

INSPECTION REPORT

PUTTERIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

Luton

LEA area: Luton

Unique reference number: 109685

Headteacher: Mr A J Smith

Lead inspector: Ms M J Goodchild

Dates of inspection: 1 – 5 March 2004

Inspection number: 258734

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 – 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1196

School address: Putteridge Road
Luton
Bedfordshire
Postcode: LU2 8HJ

Telephone number: 01582 415791
Fax number: 01582 419357

Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr D Christopher

Date of previous inspection: April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Putteridge High School is an 11 to 16 secondary school, with 1196 boys and girls on roll. Fully subscribed, the school is located on the Bedfordshire/Hertfordshire border at the very edge of the town of Luton. Students are drawn from 20 primary schools over a wider area than the immediate catchment; about 40 per cent come from outside the catchment, including some from areas that are socially disadvantaged. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Just under a third of students come from ethnic minorities, the main groups being of Indian, Pakistani, Black British or Caribbean heritage. There is currently one refugee or asylum seeker and 343 pupils are supported through funding to support ethnic minority achievement. There are no pupils at early stages in learning English, although the percentage for whom English is an additional language (12.5 per cent) is higher than in most schools. The school makes special provision for 25 physically disabled and visually impaired students who are integrated as completely as possible into mainstream classes. This special provision acts as an attraction to parents of other children with special educational needs, so that the percentage of such pupils (20.2 per cent) on intake has risen steadily over the last four years and is above the national average. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational need (3.6 per cent) is also above the national average. Students' attainment on entry in Year 7 has been slightly below average for the past five years. In their Year 6 National Curriculum tests, students have typically achieved average results at Level 4 but slightly below average results at Level 5 before they join Putteridge High.

The school faces substantial difficulties in recruiting permanent staff and experiences a very high turnover of teaching staff. These factors present a barrier to raising achievement in a number of subjects. The school is involved in the Excellence in Cities initiative.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15918	Margaret Julia Goodchild	Lead inspector	
9748	Cliff Hayes	Lay inspector	
22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Mathematics
6432	Mick Sewter	Team inspector	Science
18950	Carmen Rodney	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
17015	Lawrence Denholm	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
24127	Jim Kidd	Team inspector	History Personal, social and health education
4361	Richard Boatman	Team inspector	French German
31252	Karen Walker	Team inspector	Physical education
23886	Declan McCarthy	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs
18846	Philip Priest	Team inspector	Music Citizenship
20533	David Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Vocational education
30743	Neil Cowell	Team inspector	Geography
15163	Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Design and technology

The inspection contractor was:

Open Book Inspections

6 East Point
High Street
Seal
Sevenoaks
TN15 0EG

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6-8
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	9-15
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	15-22
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	22-25
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	26-46
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	47

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is unsatisfactory. Standards are below average and students do not achieve as much as they should. This is partly because the school has experienced major difficulties in recruiting permanent teachers in a number of subject areas. Although unsatisfactory overall, teaching and learning are considerably better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The headteacher, whose appointment was made permanent two terms ago, is providing satisfactory leadership and has introduced a number of initiatives that are making a positive impact. There is great deal still to be done, however, to bring the school up to an acceptable level, and it does not provide satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards at GCSE have declined and students do not achieve as well as they should in English, mathematics, science, religious education and French.
- Students make good progress in design and technology, geography, music and in some vocational courses.
- Teaching is too often unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, largely as a result of challenging behaviour that disrupts teaching and learning; half the teaching is good, most often in Years 10 and 11.
- The restructuring of the senior leadership team has increased the school's capacity for improvement, but those in posts of responsibility at all levels are not yet working as a coherent or wholly effective team.
- Although a significant proportion of students work hard and want to learn, too many have poor attitudes and have become disaffected.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not effective in establishing a positive ethos and deterring some students from engaging in bullying.
- Provision for students with visual impairment and physical disabilities is good and these students are included very well within the life of the school; provision for those with emotional and behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties is unsatisfactory.
- Parents are very dissatisfied with the work of the school; however, they are kept well informed and the school has begun to seek ways of involving parents more closely.

The school has made unsatisfactory improvement since it was last inspected, in April 1998. It is clear that the school deteriorated following the last inspection and standards declined between 1998 and 2003. The school has begun to show signs of improvement in recent months. Teaching is now marginally better than at the time of the last inspection and has improved significantly since the local education authority conducted a review of teaching and learning in the Summer of 2003. There is now a more comprehensive system for monitoring the school's work, including teaching and learning, but this is not yet rigorous enough. Provision for music and information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly; that for religious education remains unsatisfactory. There has been good improvement in the curriculum. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development remains unsatisfactory, and the school has not met the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

In accordance with section 13(7) of the School Inspections Act 1996 I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Students' achievement is unsatisfactory overall. Students enter the school with slightly below average prior attainment and make unsatisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. At the end of Year 9, National Curriculum tests in 2003 were below average in English and science, and average in mathematics. Compared with schools whose students had gained similar results in their Year 6 tests in 2000, results were well below average in English, mathematics and science. The school met its targets in mathematics and science in 2003 but not in English. The trend in the school's results over the last five years has been below that nationally.

Standards at the end of Year 11 have declined over the last five years and the percentage of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE fell further in 2003 to a point where it was well below the national average. Overall results at the end of Year 11 were below average and below those of schools whose students gained similar results in their Year 9 tests in 2001. Students achieved their best results in English, mathematics, design and technology, and music. They did least well in science, religious education, art, drama, French and German. The school did not meet its targets at GCSE in 2003.

Inspection findings show that standards are below average and that students do not achieve as much as they should. This is particularly the case in English, mathematics, science, religious education and French. They make good progress in design and technology, geography, music and in some vocational courses. Their achievement is satisfactory in art, German, history, ICT and physical education. The achievement of students with visual impairment and physical disabilities is good. Those with emotional and behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties make unsatisfactory progress.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are unsatisfactory. Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are unsatisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides an unsatisfactory education. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. Where staffing is relatively stable, experienced and dedicated teachers enable students to achieve at least satisfactorily and often well.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It is enriched by increasing opportunities for students to follow vocational courses, by good extra-curricular opportunities and a varied programme for gifted and talented students. Provision for the care, health and welfare of students is satisfactory. Partnership with parents is unsatisfactory. Links with the local community are satisfactory, and those with other educational establishments are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory overall. The new headteacher is providing satisfactory leadership and has made a good start in addressing some of the many challenges that face the school. Although a number of those with leadership and management responsibilities fulfil aspects of their roles well, many senior and middle managers are still developing important skills and undergoing further training. In some areas, staffing difficulties weaken the overall coherence of management. The governing body did not challenge the school to improve as much as it should have done following the last inspection. Statutory requirements for collective worship are not met and not all elements of the National Curriculum are taught in physical education. Governance is therefore unsatisfactory overall, although governors are now providing satisfactory support and challenge.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is fully subscribed and has, in the past, had a good reputation in the town. However, parents who expressed their opinions are very dissatisfied with a range of aspects of the school's work. Students are more critical of the school than is usually found and express particular concerns about behaviour and bullying.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- To raise standards and improve students' achievement in a number of subjects, particularly in English, mathematics, science, religious education and French.
- To improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- To strengthen the management of challenging behaviour and bullying.
- To establish an ethos in which learning has a higher profile, and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures more positive attitudes.
- To improve provision for students with learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- To strengthen the partnership with parents.
- To bring about greater coherence in the leadership and management of the school at all levels, including developing further the role of governors.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
- Ensure that National Curriculum requirements are fully met in physical education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are below average in Years 9 and 11. The trend in the school's results has been below the national trend and performance at GCSE has declined in recent years. Although students achieve satisfactorily in some subjects and there is some good achievement, overall achievement is unsatisfactory and it is especially so in Years 7 to 9.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 were below the national average in 2003 in English and science, and in all three of the core subjects they were well below those of schools whose students' gained similar results in their Year 6 tests in 2000.
- GCSE results are below average and results at A* to C have declined since the last inspection to a point where they were well below the national average in 2003.
- Students' achievement is adversely affected by the school's difficulty in appointing permanent staff in a number of subjects and by disruptive behaviour especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Students make good progress in design and technology, geography, music and in some vocational courses.
- Students with visual impairment and physical disabilities achieve well in response to good support; the progress of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.0 (32.0)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	34.8 (33.1)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	32.7 (31.1)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 237 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Students enter the school with slightly below average prior attainment and make unsatisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. At the end of Year 9, National Curriculum tests in 2003 were below average in English and science, and average in mathematics. Mathematics and science results in 2003 were an improvement on those in 2002, but compared with schools whose students had gained similar results in their Year 6 tests in 2000, results were well below average in English, mathematics and science. The school met its targets in mathematics and science in 2003 but not in English. The trend in the school's results over the last five years has been below that nationally.

Standards in GCSE/General National Vocational Qualifications examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	35 (43)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	86 (89)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	30.1 (31.8)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 230 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Standards at the end of Year 11 have declined over the last five years and the percentage of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE fell further in 2003 to a point where it was well below the national average and below that of the local education authority. There has also been a significant decline since the last inspection in the percentage of students gaining five or more A* to G grades and one or more A* to G. Overall results at the end of Year 11 were below average.
3. The school explains the fall in results in 2003 partly by the fact that there were more lower attaining students in that particular year and its own predictions anticipated a drop in A* to C grades. The results overall were below those of schools whose students gained similar results in their Year 9 tests in 2001. There was considerable variation in standards from subject to subject, and the school's own evaluation indicates that the 2003 results represented fairly widespread underachievement.
4. At GCSE in 2003, students achieved their best results in English, mathematics, design and technology, and music. They did least well in science, religious education, art, drama, French and German. The school did not meet its targets at GCSE in 2003. The school's own predictions suggest that GCSE results should improve in 2004: around 40 per cent of students are expected to gain five or more A* to C grades, compared with 35 per cent in 2003. Inspection findings suggest that assessment information may not be entirely accurate in some subjects, so it is difficult to judge the reliability of this data.
5. Inspection findings show that standards are below average and that students do not achieve as much as they should. Unsatisfactory achievement stems from:
 - the major difficulties the school has had – and continues to have – in appointing permanent teachers;
 - the poor behaviour of a substantial minority of students which disrupts learning in too many lessons – especially in Years 7 to 9 – and is a contributory factor to the unsatisfactory teaching in these years;
 - other weaknesses in teaching that contribute to underachievement in some subjects, including marking that does not make clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work, and tasks that are not matched sufficiently to the different needs within the class;
 - inconsistent and insufficient homework and the failure of some students to complete homework that is set;
 - the school's unsatisfactory ethos, where too many students do not see learning as a desirable activity that is worth their effort and application;
 - a lack of rigour in monitoring and weaknesses in management by some heads of department, so that students' underachievement and those factors that contribute to it are not identified quickly enough and acted upon.
6. Staffing difficulties have impacted particularly on students' achievement in English, mathematics, science, religious education and modern foreign languages.
7. In English, staffing difficulties and the lack of a permanent head of department are impacting adversely on students' work, and on their attitudes and particularly their behaviour in Years 7 to 9. Students in Years 10 and 11 have not covered the volume of work expected, and there is much work that is unmarked. Instability in staffing and the absence of a head of department have also led to a sharp decline in GCSE results and achievement in drama, but the school's decision to appoint and train experienced teachers to manage the GCSE drama course is already showing an improvement in students' learning. In Years 7 and 8, where drama is taught as part of English, students achieved well in response to challenging teaching in the lessons seen.
8. In mathematics, difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified and skilled teachers means that the department is at present under staffed. Class sizes are therefore too large in Years 7 to 9,

particularly in Year 7. This increases the range of attainment in each class, and teachers do not always take sufficient account of this in their planning. As a result, a significant number of students develop a casual attitude to their work, lose confidence and standards fall. Students make satisfactory progress in mathematics in Years 10 and 11, partly because classes are smaller.

