give pupils a clear enough idea about how they could improve, and is used to set clear targets for improvement. Most pupils know to what level they are performing and what they need to do to improve.
80. Leadership is good. The new subject leader has a clear and appropriate vision for the subject, but has had too little time to plan effectively for this. This is due to severe staffing problems during recent years, which included the prolonged absence of key staff. Management of the subject is satisfactory; much better use is being made of assessment to help pupils move on but the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and of the standards pupils achieve are not, as yet, rigorous enough. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory and hinder learning. The three relatively new laboratories provide for a good learning environment. The other four are in need of refurbishment.
81. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall because pupils' underachievement is now being successfully addressed. However, some key issues for action still remain. The quality of teaching and learning is still not consistently monitored and evaluated, and there has been insufficient development of the use of ICT.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The great commitment of the team of staff improves the motivation of many pupils to work.
- The development of skills is good throughout the school, though only a minority of pupils gain sufficient knowledge of the use of the technologies in the outside world or understanding of them as tools.
- That is partly the result of there being as yet little co-ordination of the use of computers throughout the school as a whole; this, in conjunction with some difficulties of access, means that computer use in most subjects is low.
- Teaching schemes and lessons are not based on clear learning objectives; therefore the work does not always present sufficient challenge, and teaching and learning are often no better than satisfactory.

Commentary

82. The proportion of Year 9 pupils reaching the target of Level 5 in teacher assessments was average. However, few reached higher levels and achievement overall was satisfactory. About a quarter of the pupils in Years 10 and 11 followed a GCSE course, and results were above average. Again, however, few reached higher grades.
83. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are average. Pupils enter the school with average prior attainment in ICT so achievement is satisfactory. There is very little difference between the achievement of the various groups of pupils in the school. That few pupils are working towards the higher levels is partly because teachers concentrate much more on developing the pupils' ICT skills than on their knowledge and understanding. For instance, when word processing, most become very adept at using different colours and fonts and at including different types of graphics from different sources - however, few have any idea how to relate the various techniques and effects to a document's purpose (even if they know it) or to the likely audience. Again, few are able to think how they could use such software at home or in the world of work.

84. In Years 10 and 11 standards overall are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The picture is better for those in the GCSE and GNVQ groups, who successfully gain a much more complete picture of ICT skills and knowledge and understanding, achieve well and standards are above average. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow the school's own specially developed certificate of achievement. On this course too, the teachers concentrate on skills more than on knowledge and understanding, but the pupils' skills work is rarely unsatisfactory - often it is good or very good. This is because the course materials are of high quality and the teachers work very hard to encourage the pupils to develop skills rapidly.
85. In none of the above are there significant differences between the standards of boys and those of girls, or in the case of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as others in the school.
86. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory; it is better in the case of the GCSE and GNVQ groups, which is mainly why the pupils learn so well. Here the lessons tend to move faster, challenging the pupils more (as do the homework tasks), and call on a wider range of well used resources, which helps motivate the pupils. However, the teachers' work is not based on clear, specific learning objectives, which makes it harder to assess how well the pupils are learning and how successful lessons are. In many lessons learning is held back by unsatisfactory attendance by a large minority of pupils. This means that pupils' work is incomplete and their progress interrupted.
87. The subject is well led. The learning area manager is very clear about the direction in which the department is moving and how to reach targets quickly and efficiently. The manager successfully leads a large team of teachers (most of whom contribute just a few lessons a week) and the technician (who is very skilful but also directly offers much to the pupils' learning). The management of the department's people, time, resources, and restricted accommodation is also good. As a result, there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection in 1998; in particular, work in the subject in all years now meets National Curriculum requirements.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

88. The National Curriculum expects computers and communications to be well used tools for high quality teaching and learning in the other subject areas. No-one in the school has the time to develop a meaningful policy and plan, to monitor what is done in this regard against what should be happening, or to co-ordinate whole school work in ICT. As a result, few pupils have the chance to extend what they learn in ICT lessons (for instance growing their understanding of how to use such types of software as spreadsheets in a number of different contexts). Work with ICT is satisfactory (and quite often good) only in design and technology; there is significant good practice otherwise only in English and physical education.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A variety of teaching techniques is used to maintain the interest of the pupils.
- The subject leader is aware of the areas requiring improvements so that standards can rise.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge is used well to motivate pupils.
- There is insufficiently close monitoring and guidance of pupils' written work.
- Pupils are not made fully aware of their level of attainment and the progress they are making so they can improve.

