

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JAMES' HIGH SCHOOL

Exeter

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113507

Headteacher: Felicia Hart

Lead inspector: Bob Allan

Dates of inspection: 3rd - 6th November 2003

Inspection number: 258771

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	12 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	629
School address:	Summer Lane Exeter
Postcode:	EX4 8NN
Telephone number:	(01392) 209922
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Alderman Patrick Spoerer
Date of previous inspection:	19 th January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St James' High School is a small mixed secondary school serving a low-income community on the north-eastern edge of Exeter. The school is undersubscribed but the number of pupils has risen significantly in recent years. The proportion of girls has been increasing so that their number is similar to that of boys in the most recent intake. The school is due to be reorganised to take in Year 7 pupils from 2005. Pupils are almost exclusively of white British background with very few for whom English is not their mother tongue. Attainment on entry is well below the national average; a higher than typical proportion of pupils join or leave the school after the normal year of entry. There is an above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, the most numerous being those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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8919	John Kerr	Lay inspector	
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31441	Maggie King	Team inspector	Mathematics
12356	Richard Dickason	Team inspector	Science
10449	Rowland Hull	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Art Design and technology
13048	Tony Boyden	Team inspector	Business Vocational courses History
10391	Val du Plergny	Team inspector	Drama Music
32252	Deborah Wring	Team inspector	French
8632	Derrick Beer	Team inspector	Geography
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St James' High School is fairly effective with many good features. Pupils achieve well because in the main their teaching is good and they learn well. Both the school leadership and its management are good and have provided clear direction and secured steady improvement. The attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils are unsatisfactory and have an adverse effect on the school's efforts to establish a healthy climate for learning. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards of achievement are well above those typical of similar schools.
- Teaching is good, with many very good features.
- Leadership by the headteacher is good and is well supported by other key staff and subject leaders.
- The curriculum is very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The ethos of the school is unsatisfactory, due to the disproportionate influence of a minority of pupils with unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour.
- Weaker teaching does not take sufficient account of the range of pupils' capability, or help pupils see how they can improve.

Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. All the key issues identified at that time have been successfully addressed. A recent staffing difficulty has caused a recurrence of weakness in religious education and an oversight has led to a minor breach of statutory requirements. Teaching has improved so that learning and achievement are both now good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	E	D	E	A
mathematics	E	D	E	C
science	E	D	E	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.
Similar schools are those whose pupils have attained similarly at the end of Year 6.*

Throughout the school, **achievement is good** as a result of good teaching and learning. Learning and achievement are very good in drama, but unsatisfactory in religious education where standards are well below average. Standards are currently below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Pupils do not learn and achieve as well in mathematics at the end of Year 9 as in English, science or ICT. In tests in 2003, boys did not do as well as girls.

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

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

GCSE results rose above the school's targets in 2003. Standards were below but close to the national average. This represents good achievement. Those pupils whom the school identifies as being gifted or talented, those who participate in the school's special programmes to raise achievement and those from ethnic minority backgrounds make very good progress.

Overall, although they make good progress, generally **pupils do not achieve satisfactory levels of personal development**. This is in part because many enter the school with immature attitudes and poor behaviour and respond slowly to the school's programmes for personal development. It is partly because some teachers do not deal sufficiently effectively with misbehaviour so allowing it to have an adverse impact on other pupils. Attitudes, behaviour and attendance are unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good standard of education for its pupils. **Teaching is good**; about a quarter is very good or excellent, hence learning and achievement are good. Some teaching is neither sufficiently responsive to the needs of those pupils who find learning difficult, nor effective in promoting independent learning. The curriculum is very good with an emphasis on expressive arts that promotes personal development, relevant and popular vocational courses and enrichments for older pupils. Pupils are well cared for and supported. Many individuals and small groups benefit from special attention so that they achieve as well as they can. Although it has good links with parents, the school is hampered in its efforts to raise achievement for all due to a lack of support from those parents who condone truancy or do not support homework.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides clear, firm direction supported well by an effective team of senior teachers and subject leaders. Consequently, the school has steadily improved and standards are rising. The governing body is committed to school improvement but relies too heavily on the headteacher and key governors. As a result, some minor breaches of statutory duty have arisen.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are content with the school but many feel that it does not do enough to deal with unsatisfactory behaviour and bullying. Too many pupils are inhibited in their response to good teaching because of their anxiety about attracting derogatory remarks and other harassment. The school deals purposefully with reported bullying, in many cases successfully.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- to insist that pupils display higher standards of conduct and responsibility to reduce harassment in lessons and around the school;
- to ensure that teaching meets the needs of all pupils and uses assessment better to help pupils learn more independently;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure religious education meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus; and
- check that information for parents includes all the required elements and that there is more consistency in daily acts of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, standards are below average but achievement is good by the end of Years 9 and 11. Pupils achieve well in English, science and information and communication technology (ICT) and their achievement in mathematics is satisfactory by the end of Year 9. Recent test results indicate that girls make better progress than boys do generally. Pupils achieve well in English, science and ICT by the end of Year 11; achievement is satisfactory in mathematics. At the time of the inspection, the only pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language were recently arrived. Satisfactory interim arrangements had been made whilst assessments were in hand; it was too early to form a judgement as to their progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In tests taken at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations in 2003, standards were well above those of pupils in similar schools.
- Unsatisfactory and irregular attendance has a detrimental impact on achievement by the end of Year 11.
- Achievement overall is good and in drama at the end of Year 11, it is very good.
- Achievement in religious education is unsatisfactory throughout the school.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.2 (31.4)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	30.9 (32.5)	34.7 (34.4)
science	30.7 (31.1)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 160 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. In 2003, test results at the end of Year 9 were well below average overall. They were lower than in 2002, corresponding with pupils' lower attainment when they entered the school. Girls did better than boys at reaching the expected levels in English, similar to the differences nationally. Girls did not do as well as boys in mathematics, the difference corresponding to the difference in their standards when they joined the school. Teacher assessments in ICT showed girls' standards to be below average, boys' to be well below average. Generally pupils make satisfactory progress in comparison with pupils nationally and good progress compared with pupils in similar schools. Girls tended to do better than boys generally in comparison with those in similar schools. Overall, results have risen at a rate similar to the national trend since the time of the last inspection.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	38.7 (33.8)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	81.0 (81.0)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	92.0 (88.0)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	27.3 (26.2)	34.3 (33.5)