9. In science, there has also been considerable difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified and experienced teachers. In a small number of lessons in science, poor behaviour prevents learning. In Years 7 to 9, students are given too few problem-solving activities or challenges to enquire and discover for themselves. In Years 10 and 11, students' achievement varies but is unsatisfactory overall, largely because of poor attitudes and behaviour.
10. In French, difficulties in recruiting staff – combined with unsatisfactory leadership and management of the subject – have led to results at GCSE that are poor compared with students' performance in other subjects. Those students who study both French and German perform better in German, sometimes by as much as two National Curriculum levels by the end of Year 9.
11. In religious education, students' achievement is unsatisfactory as a result of widespread disaffection. The ethos for learning is poor in the subject and teaching was unsatisfactory, in the vast majority of lessons seen, as a result of teachers' difficulties in managing challenging behaviour. GCSE results in religious education are well below the national average and poor compared with students' performance in other subjects. The subject has been without a head of department for the last few months, but the temporary guidance provided by a deputy headteacher, who has been seconded from another school, is leading to some improvement in achievement in Years 10 and 11.
12. In subjects where staffing is relatively stable and teachers are experienced or effective in managing challenging behaviour, students achieve at least satisfactorily and often well. They make good progress in design and technology, reaching GCSE results that are just a little below the national average and better than local averages, because teaching is good and they enjoy the practical nature of the tasks. In geography, standards at GCSE – although below average – have been sustained over the last five years whilst those in many other subjects have declined. This is mainly because the subject has an experienced, long-serving head of department – who is also a member of the senior leadership team – and work is well planned and challenging. In German, standards are now in line with the national average in Year 9, which represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Although GCSE results declined considerably in 2003, work seen during the inspection shows that there has been an improvement in students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 since the appointment, in September, of a new head of department who is providing good leadership and management. GCSE results in music have improved over the last three years until they are now in line with the national average. In Year 9, students are working at – and in some cases above – national expectations. This is because teaching and learning are good, the department is led well and individual instrumental tuition of a large minority of students contributes to overall achievement. In vocational courses, achievement is very good in hairdressing and beauty and good in art and design, where students reach standards that are above average.
13. In contrast to the national pattern, boys outperform girls in end of Year 9 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science and at GCSE. This is a reversal of the situation found at the last inspection. In lessons during the inspection, boys tended to dominate in discussions and when answering questions. Boys were, however, also the main source of disruption in lessons. In some subjects, the better presented written work of girls may be masking weaknesses within the content of their work that are not being picked up where marking is unsatisfactory.
14. Disruption in staffing and the school's inability to appoint a literacy co-ordinator have impacted adversely on the development of students' literacy skills. Overall, literacy levels are below

average and the writing skills of many students do not support success at higher levels in examinations. Standards and confidence in the use of number are below average, although following recent staff training, a number of subjects are providing satisfactory opportunities for students to develop their mathematical skills. ICT makes a good contribution to students' achievement in many subjects as a result of good teaching in separate ICT lessons and a major overall improvement in ICT provision since the last inspection.

15. Students with visual impairment and those with physical disabilities achieve well because the support provided by teaching assistants and teachers is good, moving their learning forward in lessons by precise use of specialist resources to enable them to access learning. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson, the teacher modified a worksheet into a larger formatted version printed on a yellow background, which enabled the visually impaired student to see and read the tasks. As they move through the school, these students perform well at GCSE in relation to their prior attainment. They make good progress against the targets set for them, although the absence of detailed diagnostic assessment of their needs makes it difficult to determine if their targets are always sufficiently challenging.
16. Students identified with emotional, social and/or behavioural difficulties, who receive support from the learning support unit, make poor progress against their targets and in changing their behaviour so that they can integrate successfully into mainstream lessons. On the other hand, the students achieve well on tasks within the learning support unit because these are tasks they have chosen to do and are interested in. However, the tasks bear very little relationship to the work they should be doing in normal lessons. A very small minority of students are denied access to the National Curriculum and are not receiving their full entitlement because they spend all their time in the learning support unit as a result of newly agreed referral arrangements. This is not only a breach of legal requirements but restricts the achievement of such students still further.
17. Students with general and specific learning difficulties make good progress in their reading, writing and spelling tasks in lessons within the base. However, much of this work is out of context with what is happening in their English lessons. Although generally satisfactory support is provided in mainstream classes, it is sometimes unsatisfactory, as in science, and there is insufficient match between the work and the different needs within the class in a number of subjects. As a result, the achievement of students with learning difficulties is unsatisfactory overall.
18. Students who are gifted and talented achieve satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11 in most subjects, but unsatisfactorily in Years 7 to 9. They are given good opportunities to extend their skills, knowledge and understanding through a varied programme of enrichment opportunities. In some subjects, however, work is not always matched sufficiently to their prior attainment to provide them with enough challenge.
19. The numbers of students in any particular ethnic minority group are small and therefore attainment varies from year to year, depending on the individuals within each group. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests, most students of Indian and Pakistani descent reached above average standards in English, mathematics and science. These results were above the local education authority's average. Overall, students of Bangladeshi heritage did not perform as well as other students of Asian descent. The school's own data analysis shows that in science, attainment is lower in ethnic minority groups than for White British students, and it has identified this as an issue requiring attention. At GCSE, there are no definite ethnically determined differences in attainment. Performance by ethnicity follows the national pattern of underachievement among Black Caribbean boys.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are unsatisfactory. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is unsatisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attitudes are unsatisfactory and bullying is a concern for many students.
- In too many lessons, learning is disrupted by unsatisfactory and occasionally poor behaviour.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are underdeveloped.
- Statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship are not met.
- Many students are critical about various aspects of the education provided.
- Attendance is effectively promoted and monitored.

Commentary

20. Students' attitudes present a mixed picture but are unsatisfactory overall. Students are willing to accept responsibility outside the classroom, for example in mentoring younger students, escorting visitors or undertaking year council activities, and they participate well in out-of-lesson activities. However, too many students show a lack of respect for some teachers and several have negative views about the school.
21. Behaviour in lessons is unsatisfactory. This relates to students' refusal to follow instructions and to disruptive behaviour, demonstrating lack of respect for teachers – especially those who are employed on fixed-term contracts or who do not have strong classroom control. Disruption is particularly evident in Years 7 to 9, mostly within subjects where the school has experienced staffing difficulties. During the inspection, learning was disrupted in some lessons in English, mathematics, science and religious education. Behaviour management initiatives introduced by the school, including training for all staff, have not yet yielded significant improvement. An increased use of exclusion is beginning to create boundaries of acceptable behaviour but a great deal more needs to be done to make students truly accountable for their behaviour. Exclusions were low over the last year – especially so, given the high rate of behavioural incidents.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – other
Black or black British – Caribbean
Black or black British – other

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
822	25	0
8	1	0
24	1	0
49	3	0
60	1	0
50	1	0
28	1	0
48	8	0
11	1	0

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

22. The learning support unit and the 'removed room' – which is used for internal exclusions – reduce lesson disruption but do not generally contribute to long-term improvements in behaviour. The recent development of a new referral system for the learning support unit, although good on paper, does not have the full support of staff, as the learning support unit is often used for internal exclusion and an extension of the 'removed room', rather than providing strategies for dealing with students' emotional, social and behavioural difficulties.

23. The school ethos is unsatisfactory and the whole-school procedures and teaching needed to achieve good behaviour are not yet effective enough. Students are open, though casual, towards visiting adults. Their movement around the school and behaviour in the playground and dining areas are satisfactory. They are generally friendly towards each other, often socialising in mixed-ethnic groups. A significant minority, however, show a general lack of respect and there is an excessive amount of litter.
24. Inspectors confirm the views of parents and students that there are bullying issues within the school, a very small proportion of which appear to be racially motivated. The school promotes good relationships through its guidance programme and this is effective overall but not enough to reduce bullying substantially. Whilst the school has appropriate policies to deal effectively with bullying and often does so, some goes unchecked or unreported. A small number of instances of verbal and some physical bullying were observed during the inspection. Furthermore, an undercurrent of racism was evident by a small minority of white boys towards overseas teachers and by a group of students in response to the traditions of other cultures.
25. Many students are critical of several aspects of school life. They are particularly concerned about disruptive behaviour and bullying. Their other concerns relate to:
- their perceptions that they are unfairly treated by staff;
 - that the school is not interested in their views;
 - that assessment does not inform them about how to improve their work;
 - that homework is irregular and/or inappropriate;
 - that the school is not effectively run;
 - that they do not have an adult in whom they can confide (a criticism in the questionnaire but not evident amongst students interviewed).

Students expressed positive views about high teacher expectations, good teaching, and about being trusted to do things on their own.

26. Students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Provision for – and teaching in – religious education are unsatisfactory and the school does not fulfil the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. Some assemblies do meet these requirements but the 'Thought for the Week' is not used sufficiently well in tutor periods. In some subjects, for example in music, in assemblies and via displays around the school, students are encouraged to become more self-aware and to appreciate high achievement.
27. Moral development is unsatisfactory. Students appreciate the moral dimension in aspects of their school work, for example through studying World War II or considering Third World poverty, but a substantial minority do not practise morally acceptable behaviour and have little concern for the impact of their behaviour on others. They appear to know right from wrong but this only emphasises the lack of principle in their behaviour, revealing a lack of respect for others' values and feelings.
28. Overall, social development is unsatisfactory with some positive features. Students are willing to help others; for example, a number of students are involved in mentoring and supporting charitable activities. Some students participate in school and year councils and much of the interaction between students is positive. However, the councils have limited responsibility and few students participate in other 'citizenship-related' activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award or Young Enterprise. There is little recognition amongst the students of the school as a shared community.
29. In parts of the curriculum, students learn to appreciate their own, and other, cultures – notably in music – but insufficient use is made of the cultural diversity present within the school and the local community, and some students show a lack of respect for cultures different from their own. Good opportunities are provided for students to take part in cultural experiences through trips and the school's extra-curricular programme.

30. Compared with the findings of the last inspection, attendance and punctuality have declined from good to satisfactory. Attitudes, behaviour, moral and social development – that were previously satisfactory – are now unsatisfactory. Spiritual and cultural development remains unsatisfactory.
31. Present attendance is near the national average, although slightly below last year’s improved figure. Most students are punctual to school and to lessons. The school monitors and promotes attendance well.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	8.0
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.4
National data	1.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides an unsatisfactory education. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall, though teaching was satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection. The curriculum is satisfactory overall and is enriched by increasing opportunities for students to follow vocational courses. Provision for the care, health and welfare of students is satisfactory. Partnership with parents is unsatisfactory. Links with the local community are satisfactory, and those with other educational establishments are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall: teaching during the inspection was nearly always at least satisfactory and often good in Years 10 and 11 but too often unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Assessment procedures are broadly satisfactory but teachers are not yet using assessment information as much as they should to raise standards, and there are weaknesses in the marking of students’ work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, with particularly weak teaching seen in Year 8 during the inspection.
- Although teaching in Years 10 and 11 is now nearly always satisfactory, weaknesses in learning reflect a history of unsatisfactory teaching within the school.
- Recent initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning are beginning to make an impact on teaching, and half the teaching seen was at least good.

- Major difficulties in recruiting permanent staff continue to impact adversely on teaching and learning in a number of subjects.
- Most subjects have satisfactory procedures for assessing students' work, but students are not clear about how to improve their work, and assessment information is not always used as well as it could be.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 127 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	13 (10%)	51 (40%)	47 (37%)	14 (11%)	1 (1%)	-

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.

32. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall. In over one in ten lessons, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory during the inspection, and scrutiny of students' work shows that disaffection with learning leads to unsatisfactory progress over time for too many students. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs generally in subjects where the school has had serious problems in recruiting permanent staff or where there are other particular staffing difficulties. During the inspection, unsatisfactory teaching was found in English, mathematics, science, religious education and French. There is, however, a significant amount of good teaching and in a number of subjects teaching and learning are consistently at least satisfactory. This is the case in art, citizenship and personal, social and health education (based on a small sample of lessons seen), design and technology, drama, German, geography, history, ICT, music and physical education.
33. During the inspection, teaching was significantly better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The majority of lessons were at least satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and six out of ten lessons were good or, at times, very good. In Years 7 to 9, almost one in five lessons were unsatisfactory or, occasionally, poor. There was a particularly high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in Year 8, where nearly three out of ten lessons were unsatisfactory. In Year 7, one in five lessons were unsatisfactory, and in Year 9, just over one in ten were unsatisfactory. The relatively better teaching in Years 10 and 11 is partly explained by the school's strategy of allocating more experienced and effective teachers to older classes in an attempt to raise standards at GCSE. The higher incidence of challenging behaviour in Years 7 to 9 and students' lack of respect for teachers employed on fixed term contracts accounted for many of the unsatisfactory lessons in these years. Weaknesses in whole-school systems for dealing with difficult behaviour undermine teachers' attempts to maintain order and attention in the classroom. Unsatisfactory teaching in French is related to low expectations and lack of challenge within tasks rather than to difficulties in managing behaviour.
34. Unsatisfactory as these figures are, inspection findings suggest that the work the school has undertaken in recent months to improve the quality of teaching has made an impact on some aspects of teaching. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in this inspection is less than at the time of the last inspection, when 18 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory. When the local education authority undertook a review of teaching and learning in Summer term 2003, 48 per cent of teaching was found to be unsatisfactory – suggesting that teaching declined drastically between the last inspection and 2003. In response to the findings of the review, the senior leadership team established a strategic plan for improving teaching and learning, provided in-service training for teachers, developed a guidance booklet on teaching and learning, and significantly strengthened the school's system for monitoring. Whilst much more still needs to be done, these initiatives have had a definite effect. Whereas in the summer of 2003, the local education authority review found that too many teachers omitted to identify learning objectives or plan their lessons, teaching now follows a documented plan, and learning objectives are identified and generally shared with students at the outset of the lesson. Strong teachers are not yet being used as much as they could be, however, to disseminate their good

practice, although the school provides a good programme of support for newly qualified teachers, and those who are new to the school. Other teachers and non-teaching assistants have good opportunities to undertake training to develop their skills.

35. The inspection found that half the teaching is at least good. A number of experienced and dedicated teachers enable students to achieve well, but only the strongest or most established staff command real respect from students. In these teachers' lessons, students are still lively and challenging, but they respond to teachers who set clear expectations for work and behaviour, and insist on them.
36. The school's initiatives have met with limited success in changing students' attitudes to learning. Students are clearly still adversely affected by a history of poor teaching. Disaffection undermines teaching that is in other respects satisfactory. Too many students have failed to develop a work ethic or have lost interest, and through active disruption or low level but persistent chatter make it very difficult for others to learn. Their books reveal unfinished work and little care with presentation. A significant proportion of students apply themselves well to set tasks, however, and try to ignore disruptive behaviour. These students have sustained their interest in learning and their desire to succeed: they want to glean what they can from learning opportunities. Their written work is well organised and reveals consistent effort. In subjects where staffing is relatively stable, this latter group predominate.
37. Parents expressed concern that their children do not have enough homework to support their achievement and the school's own monitoring reveals that homework is not set sufficiently. In some subjects, it is set with reasonable regularity but, even then, a significant proportion of the students do not necessarily complete it. Homework too often consists of finishing off work and general expectations for the amount of independent study students should undertake tend to be low. Individual members of the senior leadership team are working to try to remedy this situation.
38. Students with visual impairment and physical disabilities receive good support from teachers and learning support assistants in lessons. As a result, they try hard, improve their self-image and increase their confidence as learners as they are able to access the same learning as their peers. Although support provided in lessons often ensures students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties are able to remain in the lesson, teaching for these students is unsatisfactory overall because targets and approaches used in the learning support unit are not focused sufficiently on returning students to mainstream classes. Although teaching is good in the learning difficulties base and satisfactory levels of support are provided for students with learning difficulties in subject lessons, work is often not matched sufficiently to these students' needs.
39. Students' achievement is further restricted, particularly in the learning support unit and learning difficulties base, by imprecise individual education plan targets which are set for too long a duration. These targets are not currently based sufficiently on diagnostic assessment, despite records of appropriate screening such as reading ages, spelling ages, cognitive ability tests and National Curriculum test results. Targets and resources are, therefore, often inappropriate. Teachers are not given enough information or suggested strategies for students with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, which restricts both teaching and learning. Conversely, teachers with visually impaired students in their classes are provided with good advice and support from support staff, based on a breakdown of their needs, although more work needs to be done diagnostically to ensure a more precise match of subject targets to learning needs.
40. Given the high mobility of staff, teachers do not have sufficient strategies to meet the specific needs of students with English as an additional language who need additional support. They have not had recent training or access to resources to improve planning. Currently, planning does not reflect the needs of students at the progressive and early stage of learning English. The school has a rich body of data on the achievement of students from different ethnic groups but the assessment information is not used for monitoring their progress or to inform planning.

The school has had difficulty recruiting a suitably qualified teacher to co-ordinate English as an additional language and is presently looking to make interim arrangements by using a consultant to develop the provision for students who need support.

41. There are satisfactory procedures to assess students' work in most subjects, with the best practice found in Years 10 and 11. Some subjects set specific pieces of work to measure students' attainment in Years 7 to 9, but this system is more fully in place at GCSE. The school has recently entered its assessment information onto a database which is being used in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 to set targets. Individual targets have been set for GCSE and progress is monitored at regular intervals, so that underachievement can now be detected in Years 10 and 11. A range of intervention strategies has been introduced, including mentoring by the senior leadership team and study support, especially targeting students who are likely to be on the C/D borderline at GCSE. Targets will be set for students in Years 7 to 9 in the next academic year.
42. Heads of department are beginning to make use of performance data in monitoring the effectiveness of provision in their subjects, but this is at a fairly early stage in the school as a whole. Some teachers make good use of information about students' prior attainment when planning their lessons, but teachers do not consistently seek to match work to the needs of individuals or groups of students within their classes. At a whole school level, assessment information is used reasonably effectively in planning the curriculum and identifying, for instance, groups of students who would benefit from more vocational courses or who are gifted and talented and need enrichment opportunities.
43. The assessment policy is currently under review and senior managers recognise the need also to strengthen the school's marking policy. Parents expressed concern about work not being marked and the inspection found that marking is highly variable and not good enough in many subjects. Some individual teachers make clear to students what they need to do to improve, but marking is often cursory and there are some instances where work has not been marked over a significant period of time.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and is enriched by increasing opportunities for pupils to follow vocational courses. A good range of extra-curricular activities opportunities is provided. The quality and quantity of accommodation is unsatisfactory. Learning resources are largely satisfactory. The school faces major difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has spent considerable time in planning a curriculum that meets the needs of all its students and has introduced a range of vocational courses as a result.
- There is a wide range of relevant courses and activities for gifted and talented students.
- Provision for visually impaired pupils and for those with physical disabilities is good but the provision for other students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- Serious staffing problems in English, mathematics, science, religious education and modern foreign languages are a major contributory factor in unsatisfactory teaching and achievement.
- The guidance programme has a high profile within school and students make favourable comments about its value to their everyday lives.
- The learning resources centre is a growing strength and is used extensively by students at breaks, lunchtimes and after school.
- Students speak highly of the music department and benefit from the many extra-curricular opportunities in this area.

Commentary

44. Curriculum planning for the needs and aptitudes of all students is good and, although the physical education programme does not yet meet the statutory requirement to teach dance and gymnastics, more vocational courses are being introduced each year. The vocational programme was increased to five elements in September 2003 and the school is now preparing for courses in leisure and tourism and manufacturing for the next school year. Moreover, there is a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and take-up is good overall for sporting, academic and musical sessions.
45. Planning to meet the needs of gifted and talented youngsters is good and comprises a wide range of events. The school is recognised as a leading institution in this area and provides, amongst many sessions, master classes in several subjects, visits to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, taster days for oriental languages and competitions, hair and beauty being but one example. Moreover, there are strong connections with the guidance programme and students speak highly of the relevance of the questionnaires they complete on different learning styles and how they can maximise the effectiveness of their revision prior to examinations.
46. Provision for students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory overall. The school operates a unit for visually impaired students and those with physical disabilities. These students are fully integrated into the life of the school and, because of the abilities, preparation and support of specialist teaching staff and learning support assistants, they are able to take full advantage of what lessons have to offer. Provision is unsatisfactory for students with a variety of other learning difficulties, because subject teachers do not receive sufficient information about these students' learning needs. Curricular provision is poor in the learning support unit, which is used reactively and, in effect, too often acts as another form of internal exclusion rather than promoting inclusion as it should do. Curricular liaison between the learning support base and subject departments is inadequate, so that work students undertake in the base is not related closely enough to aspects of the National Curriculum that are being studied in their subject lessons.
47. The school finds it very difficult to recruit teaching staff in several curriculum areas. There are several teachers on temporary fixed term contracts and staffing difficulties, particularly in English, mathematics, science, religious education and modern foreign languages, have a negative effect on the achievement of students and the standards they reach. Nevertheless, where young and inexperienced staff are supported well, in humanities for example, students benefit from enthusiastic teaching and perform satisfactorily.
48. The guidance programme, comprising careers education, personal, social and health education and citizenship is popular amongst the pupils, who speak highly of its value for their school careers and also for the preparation for life after compulsory education. A good scheme of work has been put in place for personal, social and health education, although it is not yet doing enough to raise students' awareness with respect to bullying.
49. Students make very positive comments about their music education and enjoy taking part in musical events. The school's 'big band', for example, is well supported and those who play an active part do so with skill and verve. Another area, which is well respected by students and of which they take full advantage, is the learning resources centre, with its access to library books, computers and the Internet. The centre is a hive of industry at breaks and lunchtimes and staff and pupils use it extensively for both leisure and personal research. Learning resources are satisfactory in most areas of the curriculum, with the exception of some subjects, where there are insufficient textbooks, and religious education, which has limited artefacts to stimulate learning.
50. The school is popular and attracts high numbers; effectively all year groups are full but for casual movements. The facilities are therefore stretched and the design of the building makes movement difficult. There is far too little hard play area and the school field is on a separate site. At breaks and lunchtime, the site is extremely congested and the management of

students is therefore more difficult. There are insufficient classrooms for many teachers to have their own base. This impacts on the use and availability of subject resources in lessons. It also reduces teachers' opportunity to establish stimulating learning environments relating to their subject. The building has been adapted very well to meet the needs of students with visual impairment and physical disability.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for the care, health and welfare of pupils is satisfactory overall. Pupils receive satisfactory advice, support and guidance. Satisfactory attention is given to students' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The induction of Year 7 students is good.
- Students receive effective guidance on further study and careers.
- Medical provision is good.
- The school has begun to involve students in decision-making and intends to develop this further.

Commentary

51. Child protection procedures are in line with locally agreed arrangements and medical care is good. The school has appropriate policies on fire and other safety matters and these are properly applied, including risk assessments and regular inspections.
52. Students interviewed all said they had an adult they could approach with problems – although, in the pre-inspection questionnaire, one in three said they did not. Again, a high proportion of students said they were not given helpful assessments but inspectors found that, despite inconsistent marking of work, advice and guidance is satisfactory overall and good provision for mentoring has been introduced in Year 11 in an attempt to raise standards. Learning mentors give added support to students with a range of learning problems. Those with visual impairment and physical difficulties receive good levels of care for their personal needs. Support for other students with special educational needs is inadequate; however, the school works effectively with a wide range of external agencies.
53. Advice and guidance for students choosing options, routes of study or career paths are good and appreciated by the students. There have been some difficulties in obtaining services from the Connexions Service with regard to students needing a wider range of support, but a new appointment has brought signs of improvement. The school's new management structure has given added impetus to support for personal development with the appointment of curriculum leaders. This provides direct senior leadership support, and consequently more time, for individual pupil support, though this is offset to some extent by the change to the timetable which gives form tutors less personal contact with their students.
54. The induction of Year 7 students is good. Apart from all the usual practices, the school provides mentoring by students from Years 8 and 11 and prior opportunities for students to experience work in a secondary school.
55. Students have begun to be involved in the work and future development of the school. The school, and year, councils have a role in discussing issues raised by staff and students, and are involved in organising charity events and activity weeks. Some individual students act as mentors and buddies and others take part in new staff interviews. Involvement in matters concerning, for instance, behaviour, bullying and teaching, has begun and further contributions from students are planned through focus groups working with the senior leadership team. The school has begun to establish a student-governor forum. Internal surveys of students' views have been undertaken in Year 11 and this practice is to be extended to the rest of the school.

