

INSPECTION REPORT

STOCKLAND GREEN SCHOOL

Erdington, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103504

Headteacher: Mr A Arnott

Lead inspector: Ms J McKenna

Dates of inspection: 23 – 26 February 2004

Inspection number: 258787

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:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	589
School address:	Slade Road Erdington Birmingham West Midlands
Postcode:	B23 7JH
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Shuttleworth
Date of previous inspection:	12 January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Stockland Green School is a much smaller than average, mixed 11-16 secondary school in Birmingham. Just under six out of ten pupils are white. The remainder are from a range of minority ethnic groups, the largest group being of Pakistani heritage. Although some students speak English as an additional language, the most common languages being Urdu and Panjabi, none are at early stages of English acquisition. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs from within the school's own catchment area is below average. The school has a Resource Base for pupils with statements for special educational needs. There are 32 pupils attending, half of which come from beyond the school's immediate catchment area. There are a further ten students with statements in the main school, and as a result, the proportion of pupils within the school with statements is well above average. Most pupils with special educational needs have moderate learning difficulties. The socio-economic circumstances of the local community are well below average, and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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19366	W Walker	Lay inspector	
18676	R Meakin	Team inspector	Mathematics
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27984	A Whitehall	Team inspector	Science
22524	S Innes	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design technology
31129	J Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design
31008	P Rourke	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs
4355	F Earle	Team inspector	History Religious education
28178	J Connor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Stockland Green School provides a satisfactory quality of education. Following a period of difficulty, the curriculum provided for pupils, the quality of teaching they receive and the leadership and management of the school overall are now satisfactory. Standards are below the national average but are improving, and pupils are achieving satisfactorily overall. The good leadership of the headteacher is ensuring that the school is continuing to develop and improve. It provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about improvement within the school and the rising standards in GCSE examinations.
- Standards are below average, but pupils of all ages achieve well in history, geography, music, physical education and citizenship, and in mathematics, science and art in Years 7 to 9.
- The vocational and work-related courses in Years 10 and 11 are helping to meet pupils' broad range of interests and needs and are contributing to raising standards.
- Aspects of provision for information and communication technology (ICT), religious education, and modern foreign languages are unsatisfactory and do not meet statutory requirements.
- The assessment of pupils' work is inconsistent and information gained from it is not used well enough to track their progress or promote improvement.
- Relationships between different groups of pupils are very good and result in a high level of racial harmony.
- Although teaching is satisfactory overall, there is not enough good teaching.
- Some aspects of leadership and management are not strong enough throughout the school. In particular, systems for monitoring practice and judging its effectiveness are not rigorous enough to ensure consistency of practice.
- The school promotes pupils' personal development and cares for them well and provides good pastoral support.
- There is some under-identification of pupils with special educational needs.

Following the previous inspection in 1998, the school went into a period of decline and there were staffing difficulties which had a negative impact on the quality of leadership and management, the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils. Since the appointment of a new headteacher in 2001, the situation has improved. Teaching, pupils' behaviour and attendance are all better and there have been improvements in a range of other areas, including staffing. Standards are beginning to rise. All of the key issues identified at the previous inspection have been tackled, although some still require further attention. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, and there is now good capacity for further improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils enter the school with well below average attainment. Examination results have been well below the national average, but standards are rising, and by the end of Year 11 are now **below average** overall.

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

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

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory** overall and is good in several subjects. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in religious education in all year groups and in ICT in Years 7 to 9. The achievement of pupils identified as having special educational needs, those from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory and is in line with that of other pupils. Pupils in the Resource Base achieve well.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **good**. Relationships are **very good**. Their attendance, although improving, is **unsatisfactory**. The promotion of pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **good** overall.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**.

The quality of teaching is **satisfactory** overall. It is good in just over half of lessons, but there is not enough good teaching within the school. Positive features include teachers' subject knowledge, the quality of planning and good relationships. Pupils respond well to the supportive and productive climate found in most classrooms. General weaknesses include insufficient account being taken of pupils' different levels of prior attainment and specific needs and tasks not requiring their active involvement. Assessment is unsatisfactory, because, despite some good practice, it is too inconsistent and not enough use is made of the information gained.