There were 143 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In 2003, examination results at the end of Year 11 were well below average overall but well above the average of pupils in similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more grades of A* - C was below the national average but well above the average of pupils in similar schools. The proportions achieving five or more grades of A* - G and those achieving at least one grade of G or better were both well below average but above the average of those in similar schools. These differences indicate that, whilst pupils overall achieve well, those capable of the higher grades do better as their progress is less affected by irregular attendance. Put alongside the results of recent years, the 2003 results show the trend now to be in line with the national pattern.
3. Overall, standards of work seen during the inspection were below average but they represent good achievement and reflect recent test and examination results. Pupils generally enter the school having attained well below average standards in assessments at the age of 11. Furthermore, tests used to assess pupils' capabilities in Year 8, when they join the school, show that a high proportion of pupils are likely to find learning difficult. Many pupils join the school needing to be taught programmes of study that are more typically taught in Year 7. Subsequently, as a result of good, often very good teaching, pupils make good progress in English, science, vocational studies, history, geography, art and design and technology. In religious education, progress is unsatisfactory. Whilst there are differences in attainment between boys and girls, such as in mathematics, these are due to differences in prior attainment rather than achievement.
4. Although standards of literacy are below average, achievement overall is satisfactory with science, French, history and geography making an effective contribution. There is insufficient emphasis on literacy in religious education and in written work in physical education. Standards of numeracy are below average and impede progress in some other subjects such as science and geography. However, teachers have a good knowledge of the requirements of the school's numeracy policies and some make good provision to support the work of specialist teachers, such as in English and science.
5. Standards in ICT are below average in Years 8 and 9 but rise to above average in Years 10 and 11 and have improved significantly since the last inspection. The good facilities have enabled many subjects to contribute to pupils' good achievement, most clearly in design and technology, mathematics, French, business studies and geography. Opportunities are weaker in some subjects, such as art.
6. Pupils who are gifted or talented achieve well. Those in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well with some instances of outstanding individual achievement, particularly in the performing arts with former pupils taking part in major public performances. A current pupil is following an advanced course in music technology in collaboration with a local college.
7. Pupils with special educational needs generally achieve the standards of which they are capable, reflecting steady progress through the school. Individual pupils' achievement ranges from outstanding to unsatisfactory. Progress reflects the strong commitment by their teachers who understand these pupils well, very good relationships and productive working partnerships with some other agencies. However, too many subject teachers pay insufficient attention to pupils' individual needs when planning lessons for these pupils to allow them to achieve as well as other pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is unsatisfactory, as are pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and they make good progress in response to the school's programmes for personal development. Nonetheless, mature attitudes and behaviour are slow to

develop and even in Year 11 the behaviour of a significant minority inhibits others from taking a full part in lessons and other school activities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is well below the national average.
- Lack of co-operation from some parents handicaps efforts to improve attendance.
- Attitudes of an influential minority of pupils are poor and they show disregard for other pupils
- Immature behaviour by a minority of pupils prevents others from learning as well as they might.
- When highly motivated, pupils show initiative and work together to a common purpose.
- The school invests much time and effort to promote attendance.

Commentary

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	8.1
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.9
National data	1.2

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

8. Despite the school's many efforts to improve it, attendance has remained well below average for a number of years. As at the time of the last report, a persistent group of pupils fail to account adequately for their absence. Attendance deteriorates in Years 10 and 11, as does punctuality. In addition to its regular checks, the school has recently introduced new initiatives to improve attendance. More detailed and immediate information is available and parents are contacted the same day when an attendance manager reports an absence. Attendance is adversely affected by parents who take family holidays during term time. The school discusses records of poor attendance and all requests for holiday absence with parents. Too often parents ignore the school's advice that poor attendance will have a detrimental effect on their children's education.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background

No of pupils on roll
590
1
3
1
2
4
2
3
1
1

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
69	0
0	0
1	0
0	0
2	0
1	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

Any other ethnic group	1	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	20	0	0

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

9. Although the number of exclusions is high, the governing body exercises a thorough review of serious misbehaviour and distinguishes well between the instances of isolated misconduct and repeat offenders whose behaviour is monitored and subject to special programmes to improve it. However, the school's efforts are often not understood by other pupils and some parents who see them as rewards for misbehaviour.
10. Behaviour and attitudes are unsatisfactory. Standards of conduct are poor in Year 8 and improve little in the early years but more rapidly later so that, although still unsatisfactory in Year 11, pupils' behaviour improves as a result of the school's strenuous efforts to promote personal development. Attitudes of most pupils in lessons are satisfactory but they do not carry over to other times. Many pupils do not see homework as important and participation in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities is low. Furthermore, the unsatisfactory and poor attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, evident in some lessons and around the school at other times, have a detrimental effect on the ethos of the school. Some pupils are reluctant to participate in lessons as fully as they wish for fear of insults and verbal abuse that this attracts. Some more capable pupils are careful to avoid answering the more challenging and probing teachers' questions for example.
11. Exceptionally mature and co-operative attitudes may be seen as pupils prepare dance routines or work together towards the school production. Where teaching is inspiring, pupils respond well to the range of activities offered. They listen and contribute well, rising to challenges with reasoned answers and comments. Some pupils with special educational needs, make very good progress using ICT, for example in French, show very good attitudes and readily help one another. However there is a significant element of dominant but very immature pupils, whose anti-social behaviour is allowed to disrupt the learning of others, including those with special educational needs. This can happen throughout the school, mainly in the lower sets but it is not absent from higher ones. The same group of pupils will respond well to firm class control in some lessons and in others can completely undermine the ethos for learning if the teacher does not capture their interest and insist on good conduct.
12. Many pupils form good relationships with each other and with their teachers. The school fosters these relationships and promotes racial harmony. The peer-mentoring scheme is well developed. Trained pupils help to defuse day-to-day disagreements, by persuading other pupils to make up their differences, so reducing tension. They are well respected by staff and many pupils. For instance, they join the teachers as they visit the primary schools to meet the new intake. Staff are quick to deal with more serious cases of disruptive behaviour. Recently, a behaviour unit has been set up where pupils identified as having specific difficulties, can work with two behaviour counsellors. However, the harassment that some peer mentors suffer due to their efforts discourages some less robust pupils from participating.
13. Overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Many pupils enter the school with limited understanding of what constitutes acceptable behaviour or community responsibility. The school has identified these deficiencies and is working hard to address pupils' lack of understanding of moral codes and social responsibility through a range of imaginative initiatives. The majority of pupils benefit substantially from the experiences provided through, for example, citizenship, personal, social and health education and enrichment aspects of the curriculum, Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, sport and the performing arts. They show some maturity in their responses to adults and their peers, recognising and responding to the school's efforts. A small group shows confidence and commitment in taking on leadership roles such as peer mentors or school councillors. Understanding of different cultures, faiths and backgrounds is growing but there needs to be a more systematic approach to ensure the messages are consistent throughout all aspects of the curriculum.

14. For the majority of pupils, school is providing an effective model for developing the skills necessary to meet the expectations and standards acceptable within society. However, despite the efforts of the school in focussing on personal development there remains a core of individuals, mainly boys, who remain rude, belligerent and insensitive to the feelings of others. Management of this core of pupils is generally effective but there are a number of others who imitate this unacceptable behaviour and for whom sanctions are not effective. Addressing the impact of this group in lessons, in the playground and around school is essential for the establishment of a satisfactory ethos for learning.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching is good, the curriculum is very good and the school provides a good level of care, guidance and support. Special programmes for small groups of pupils and enrichments help to raise their achievement significantly. Both leadership and management are good. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching and learning are both good. They are better in Years 10 and 11, where there is more very good and excellent teaching and less unsatisfactory teaching than in Years 8 and 9. Teachers' use of assessment is satisfactory insofar as they use it to plan effectively. Since the time of the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning has improved as a result of sustained concentration on improving performance by school and subject leaders and managers.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Sustained good teaching in most subjects underpins good achievement.
- Some very good or excellent teaching stimulates pupils to learn very well.
- Teachers plan very well and use their very good knowledge of subjects and courses to ensure most pupils learn effectively.
- Effective use of ICT in several subjects contributes to good learning.
- Teachers do not provide sufficiently for the wide range of pupils' capabilities in some groups.
- High expectations of pupils' conduct are not sufficiently consistent to prevent disruptions to learning by a minority of pupils.