56. Since the previous inspection, care, welfare, support and guidance have remained at a satisfactory level. Child protection procedures have overcome the small criticism previously noted and student induction is now good, rather than satisfactory.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnership with parents is unsatisfactory. Links with the local community are satisfactory, and those with schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents receive good quality information and regular communication.
- The school shares provision of vocational subjects effectively with other establishments.
- The level of parental dissatisfaction is high.
- Parents of students with visual impairment and physical disabilities are suitably involved.
- The contribution of parents to their children's learning is limited and the school has unsatisfactory homework arrangements.

Commentary

57. The school provides parents with regular and useful information about its practices and activities. Frequent newsletters and parents' topic evenings keep parents well informed. Reports and letters on the academic and personal progress of students are a feature of the liaison between tutorial staff and parents. In particular, formal reports on students' progress are frequent and clear. They are supported by regular consultation evenings and the school has recently introduced an academic review day for Year 11 to supplement existing opportunities for parents and students to review progress. This good practice is being extended to other year groups. Some parents see the computer-generated phrases used in reports as not being user-friendly and too repetitive. Inspectors found that, though at first sight this appears to be so, in fact these reports demonstrate better diagnosis of areas for improvement and more helpful comments than is usually found.
58. The school seeks to obtain parents' views by means of questionnaires, focus groups and interaction during parents' meetings. The academic review day is a result of such consultation. The school was not aware of the strength of negative feeling expressed in the pre-inspection meeting and questionnaire, suggesting that present systems for eliciting views are not wholly effective or that parents do not feel confident about airing their views directly to the school.
59. Parental and student involvement in the reviews of their statements of special educational need is good and leads to the setting of some relevant short-term targets in their individual education plans. There are good links with the visual impairment service and with a local special school for physical disabilities, which benefit these students.
60. In the school as a whole, the involvement of parents in their children's learning is limited. However, two thirds of parents turn up for consultation evenings; none do so for the governors' annual meeting. Homework is inconsistently set and marked and students' planners are not effective enough as a means of communication between school and parents. There is no parent-teacher association.
61. The school is committed to developing an effective partnership with parents and to raising the level of parental satisfaction. The large number of parents expressing dissatisfaction with several aspects of the school indicates that it is not yet successful. Evidence shows that the school does deal effectively with written concerns and complaints.
62. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, which saw about one third returned, half the parents expressed concern about behaviour. Between a fifth and a third of parents were unhappy with

bullying, the quality of teaching, information received, leadership and management, the school's response to their views and concerns, homework and out-of-class activities. These and other negative views were confirmed at the parents' pre-inspection meeting, where a high level of dissatisfaction was apparent. Inspectors support parents' views to a greater or lesser degree on bullying, the quality of teaching (in Years 7, 8 and 9), management and homework. They found, however, that the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11, the leadership of the headteacher and some heads of department and the response to parents' complaints are satisfactory, and that information provided and the provision of out-of-class opportunities are good.

63. Mechanisms for the transfer of students to and from other schools and colleges are effective. The school enjoys strong links with primary feeder schools and with other secondary schools and post-16 colleges, for example in vocational course development, the Excellence in Cities initiative and the development of an augmented curriculum. Where there is already shared provision with other schools and colleges, for example in hair and beauty, there is very good management of such provision.
64. Since the previous inspection, the school has made insufficient progress in improving parental satisfaction and involvement. Problems and complaints are now handled better and the provision of information is now good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The new headteacher is providing satisfactory leadership and has made a good start in addressing some of the many challenges that face the school. Others with posts of responsibility generally fulfil aspects of their roles well, but they do not yet work as a coherent team. There are important weaknesses in some aspects of leadership and management at middle management level. Governance has been unsatisfactory overall since the last inspection and there is some statutory non-compliance, but governors are now working satisfactorily with the headteacher and senior staff.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has deteriorated since the last inspection and it will take time for recent initiatives – along with others that need to be introduced – to take effect.
- The new headteacher and other key staff show dedication and a genuine commitment to improve the school.
- The restructured senior leadership team has improved the school's capacity to evaluate its own effectiveness and bring about change, but senior and middle managers are not yet working as a coherent and effective team.
- Staffing difficulties and weak leadership in some important areas of the school's work are undermining its potential to improve.
- The governing body has not held the school to account sufficiently but is recognising the need to provide greater challenge; most but not all statutory requirements are met.

Commentary

65. When the present headteacher was permanently appointed two terms ago, he inherited a school with many difficulties. This is evident from the previous inspection report and the decline in standards over the last five years. The extent of the weaknesses within the school is also evident from the monitoring undertaken by the local education authority immediately after the current headteacher took up post.
66. As soon as he was permanently appointed, the headteacher took distinct action in seeking support from the local education authority and from external consultants in order to arrive at a clear picture of how much work needed to be done to turn the school around. The initiatives he

has introduced are making a positive impact but some of the school's weaknesses have become entrenched over a number of years and cannot be easily remedied. The local education authority has put into place a programme of enhanced support for the school.

67. The restructuring of the senior leadership team has established a clear system of line management for subject departments and the work of heads of year. The beginning of a new sense of direction is evident. The school is benefiting from the good support of an experienced deputy headteacher who has been seconded from another school to supplement its management capability. A number of those with leadership and management responsibilities fulfil aspects of their roles effectively. Many senior and middle managers are still developing important skills and undergoing further training, however, and senior managers often get too involved in day-to-day troubleshooting instead of concentrating on strategic aspects of leadership. This is partly because the role of heads of year is still undergoing development. Not all members of the senior team currently have responsibilities that play most obviously to their greatest strengths and there is scope, through re-designating some responsibilities, to strengthen significantly the impact of the senior leadership team.
68. A good deal of monitoring is undertaken, which is putting the school in a better position to evaluate its effectiveness and take action, but monitoring is not always rigorous enough. In particular, the findings of the different aspects of monitoring are not being synthesised sufficiently in order to pinpoint exactly where the leadership team should place its focus at any given time, except in mathematics and science where a self-evaluation exercise has been undertaken. The decision to focus primarily on teaching and learning has led to some key improvements in this important aspect of the school's work, but there are many other issues that simultaneously require an equal amount of attention. Until the senior leadership team is working as a coherent whole that is consistently shaping the school by setting clear parameters for students and staff – supported consistently by middle managers – the various aspects of the school's work are unlikely to come together into a meaningful whole. The school is aware of this and training is being targeted to improve its leadership and management capacity, but it is unlikely to be able to solve its most profound problems without significant external support.
69. School effectiveness is adversely affected by some important weaknesses in leadership and management at middle management level and by staffing difficulties. As a result, the senior leadership team is not receiving seamless support from middle managers, although leadership is good in some subjects and there is a general commitment to school improvement. Heads of department have quite recently begun to undertake a range of monitoring tasks and to use performance data as a means of raising standards.
70. Recruiting a permanent head of department for English and a co-ordinator for literacy has proved impossible. The school has sought in English, as in other subjects, to avoid the use of temporary short-term staff and has, instead, filled the gaps with the part-time use of a number of its permanent staff – who are not necessarily English specialists – and by appointing some temporary teachers on fixed term contracts. An acting head of English is currently leading the subject, but the fragmented nature of the staffing arrangements undermines the effectiveness of provision for English throughout the school and necessarily affects students' achievement. In mathematics and science, the school is also experiencing some staffing difficulties. There is no head of department in religious education at present, and lack of effective leadership has given rise over time to the establishment of students' very negative attitudes towards the subject. The seconded deputy headteacher is providing temporary support for religious education and has made a good impact on a number of aspects of the department's work in a short time. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory in French, where students have achieved some of their lowest results at GCSE in recent years.
71. The co-ordination of special educational needs is unsatisfactory overall. Leadership within the unit for students with visual impairment and physical disabilities is good, and this enables these students to make good progress. Leadership for inclusion across the school as a whole and within the learning support unit and learning difficulties base is unsatisfactory. Currently, there

are three separate aspects to the school's special educational needs provision, which are largely 'unit' based, with varying degrees of overlap between the work of each one. The provision is not coherent and there is often duplication of work and purpose.

72. The work of the learning support unit and the learning difficulties base does not support inclusion and is not based on a coherent vision. Development planning is unsatisfactory, particularly for the learning support unit and learning difficulties. It does not suggest effective strategies to develop proactive inclusion, but rather focuses on internally excluding students in reaction to difficulties managing their needs in the classroom. Monitoring is unsatisfactory and is only carried out as part of performance management arrangements or informally through meetings and discussions. It has not been formalised, lacks rigour and has very little impact.
73. As a result of this variability in the quality of leadership and management at middle management level and the fact that the senior leadership team is not yet working as a powerful force for change, leadership and management overall are unsatisfactory. They need to be strengthened at senior and middle management level to achieve the radical changes required to make the school at least satisfactory in all aspects of its work.
74. The new headteacher has sought a closer working relationship with the governing body and enjoys an open relationship with the chair of governors, who now has a good understanding of the school's main strengths and weaknesses. The governing body has a stable membership, operates through a range of appropriate sub-committees and governors have been consistently supportive to the school. They did not, however, challenge the school as much as they should have done following the last inspection when the school received a very critical report on a number of important aspects of its work. They received annual feedback from subject departments and asked heads of departments to account for themselves when standards fell in science, French and electronic products, which led to some improvements. They were involved in discussions about school development, asking questions about specific aspects of practice, but did not undertake formal monitoring. The governing body understood that something was seriously wrong when GCSE results dropped significantly in 2003. Governors now realise that they need to be more proactive in gathering direct information about how well the school is performing. Link governors have been established with most subject areas and visits have been arranged.
75. The school is closer to meeting fully its statutory requirements than it was at the time of the last inspection. Not all elements of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study are taught in physical education, however, and the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is still not met. Governors have given consideration to how the school might meet the requirement for a daily act of worship. The school hall is capable of holding only one year group at a time and the larger Recreation Centre sports hall is not consistently available. A structure has been put in place, whereby tutors have access to a 'Thought for the week'. Observations during the inspection showed that this is not implemented by all tutors.
76. Financial control is good and spending is linked to planned developments for the current year. Performance management is being used increasingly to align school improvement with the identification of professional development needs. Information, derived chiefly from local education authority monitoring and that undertaken by external consultants, has been used to identify some important priorities, currently with an emphasis on improving teaching and learning as a means of raising standards. The recent appointment of a business manager has improved school efficiency and the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.
77. Standards are below average and students do not achieve as much as they should, although they do achieve satisfactorily in some subjects and generally do better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall, but half of the teaching is good. The curriculum is satisfactory. Too many students have an unsatisfactory attitude to learning. The school has begun to make some improvement in recent months, having deteriorated since the previous inspection. It provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,969,256
Total expenditure	4,043,057
Expenditure per pupil	3,437

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	189,619
Balance carried forward to the next	115,818

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 **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 9 and 11 are below national averages.
- Students make more progress in Year 11 and their achievement in the GCSE examination is satisfactory.
- Staffing disruption has severely affected students' attitudes to learning; this is leading to underachievement in all year groups.
- Despite extensive efforts to recruit, the department is still without a full team of specialists and head of department.
- Marking and the use of assessment data are not thorough enough – despite good marking by some teachers – which means that students do not know how they can improve their work.