Overall curriculum provision is **satisfactory** with significant strengths but some important weaknesses. Staffing and resources are **satisfactory** but aspects of accommodation are **unsatisfactory**. The care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are **good**. Pastoral support is **good**. Weaknesses in assessment result in **unsatisfactory** academic support and guidance for pupils. **Good** procedures are in place to seek and respond to pupils' views. The school's partnership with parents and other schools and colleges is **satisfactory** and its links with the community are **good**.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is **good**. Leadership and management of other key staff are **satisfactory**. Governance is **satisfactory**. Financial management is **very good**.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally positive about the school, as shown by the fact that it is regularly over-subscribed, and most pupils are also positive about the school. Both parents and pupils have a small number of concerns but they recognise and value the improvements made in the recent past.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve provision for ICT, religious education and modern foreign languages.
- Increase the amount of good teaching.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, particularly ensuring that monitoring and evaluation promotes consistency of practice.

- Improve the quality and consistency of the assessment of pupils' work, making sure that the information gained is used to track their progress and promote improvement.
- Improve the identification and assessment of all pupils with special educational needs and ensure that appropriate provision is made for them.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Attend to the curriculum weaknesses in ICT, religious education and modern foreign languages as noted above.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students enter the school with well below average attainment. Standards are rising, and by the end of Year 11 are now **below average** overall. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination and test results have been well below the national average, but the standards attained by pupils are improving.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, and is good in geography, history, music, citizenship, drama and physical education for pupils in all year groups, and in mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in religious education and in ICT in Years 7 to 9 due to weaknesses in provision.
- Pupils in the Resource Base achieve well due to good specialist teaching and support.

Commentary

1. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were very low, in the bottom five percent of schools in the country, and this is despite an increase from 2002. Results in English and mathematics were very low, and results in science were well below average. These results are shown in the table below. In relation to similar schools, results were average in science, below average in mathematics and well below average in English. Standards seen during the inspection in these core subjects were higher than these results indicate and are now below average. This improvement is due to the positive impact of the more stable staffing situation in the subjects, and to a variety of improvements made to the curriculum in each of the subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.7 (28.7)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	29.7 (29.2)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	28.7 (27.6)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 119 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Teacher assessments made at the end of Year 9 in 2003 in almost all other subjects were either below or well below the national average. Art and design was an exception where results were above the national average, although these were a little generous, and results in ICT were very low. Standards seen during the inspection are higher than those represented by these assessment results in many subjects. In ICT standards are well below average, but in almost all other subjects are now below average. Standards are above average in textiles because of very good teaching. The improvements have come about because the staffing situation in many of the subject areas has improved, and there have been improvements in curriculum planning and in teaching.

3. GCSE result improved considerably from 2002 to 2003, although they are still well below the national average, as shown in the table below. The results are above those from similar schools overall, however, and the proportion gaining one or more GCSEs at A*-G is well above the average of similar schools.

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	26 (14)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	78 (67)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	25.8 (20)	34.7 (n/a)