Commentary

15. During the course of the inspection, very good or excellent teaching was seen in many subjects: English, mathematics, science, ICT, drama, dance, art, geography, French, design and technology, food technology, personal, social and health education, business studies, history and vocational studies. Consequently, effective learning is widespread. In very good lessons, teachers have planned them very well. They take time and care to ensure that pupils know exactly what is expected of them and what level of achievement this represents. This is sufficiently challenging and interesting to command pupils' full attention and concentration so there are few, if any, opportunities for distraction. Errant behaviour and unhelpful attitudes are challenged without confrontation and prevented from exercising any influence. Pupils learn very effectively in such lessons. Those pupils who miss the generally good provision due to their irregular attendance do not make the progress of which they are capable and so the standard of achievement overall is not as high as it otherwise would be.
16. In one of several outstanding lessons seen, more so because it was conducted at short notice, the teacher quickly captured the imagination of a Year 11 group containing many low attaining pupils, with a gripping account of mistaken identity. By conducting a vibrant but orderly discussion on human rights the teacher skilfully led them to make mature decisions after analysing a range of choices. Demanding high standards of justification, the teacher ensured

that pupils expressed their views thoughtfully. They responded with horror at the testing of the death chamber with live animals; with shock at possible injustice to black Americans; and were clearly shaken by deciding to sentence an apparently innocent man to death. Pupils were fully involved and captivated by the teacher's increasingly demanding priorities. As a consequence, when directed to a written task, pupils were buzzing with ideas that they were keen to exchange with a chosen partner and express in writing, despite their weak literacy.

17. Teaching incorporates ICT well in several lessons. A skilful *Powerpoint* presentation helped the teacher set and reinforce lesson objectives when reviewing ideas about the states of matter in science. In French, pupils are successfully encouraged to use good ICT skills to consolidate both reading and writing skills, enjoying the activities, which hold their attention well. Thorough and detailed subject knowledge underpins very good and excellent teaching. In a GCSE dance lesson this promoted very efficient learning when combined with detailed knowledge of assessment requirements and highly proficient skill. This allowed teaching to incorporate detailed explanation with video presentation and personal demonstration in a highly effective way that resulted in outstanding learning.
18. Unsuccessful lessons are characterised by insufficiently high expectations of pupils' capability, work rate or behaviour so that they soon show a lack of interest. Their behaviour deteriorates and disrupts the learning of others by making excessive demands on the teacher's time and attention. At its worst, when the teacher does not manage this effectively, this leads to unsatisfactory or poor learning generally. In some instances, pupils see teachers as unfair, when, for example, a group of pupils are detained for the misdemeanours of a few or when pupils feel those misbehaving are let off lightly. This undermines good relationships upon which good and very good teaching depends. Even in well-managed and challenging lessons, some pupils are careful to only answer questions when pressed to do so by the teacher. Others deliberately appear not to be able to answer more difficult questions lest this attracts abusive and hurtful remarks from other pupils with a poor attitude to learning.
19. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, as is their learning. Teachers and assistants have good relationships with pupils and give them effective support and personal guidance. Consequently most pupils try hard to co-operate and concentrate. Where teaching is good, well-planned lessons take good account of pupils' individual needs through ensuring that they know the methods for approaching a particular task rather than just finding an immediate answer to the current worksheet or problem. Focusing their attention upon finding a way to tackle the task increases the pupils' confidence and self-esteem which, in turn, helps them to approach similar tasks with more independence in the future. In less challenging lessons or when pupils lack motivation and show little sign of co-operation, some staff resort to helping them too much by telling them precisely what to do or write. In these extreme cases, the pupils' negative attitudes or their inability to read or understand the work provided, result in little or no progress. Some teachers rely too much on ability-based sets to meet pupils' needs. In lower sets particularly, the ability and emotional range is very wide and planning for this is often insufficient to ensure good achievement.
20. Some teachers plan well for pupils' individual needs. Good examples of support are provided in geography, science and French. In some lessons, insufficient planning or lack of learning support staff limit the achievements of lower attaining pupils, as evident in some English and French lessons. In an English lesson, a significant number of pupils were unable to achieve well because of difficulties in reading some material. Difficulties with literacy impede these pupils' progress in other subjects.
21. Assessment is satisfactory overall; a balance of strengths and weaknesses. The systems are thorough and well used by teachers so that they have a good knowledge of their pupils. Whilst good practice in using targets for attainment based on reliable assessment is evident in science, drama and geography, often targets are too vague and pupils generally have insufficient understanding of how they might improve their work.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 117 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (4%)	23 (20%)	52 (44%)	29 (25%)	7 (6%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good with extensive opportunities for enrichment. The relevance of programmes for Years 10 and 11 pupils promotes their interest and good achievement very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A broad curriculum seeks to engage the interest of pupils in their early years in the school.
- A very wide range of courses allows pupils considerable choice at the end of Year 9.
- The provision of courses in partnership with Exeter College stimulates pupils' interest in continued study and achievement.
- Opportunities for participation in sport and other enrichment activities are good.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and others who find learning difficult, is insufficiently adapted to meet the range of needs within mixed ability classes and sets.
- The time allocation for religious education is insufficient to allow broad coverage of the agreed syllabus.

Commentary

22. The curriculum provision for Years 8 and 9 is good with emphasis given to creative subjects that promote self-confidence and self-esteem very well. Ensuring good curriculum continuity between the middle schools and the high school is a particular problem, especially in foundation subjects. The school overcomes this barrier effectively, as is evident in pupils' overall achievement. The contribution to the teaching of science, design and technology and modern foreign languages in the main middle school that is made by St James' teachers allows better progression and greater coherence in these subjects.
23. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum offers a good range of choices that allows pupils to combine GCSE and vocational courses. The partnership with Exeter College provides very good opportunities for some pupils and enables the school to offer a much wider choice than would normally be the case in such a small school.
24. The school offers a good course, consisting of basic skills work and three days per week work experience, for a small number of Year 11 pupils. The programme now works very effectively and has led to measurably more positive behaviour and attitudes in the pupils, some of whom would otherwise have been at risk of permanent exclusion. Their success on work experience has opened up good possibilities of employment and training next year.
25. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. These pupils make good progress in many subjects but there is insufficient adaptation of tasks in some lessons to cater for the needs of all pupils in classes with a wide range of ability. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is good but insufficient challenges are offered to those pupils who are relatively able, but who have not been identified as gifted and talented.

26. The school recognises the difficulties many pupils have within the standard curriculum and has invested curriculum time in an extensive programme of enrichment activities. This is an innovative and effective response to pupils' needs and a successful means of stimulating interest in the main curriculum. It provides them with opportunities to try new activities or explore different approaches to existing curriculum areas and is highly regarded by many older pupils. This programme ensures that all pupils participate in a wider range of activities even if they are reluctant to join after school clubs.
27. Alongside the curriculum enrichment the school offers a good programme of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport and the arts. Extra-curricular sport is growing with the school running teams and clubs in a range of areas. As yet, participation is low, but there is a core of committed, enthusiastic pupils who benefit from the opportunities available. Additionally, pupils are encouraged to join local clubs and the most able go on to achieve representative status.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides good support and guidance for its pupils. There are good procedures to ensure that they work in a healthy and safe environment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good induction arrangements for Year 8 pupils so they settle in well.
- Pupils work in a healthy and safe environment.
- There are good procedures for responding to the views of pupils.
- Pupils have many sources of support and advice from adults or older pupils.
- Support for SEN pupils is not specific enough to guide planning and teachers do not use the information they have well enough.
- Some pupils see unfairness in detaining a whole class when only a few misbehave.