Commentary

78. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 were below the national average. Students' rate of progress between Years 7 to 9 was well below the average for schools where pupils' attainment in Year 7 was similar. Girls perform much less well than boys. Test results have not improved over the last three years.
79. Standards at GCSE in 2003 were below average in English language and well below average in English literature. Although most students achieved a pass at GCSE, a low proportion gained the highest grades. In National Curriculum tests and at GCSE, students of Caribbean descent – particularly black boys – underachieve in comparison with other ethnic groups. Indian and Pakistani heritage students achieve better results than all other students. Students with visual impairment and physical disabilities achieve well; others with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress.
80. Inspection evidence indicates that students make better progress in Years 10 and 11 than during Years 7 to 9, where achievement falls short of expectations. A number of factors have had an adverse impact on students' achievement. Firstly, disruption in staffing is adversely affecting students' work and behaviour particularly in Years 7 to 9. Secondly, students have not covered the volume of work expected; there is much work that is unmarked and some marking does not convey to students what they need to do to improve their work. Thirdly, the ethos for learning is not positive. Overall, given students' starting points, they make less progress than they should over time.
81. Standards in all areas of the English curriculum are below the national average. In Year 9, students do not speak at length or use a formal register to develop their thinking. In Year 11, most students explore texts through lively discussion. Their success is the result of thorough teaching and assessment. Reading for understanding is undeveloped. Whilst the higher-attaining students use quotations in their work and identify some of the implicit meanings, most do not readily understand the subtle way in which language is used. Consequently, there are weaknesses in textual analysis, and comprehension work is too brief. Overall, close reading is undeveloped in Years 9 and 11. Generally, students enjoy narrative writing and some use the

drafting process, but the changes they make are mostly superficial. Higher-attaining students write coherently. However, their technical skills are not improved substantially; there are frequent errors in spelling, paragraphing and grammar. ICT is not used widely. Presentation skills range from work that is scrappy to work that is very neat and well presented.

82. During the inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in Years 10 and 11 but, over time, the quality of teaching and learning has been unsatisfactory for these students. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. Students are lively and challenging but they respond to teachers who set clear expectations for work and behaviour, and insist on them. The best lessons are carefully structured, based on precise objectives. In these lessons, teachers skilfully question students and use their answers to extend learning, and they use peer assessment instructively to challenge students. In the less successful lessons:
- there is insufficient direct and active teaching to engage students;
 - resources and methods are not matched to the wide needs of students;
 - students become restless, so that classroom control and the pace of teaching break down.
83. Students' progress is not helped by the lack of emphasis on assessing how much they understand in response to teaching. Homework is sometimes set but many students do not complete it.
84. The interim head of department, who has been in post for six weeks, entered a fragmented department that is kept going by a substantial number of part-time and non-specialist staff. She has started to introduce changes in curriculum planning and group organisation in order to raise standards but, despite her best efforts, has not yet been able to establish effective leadership of a subject that has suffered – and continues to suffer – major staffing difficulties. The department is without a strategic plan and formal monitoring lacks rigour to drive up standards. Since the last inspection, improvement in English has been unsatisfactory. More time has been allocated to Year 11 but standards have declined, teaching is unsatisfactory overall and resources are inadequate. Students are not realising their potential.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

85. Disruption in staffing and difficulties in recruiting a literacy co-ordinator have affected development of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. At school level, staff training has led to teachers developing expertise in some aspects of literacy. The librarian is very proactive in developing students' study skills and is presently working with the English department to encourage wider reading. The library has expanded since the last inspection and students use it well.
86. Satisfactory attention is given to reinforcing technical vocabulary in all subjects. In music, where it is developed well, students use recording, chants and repetition when learning new words. Across the curriculum, however, speaking and listening skills are undeveloped. Listening skills are generally unsatisfactory; although, where there is good teaching, students listen and use discussion well to consolidate their learning. For example, in physical education, students are expected to give extended answers and take part in group discussions. In English and geography, students achieve well when they are challenged to make presentations. There are insufficient opportunities to develop oral skills in science, mathematics and religious education. Students' writing skills are not good enough to raise standards in most subjects; students tend to write in less depth than is required to reach higher grades at GCSE. The writing of higher-attaining students is, however, generally well structured in subjects such as music, health and social care, English and citizenship. Writing frames have been developed for use in religious education and history, and in German, students are aware of grammatical features. In most departments, students' books reveal written work that is incomplete. Work is not marked thoroughly enough to correct mistakes in literacy and results in students not knowing how to improve their work.

87. Overall, provision for literacy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There is a need to monitor and evaluate the impact of this provision and use aspects of the Key Stage 3 Strategy in supporting the development and use of the students' literacy skills.

Drama

Provision in drama is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Instability in staffing has resulted in a sharp decline in standards and achievement.
 - Teachers are committed to helping students achieve their best.
 - Teachers' clear expectations of work and good relationships have fostered positive attitudes of students that enable effective learning to take place.
88. The fact that standards are well below average at GCSE may be explained by a number factors, including frequent staff changes and students choosing the subject for the wrong reasons – for example, believing that it does not involve academic work or that they had no other choice. Students have not had the benefit of continuous specialist teaching and guidance throughout the course and standards have been well below the national average for the last five years. The school has recently taken temporary measures to prevent further decline by appointing and training experienced teachers to manage the GCSE course.
89. In discussion with students, they indicated how much they had been behind with their work until a temporary specialist teacher was appointed. Achievement is lower than expected because of the disruptions to teaching. Students work well collaboratively to devise role-play but performances are not polished and evaluative skills are undeveloped. With the recent support, students are beginning to tackle their coursework tasks more conscientiously, but written work often falls short in analysis and development. Students in Years 7 to 9 are taught drama as part of the English curriculum. In the lessons seen in Years 8 and 9, students achieved well because they were continuously challenged to reflect on and assess their work. Furthermore, a 'can do' culture was emphasised.
90. The quality of teaching is good overall. Working relationships are good and all teachers are committed to helping students achieve their best. Students work in partnership with their teachers and this is increasing their awareness of the demands of the subject. In all classes, expectations of behaviour are known and respected. This is leading to students listening to and following instructions without wasting time. Teachers provide detailed guidelines of the examination requirements to ensure that all students know what is required. There is a very good level of care and sensitivity to the needs of students with physical disabilities; these students find that they can merge and join in with performances and discussion.
91. Drama is without a permanent and specialist head of department to lead developments. There are, however, opportunities for students to take part in theatre visits and drama productions for the gifted and talented, and there is commitment to helping the examination classes. Since the last inspection, improvement has been unsatisfactory: standards have fallen significantly and staffing is unsatisfactory.

French

Provision in French is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 are well below the national average.
- Higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged and GCSE targets for 2004 are too low.
- Management of the department is unsatisfactory.
- Teachers have a good command of French and individual lessons are well planned.
- Students' behaviour is good.

Commentary

92. Standards in French have declined considerably since the last inspection and the percentage of students gaining A* to C grades at GCSE in 2003 was well below the national average and poor in comparison with students' performance in other subjects. Girls do much better than boys in French. There is no significant difference between the attainment of students from different ethnic groups. Standards in Year 9 are well below national expectations for Levels 5 and 6. Those students who study both French and German perform better in German, sometimes by as much as two National Curriculum levels. The difficulties of recruiting staff have undoubtedly been a significant factor in the decline in performance but there are now three specialist teachers and there is some improvement in standards. The targets set for GCSE in 2004 are, however, much too low. Students' achievement is currently satisfactory overall although it was unsatisfactory in some lessons during the inspection.
93. Students are able to understand the teachers' instructions and explanations in French and are attentive and well behaved in most lessons. They make every effort to answer questions when they are asked directly but few offer answers when the teacher asks questions generally to the whole class. When they are asked to work with a partner, they are co-operative and they ask and answer questions of their peers with more confidence than in front of the whole class. Their pronunciation still contains basic errors. They read short phrases with understanding but few can read longer passages and pick out the key information. They are given little opportunity to write more extended passages and their written work is correspondingly at a low level in most cases. Marking is inconsistent and some books have not been marked for some time.
94. Whilst the majority of teaching was satisfactory during the inspection, there was some unsatisfactory teaching and no teaching was judged to be good. Although teachers have a good command of their subject, most use English too much and their expectations of the students are correspondingly lower than they should be. The pace of lessons is inconsistent and in one of the lessons, the slowness of the pace led to poor behaviour on the part of the students. With this one exception, however, behaviour in French was good. Teachers are aware of different strategies for matching work to the needs of different students but they frequently fail to provide enough challenge for higher-attaining students.
95. The head of French has been in post for just over a year. She has a clear vision for the department and is a good role model in her use of French for the main business of the classroom. She has, however, yet to create an effective team in the department and this hampers progress and means that the improvement has so far been only slight. Little monitoring and evaluation of performance have yet taken place. The department consists normally of only two people, but a third specialist is working on a temporary contract. Book resources are limited in the French department and students have to share textbooks. This is difficult particularly as the new scheme of work is based upon the textbook. The department does not currently have the services of a foreign language assistant. Use of ICT is reasonably

limited but staff are building in opportunities to use it and displays in classrooms do reflect some ICT use.

96. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. A number of weaknesses identified in the previous inspection have not been resolved, particularly in relation to expectations.

German

Provision in German is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Results at GCSE in 2003 were well below average.
 - Teaching is good and teachers have a good command of German.
 - Lessons are well planned.
 - Students are well behaved and most have a positive attitude to the subject.
 - Leadership and management are good.
97. Standards in Year 9 are in line with national averages in relation to the percentage of students achieving Levels 5 and 6. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection. At GCSE in 2003, the results declined considerably and were well below average. In contrast to previous years, boys achieved considerably lower standards than girls. Work seen during the inspection and the school's self-evaluation processes show that there has been a significant improvement since September. The department has set some challenging targets for GCSE for 2004. The number of students taking the higher tiers of the GCSE examination is low, however, representing a third of those studying German in Year 11.
98. The difficulties in recruiting staff have been a significant factor in the decline of the German results, but there are now three German specialists, who are raising standards. Achievement is satisfactory overall and some students are achieving above average standards. Most students have a good understanding of the teachers' instructions and explanations in German. They make a good attempt to answer the teachers' questions when asked directly but are less confident about asking questions. They are more comfortable when working with a partner where they ask and answer questions. They pronounce German with reasonable accuracy and intonation, although they still make some basic errors.
99. Students read short phrases with understanding and some use reference materials such as dictionaries with confidence. In Years 10 and 11, they read short texts and dialogues and translate them into English. There is some evidence of students being able to read and pick out the key points from a longer factual text or short story, but this is rather limited. There is no evidence of students reading independently.
100. In Year 11, the writing in students' books is often undemanding and mainly in the present tense. There are, however, some who use a greater range of tenses more often and who do some more extended writing. The range of writing is better in Year 10 than in Year 11 and students in Years 8 and 9 are producing some good writing using a range of tenses. There is, however, too much English in exercise books.
101. Teaching is good overall and all the teaching seen was at least satisfactory. Teachers have a good command of German and in most lessons German is the main language of classroom communication. In a minority of lessons, there is too much English used by the teacher and students. Lesson planning is good, objectives for lessons are clear and they are shared with the students. In some lessons, they are reviewed at the end of the lesson, but too often the plenary is a little rushed and unfocused. Teachers plan work to match students' different needs, but they do not always provide appropriate tasks for higher-attaining students: simply more of the same, for example, to produce six sentences rather than four. In the best lessons,

however, teachers show they are aware that some of the class can achieve higher standards and both in class and homework they expect them to do some independent work. Teachers ensure that their work is made accessible to the lower attainers and give them support. There is a register of gifted and talented students and teachers are aware of who they are, but there was no specific evidence of work being tailored to meet their needs. The pace of most lessons was good and teachers gave students deadlines for tasks.