Commentary

89. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were below average. Girls did much better than boys although they did not do as well as girls nationally. Achievement overall was satisfactory given the below average standards that pupils had when they entered Year 10.
90. When pupils enter the school their standards in geography are broadly average. Based on work seen and lessons observed, pupils' levels of knowledge, skills and understanding are average by Year 9. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their capabilities. They can use and draw maps at a variety of scales and can use appropriate graphical techniques well. Opportunities for extended, well-developed answers are sometimes lacking in middle to lower attaining pupils. Pupils of all levels of attainment are achieving satisfactorily and there are no significant differences between girls, boys or ethnic minority pupils because teachers are sensitive to the needs of all.
91. By Year 11, pupils' levels of knowledge, skills and understanding are also average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily. There are some instances of underachievement, especially amongst the boys but this is not widespread. For example, there is sometimes a shortfall in the quality and quantity of written work when explaining geographical patterns and processes. Pupils at all levels of ability can use quite a wide range of diagrams, map work skills and graphical techniques.
92. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers use appropriate language suited to the needs of their pupils and show good subject knowledge and use this well to motivate pupils. Lessons are planned with the setting of clear objectives so that pupils can see what they have to learn. Management of time needs further attention so that sufficient emphasis is placed on the main activities. In an effort to include too many teaching techniques, sometimes the pace of lessons is too rapid, with a consequent reduction in the quality of learning. However, a variety of methods are used to maintain the interest of the pupils. Pupils are made aware of how well they are doing as work is marked regularly, although detailed, helpful comments are sometimes lacking. Generally, pupils are not aware of their level of attainment in relation to national standards. They are confident with computers, although whole class opportunities are restricted by lack of access and limitation on the amount of teaching time available. Pupils' progress is tracked and targets for improvement are set. Learning is often held back because unsatisfactory attendance by a large minority of pupils means that their work is incomplete and their progress interrupted.
93. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. The learning area manager has some clear ideas as to how the department should move forward. The development plan has clear aims and is reviewed each year so that departmental progress is monitored. Schemes of work cover national requirements although a numeracy strategy has not yet been included. Data are available to track the progress of pupils but not enough is done to identify those pupils who are not achieving as well as they could so that action can be taken. Teaching and learning are not monitored thoroughly to raise standards.
94. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards and achievements have remained satisfactory and learning objectives are now used, with some effect, in lessons. There have been a number of welcome introductions such as the incorporation of new teaching methods, increased use of computers, self-assessment by the pupils and the tracking of pupils' progress.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were well above average.
- The good standard of teaching and learning ensures that pupils achieve well.
- The subject leader for history provides good leadership and management.
- The marking of pupils' work at times lacks specific guidance on how they could improve their grades.
- The lack of a structured programme of lesson observations makes it difficult to share good practice.