Commentary

28. There is good teamwork between tutors and heads of years to ensure that pupils are well cared for. Pupils are confident that there is always a member of staff to help them. Most parents find it easy to come to the school if they have a concern about their children's welfare. Procedures for child protection are thorough and staff know their responsibilities. Training is kept up to date and communications are good. The health and safety procedures are also well established. Staff and governors carry out routine checks of premises and equipment and defects are dealt with swiftly. Accidents and injuries are treated promptly, records kept and parents informed.
29. Pupils have a wide range of adults in the school with whom they are able to discuss their personal and academic needs. They are able to request a formal meeting with a range of professionals and have access to the school's well-established peer mentor scheme. Staff know their pupils well and the school uses external professionals to offer further support. However, the systems for support have not yet been consistently applied across the year groups, an issue that is being addressed by the newly appointed assistant headteacher. The school's reward system is not consistently used. Where rewards are used in departments they are very effective in motivating pupils to learn. The identification of underachieving pupils is effective and all pupils discuss their progress and set and review targets with their form tutors; however there has been a lack of consistency recently due to the turnover of staff. There are good induction arrangements for new pupils and good advice for pupils about post-16 opportunities.
30. There is a school council for each year group with two representatives from each tutor group. Matters put forward by pupils are discussed and acted on by the councils. If a subject concerns the whole school, it will be put forward to the full school council by the year group representatives. The views of the council are put to the school's management by the heads of

year who will also relay matters that the school would like discussed by the council. The system is working well. Pupils' questionnaires are a regular feature of the school. The school suggestion box is well used and has produced good ideas.

31. Guidance for pupils with special educational needs is helped by good record keeping and the increasing use of data to track pupils' achievements. This helps to provide relevant learning targets within individual educational plans. However, guidance for teachers does not include particular strategies that might be used with individual pupils, so generally, subject teachers do not make effective use of this information.
32. Careers education is disparate and not sufficiently linked to other curriculum areas so that many pupils do not appreciate how their work in school can provide opportunities for them until later years.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and the community are satisfactory; links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school commits much effort to maintain an effective partnership with parents.
- There are very productive links with Exeter College that benefit both pupils and staff.
- Very effective links with middle schools enable the school to provide a smooth transfer for new pupils.
- When their children are directly involved, parents support school activities and the majority regularly attend reviews.
- Lack of support from some parents undermines the school's efforts to achieve better attendance and effective homework.

Commentary

33. The school works hard to maintain its partnership with parents. From the start of their relationship with the school, parents receive good information about aspects of school life. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents, though a little bland, tell parents what they need to know. Reports to parents tell them what their children know and can do and at what level they are working. They leave no room for doubt about underachievement, particularly where that relates to poor attendance. Targets have recently been introduced to help parents understand how they can encourage their children's progress.
34. The school works very well with several other schools and Exeter College to provide a range of popular vocational programmes. A small number of pupils follow a broad-based course to help them decide upon their options after school. It too is proving to be successful. The consortium is well co-ordinated by the college link representative and there is very good liaison between the school, the college and other schools within the group. The programme is regularly reviewed and improved. There is a community based partnership group and an adult education group which strive to promote parental involvement.
35. The school works very closely with its feeder schools and provides teaching in French, technology and science that enables Year 7 pupils to benefit from specialist facilities. In this way many pupils become familiar with the school and some of its teachers. Its induction programme has recently been extended to include a residential programme that has made the transfer very smooth. Staff have used this to identify pupils who would benefit from opportunities that the school offers from early in their secondary school life.
36. Meetings to explain the homework policy and the need to improve attendance have not had the support of parents. About three-quarters of parents attend meetings arranged for those whose

children are about to join the school. The formal parent-school association has recently been disbanded due to very low participation. However, almost all parents come to review meetings where pupils' progress is discussed on a one-to-one basis with their teachers. Parents are encouraged to come into school if they have a complaint or a concern about their children's progress. Parents' views are sought regularly and action is taken on their ideas. For example, the growing awareness of ICT in school has prompted the organisation of adult education sessions in computing skills for parents. This has been very popular.

37. The special educational needs co-ordinator and her staff make every effort to support parents. They ensure that parents know as much as possible about their children's education and are able to make their own wishes known and have them acted on. The school enjoys very good relationships with other agencies that are helpful in giving their time for meetings and reviews. During an annual review of a Year 11 pupil's statement, the focus was firmly based upon his transition to the local college. A representative from 'Connexions' gave clear and well-informed advice about the arrangements for studying at the college. The outstanding progress made by this pupil was repeatedly discussed during the review yet the pupil himself was left in no doubt about the difficult tasks which lay ahead if he is to succeed in a busy further education department.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governance of the school is satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is good. The school is well managed so that steady improvement has been achieved.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body has a far-sighted and very effective strategic committee.
- The headteacher and key staff provide good leadership that has secured rising standards.
- Good curriculum leadership has led to effective subject teams.
- School and subject leaders provide models of good practice that promote improvement well.
- The governing body relies too much on the headteacher and a core of active members so has not fulfilled all of its duties effectively.
- Finances are prudently managed so income is well directed to priorities.

Commentary

38. The governance of the school is satisfactory. The governing body has a far-sighted and very effective strategic committee that understands the school's strengths and weaknesses well, so has been able to pursue school improvement effectively. This has contributed to a steady and sustained rise in standards, now in line with national trends of improvement. However, the governing body's overall reliance on the headteacher and a core of active members has led to some oversights that risk breaches of statutory duties. Under the heavy demands of planning for school reorganisation, some recent guidance has not been followed, for example, in the governors' annual report to parents and has led to delays in reacting to the most recent auditor's report. Monitoring of its policy on collective worship has not been sufficient to ensure its consistent application. Since improving provision for religious education well since the last inspection, the governing body has been unable to engage a sufficiently well qualified specialist teacher to fill a vacancy until very recently. As a consequence, the time allowed for teaching the subject has been reduced temporarily to a level that is not sufficient to meet the needs of the locally agreed syllabus.
39. The headteacher provides good leadership. Through commitment to improving teaching, developing a very good curriculum that emphasises personal development as well as achievement and making very good provision for particular groups of pupils through special funding, significant barriers to raising achievement are being overcome. The clear and purposeful vision of the headteacher is transformed into effective practice through good

management. The recent high turnover of staff has been very well managed so that the momentum of improvement has been sustained well.

40. School leaders show strong support for promoting equality, reflected in mainly positive and caring attitudes to pupils by pastoral and academic staff. They concern themselves effectively with raising pupils' expectations and self-esteem. These features are particularly evident in ICT and drama. There are some inconsistencies in teachers' willingness to deal with pupils' misbehaviour in informal situations at breaks and lunchtimes. There is insufficient attention to overcoming the impact of the insidious behaviour of a significant minority of pupils in some lessons and about the school more generally. This undermines the willingness of many pupils to participate fully in lessons and other activities.
41. Overall, managers are effective, efficient and thoughtful. They are committed to enabling the school to fulfil its vision and strategic objectives. Management places high priority on appointing good staff, developing their skills and deploying them to best effect. Subject leaders generally provide good role models for other staff and pupils; some do so very well, for example, through the quality of their teaching and good planning as in science and by providing authentic experiences as in hearing and speaking French, to which pupils respond enthusiastically. Staff work together well as effective teams, as year tutors and in organising most subjects. This is a very good feature in art and design, ICT and geography and is outstanding in drama. This is an area for improvement in physical education and inexperienced or temporary staff in the small departments of religious education and music would benefit from more specialist support. The limited time available for the special educational needs co-ordinator to provide guidance and support for teachers hampers the consistency of provision for these pupils.
42. Finances are sound and managed efficiently and effectively. The school has a good plan and timescale for the stages of planning, drafting, consultation, reviewing and implementing decisions on finance. The school budget reflects the priorities identified in the school improvement plan well, meeting the need to maintain provision, allow for increases in courses or numbers of pupils, and to support and direct spending on new and developing initiatives. Grants have been used appropriately and effectively for promoting educational priorities and extending the curriculum. Changes in staff responsibilities, resources and training have been well managed to enable time to be made available for teachers to address underachievement successfully and to take measures to improve attendance. Some areas of financial accounting need to be streamlined, to benefit from new technology and to implement the recommendations of the school's auditors.
43. The governors and headteacher plan well for fluctuating admission numbers from year to year, using the contingency fund and small surplus prudently. Best value principles are evident in the process used for ordering resources, the use of the Local Education Authority for available purchasing power and the use of in-house expertise where it is available.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2001 to March 2002