There were 115 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- GCSE results in virtually all subjects in 2003 were either below or well below the national average. The only exceptions were in art and design and religious education where the results were in line with the national average. Results were particularly low in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages, and in the ICT GNVQ course. All of these subjects have been particularly badly hit by staffing problems. Standards are now better in most subjects, although they remain below average in most. The improvements are a result of improved staffing, teaching and curriculum developments. In some cases they are recent and are not yet fully reflected in examination results. Standards are still well below average in English language, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, although they are improving in these subjects too. They are below average in almost all other subjects. Standards are slightly less strong in art and design this year than last due mainly to some staffing changes, and in religious education due to some curriculum changes. Pupils following the newly introduced vocational course in manufacturing are reaching satisfactory standards as this course is better suited to their needs.
- Pupils' achievement reflects the improvements that have taken place within the school and is now satisfactory overall across Years 7 to 11. It is good in geography, history, music, physical education and citizenship for pupils in all year groups, and in mathematics, science and art in Years 7 to 9. It was good in the lessons sampled in drama. It is unsatisfactory in religious education and in ICT for pupils in Years 7 to 9 because there are weaknesses in curriculum provision in these subjects which have a negative impact on pupils' achievement. It is satisfactory in all remaining subjects. The vocational and work based courses are motivating the pupils who participate in them and helping them to improve their achievement. Pupils' competence in literacy and numeracy in other subjects is below average, although it is sufficient to enable pupils to make satisfactory progress. The limited use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum means that achievement in this aspect is unsatisfactory.
- The achievement of pupils identified as having special educational needs is satisfactory and is in line with that of other pupils. There are some pupils who would benefit from specific support to tackle their learning needs who do not receive any currently and so they do not achieve as well as they might. However, the school is successful in ensuring that pupils leave with qualifications and in the last two years almost all pupils have attained at least one GCSE pass. Pupils in the Resource Base achieve well. The achievement of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory overall and is being improved by the range of enrichment activities provided for them. In 2003 they achieved well in some GCSE subjects, most notably art and geography, achieving significant proportions of the highest grades, A* and A. In most other subjects there are few of these grades, indicating some under-achievement. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also achieve satisfactorily. There is variation in the examination results of pupils from different minority ethnic groups, with some, such as Chinese, Vietnamese, and Pakistani pupils performing better than the school average, while

other groups, including Bangladeshi and some of mixed heritage, perform less well. Some of these groups are very small, however, and in general, all are achieving satisfactorily and in line with their prior attainment. There is some fluctuation in the gender difference in examination results, with girls generally performing better than boys, and at GCSE in 2003 by a large margin. In lessons this difference is less evident, although on occasions girls achieve better because of greater application to their work. Boys perform less well in examinations than they do in lessons because they find it difficult to write at length in the examinations without teacher support. The unsatisfactory attendance of some pupils has a negative impact on their achievement.

7. The trend of improvement in test and examination results is in line with the national trend. Targets for attainment are challenging. Last year, few of the targets set were met, but the school is reluctant to set lower targets than those they wish to aim for. Standards are rising, and, although the recent improvements are not yet fully reflected in examination and test results, they give ground for optimism.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **good**. Relationships are **very good**. Their attendance, although improving, is **unsatisfactory**. The promotion of pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Relationships between different groups of pupils are very good and result in a high level of racial harmony.
- The school sets high expectations for pupils' conduct and the great majority behave well in lessons and about the school, although a small number of pupils are sometimes disruptive.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility and contribute to the smooth running of school life.
- The personal development of pupils is good.
- The rate of attendance is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

8. Most pupils have a good attitude to school. They arrive punctually and settle quickly to work. They appreciate the calm and quiet environment that is found around the school and in most classrooms which enables them to concentrate on their learning. In the main they show courtesy and respect to their teachers, listen well and respond with enthusiasm to good teaching. Relationships overall are very good. Pupils mix readily both within their peer group and across age, gender and ethnicity groupings. This is an inclusive community, with a high level of racial harmony. Pupils collaborate well in lessons, although some lack confidence in their abilities and require the regular reassurance of their teachers. The attitudes and values of pupils with special educational needs are not markedly different from those of other pupils, although the behaviour of some is more challenging. Pupils from the Resource Base are well integrated into the life of the school and are equal and valued members of the school community.
9. The school makes very positive efforts to promote good and civilised behaviour, and these are effective most of the time. All pupils are aware that the school has high expectations of their behaviour. The majority appreciate the benefits of the reward system and recognise the fairness of the sanctions imposed for misbehaviour. Pupils' behaviour is good overall.