Commentary

95. Results in GCSE examinations were well above average in 2003 and pupils achieved well, given the average standards they had when they started the course. This represents a very big rise over 2002 when results were below average.
96. When pupils enter the school their standards in history are broadly average. By the end of Year 9, standards in the work observed during the inspection were above average and achievement overall is good. Pupils of all attainment levels have a good knowledge and understanding of aspects of the Industrial Revolution, including population growth and the conditions in factories, and can select information from historical source materials in order to explain what life was like for the inhabitants of towns.
97. By the end of Year 11, standards in the work observed are also above average. This represents good progress for the pupils who have opted for the subject. They make good advances in acquiring historical knowledge, understanding and skills, particularly in developing the ability to use source material to explain events and support arguments. Pupils of all attainment levels have a good understanding of the key features of the Cold War and can give convincing explanations of Stalin's attitude towards Churchill and Roosevelt.
98. Overall, pupils of all levels of attainment are achieving well and there are no significant differences between girls, boys or ethnic minority pupils. This is because teachers are sensitive to the needs of all pupils. Pupils with special needs are achieving well because they are fully included in lessons and are well supported in class.
99. The achievement of pupils in lessons is good because the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to check pupils' understanding of historical issues, particularly in stimulating questioning sessions. They employ a range of teaching approaches, often using contemporary documents that ensure pupils' concentration throughout lessons. This was the case in a lesson on the claims to the throne in 1066 for lower attaining Year 7 pupils where group work stimulated them into making valuable contributions to the class discussion. Starter activities are successfully used to capture pupils' interest before moving on to the main theme of the lesson.
100. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good because teachers have good classroom management skills, use appropriate strategies for securing high standards of behaviour and give good support to pupils on an individual basis. The marking of pupils' work is generally helpful but at times lacks specific guidance on how they could improve their grades. Learning is sometimes held back because unsatisfactory attendance by a large minority of pupils means that their work is incomplete and their progress interrupted.
101. The leadership and management of the department are good. The subject leader for history provides good support to a small team of colleagues. The department has a clear focus on a number of priorities, including raising boys' attainment. Whilst a number of strategies are used in order to monitor and evaluate the work of the department, a structured programme of lesson observations would make it easier to share good practice.

102. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. It has improved its planning techniques, makes better use of resources and has introduced a wider range of teaching approaches. There has been some progress in the application of ICT in the subject but this is an area for further improvement.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources overall are good which enables teachers to plan interesting lessons that capture pupils' attention.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Assessment and marking do not always inform pupils of how to improve their work.

Commentary

103. No pupils were entered for the GCSE examination last year. GCSE results in 2002 declined to below average from above average in 2001.
104. When pupils enter the school their standards in religious education are broadly average. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory and pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory. Their knowledge and understanding of the origins, beliefs and practice of Christianity and Islam are satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with very different levels of knowledge, skills and understanding of religion and religious practices.
105. Standards in Year 11 of pupils who are preparing for the GCSE in religious education are average. Those taking the GCSE course achieve well given their level of knowledge, skill and understanding on entry to the course. During the course they gain in their ability to interpret religious beliefs, and select quotations from Christianity and Islam to support their work. They tackle difficult issues sensitively, as seen in the work dealing with death and life after death.
106. Those who do not follow the GCSE course follow a modular programme, where they learn about the view of major religions about personal and moral, social, global and theological issues. Here, standards are also average and achievement is satisfactory. Understanding of other major world religions is generally satisfactory. Pupils who are learning about beliefs and practices of five major religions are able to talk with reasonable confidence about religious leaders, key beliefs and religious buildings. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in class. Their needs are well known and they achieve well through being supported by effective support staff.
107. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in all years. In the most effective lessons pupils learn at a good pace because teachers ensure that the challenge is appropriate to the pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. The teachers know their pupils well and plan accordingly. However, marking is inconsistent and irregularly monitored. Pupils do not always know clearly how to improve their work. Girls, who achieve well, have a better attitude to learning than boys, whose behaviour is sometimes unsatisfactory in lessons. Learning is often held back because unsatisfactory attendance by a large minority of pupils means that their work is incomplete and their progress interrupted.
108. Leadership and management in religious education are satisfactory. The subject leader is very experienced but there is no vision for future developments for the teaching of religious education, particularly for non-GCSE groups in Years 10 and 11. The subject leader monitors teaching and pupils' learning irregularly.

109. Although there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection there are still areas to be addressed. The department still suffers from accommodation that is unsuitable for the size of the groups in Years 7 to 9 and noise insulation from adjoining rooms is still inadequate. Teaching time for religious education is now adequate. Years 7 to 11 now have individual textbooks, which they keep until the end of the course, and there are religious artefacts for the major world religions for all the years, which are shared between the staff. Assessment procedures and marking of books do not always inform pupils of how to improve their work

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very positive working relationships between teachers and pupils.
- The subject area provides pupils with a good quality learning environment.
- The increasing use of computers is improving the quality of pupils' learning.
- The difference between the achievement of boys and girls is too wide.
- Methods of assessing pupils' work are not sufficiently clear or consistent.
- Systems to monitor teaching and learning are not yet fully in place.