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,563,433
Total expenditure	1,579,874
Expenditure per pupil	2,512

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	55,037
Balance carried forward to the next	38,596

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good schemes of work provide effective guidance and support for teaching.
- Teaching is good overall and pupils learn well as a result. Pupils' achievement is good in relation to their capabilities.
- Good leadership is forming an effective team with the capacity to improve further.
- Some teaching is not so strong, with weaknesses that affect the pace of learning and pupils' co-operation.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Commentary

Examination results

44. Despite dips in performance over the last four years, reflecting the lower attainment of year groups in 2000 and 2003, the trend in results at the end of Year 9 is a rising one. The 2003 results represent very good achievement by many pupils given their low attainment on entry. At GCSE level, A*-C grades for English in 2002 were significantly below average; results for 2003 were lower. Nevertheless, comparison of average points scores with standards at the end of Year 9 shows good achievement, particularly for lower attainers – almost all pupils entered have obtained at least a pass grade in the last two years. GCSE English literature results, though below average overall, have been substantially higher than English language results and improved again in 2003.

Standards and achievement

45. Standards are below average at the end of Years 9 and 11. This represents good achievement in relation to prior attainment and reflects improvement in the picture of achievement overall. Pupils achieve well because the department's teaching is particularly effective in showing how to tackle texts and organise ideas into a structured piece of writing. As a result pupils can tackle a wide range of interesting texts, write in a variety of styles and often show pleasing personal involvement in their writing. Despite the attention paid to basic skills, spelling errors persist and pupils' expression is limited by lack of vocabulary. Such weaknesses often prevent pupils reaching the higher levels or grades.

Teaching and learning

46. Teaching and learning are good overall. Pupils gain confidence because teachers have a clear purpose, show pupils how to tackle work and provide much help in clearing up misunderstandings. They create good relationships and a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom because they know and manage pupils well. Pupils respond with good attitudes and behaviour and these help them achieve well. Good teaching is marked by well-planned lessons using a variety of methods to involve and motivate pupils; teachers work hard at providing interesting ways to learn. The department's schemes of work ensure that teachers usually provide a consistently similar and effective learning experience for all pupils. Occasionally, however, teachers do not conduct lessons at a pace that makes sufficient demand on pupils, or miss opportunities to model or demonstrate how to tackle an activity, or do not use sufficiently small steps or stages to ensure that all pupils can follow the learning. On one occasion a teacher erred on the side of generosity in not picking up and correcting inattentive, distracting or indifferent behaviour that affected the learning of other pupils.

Leadership and management

47. Intelligent and knowledgeable leadership has established clear direction through well-focused and supportive schemes of work and well thought out guidance in the department's handbook. Leadership has also brought about good improvement since the previous inspection. Though standards remain below average, achievement is better. Teaching quality continues to be good overall. National strategies have been taken on with determination and commitment. Management of the teaching team is not yet fully effective because of the teaching weaknesses referred to, but the department clearly has good capacity to improve further.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. The contribution of other subjects to improving standards of literacy is satisfactory overall. The literacy co-ordinator has led a substantial programme of training and prepared and distributed materials to help staff. As a result there is much effective support for literacy, in particular in science, modern foreign languages, history and geography. In these subjects support goes beyond emphasis on important vocabulary to include opportunities for reading, speaking and writing. In other subjects, though literacy is clearly planned for in schemes of work, opportunities are missed to develop skills. In physical education, for example, insufficient attention is paid to checking pupils' spelling or developing their listening skills. In art, speaking and extended writing opportunities are limited. In religious education the position is unsatisfactory because of the lack of a literacy policy and the failure to develop the use of key vocabulary or practise other skills hampers progress. Weak literacy continues to prevent many pupils making better progress in other subjects.

French

Four French lessons were observed and samples of written work analysed.

Commentary

49. Pupils achieve well in French. Standards are below national expectations in Year 9 and average in Year 11. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 and 2003 were below national expectations; GCSE results in French for 2002 were above the national average; in 2003 they were lower, reflecting the different capabilities of pupils.
50. Pupils enjoy French as a result of enthusiastic and expert teaching and effective use of the department's newly introduced reward system. In three out of the lessons seen, teaching was good, or better due to challenging questioning, high expectations and the very effective use of the target language. In all lessons observed, teachers were very skilled in their management of pupils' behaviour and relationships with pupils were positive. However, the assessment of

pupils' written work is not frequent and teachers' comments do not offer pupils guidance on how to improve their work. In lessons where there is a wide range of abilities, teachers do not offer a range of activities for the different groups and there is sometimes insufficient additional support.

51. The newly appointed head of department has a clear vision for the department and has already identified appropriate areas for development. Schemes of work are not sufficiently detailed to guide planning very effectively and there is no sharing across the department of good practice or individually produced resources.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE are improving as a result of good leadership.
- There is a clear emphasis on improvement and good teamwork.
- There is wide variation in the quality of teaching, especially in the extent to which teachers relate to pupils, engage their interest and secure their commitment to learning.
- Assessment of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not guide them sufficiently in how to improve.
- The team identifies weaknesses and takes action to improve teaching and learning.
- Data is not used sufficiently to analyse performance and guide planning.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Test and examination results

52. In national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, students' results were well below the average for pupils of that age. Results rose steadily until 2002 and then dropped in 2003 in line with the lower standards shown by these pupils when they joined the school. GCSE results in 2003 were also below average but in line with similar schools. Results improved significantly from 2002. Boys generally have higher standards on entry and secure better results than girls. Analysis by the school shows that results represent satisfactory achievement for all groups of pupils.

Standards and achievement

53. Standards are well below average in Years 8 and 10. In Years 9 and 11 they are below average in line with these groups' higher standards on entry. By the end of Year 9 about half the students are working at or above the expected level. A small minority can use symbols to represent relationships, while many pupils still have difficulties with basic concepts such as place value. While they learn techniques in lessons, pupils cannot effectively use these techniques to solve problems. By the end of Year 11 attainment remains below average

though most pupils have secure basic number skills and they can use these in solving familiar problems. They have higher standards in handling data. Pupils have below average standards of literacy. Many miss work as a result of irregular attendance and indifferent attitudes to homework.

Teaching and learning

54. Teaching varies from very good to unsatisfactory. Planning is consistent and thorough and shows good knowledge of examination requirements. Pupils' behaviour is normally acceptable but a significant proportion only work in lessons because teachers use effective strategies to manage them. In the better lessons, teachers use a variety of activities to engage and interest pupils, including information and communication technology. For example in a lesson with low attaining Year 9 pupils, the teacher introduced magic squares and then asked the pupils to complete these and check their answers using a spreadsheet. Pupils enjoyed the activity and made very good progress. In less good lessons, common features are a poor match between the work and pupils' level of understanding, low expectations and teachers' failure to relate to pupils and secure their involvement. Consequently, pupils' unsatisfactory attitudes become more evident so pupils lose interest and misbehave. Teaching assistants generally provide good support for pupils with special educational needs and enable them to learn effectively. However, some pupils lack confidence and sometimes adults do too much for them. Teachers use regular tests and monitor progress well but pupils are not aware of their target grades and levels and most do not know how to improve their work. Grading systems are not consistent across the department. Some pupils' work shows little evidence of marking, while other pupils have detailed feedback.