However, there are some occasions when this is not the case. A significant minority of pupils express reservations about the disruptive behaviour of some of their peers. There are occasions when a few pupils, some of whom have identified behavioural difficulties, act in a way which is detrimental to the sense of order and well being which otherwise characterises the school. The level of exclusions, although falling, is high. This reflects the zero tolerance of any violent and aggressive behaviour. Both the staff and the senior pupils show much commitment in their endeavours to make their school a safer and pleasanter place in which to learn.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	312	51	1
White – Irish	11	0	0
White – any other White background	11	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	43	21	2
Mixed – White and Black African	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	6	6	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	23	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	78	7	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	11	2	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	7	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	49	23	1
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	13	2	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

10. The school has improved attendance markedly since the previous inspection although levels are not yet satisfactory and are below the national average. Unauthorised absence is above average. This is due in part to the practice of parents taking their children on holiday during term time. The headteacher is very conscious of the detrimental effect absence can have on the attainment and progress of pupils and he seeks parental support to improve both attendance and punctuality. Advantage is yet to be taken of the opportunities offered by the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for consultancy and training to help improve behaviour and attendance in secondary schools.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.4	School data	1.2
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

11. The personal development of pupils is good. There are fruitful opportunities at every level for pupils to exercise responsibility in the daily routines of school life. These increase appropriately as pupils move up through the school. For example, younger pupils have tasks such as taking messages and assisting visitors. Older pupils assist younger ones with their work, provide support in the playground, and in due course exercise supervisory roles as

prefects. It is a reflection of maturity and loyalty that such pupils are volunteers who make a commitment of their own free time to support the school in this way. Pupils develop a proper understanding of the responsibilities of community living, and, through the workings of their school council, they have a growing awareness of the democratic process. Benefiting from the good example of their teachers and the valuable support of their mentors and other members of the support staff, they are helped to reflect on the consequences of their own actions and become morally aware. The ethnic diversity of the school community contributes to a mature understanding of the variety of faiths and cultures which are found in society. A recent and thorough review of the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is indicative of a new commitment to this central aspect of pupils' development. Curriculum plans are still being developed in some subjects to promote best practice but the initiative is being strongly led and carefully monitored. The school complies with its statutory obligation to provide a daily act of collective worship. Sensitively conducted assemblies and the 'thought for the day' during morning registrations encourage pupils to think beyond the material world.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**, as is the curriculum provided. The care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are **good**. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress is **unsatisfactory**. **Good** procedures are in place to seek and respond to pupils' views. The school's partnership with parents and other schools and colleges are **satisfactory** and its links with the community are **good**.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory**. Assessment is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is some good and very good teaching, for example in geography, history, music and textiles. Overall, however, there is not enough good teaching.
- Some skilled teachers inspire pupils with their enthusiasm and creative tasks, and consequently they work with confidence and independence.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils result in a supportive climate and encourage pupils to contribute in lessons.
- Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and organise lessons well. In too many lessons, however, expectations are not high enough, and not enough account is taken of pupils' prior attainment, resulting in work that is insufficiently challenging.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons and there is inconsistency in the quality and regularity of homework set which has a negative impact on pupils' learning.
- Despite some good assessment, practice is inconsistent and information is not used well enough to promote pupils' progress.

Commentary

12. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is satisfactory or better in almost 19 out of 20 lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection and particularly so from the period of decline that followed, when only just over 6 out of ten lessons were satisfactory. The improved teaching has come about mainly because of the more stable staffing situation, but also because of developments within the school to promote better practice, such as the

common lesson planning format that has been adopted. Teaching is very good in music, and is good overall in science, geography, history and physical education. There are good lessons too in other subjects such as textiles, drama and in some specialist ICT lessons, and in other areas such as the specialist teaching of pupils in the Resource Base. However, overall, there is not enough good teaching within the school. Only just over half of lessons are good, as compared with the national figure of more than seven out of ten lessons. Improving the quality of teaching so that more of it is good is an important area for the school to tackle in its drive to raise standards.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 105 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	17 (16%)	40 (38%)	42 (40%)	4 (4%)	2 (2%)	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.