102. Teachers have a good understanding of National Curriculum levels and their assessments follow the school pattern of rewarding quality and effort. There were some good examples of marking which helped the students to improve, but this was not consistent.
103. The students had a positive attitude to German and were attentive and co-operated well with teachers and their peers. They made a good effort to carry out their tasks successfully and there was evidence of progress being made in lessons.
104. Leadership and management of the German department is good: the head of German has only been in post since September, but she has had a significant impact on the standards in German. She has a clear vision for the department and has been able to communicate that to her team. The other teachers understand the vision and are working with her to bring about the changes, which they all know are necessary. Teachers of German use a variety of resources and there is some evidence of the use of ICT as seen in displays, but students in Year 7 do not have a course book.
105. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with good improvement recently following the appointment of the new head of department.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' overall achievement is unsatisfactory.
- There are difficulties in the recruitment and retention of well qualified teachers.
- The attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of students are unsatisfactory.
- Insufficient time is allocated to monitoring the work of the department, and to devising strategies for improvement.
- Curriculum leadership is good; the scheme of work provides very clear guidance for teachers.

Commentary

106. Results in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 in 2003 were average, and showed an improvement on 2002 results. Results in mathematics were better than in science, and much better than in English. However, compared with the results of pupils in schools with similar standards at the beginning of Year 7, they were well below average. Boys' standards improved, and they performed better than the girls, whose standards have remained constant in the last five years. In the GCSE examinations, the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades was well below average; these results have declined in the last four years. The improvement shown by students since their tests in Year 9 was unsatisfactory. However, students performed better at GCSE than in many of their other subjects, particularly the boys.
107. Standards on entry to the school are broadly average. In work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 11, overall standards are below average. Students' achievement is therefore unsatisfactory in both key stages. In class, there are no consistent differences in the work of boys and girls. In most classes, the boy/girl seating arrangement has a positive impact. Students with special educational needs are well known by their teachers, but they are in big

classes in Years 7 to 9. Even where teaching assistants are present to provide additional support, pupils' overall progress is unsatisfactory. Their progress is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 because they are generally in smaller classes, and they receive more individual attention. Students with physical disabilities or visual impairment are well integrated throughout the school, they mostly have a positive attitude to their work, and their progress is satisfactory. Students from ethnic minorities are also well integrated. A number perform particularly well, but their overall achievement is on a par with that of other students.

108. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall; it is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Due to difficulty in the recruitment of suitably qualified and skilled teachers, the department is at present under staffed. Class sizes are therefore too large, particularly in Year 7. This increases the range of attainment in each class, and teachers do not always take account of this in their planning. As a result, a significant number of students develop a casual approach to their work, they underachieve, lose confidence, and standards fall. Relationships with teachers are less positive when pupils do not concentrate. Teachers are conscientious and plan the topic content of lessons thoroughly, but they do not always devise good strategies for learning. A number of lessons are too dominated by the teacher's voice, leaving little opportunity for students to use their initiative and to learn by doing, and thereby to overcome their individual weaknesses. The good display of work enhances classrooms and includes information about how to improve grades, but this is rarely referred to in lessons. Marking is inconsistent, and the grading of work makes insufficient reference to national levels. Moreover, marking is not diagnostic, and although many students know their target grades, there is little advice about how to attain them, other than to 'work harder'.
109. Curriculum leadership of the department is good, with a well-structured scheme of work to guide teachers' planning. This scheme is produced at three levels, so that all students should be provided with work appropriate to their need. The head of department leads by example. She is a very good role model for teachers and students in her relationships with colleagues and students, and her attention to detail. There is strong support from her line manager.
110. Management of the work of the department is unsatisfactory. There is increasing use of comparative data to monitor the work of all students, and to identify underachievement. This data is not yet utilised to monitor the work of teachers through measuring the improvement of each class each year, or to devise strategies for increasing students' achievement. There is also insufficient priority given to monitoring teaching and learning in class, to improving teaching skills, and the quality of marking.
111. There have been some signs of improvement in the last two years, but overall progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. In particular, teaching has not improved, and therefore students still spend too much time listening, and their achievements are still unsatisfactory. Standards at GCSE have fallen. More priority is given to the use of investigations which encourage students to think about their work, and to realise there may at times be more than one answer. There is still little use of computers in lessons by teachers or students, and teaching methods lack variety.

Mathematics across the curriculum

112. Recent training sessions have raised teachers' awareness that all subjects contribute to the development of students' mathematical skills. The co-ordinator has also prepared a draft policy for the use of mathematics across the curriculum, in order to improve consistency and progression in learning. A number of subjects have developed their own policies as a result, improving provision for students.
113. Standards and confidence in the use of number are below average. Students find difficulty when undertaking simple calculations (such as a Year 11 pupil calculating 20×4), and they often turn too readily to a calculator. Moreover, they do not routinely question the feasibility of answers provided by the calculator.

114. There is regular use of mathematical processes in a number of subjects. In science, for example, there is good use of measurements and formulae to calculate values such as average speed, and also analysis of measurements by using graphs. Students understand the use of 'line of best fit'. There is also good use of graphs in geography, for instance to help students to understand population changes in the Luton area. In physical education, students study changes in pulse rates, and in vocational courses such as health and social care they use graphs to study growth patterns.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below the national average in Year 11.
- Practical activities and investigation are not used well by teachers, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9, and throughout the school, students do not achieve well enough.
- Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of science and are enthusiastic, but teaching is unsatisfactory overall.
- Assessment and recording systems are recently well established.
- There is insufficient monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and learning.

Commentary

115. There has been considerable difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified and experienced science teachers and this has affected learning and achievement for many students. In a minority of lessons, poor behaviour prevents learning.

116. Students enter with just below average attainment. All students, including those with special educational needs, physical disability and visual impairment, from all ethnic backgrounds, showed satisfactory achievement in the National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003. These results were in line with the national average and a significant improvement on the previous year. The increase in the proportion of students gaining the higher Level 6 and above was the best ever, although still below the national average. In comparison with standards in similar schools they are well below the average and, at the end of Year 9, the performance of girls is well below that of boys. In lessons, there is a shortage of problem-solving activity, inquiry and discovery, and students' achievement by Year 9 is currently unsatisfactory. Lower-attaining students, in Year 8 are well supported by an experienced teacher and they demonstrate good understanding of respiration. Others, of high ability, were insufficiently challenged in their work on the components of a balanced diet and achievement was unsatisfactory.

117. In Year 11 students usually take double award science at GCSE although, in Year 10, new single and double award courses have been introduced for some students. In 2003, results were well below the national average, especially at the higher grades, and there has been a steady decline over the past five years. There is also a recent and marked difference in the success of boys and girls, with girls falling well behind, although all other groups of students do equally well. In the work seen in Years 10 and 11, students' achievement varies but is unsatisfactory overall, largely because of poor, unchecked, behaviour.

118. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory overall, and students are not engaged with the excitement of science. A number of lessons are led by teachers with limited experience and poor class control, and many students do not learn enough to achieve what they should do. Teachers' specialist subject knowledge and understanding are very good and there are isolated examples of good and very good practice. The recent use of starter and plenary activities, focused questioning, and thorough and detailed planning, are strong features of these lessons and they help some

students to do well. Standards of literacy are poor and much work in students' books is of an unacceptable quality and often unfinished.

119. Leadership is satisfactory and the head of faculty handles people well and with sensitivity. He is aware of the strengths in the department and of what needs to be done to effect improvement. However, management generally is unsatisfactory and the strategies for ensuring improvement are not in place, and monitoring and evaluation are not routine or well done. Strategies for improving teaching and learning, the use of assessment and the sharing of good practice are very recent and not yet fully developed. The team of teachers and technicians have a keen sense of purpose to their work. However, there is insufficient practical work in lessons. Resources are barely satisfactory and access to some laboratories through adjacent rooms is inconvenient, disruptive and may be hazardous if students' behaviour is poor or unsupervised.
120. Since the last inspection there has been no significant improvement in standards, teaching and learning and the monitoring and evaluation of lessons. However, there is a corporate energy and a strong desire to succeed. Recent review and evaluation now clarify the way forward, new schemes of work are complete, the Key Stage 3 Strategy is in use in all lessons and a regular and rigorous system for assessment is in place.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching has led to continuously improving standards and achievement in ICT, but there is still some backlog of underachievement.
- Students respond well to teachers who demonstrably like them but also provide clear boundaries.
- Good leadership and effective teamwork support consistent quality of provision.
- ICT is embedded into schemes of work and teaching in a number of subjects.
- There has been substantial improvement since the previous inspection.

Commentary

121. Standards in 2003 National Curriculum assessments in Year 9 were broadly average. Girls did better than boys. However, much of the work seen during the inspection was above average, showing that strong teaching and good implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy are having a positive effect on standards. Given students' attainment on entry, achievement is good for girls, satisfactory for boys and satisfactory overall. Until September 2003, there were no accredited courses in ICT for Years 10 and 11. Work seen from the current students in Year 10 reveals satisfactory achievement. Year 11 students have only just begun an accredited programme, and the standards are not yet appropriate for the age group. Higher-attaining students are not yet fully challenged or supported, with some consequent underachievement, but students with visual impairment and other special educational needs are supported well in ICT and make satisfactory progress.
122. Teaching and learning are good in both key stages. Methods are effective, teachers usually have appropriate expectations and provide sufficient challenge. Students respond well in lessons where teachers treat them with respect and affection, but with clear boundaries for behaviour. Teaching in ICT is characterised by thorough preparation and planning, imaginative materials, very good behaviour management, strong rapport with the students and good use of time in lessons to ensure that all achieve key objectives. Support for students with visual impairment is good. Teaching materials, for example, are produced in separate versions for greater legibility, or for easier reading in terms of style and content. In class teaching, however, there is some need for greater matching of teaching to different learning styles and for methods

more suited to students with special educational needs and for those who are gifted and talented.

123. The leadership and management of the department are good, characterised by strong teamwork and mutual support. There is good planning and effective tracking of attainment against expectation through the use of target grades. Development planning is thorough and sophisticated. There are realistic targets, centred on attainment, curriculum and staff development as well as the necessary hardware, software and resources to achieve those ends. Sensible policies are fully stated, clearly understood and consistently applied.
124. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The previous inspection found attainment below expected levels, unsatisfactory progress and few opportunities for students to use computers. Although the quality of teaching was satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, the school did not comply with the statutory requirement to assess and report pupils' attainment in Year 11. Since that time, there has been substantial development, including:
- major investment in resources and infrastructure;
 - enormous strategic expansion of physical ICT resources and software;
 - effective use of NOF funded training to secure staff's personal ICT skills;
 - a re-evaluation of approaches to secure greatly improved teaching and learning;
 - the implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy in Years 7 to 9;
 - the introduction of Applied GCSE in Year 10 and ICT Key Skills training in Years 10 and 11.
125. Several rooms used for ICT are small and inflexible, however, while poor ventilation and a lack of air conditioning mean that excessive warmth impinges at times on students' performance and concentration.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

126. The use of ICT to promote learning in subjects across the curriculum is good. Many departments make effective use of ICT, while the level of hardware provision means that teachers have access to clusters of terminals as well as to 'bookable' suites. A sophisticated on-line booking system ensures that there is maximum usage of the resource. There is extensive provision and usage of whiteboards, and a generic software base is supplemented by licences for specialist applications where appropriate. Computers are used for presentation, Internet-based research, the design and making of artefacts, manipulation of sounds or data and for analysis of information. The use of computer controlled sewing machines helps to make aspects of computer aided design and manufacture attractive to girls as well as to boys. In science, spreadsheets are used to analyse information. In English and humanities, students use ICT in presentation of their work, although word processing could be used more in the drafting and redrafting of written work. Programmable keyboards in music support students in composition, and computers are used for data logging and analysis in science and geography. The Internet is increasingly used as a research tool to support learning. The work scrutinised electronically was impressive, combining input from core subjects with good ICT and presentational skills.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results and National Curriculum assessments in Year 9 are improving though still below average.
- Pupils achieve well from a low entry standard in Year 7.
- Teaching is good, well planned and demanding and ensures good learning.
- Modern technologies are used very well in teaching, to display visual references, focus attention and raise standards.