Leadership and management

55. There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection. The relatively new head of department has a good knowledge of strengths and weaknesses and clear priorities. Performance management is very well used to monitor and develop teaching especially for new staff. Schemes of work and systems to support teaching are well organised. These are starting to have an impact in, for example, common assessment tasks. However there are still inconsistencies in marking as there were at the time of the last inspection. Data on pupils' likely grades is used to monitor progress and to take action where there are signs of underachievement. However the department does not evaluate achievement for different groups of pupils such as boys and girls. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Results have fluctuated but have improved overall.

Mathematics across the curriculum

56. Pupils' mathematical competence is below average. Weak numeracy remains a handicap to progress in some other subjects. In art pupils show good spatial awareness. In geography, secure analysis and data-handling skills are well used especially in Years 10 and 11. However, pupils have limited skills in using and applying formulae in science and lower attaining pupils have an insecure grasp of basic number work, especially in Years 8 and 9. The school and most departments have numeracy policies. All teachers have been trained in approaches to mathematical skills and there are some examples of good practice. For example, in science, pupils' graph-plotting and data-handling skills are developed well. In English there are projects analysing school differences and magazine articles. Provision has not been monitored and is not sufficiently systematic in developing competence through other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The best teaching is very good or excellent because it is very well planned and pupils learn very well.
- The analysis of results and marks is very good and underachieving pupils are identified and supported.
- Improvements in teaching arising from the Key Stage 3 Strategy are very good and lead to rising standards.
- Inconsistency in teaching includes some unsatisfactory teaching and missed opportunities for pupils to learn independently.
- Targets for improvement are not always known by the pupils and are recorded inconsistently.
- Pupils' behaviour is sometimes unsatisfactory and leads to unsatisfactory learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Test and examination results

57. In National Tests for Year 9 pupils' results were below average in 2002 and well below average in 2003 but when compared with pupils' test results in Year 7 they were about average in 2002 and well above average in 2003. This shows that progress between Years 8 and 9 was satisfactory in 2002 and that it was excellent in 2003. Results are improving more quickly than the national trend. GCSE results in 2002 and in 2003 were below average but when compared with the pupils' results in the Year 9 tests they were above average in 2002 and well above average in 2003 showing that pupils made very good progress in Years 10 and 11. There were no significant differences between the results of boys and girls.

Standards and achievement

58. The standard of pupils' work in lessons is below average overall but pupils' achievements are good. In Year 8 pupils' work about inheritance was above average but in a lesson about the heart it was well below average. However pupils' achievement was very good because the teacher's explanations were clear and sympathetic. In a lesson about photosynthesis in Year 11 pupils' understanding was well below average but their achievement was excellent because the teacher's planning and encouragement for the pupils were highly effective. Work about rates of reaction was well above average and investigative work about rates of enzyme action was about average but numeracy skills in calculations were well below average. In some lessons pupils' unsatisfactory behaviour was the cause of unsatisfactory achievement. Although there are few of them, Learning Support Assistants provide pupils with good support and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils are often hesitant when asked to explain their ideas and their weak literacy skills hamper their written work.

Teaching and learning

59. Teaching varies between excellent and, in one case, unsatisfactory; overall it is good. Discussion activities are very effectively used in Years 8 and 9, to teach science and to improve pupils' literacy skills. Good and sometimes very good planning provides a range of activities that ensure good learning, for example when a model is used to explain difficult ideas about rates of chemical reactions. Interesting and relevant examples of energy changes lead to good understanding in Year 9. In Year 10 demanding teaching, in which the teacher expected detailed explanations, led to very good understanding about gas exchange in the lungs. When instructions are unclear and techniques are not demonstrated pupils flounder and do not learn well. Pupils were taught well about fair tests and learnt to investigate how things cool, but did not complete their analysis of the results. Excellent teaching, particularly planning, excellent relationships and very clear explanations, in a Year 11 lesson for less able pupils ensured that they enjoyed their work and made excellent progress. Sometimes opportunities for pupils to contribute to a lesson are missed because the teacher leads too much and does not use questioning techniques effectively. In such cases teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. In many lessons teachers encourage pupils and pupils respond well by listening and working hard but despite teachers efforts there is a minority of pupils who do not take their work seriously. They discourage others by denigrating their efforts and interrupt teachers so that the pace of learning slows.

Leadership and management

60. Leadership is very good; it has a clear and well-informed view about how to improve standards and has introduced a range of measures to do so. Measures include improving teaching through use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy and thorough recording and analysis of marks and results. These are used well to support pupils although some pupils are not aware of their targets and what they need to do to improve. Teaching is monitored and discussed regularly so that effective methods are shared; teachers support each other very well and consistently use methods that improve pupils' literacy skills. Innovative links with drama teachers involve pupils in productions about molecules. Management is good and has led to good improvement since the last inspection. All pupils have a science record sheet and they are given revision materials so that achievement, especially in Year 9, has improved. Teaching plans are good. They include investigations and a wide range of interesting activities designed to meet the needs of pupils whose interest and capacity to listen is below average. Although use of ICT has improved greatly, spreadsheets are not used often enough and some mathematical aspects of science are not demanding enough.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is thoroughly planned and based on high expectations so learning is effective, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The curriculum is well planned to give clear progression from lesson to lesson.
- Effective leadership and management and better resources have contributed to overall improvements.
- Some teachers allow too much calling-out and other disruptive behaviour that arises when pupils are not capable of the work they are set.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

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

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

Commentary

Examination results

61. GCSE results in 2002 were above average. Results on the GNVQ course in 2003 were good with more than one-third of accreditation gained at merit or distinction level. Girls did better than boys generally although boys achieved proportionally more merits than girls did.

Standards and achievement

62. Pupils make good progress from the beginning of Year 8 although, standards remain below national expectation by the end of Year 9. Pupils continue to make good progress and by the end of Year 11, standards are above average, reflecting the good teaching and well-designed courses. Achievement overall is good, with some pupils making very good progress. Reasons for the improved achievement since the last inspection have been the high investment in equipment, a curriculum review, new teaching strategies and good teamwork. Good teaching provides all pupils with good opportunities to learn. For example, older pupils are well motivated by using good quality specialist software to simulate the collation of data. They can create relational databases and generate and modify reports from them by incorporating tables and data. More capable pupils are skilled at Internet research and most pupils use e-mail, some to collect work from teachers.

Teaching and learning

63. Teaching in all years is good. There is some very good practice in Years 10 and 11, particularly teachers' thorough and clear planning. Lessons are linked together well and so pupils progress effectively. Teachers use recommended strategies that have helped to ensure that learning objectives are clear. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of work rate and use effective methods to manage misbehaviour. Relationships are good, but some teachers allow too much calling-out, which distracts others and spoils the learning environment. Assessment of pupils' work is helpful and good use is made of a system that helps pupils to track their own progress.
64. Pupils enjoy their lessons and attitudes to ICT are good generally. Teachers do not sufficiently support those less able younger pupils by providing them with simpler tasks. Some pupils lack the self-discipline to work independently on computers so become disruptive. Most older pupils display a good and mature manner and the majority discuss their work enthusiastically. In some cases, they show justifiable pride in their excellent presentation of their work.