Commentary

110. In GCSE examinations in 2003, pupils' results were average. Pupils in design and technology overall get grades that compare well within the school and they achieve satisfactorily. Girls are the most successful at gaining the highest grades, helped by detailed programmes for deadlines, combined with regular marking and feedback. At the lower grades, pupils have not developed a sufficient range of skills and confidence to tackle projects independently. Motivation is better where pupils have more freedom of choice, for example in textiles, to make products that really interest them. The increasing use of ICT is improving project work and engaging the interest of boys.
111. When pupils enter the school their standards are broadly average. In the work seen, and in teachers' records, their designing and making skills are average by the end of Year 9 and 11. Pupils develop a good range of subject skills and knowledge through a variety of projects including bread making, textile cushions, packaging and games. They use design briefs and various research skills to develop their projects. Achievement is best for girls who attain the higher levels and for pupils with special needs, who through being very well supported in class make maximum progress. Overall, pupils of all levels of attainment are achieving satisfactorily and there are no significant differences between girls, boys or ethnic minority pupils. This is because teachers are sensitive to the needs of all pupils. Pupils with special needs are achieving well in Years 7 to 9 because they are well supported in class. Where this support is less evident in Years 10 and 11, the achievement of these pupils is satisfactory.
112. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and sometimes good in all years. Teachers are committed and hardworking, endeavouring to give their pupils the best learning experiences. This results in pupils who really enjoy the subject, are enthusiastic in lessons and behave consistently well in class. In the best lessons, pupils are clear about their progress. Booklets and guides, as in the mobile phone project, or the "ticket system" in resistant materials, show pupils clearly what is expected of them. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, providing interesting resources. Relevant visits are planned to various venues such as mills, bakeries and nurseries.

113. Assessment of pupils' work is better in the upper school, where examination grades are used to track pupils' progress. Questioning of pupils in lessons, to find out more about what they are learning, is not used enough, and teachers and pupils are not really clear about the standards expected by the National Curriculum levels. Some lessons lack pace, when not enough thought is given to planning teaching slots or where opportunities for pupils to learn together are lacking. Lower school schemes of work are inconsistent in their challenge and relevance for all pupils. Learning in many classes is held back because unsatisfactory attendance by a large minority of pupils means that their work is incomplete and their progress interrupted.
114. Leadership and management in design and technology are satisfactory. There are elements of good team working and shared expectations about the way forward. The development of an assessment system setting challenging targets for individual pupils has been established. In general, professional development opportunities for teachers are limited and systems for the monitoring of teaching and learning are not yet established. The department is efficiently run, and well resourced with substantial improvements to the accommodation since the last inspection. There is good technician support for resistant materials, but the food and textiles area requires the equivalent, to maintain the current quality of learning. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and pupils enjoy good relationships and pupils benefit from personal tuition and guidance.
- In Years 10 and 11, lessons have good integration of theory and practical work.
- Pupils' insufficient use of ICT and ceramics limits media experience in Years 7 to 9.
- The development of assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 relating to levels to further improve the learning climate is limited.

Commentary

115. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades A* - C in GCSE examinations in 2003 was average. There were no significant differences between boys and girls and pupils achieved satisfactorily.
116. Standards in the current Year 9 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement for many pupils in relation to their knowledge, understanding and skills when they entered the school, which were broadly average. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, also achieve satisfactorily. Pupils of all abilities are able to observe from direct observation and use line and tone effectively in their drawings. Pupils are supported well and apply themselves purposefully to their work and enjoy it.
117. Standards in the current Year 11 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement for all pupils over the two years of the course. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and benefit from personal tuition and guidance. Middle and higher attaining pupils are able to show some influence of important movements in art and design or of particular artists. Pupils often demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other cultures through the work they produce. Final outcomes of work are often developed on a larger scale.
118. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. Where good lessons were observed in Years 10 and 11, good pace and a variety of activities which maintained pupils' interest were

evident. A strong feature of the most effective teaching is sharp teacher questioning which ensures the participation of all pupils. Where teachers' explanations are too long or where tasks were less challenging, some pupils became restless. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' learning was held back slightly because practical examples of learning objectives, based on national expectations, were not shared with them. The full potential of ICT as a learning aid has not yet been fully developed. Limits in curriculum time and large class sizes, especially in Year 9, restrict the range of materials used and this has an adverse effect on teaching and learning. For example, there is insufficient use made of working with clay for three-dimensional studies.