Commentary

127. Results in GCSE examinations are below average. The attainment of girls and boys is similar to their success in other subjects, but girls do less well than boys. Results show a five-year trend of improvement, during a time when standards at A* to C fell in a number of other subjects. Standards were well below the national average at the end of Year 9 in 2003 but they are improving rapidly.
128. Achievement by all students, including the visually impaired and those with physical disabilities, other students with special educational needs, and students for whom English is an additional language, is good overall. On entry to the school, pupils have much lower than expected prior attainment in geography. Very good strategies rapidly build geographical understanding, skills and knowledge, to the point that most students are making better than expected progress in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils in Year 9 write in a range of genres demonstrating good knowledge and understanding, for instance, of conflicts over rainforest development. In Years 10 and 11, almost all students work hard with good application and effort to achieve a satisfactory basis for the GCSE examination. Coursework investigations demonstrate a wide range of geographical techniques used, for instance, to relate birth rate changes to population growth and to map noise footprints produced by Luton Airport.
129. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are very well planned and make very good use of new technologies. Behaviour is well managed through consistent high expectations and unequivocal direction. Teachers are skilful, well qualified and knowledgeable and offer challenging and interesting work that raises motivation and attainment. Individual learning needs of students are planned and provided for well. Varied strategies, demanding pace of learning, and resources which are well matched to the curriculum and to students' abilities raise standards for all, including higher and lower-attaining students. Students make satisfactory use of computers throughout the school. Marking is good because it tells pupils how to improve their work. Assessment and the monitoring of progress are sound but not enough use is made of National Curriculum criteria to help pupils know how well they are progressing. GCSE candidates have clear targets and are keen to attain their expected grades.
130. Leadership is good, with a strong sense of direction embodied in the department development plan that aligns well with the whole school improvement plan. Curriculum planning and development are good; a programme of revision to schemes of work is under way. Departmental self-evaluation is used well to review practice and set targets for improvement. A range of well-focused strategies has been put in place to raise GCSE examination results. Literacy and numeracy development is well integrated in all topics and is a strong feature. Citizenship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural topics feature in work for all years but are not yet identified as such. Management is good. Recruitment, retention and continuing professional development of a very well deployed team of well-qualified recently trained teachers, with an experienced head of department, are producing good teaching and learning across the subject. The stability, high quality and coherence of the teaching team are clear strengths that have enabled the subject to sustain and build on its GCSE results over the last few years.
131. Since the previous inspection, there has been good improvement in standards but they are not yet high enough. There is good capacity for further improvement.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although they are rising, standards at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations are below average.
- There is not enough emphasis on the acquisition of historical skills and the nature of evidence in Year 7.
- The subject is popular, with extensive take-up of GCSE courses.
- Lesson preparation is good and there is detailed planning for activities and resources to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities.
- Pupils are not always aware of the levels at which they operating in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

132. GCSE results were well below average in 2003 but both girls and boys performed at least as well in history as in their other subjects. In work seen during the inspection, standards have improved to below average because teachers challenge students more realistically. There is a larger percentage of students demonstrating the potential to reach grades A and A* at GCSE and many are now using the subject terminology accurately and with confidence. In Year 9, attainment is below average and a significant minority of students find it difficult to support their views with evidence.
133. Students make satisfactory progress overall in Years 7 to 9. Higher-attaining students in Year 8 can give thought-provoking comments about the personality of Thomas Cromwell and are beginning to recognise that there are opposing views about his political career. Achievement in the GCSE programme is satisfactory, too, and there are examples of very good achievement in both years. Students are becoming more adept at seeing the past in shades of grey and can, for example, speak convincingly about how perceptions of cowboys in the American West have changed over time. Moreover, because students in Year 11 are aware of the different ways in which they learn, they take more responsibility for their own progress and revise effectively as a result.
134. Teachers treat their students with the utmost respect and their lesson preparation places emphasis on meeting the needs of all. Because of modified resources and effective support from learning assistants, visually impaired students, those with special educational needs or who are at early stages of learning English take full advantage of what the lessons have to offer. Students speak highly of their teachers, enjoy their lessons and inappropriate behaviour is rare; they are opting in large numbers for history in Year 10. Teachers recognise that students are not fully aware of the levels at which they operating in Years 7 to 9, and that more emphasis needs to be placed in Year 7 on how historians work and the evidence they use to make their judgements about the past. Teaching is satisfactory overall and in half the lessons it was good and occasionally very good.
135. Leadership and management are satisfactory, departmental performance is constantly under review and newly qualified teachers are supported effectively and with sensitivity. The department has made sound improvement since the last inspection; if further success is to be assured, teachers need to share good practice with their colleagues on a more regular basis.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory; past performance at GCSE has been poor.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, mainly as a result of weaknesses in the management of challenging behaviour.
- Very recent improvement to the curriculum, the production of a subject handbook and assessment are as a direct result of the leadership and management of the seconded deputy headteacher.
- Students have entrenched negative attitudes to the subject and there are high levels of unacceptable behaviour in lessons.

Commentary

136. Standards are below average throughout the school. Results at GCSE in 2003 were well below the national average. Students' achievement is unsatisfactory in lessons and over time. Their written work reveals gaps in their learning during the current academic year, where religious education has not been taught effectively or students have opted not to complete set work. Standards have begun to rise and achievement has improved in Years 10 and 11 since the beginning of this term because there is more effective temporary leadership and management of the subject. Good recent improvements in planning, assessment and support for teaching and learning are contributing to the school's predictions of better results in the forthcoming GCSE examinations. Nevertheless, students' overall achievement in religious education is unsatisfactory.
137. Learning about religion is broadly satisfactory, albeit at a superficial level. Students in Years 7 to 9 are learning about the main features of various world faiths. In Years 10 and 11, students concentrate primarily on ethical issues within the context of religious teachings. For example, Year 10 students have an understanding of suffering within a Christian context and compare that to Buddhist teachings on suffering. In Year 11, students know about the importance of pilgrimage within different belief systems, such as those to Rome and Lourdes for Catholic Christians, and compare this to agnostic and atheistic ideas.
138. Religious education covers a significant amount of citizenship in Years 10 and 11 but much of it is 'lost' on most students, who do not think at any depth about what they are being taught. The majority of students show limited interest even when working from an attractive set of textbooks on topics of everyday significance. Learning from religion is poor as a result of students' negative attitudes to the subject: they readily admit that they do not like religious education.
139. During the inspection, some satisfactorily planned lessons where teachers intended to focus on learning that can be derived from religion were effectively sabotaged by students' refusal to co-operate. Students' poor attitudes to learning often lead to behaviour that teachers find difficult to manage and, as a result of such difficulties, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory in the vast majority of lessons during the inspection. For example, in Year 8, a group of boys showed blatant lack of respect and ridiculed religious rituals as the class watched a video excerpt. Despite the persistent efforts of the teacher who worked hard to gain control, they continued to disrupt the lesson. In the majority of religious education lessons during the inspection, including all lessons in Years 7 to 9, behaviour was unsatisfactory and at times poor. The worst behaviour was generated by boys; girls and a minority of boys generally behaved satisfactorily, with about a third of students typically attempting to work in any given lesson. Regular disruption in religious education results in unsatisfactory achievement. The poor work ethic makes it impossible for teachers to generate any serious discussion to promote students' learning from religion in order to apply it to their own lives. It also means that religious education makes a very limited contribution to students' spiritual development.
140. Leadership and management are currently satisfactory as an experienced deputy headteacher, who has been seconded to the school, is overseeing the subject. There is no permanent head of department and it is evident from students' work that there have been weaknesses in the

management of students' learning and behaviour over a significant period of time. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Good improvement has been made since the beginning of this term in developing a scheme of work and devising an assessment system, and this should provide a basis for the work of a new head of department when the school is able to make an appointment. Resources are insufficient for students to have a textbook each, however, and there is a shortage of artefacts. Students have been on some visits to places of religion, but not recently; an appropriate range of visits is planned.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are better than those in most other subjects.
- Students do not find it easy to develop and apply a view of technology as a problem-solving activity, partly because work in the subject is not integrated between the different sub-areas.
- Teaching and learning are good, and students enjoy the subject.

Commentary

141. In recent years, all Year 11 students have entered for GCSE in one (or sometimes two) design and technology subjects, and consistently just under half have achieved A* to C grades. These results are a little below the national average, but better than local averages and better than many other subjects in the school. GCSE results have been fairly steady overall since the last inspection, but the results in the different areas – electronics, food technology, graphics, resistant materials, and textiles technology – tend to vary quite significantly from year to year, with electronic products more often doing less well than the other areas and food technology usually doing well. Most students who join the school in Year 7 have had little experience of design and technology. While they finish Year 9 with below average standards in design and technology, this still signals good progress – they all learn quickly and mostly achieve well through those three years. Much the same is true during Years 10 and 11, by the end of which most students' grasp of design and technology is just about average.

142. Although students mostly achieve well, they make their best progress in the practical skills of design and technology – such as working with food, fabrics and wood, and using a range of utensils and hand and machine tools in a range of contexts. Their growth of knowledge is much less strong – knowledge of specialist vocabulary, underlying science (for instance, conductors and insulators, the nature and importance of yeast, the properties of different resistant materials) and the design process in general. And very few gain a good enough understanding of what design and technology is really about – which is solving problems – to be able to apply what they have learned to new situations. Despite this, most – boys and girls, those from different ethnic backgrounds, and students with special educational needs – enjoy the subject and accept the challenge to work hard and do well.

143. The most important factor in students' good learning is the good teaching. The teachers – mostly well qualified and experienced – do their best to identify and meet the needs of individual students. There is also currently much effort going into further improving the systems for assessing the students' progress and setting targets, and teachers are coming close to sharing those tasks fully with the students.

144. The main features of the teaching are:

- teachers' competence in their particular areas and their enthusiasm, which the students so often share as a result;
- their careful planning of topics and lessons, including revising the plans in the light of experience (this being even better for Years 10 and 11 than lower in the school);
- the wide range of activities, which means that students remain attentive and enthusiastic;
- the effective use of homework to extend what has been done in lessons (again, even better in Years 10 and 11);
- the way they expect good things from the students and continually encourage and challenge them;
- their expectations of good behaviour – which they therefore normally get.

145. The overall head of design and technology is only temporarily in that role – indeed that has been true of the leaders of the various areas within the subject. Despite this fluidity and lack of management continuity, work in the subject is well led and managed. There is a clear vision of what development should take place and monitoring is good. Traditionally, design and technology has not been a single subject in the school but students would benefit from a clearer whole subject identity and an overall problem-solving approach. While there is otherwise good support from the senior leadership team, there are some shortages of resources.

146. Design and technology was judged to be good in the previous inspection and it has generally maintained the strengths identified then. In addition, there have been significant improvements in the curriculum, the use of ICT, links with feeder schools, staffing, and accommodation.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at GCSE in 2003 were below the national average.
- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11, where teachers have high expectations.

- Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 need further development.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning need further development.