Leadership and management

65. The subject is very well led and managed which has had a significant impact on the very good development of the subject since the last inspection. Good training opportunities are offered both formally and informally, which support teachers' growing confidence. Technical support is very good so that the school network has a good level of stability that effectively promotes confidence in the systems and encourages their use. The school has very good computer

resources and classrooms that are designated for the subject are pleasant, businesslike and very appropriate to promote a learning environment that is both motivating and helpful. The school has very good community links, with the premises being used for adult education courses. The income from these has been used well to develop resources further.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. Good progress in this area has been made since the last inspection with all departments addressing the issue in a formal manner through their development plans. In some subjects, such as mathematics, French, technology, business studies and geography, there has been good progress, with some excellent practice in technology. In other departments, such as science, there has been good investment in new equipment. These computers are used routinely to improve key skills and to use Internet resources well. The school provides good access to four computer suites with a booking system that reflects its very good use as teachers' confidence grows.

HUMANITIES

Lessons and pupils' work were sampled in history, geography and religious education.

History

67. GCSE results in 2002 were above the national average. They were below in 2003. A relatively small number of pupils opted for history but their results compared well with most other subjects and their prior attainment. Teachers' assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2003 were well below the average. The impact of teachers' emphasis on improving writing skills is evident in current standards which are close to national expectations for the majority of pupils. Overall, achievement is good.
68. In two of the three lessons seen the teaching was very good and in the other one, good. The lesson objectives were well matched to the needs of the vast majority of pupils, who responded well to their teachers' high expectations of their achievement and behaviour. The resources used by the teachers encourage pupils to write about historical evidence accurately and imaginatively. For instance, in a lesson on the slave trade, most of the Year 9 class responded with good historical understanding and empathy to a video about the transportation of slaves. The worksheet provided gave them the opportunity to respond to questions in a variety of ways: both written and diagrammatic responses. However, the overall evidence of the older pupils' work shows there needs to be more specific guidance on how they might improve their standards; and for some tasks to be structured in a way that better meets the needs and pace of learning of the least able pupils.

Geography

69. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below national expectations and average by the end of Year 11. The GCSE results for 2002 were slightly below the national average. Pupils taking geography achieved results that were broadly in line with those that they achieved in other subjects. When compared to results in similar schools, pupils did better than expected. Standards at the end of Year 9 were also below average when compared to results nationally but in line with those in similar schools.
70. Overall, achievement is good. Pupils start from a low level and make satisfactory progress in Years 8 and 9 and good progress by the end of Year 11.
71. Teaching and learning were good or very good in the sample of lessons seen. Learning objectives were clearly established, pupils were given opportunities to show their independence as learners and management of pupils was excellent displaying firm and

sensitive control combined with high expectations and an atmosphere of purpose and enthusiasm.

72. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly offering clear guidance for further improvement. The use of target setting is well established in Years 10 and 11 but needs to be consistently implemented across the department in earlier years. Fieldwork opportunities are good in Years 10 and 11 but there are insufficient opportunities in Years 8 and 9.

Religious education

73. Standards are well below expectations at the end of Year 9. The 2002 GCSE results were well below the national average and pupils taking religious education did significantly worse than in most other subjects. In 2003 results were better for the small number of pupils entered. Currently all pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a short course GCSE, but standards of work seen in Year 11 are well below average and achievement overall is unsatisfactory.
74. Of the teaching seen during the inspection, in one lesson it was good, in one it was satisfactory and in one it was unsatisfactory. Good teaching emphasised responsible attitudes to the environment and gave younger pupils opportunities to reinforce their learning well. They showed very good awareness of good and bad examples.
75. Pupils have experiences of religious believers at home, in the media or at school and they are willing to talk about them. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are unsatisfactory, in part because they are not told what they are expected to learn. Current work in all years shows that the progress of pupils is unsatisfactory and pupils are not working to their capability or at a level required for average standards.
76. Teaching is hampered by weak specialist knowledge. This prevents topics being effectively linked to religious teachings and values or improving pupils' weak knowledge of religions today. Having improved since the time of the last inspection, recent difficulties in engaging a subject specialist have resulted in reduced time for the subject so coverage of the locally agreed syllabus is too narrow. An appointment has now been made and so the capacity to provide adequately will shortly be restored.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

A sample of lessons was seen and pupils work analysed.

77. Pupils' achievement is good overall and pupils across the wide attainment range are working up to their individual capabilities. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below national expectation. In recent years, GCSE results have been below average. They improved markedly in 2003 but standards overall are below average by the end of Year 11. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development, through visits, links with the college and the community and with environmental, social and moral considerations, promoted through designing and making products.
78. In the lessons seen during the inspection, teaching and learning were never less than satisfactory and there is some very good and excellent teaching. Teachers have good specialist knowledge that they use well to promote interest and good learning. Thoughtful planning and individual help for pupils, are strengths of teaching. Class management, higher expectations of pupils and the greater use of pupils' responses to questioning, are areas for development. Leadership and management of the department are good. The new head of department has very clear ideas of how the subject needs to develop and he has already established well-organised procedures for raising standards and for establishing good conduct in the workshops. Assessment procedures need further refinement so that pupils know just what to do to improve.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Lessons and pupils' work were sampled in art, dance and music. Drama was inspected in detail.

Art

79. Overall, achievement is good. Standards generally are below national expectations in Year 9 and below the national average in Year 11. However there is a rising trend of improving attainment. The GCSE results in recent years, including 2002, have been below average but show considerable improvement in 2003. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development through visits, links with the community and many curricular links with environmental, social and moral issues.
80. Teaching is good overall and some is very good. Teachers have a good command of the subject and convey enthusiasm to pupils. In the best lessons, learning is enhanced by good connections with the work of other artists and art movements. Class management, higher expectations of pupils' work and conduct and the greater use of question and answer sessions are areas for development.
81. Assessment in all years needs to be related to national standards and shared more effectively with pupils.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The older pupils attain above average standards in examinations because the quality of teaching is very good.
- The writing frames developed by the department for their own examination use have a significant effect on the literacy of all pupils.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- The quality of management is excellent and ensures that the efforts of the staff and pupils are thoroughly supported.
- Younger pupils achieve well and older pupils achieve very well because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Standards of attainment and achievement are greatly enhanced by the attention given by the staff to the corporate nature of the subject.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Excellent
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Examination results

82. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were above average as they were in 2002, maintaining the trend achieved by the department over the last five years.

Standards and achievement

83. Pupils show increasing awareness of the necessity of working together towards a production, as a result of the strong lead given by teachers. The skills of stagecraft and interpretation of character are clearly to be seen in the current school production of 'Barry Trotter'. Written work shows a growing insight into the process of bringing a production to performance.

Teaching and learning

84. Teaching is very good, characterised by excellent subject knowledge and a very real determination to encourage the pupils to work together, in which they are very successful. Support for writing assignments for examinations is excellent and is a significant factor in examination success. Assessment practices are excellent and ensure that each pupil knows exactly how they are getting on and what they have to do to improve.

Leadership and management

85. Schemes of work are very good and an ethos has been developed through which the pupils fully understand that they have to work together for the good of everyone, teachers are committed to the success of all their pupils. Management of the department is excellent, because the efforts of staff and pupils are supported by logical and simple systems to raise both attainment and achievement. The links between other departments, such as the work towards Science Week and the Dramatisation of Particles, make a powerful contribution towards the learning of pupils beyond the drama department. The school production, involving three major departments, is a significant force for raising the achievement of the pupils involved and pride in their school for the rest of the pupils. All this represents good improvement since the last inspection.