119. The leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory. The subject leader has other responsibilities in the school, which limits availability for the subject. Staff have good subject knowledge and expertise and work well as a team. Departmental meetings are used well to share ideas and good practice. Extra-curricular activities and visits to galleries and museums have a positive impact on the quality and range of pupils' work. The present lack of technical support inhibits the full potential of three-dimensional experience being developed. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, most notably in accommodation, resources and display of work around school.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 9 have doubled over the last 3 years and are above average.
- GCSE results are variable, depending on who takes the course, but in 2003 were well above the national average.
- More pupils now take GCSE music.

Commentary

120. More pupils are now entered for GCSE and in 2003 all candidates gained good pass grades. Standards over the last three years have been variable but were above the national average in 2003.
121. Standards of work seen are above average by the end of Years 9 and 11. Attainment at this level has improved steadily since the last inspection.
122. When pupils enter the school, their standards in music, as judged by the work of Year 7 pupils, are above average and so their achievement is satisfactory. A small number of Year 8 pupils with special educational needs achieve well and can make up effective raps, complete with appropriate self-led rock-style accompaniment. By Year 9, some higher attaining pupils can compose using complex techniques. In the lessons observed, there were no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils use Western staff notation regularly. Evidence from 2003 shows that by Year 11 students can compose songs, sometimes with adventurous guitar or keyboard accompaniments.
123. Overall, teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. No lessons were able to be observed in Years 10 and 11. Lesson planning is generally satisfactory. However, schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 include references to software and recording equipment that is not available at the school. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is good. Where teaching is good, appropriately high level technical musical vocabulary is used. Notwithstanding, an insufficient range of assessment methods is used and pupil records are inadequate. Instrumental teaching is very good, and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

124. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory, as is the improvement made since the last inspection. Although records indicate that standards have risen across the school, assessment strategies are under-developed. There are anomalies in some of the planning, such as schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 making reference to equipment that the school does not possess. Some targets identified in the previous inspection have not been fully addressed; the acoustics in the main teaching room are still poor and this has a negative impact on standards; and there are still too few practice rooms for group work.
125. Computers run sample- and notation-based software, but sequencing software (and quality audio recording equipment) are now needed. Music technology is under-developed; and there are too few instruments from different cultural traditions.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good community links have brought significant benefits to the provision of physical education and contribute to the high standards achieved.
- A flourishing, well-supported extra-curricular programme and good teaching across all age groups contribute to the excellent results in GCSE physical education.
- Further refinement of the assessment system is needed to ensure that teacher assessments more accurately reflect the standards attained at the end of Year 9.
- There are often in excess of 30 pupils in teaching groups in Years 7 and 8 and this prevents equality of access to the physical education curriculum.

Commentary

126. The GCSE physical education results 2003 were very high, with all of pupils gaining grades A*-C. Many pupils did better in this examination than they did in other subjects and their achievement was very good.
127. When pupils enter the school their standards are mostly below average. In work seen, by the end of Year 9 the standard of pupils' work is average and all groups of pupils are achieving well. In games they are able to apply basic skills accurately and with control in competitive situations, and successfully draw on what they know about the strategy of the game. In a Year 9 hockey lesson seen, all pupils could use the block tackle effectively when under pressure in the game.
128. By the end of Year 11 the standard of pupils' work in core physical education is above average and they continue to achieve well. Most can successfully combine skills and tactics in response to the changing situation of a game. Higher attaining pupils are able to act as confident, effective coaches and in a Year 11 basketball lesson seen, this helped to raise the level of achievement of the rest of the group.
129. In the GCSE examination group, pupils are able to plan and perform warm-up routines that are designed for specific types of activity and are making satisfactory progress towards linking theoretical concepts to their practical work.
130. The quality of teaching and learning is good across all age groups. Teaching materials are of consistently good quality and in the best lessons questioning is effective and probes and extends pupils' understanding. In a Year 9 health related fitness lesson seen, pupils recorded their own results according to very effective rating system prepared by the teacher. This motivated all pupils to a high level and encouraged them to achieve more than they might have expected. It also enabled them to judge the quality of their own and others' performances. A more widespread emphasis on encouraging pupils to analyse their work is needed to help

them to reach the higher levels of attainment. Teacher/pupil relationships are mutually respectful and expectations are high. The wide-ranging extra-curricular programme is helping to push up standards because it is very well supported and includes team sports and clubs for individual activities.