Commentary

147. GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average; in previous years, they had been close to the national average. Standards seen during the inspection were broadly in line with national expectations overall but this was not always the case in some Year 7 to 9 classes. Staffing changes in the past three years have been a significant factor here. Because of this, there has not been continuity of teaching and learning, and this has resulted in slow progress in the development of drawing and painting skills for many students in Years 7 to 9, as well as in manipulation and modelling skills when working in clay.
148. Students learn about the characteristics and style of famous artists and other cultures, which influences their own work. They are also learning to write about their work and to evaluate its worth. There is evidence in Year 9 of improvement in the use of pencil and paint, as well as in the quality of finished work. Most students achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 9. A stronger emphasis on the development and consolidation of drawing skills from Year 7 onwards would help to improve progress and raise standards. Those for whom English is an additional language are well integrated and make satisfactory progress. However, support and the range of appropriate learning resources for students with special education needs are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.
149. Overall, students in Year 11 are working broadly in line with national expectations. Many students develop good skills in drawing, painting and three dimensions as a result of good teaching. With encouragement and direction, many develop an ability to organise their own research and learning. Research and experimentation is often wide ranging but does not always translate into finished work of good quality. Work is often appropriately influenced by the style and techniques of famous artists. Those involved in the vocational course are very productive as the result of good teaching and achieve well in examinations. There is a good programme of support and development for gifted and talented pupils in Years 10 and 11. Their work has made a good contribution to the attractiveness of the school in many areas.
150. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. Good learning occurred in lessons with a prompt start, high expectations of pace and outcome, and good relationships. Expectations and pace in some classes in Years 7 to 9 were insufficiently demanding, and time and effort spent on the behaviour management of a small number of boys interfered with the continuity and progression of the lesson. Attitudes to learning are more positive in Years 10 and 11, where behaviour is good in response to thorough planning and experienced teaching. Access to computers is very restricted in all years and the department needs to consider improved strategies for contributing more effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has a diverse cultural population but this is not adequately reflected or celebrated in the artwork. Assessment procedures are thorough and informative in Years 10 and 11, but they are not related to National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9.
151. Leadership in art is satisfactory. The GCSE vocational course has been a successful innovation. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is being effectively developed in Years 10 and 11. A good team spirit is evident amongst the staff. An attractive, spacious and versatile learning environment has been established. Further work is needed to develop management of the subject. Documentation needs to be more detailed concerning whole school policies and procedures. Most importantly, rigorous and sustained monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are required to assist in raising standards and levels of achievement. The findings of monitoring need to be used in particular to raise the attainment of boys at examination level and bring teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 up that in Years 10 and 11. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables most students to achieve well.
- Standards have risen and are now in line with the national average.
- Music is popular among students who usually behave and respond well.
- Increased numbers and resources means more staff time is now needed.

Commentary

152. Standards are average overall. GCSE results have improved over the last three years until they are now in line with the national average, with no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. A few students in each year go on to study music when they leave. Teacher assessment placed the majority of Year 9 students at or above the expected level in 2003. Work seen during the inspection confirms these improving standards and good achievement. Students learn to behave as musicians, singing, playing, listening and reflecting on these activities. Many students find difficulty in pitching their voices accurately. Individual instrumental learning by a large minority of students across the school is an important support to standards. Students generally do their best because the atmosphere in lessons is so positive. They work together in groups frequently and well. Higher-attaining and talented students help those with learning difficulties so that all can and do achieve. Those with particular instrumental skill use this in lessons so that all benefit from the experience. Students learn to use music notation in Year 7 and their confidence gradually increases. Because students enjoy music and learn well in the first three years, many more now choose the subject for GCSE so that there are two full classes in Years 10 and 11.
153. Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good features to the teaching. Teachers engage with students very well, know them as individuals and provide good role models as musicians and as people. They provide sensitive support to pupils with special educational needs. Teachers show their enthusiasm through the music and have high expectations of behaviour and response. In all years, teachers regularly use written work to consolidate learning from practical activities. Teaching and learning in the first three years covers the National Curriculum well and so provides a good basis for more advanced work in GCSE. Teachers do not, however, use the criteria for different levels of attainment as incentives to even better achievement. Work in Years 10 and 11 is planned well so that there is time for revision and detailed preparation for the examination. Teachers could plan even more precisely for GCSE practical lessons so that some students could start on individual tasks immediately.
154. Leadership is good because the head of department has a clear vision of how standards can be raised and is proactive in ensuring development of provision, for example through expanding facilities for ICT and recording. Good teamwork is evident from staff, who share responsibilities. These include the management of a substantial programme of instrumental learning and many activities beyond lessons – performing groups and visits. Stewardship of the premises and resources is very demanding. Management is currently satisfactory and will not be able to improve until technical support is provided. A higher priority needs to be given to documentation, including assessment, so that it is more accessible to others and students know and understand the criteria used for assessment in Years 7, 8, and 9.
155. Improvement since the previous inspection, when music was a key issue, has been excellent. Each of the many aspects found unsatisfactory then have improved, in many cases to the point where they are now good. Music is popular amongst the students with the best GCSE results of any subject in 2003. If staff time is maximised to support increased numbers, the potential for further improvement should be very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- National Curriculum requirements are not fully met at Key Stage 3.
- Learning opportunities for students entering Year 7 are not based closely on their prior attainment.
- The marking of written work does not provide students with clear information on how to improve.
- The attitudes of students in Years 7 to 9 are almost always good.
- The use of short-term target setting by students enables them to improve their performance.

Commentary

156. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2003 showed the majority of students to be working in line with national expectations. Since the last inspection, GCSE (short course) results have improved and were above the national average at grades A* to C in 2003. All students achieved a pass, and there were no differences in attainment between groups of students.
157. Standards seen during the inspection confirm the assessment made by teachers and indicate that more students in the present Year 9 group should achieve the national expectation. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9, in relation to the level of knowledge, skills and understanding with which students enter the school. Standards could be higher if planning were based more closely on the skills, knowledge and understanding individual students bring with them from Year 6. Standards in Years 10 and 11 in the core physical education programme are in line with national expectations. The department has introduced a full GCSE examination this year. From inspection evidence at this time in the course, standards are below course expectations in the practical component and in line with them for the theory.
158. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, teachers set high expectations, make learning outcomes clear and ensure that students can identify what they have learned. Planning is focused on a variety of helpful approaches, as seen in swimming with Year 8 and fitness with Year 9. Students' work-rate and positive attitudes were a feature of these lessons. Co-operation and self-evaluation are encouraged. Students are interested in learning and doing their best. Students with physical or visual impairment are well integrated into the lessons and support staff are used appropriately. Where learning is no more than satisfactory, the teaching is less dynamic and does not allow students to plan their work so that they improve in the short term. Instead, pace is linked to getting through a series of activities. Furthermore, the marking of written work does not provide students with information about how to improve.
159. The school is involved in the School Sports Co-ordinator Programme and provision for extra-curricular sport in the school is satisfactory. Students represent the school at a range of different levels.
160. Opportunities for using ICT are developed for students in Years 10 and 11 and students make good use of the learning resource centre. Teachers are now matching Year 9 assessments appropriately to the end of key stage descriptors and students in Year 7 now know what progress they are making over time. Activities have been introduced for those who do not participate in practical physical education, which ensures that their learning is improving.
161. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with some emerging good features, and there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The new head of department has a clear vision for the subject: achievement for all is the priority. Whilst National Curriculum

requirements are not fully met in Years 7 to 9, in terms of teaching dance or gymnastics, the range of opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11 is more appropriate than it was at the time of the last inspection. Priorities for the subject are being developed and the well motivated team of staff work to ensure that all students learn in physical education. Schemes of work are being developed which should link teaching, learning and assessment.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Provision in vocational education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vocational curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Results in art and design are above the national average.
- Good features of teaching include the provision of interesting, practical tasks.
- ICT is not used enough to present or analyse data from students' research.

Commentary

162. The vocational curriculum has been significantly improved recently due to the clear vision of the headteacher. It now effectively meets a wider variety of students' needs than at the last inspection. Lessons in business, hairdressing and beauty, health and social care and ICT are being run as a pilot scheme and other subjects are planned. Vocational lessons are well established in art and design.
163. In lessons and work seen in health and social care, girls and boys were making satisfactory progress in understanding situations leading to homelessness through discussing their feelings and improved their writing skills by drafting newspaper articles. They are attaining in line with national expectations. Students on the new applied business course show a good understanding of business objectives. Higher-attaining students' folders are well organised and show good evaluation skills. In ICT, students' individual projects develop a good sense of audience and presentational skills. Students on the hairdressing course gain a high level of skill. Standards reached overall are generally in line with national course expectations, and most students achieve satisfactorily. Achievement is very good in hairdressing and beauty, and good in art and design.
164. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Good features of teaching, such as very good subject expertise, help students develop good interest in their work. An excellent hairdressing lesson was seen. The regular review of students' progress in hairdressing is outstanding, so that they are continually aware of what they need to do next. Art and design and business students' portfolios are assessed regularly; they are given a checklist to show what they have achieved and what they still need to do. Teachers are developing effective links with the local further education college, other schools, businesses and local care settings so that students can gain experience of real vocational links. The learning of students on the Year 11 health and social care course was disrupted last year due to changes of teachers, and students have had too little experience of care settings.
165. Staff involved in the new vocational courses have not yet had sufficient time to review students' progress or the effectiveness of links with other organisations. There is not yet an overall vocational co-ordinator to integrate planning and organise systematic sharing of good practice, such as the established assessment methods in art and design and hairdressing. However, staff are enthusiastic and are developing a variety of new techniques to help students learn.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching through the guidance programme is good.
- Plans and materials to improve assessment and reporting within citizenship are in place.
- Planned involvement of other subjects is still to be realised.

Commentary

166. There is insufficient evidence to make overall judgements on standards and achievement. Standards were average in the work seen in the taught course within 'guidance' in Year 10. Pupils showed an increasing understanding of legal processes, the difference between civil and criminal law, and the reasons why societies change laws. Standards within each of the lessons seen showed wide variation between students in terms of knowledge and understanding and communication skills. Regular written work shows students' increasing ability to develop personal, informed views on such issues as 'waste' and 'the environment', 'child labour' and the plight of developing countries. Work done in Year 9, some of it as homework, indicates students' growing understanding of the hidden influences of the media on their lives, with good understanding shown of issues about freedom of the press, the result of real effort from most students in the sample. Skills of participation and responsible action are developed through fund-raising for charities, peer monitoring and 'prefect' duties of older students. Elected councils for each year meet regularly, with recent plans for a whole school council. However, there is little student activity beyond school, to develop public speaking, for example, and too few links with magistrates and local politicians for students to learn how democracy operates in their own community.
167. The only lessons available in the inspection week were in Year 10. Teaching and learning in these were good. Selected teachers were well briefed for the topics and use a range of teaching strategies to try to involve all students, including those with particular needs. The methods included discussion but not formal debate. Written work, in all years, is generally well marked, often challenging pupils to think more clearly and fairly, and provides a good record of learning for the majority of students. While an audit of contributions to citizenship Programmes of Study from other subjects was undertaken three years ago, there is no evidence now of such formal contributions. Evidence from lessons in physical education, music, religious education and health and social studies shows the potential for wider learning, but it is not planned, assessed and reported as part of citizenship.
168. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Responsibility for the subject is clear and its position within guidance is appropriate and supportive. Schemes, plans and materials are sufficient to support good teaching from a team of 11. Reports to parents on achievement give an indication of the content of the course. Planning for development is taking place, including documents for assessment. The library is a good resource for the subject. However, the advantages of learning about citizenship from a variety of subjects are not being taken. Assessment, recording and reporting are too narrowly focused on taught work in guidance lessons. There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning. The leader needs more support for the subject from senior managers, including time, to widen and vary provision, for example through special events, to develop assessment with the necessary training for teachers, and to make connections with agencies outside school so as to raise standards.

Personal, social and health education and guidance

169. The school's new guidance programme comprises careers education, personal, social and health education and citizenship. The personal, social and health education programme is well

co-ordinated and there is a clear vision for future development. Teaching and learning was good in the sessions observed and the enthusiasm of the teachers for the subject matter was transmitted to the students. Moreover, students speak highly of the lessons and make positive comments about the value of the programme to their life in school and also to issues outside the formal school day. The high profile of guidance is due, in no small part, to the many written assignments produced by the students, to the detailed marking of their work and the advice offered by teachers on how their students might improve their work. The scheme of work is relevant, comprising a range of social, moral and political issues, and teachers evaluate the performance of the programme on a regular basis.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