Dance and music

86. The performing arts, dance, drama and music, between them make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. This is enhanced very well through extra-curricular activity. Standards in music are currently average. Teaching of the GCSE course is good. The unsatisfactory teaching seen is due to difficulties managing disruptive younger pupils. Teaching of dance is very good; standards are very high, mainly due to the expert teaching they receive but partly because pupils following the GCSE course have been motivated by the enrichment programme.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards, presentation and participation are improving in Years 8 and 9.
- Girls make good progress on the GCSE course.
- ICT is well used in assessment and analysis of performance.
- Inconsistencies in pupils' application and productivity in lessons hamper progress
- Unsatisfactory behaviour of some pupils, mainly boys, impedes the learning of others.

- Standards and expectation in Years 10 and 11 are too low.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

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

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Commentary

Examination results

87. Results in GCSE examinations were below average in 2002; all pupils attained a grade and less than half attained A*- C grades, representing satisfactory achievement overall. However, despite some very able individuals, no pupils reached the highest A* or A grades and boys' results were well below national averages. Boys' results fell overall in 2003 but girls' results rose very significantly.

Standards and achievement

88. Standards are generally below average and achievement is satisfactory though individual teachers have significant impact on the progress and achievement of pupils. The majority of pupils, especially girls, make good progress overall in all aspects of the subject and there is nothing to suggest that those with special educational needs achieve differently from other pupils. However there are inconsistencies. In some lessons too many pupils, mainly boys, lack self-discipline and do not expect to learn or make progress. Attitudes overall are unsatisfactory. Pupils enjoy team games but boys are often unenthusiastic about practising skills, especially in Years 10 and 11. In some lessons, substantial numbers do not take part and the poor behaviour of some of these pupils disrupts the lesson for others.

Teaching and learning

89. Teaching is generally good in Years 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching and learning are good, teachers are enthusiastic and energetic, creating a positive atmosphere for learning. Varied tasks, good relationships with pupils and high expectations gain pupils' interest so they work hard to produce their best and make substantial gains in skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils enjoy these lessons and learning is effective. Where shortcomings occur there is insufficient attention to pupils' prior knowledge and only limited attention to the needs of individual pupils, resulting in deterioration in behaviour affecting the progress of all. Teachers monitor and assess achievement in each activity area and use ICT well to manage the information efficiently. However, pupils are not always sufficiently aware of what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

90. Whereas the leadership and management have made good progress in developing specific initiatives, notably the use of ICT and in addressing curriculum imbalance, there has been unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. Individual teachers have considerable knowledge and expertise which is not always exploited fully through the sharing of responsibilities or expectations resulting in many of the inconsistencies in pupils' achievement and in the quality of teaching and learning.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The business studies course was inspected in detail; other vocational courses were sampled.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although current standards are average, the pupils are making good progress in their learning.
- Teaching is good and matches the needs of the vast majority of pupils.
- Pupils' achievement has been good in examinations in the past few years.
- Very effective use is made of ICT in pupils' learning, which has been comprehensively planned within the scheme of work.
- Assessment does not give the pupils sufficiently specific guidance on how to improve their work.
- The least able pupils need support or specific tasks that better suit their capabilities.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	n/a	Average
Achievement	n/a	Good
Teaching and learning	n/a	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	n/a

Commentary

Test and examination results

91. In the past three years, business studies results have steadily improved. Although there have been relatively low numbers opting for the subject, the results have been better than the national average and represent very good progress by the pupils in relation to their previous attainment. In 2002 the results were well above the national average for the boys and significantly below for the girls. In 2003, where only one boy took the examination, the results were again above national expectations.

Standards and achievement

92. Most of the older pupils are currently working at or above the national average. A small number are on target to achieve the highest grades. Nearly all have a sound grasp of business terminology and the most able use it very effectively in their work, such as the production of business plans for ventures of their choice. Most make good use of their computers to present their work effectively. Pupils' selective use of information from the Internet enriches the quality of their work. The most able can produce well balanced arguments within their assignments but a small number of the least able pupils have a more superficial understanding of the subject and their work lacks depth or subtlety. Current pupil progress is good overall and reflects the teachers' high expectations in terms of their achievement and the pace at which they should work.

Teaching and learning

93. Teaching is at least satisfactory and often good. The pupils work well within carefully structured lessons with clear objectives. The teacher effectively uses PowerPoint to present information and the pupils make good use of the network to access assignments and factual information. In one lesson, this approach enabled the pupils to move very effectively through the different stages of learning about health and safety at work from an initial quiz to the taking of notes on legislation and responsibilities and to individual work on the topic. The pace and quality of work produced by the pupils in the first term of the current Year 11 have improved perceptibly from their work last term. The least able pupils sometimes struggle to catch up with the rest and their oral contribution to discussion is thereby restricted. They do not have resources specifically tailored to their needs and are not given sufficiently specific guidance on how to improve their work so they cannot work independently.

Leadership and management

94. The subject leader is in her first term of teaching. She leads the subject well and monitors and manages information about pupils' progress effectively. She has established clear future plans to improve standards of work and levels of recruitment to the subject and to enrich provision by business related activities outside normal school hours.

Other sampled courses at Key Stage 4

95. School entries for GCSE health and social care will be examined for the first time in 2004. The standards of the pupils currently taking the course are well below the national average on the evidence of their work to date. In Year 11 those standards are slightly lower than for pupils in Year 10. Although their achievement is satisfactory, a significant number of the pupils have particular learning difficulties and most of them find the demands of the course too challenging despite the efforts of their teacher to provide stimulating and varied learning activities. For instance, in one of the lessons observed during the inspection, on the growth in children and adolescents, most of the pupils could understand the basic factual content of what constitutes 'normal growth' and its contributory factors. However, many of them were unable to offer more than superficial explanations of those factors. Many of the pupils learn at a very slow pace and the work in their coursework files is poorly written and presented and often not fully completed.
96. Courses in GCSE leisure and tourism and engineering were sampled as were NVQ related courses in catering, construction and the built environment and motor vehicle studies. Hairdressing and beauty care is also offered but not sampled. Currently there are 14 Year 11 pupils and 28 Year 10 pupils on Exeter College programmes.
97. The first group will complete their studies in 2004. The current standards achieved by virtually all the pupils from the school are at least satisfactory and often good. The pupils welcome the opportunity to demonstrate their practical skills. Particularly high standards were seen in the preparation of dishes in catering, problem solving activities in motor vehicle studies and the work in engineering where the only female pupil had produced a toolbox with a full complement of tools.
98. The progress made by the pupils has been good and often, very good. It is a response to skilled teaching which is closely geared to their individual aptitudes and needs. The course has had a strong impact on their behaviour and motivation, helping to raise their self-esteem and to exceed the initial predictions made about their progress. The pupils emphasise how much they enjoy what they see as a different approach to learning in the college. Their commitment is seen in the considerable personal care shown in presentation of work in many of their coursework folders.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Lessons and pupils' work in citizenship and personal, social and health education were sampled.

99. In the few lessons observed during the inspection, pupils were taking a lively interest in society and their role within it. Less mature pupils still experience difficulty in considering all the facets of an argument, for example concerning the extension of voting rights to 16 year olds or being ready to accept the accuracy of statistics on rape. In Year 11, the first pupils to be entered for GCSE find this a valuable incentive and focus to their work.
100. The newly appointed co-ordinator for citizenship has good plans to improve and extend the provision. The school is currently making satisfactory provision by using and building upon previous work as a foundation for developing the subject. It has received guidance from local authority advisors, which has resulted in a new policy and scheme of work that are soon to be distributed for consultation and discussion.
101. The subject co-ordinator demonstrates commitment to ensuring that all pupils benefit from the subject as soon as possible. The emerging work has been closely linked to the school's existing developments in personal and social education. The school is seeking to improve the impact of both areas of learning so that pupils can appreciate the impact it can have in their own lives.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	5
Attendance	5
Attitudes	5
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	5
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4

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

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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