131. The quality of leadership and management is good. Very good links with community organisations are well managed and generate additional funding as well as access to professional coaches. Performance data is used rigorously and the system for assessment is being developed further to reflect more accurately pupils' learning experiences. The curriculum is managed knowledgeably and offers good breadth and balance to all pupils. Staff work together as a team and teaching is monitored regularly, which ensures that best practice is shared. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

There are three main categories of vocational opportunity available to pupils in Years 10 and 11:

- The Increased Flexibility Project – taught at Bury College.
- The Vocational Links Project – taught at Bury College.
- GNVQ ICT - taught in school.

The organisation of a variety of courses both within the school and at the nearby Bury College provides pupils with a wider variety of courses and prepare pupils well for future education at post 16.

The GNVQ ICT course was inspected and other provision sampled. No lessons were observed at Bury College, although pupils' work was scrutinised and pupils interviewed. Overall, standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good.

GNVQ ICT

Provision in GNVQ ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The course is well led and managed.

Commentary

132. New to the school is the intermediate GNVQ; no group has yet completed the full course, but the module results so far show an almost 100% pass rate, which is very high. Standards of work seen in the GNVQ ICT course are above average and pupils' achievement is good.
133. Teaching within the GNVQ ICT course is good overall. The clear objectives set out for pupils in the syllabus criteria are well disseminated by the teachers, which ensures that pupils have a very good understanding of requirements. Pupils respond well to instruction, advice and guidance by the teachers to produce work which is of a high standard. Lessons move at a fast pace, challenging the pupils to think (as do the imaginative homework tasks), and to call on a wider range of well used resources. All this helps motivate the pupils and drives on learning.
134. The leadership and management of GNVQ ICT are good. The enthusiasm for the course and the arrangements made ensure that pupils gain the maximum benefit from their involvement. The organisation of the timetable allows pupils to follow English, mathematics and science courses without interruption. The monitoring of pupils' attitudes, in addition to course work, and assessment of the projects is successful in giving pupils additional opportunities in Years 10 and 11.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well.
- Achievement is accelerated because of the willingness of pupils to be involved in discussing issues that affect their lives.
- The School Council is effective in involving all pupils in school activities.
- Lack of funding and time for staff to meet restricts planned future development.
- The assessment and reporting system does not link pupils' progress to national requirements.

Commentary

135. Overall, pupils reach average standards at the end of Years 9 and 11. They are mostly enthusiastic and take an interest in their work. They achieve well and make good progress. Girls generally do better than boys, some of whom are reluctant to join in whole class discussions without some encouragement. Pupils work well in pairs and in small groups and are keen to discuss issues that affect them, such as teenager-parent arguments and how they can be resolved. In Year 10, pupils work closely with teachers to plan community-based events. The School Council forms a platform for all pupils to take part in decision-making and to discuss school related issues, although a system of assessment is required to assess the contribution of individual pupils.
136. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have an up-to-date knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject, engaging pupils in the discussion of issues that affect their lives. The ground rules for discussion are well established by teachers. A range of teaching methods is used to interest, engage and motivate pupils. There are opportunities for pupils to participate in, and observe first hand, activities and examples of citizenship in action, such as local fund-raising events. An effective balance is maintained between giving pupils information and encouraging them to discuss issues related to their everyday lives. Pupils' work is marked and appropriate teacher comments are given so that pupils can improve and make progress. Assessment takes place twice yearly although further work is required to link this with national requirements.
137. Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed co-ordinator has clear vision on how the subject should move forward, although there is a restraint on progress through lack of funds to meet future development together with a limited amount of time available for teacher planning. The schemes of work are detailed and some evaluation of success takes place. However, a clear outline of how the different curriculum elements fit into each year's programme of study is required. Assessment and reporting of pupils' progress require further development to follow new national guidelines.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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