13. There is a range of positive features to the teaching. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and of the curriculum and course requirements and so give pupils accurate and helpful information and explanations. Most lessons are well organised and the common lesson planning format is beneficial and encourages teachers to consider a good range of relevant factors in their preparation. The very good relationships that exist within the school help to establish a supportive and productive climate for learning in most classrooms, and encourage pupils to contribute in lessons. Pupils' behaviour is well managed in the main and ensures that pupils' focus is kept on learning. The most skilled and effective teachers inspire pupils with their enthusiasm for their subjects and their creative tasks and approaches. As a result, pupils actively engage in challenging tasks and display confidence and independence. In lessons such as these, where teachers' expectations are high and the tasks appropriately challenging, pupils make real intellectual and creative effort and achieve very well. However, in too many lessons, although the teaching is competent and ensures satisfactory learning, it does not result in pupils making as much progress as they are capable of. Teachers' expectations are not always high enough, and not enough account is taken of pupils' different levels of prior attainment, resulting in work that is insufficiently challenging. Tasks do not involve pupils actively enough and so there is too much passive learning. Pupils work hard and are keen to do well although a significant proportion of pupils lack confidence in their abilities and need regular reassurance from teachers. In the small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons, pupils' behaviour is not well enough managed. The provision of homework is inconsistent. While some homework is of good quality it is not set in accordance with the homework timetable and not all is of a high standard. ICT is not used enough to support pupils' learning in many lessons.
14. The specialist teaching of pupils in the Resource Base is good and skilled learning support assistants support pupils well and make a very good contribution to their learning. The mainstream teaching of Resource Base pupils is also good overall, although it is less effective when teachers are inexperienced in dealing with Resource Base pupils and are not familiar with pupils' particular needs. Pupils with special educational needs who are not in the Resource Base are taught by subject specialists and experience a similar quality of teaching and learning to that of other pupils, alongside whom most of them are taught. Where they are taught in classes with pupils from the Resource Base, they also benefit from the capable learning support assistants, who sometimes helpfully share the teaching and give good support for behaviour and learning. However, the majority of pupils with special educational needs are taught in classes that do not enjoy such support, and, while teachers give general attention to their requirements, tasks and materials are not modified enough to fully meet their particular needs so their learning is not as good as it could be. In addition, there are pupils who are not identified as having special educational needs but who nevertheless do have learning needs that are not being tackled enough by teachers. While some enrichment activities for pupils identified as gifted and talented are offered, the demands made of them in many lessons are often no greater than those of their peers so their learning is satisfactory rather than good.

15. The quality of assessment is inconsistent and is unsatisfactory overall. There is some good practice. In geography for example, specific tasks are assessed at National Curriculum levels and teachers' comments clarify why pupils achieve a particular level and how they can improve upon it in future. In history pupils' work is thoroughly marked with helpful comments. In music, there is good analysis of GCSE results with targeting of areas needing improvement. These features are not always present in other subjects, however, and there are weaknesses in practice overall. The way in which assessment information is gained and the nature of it varies. In particular, information gained is not analysed systematically nor used well enough to form a clear picture of how pupils are progressing or to take enough specifically targeted action to promote improvement. Some good work has taken place at whole school level recently, such as the introduction of tracking in Years 9 and 11, but this too needs to be more comprehensive. Practice at the moment is at the discretion of individual departments, and the resulting variation means that the potential for use for tracking pupils' performance across subjects is limited.

The curriculum

Overall curriculum provision is **satisfactory** with significant strengths but some important weaknesses. Enrichment opportunities are satisfactory. Staffing and resources are **satisfactory** but accommodation is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vocational and work related courses in Years 10 and 11 meet the needs of individual pupils well and promote equality and inclusion.
- The flexible approach to allocating full days for specific activities enriches pupils' curriculum experience.
- Curricular provision for promoting pupils' personal development is good.
- Statutory requirements are not met in religious education in all year groups, in ICT in Years 7, 8 and 9 and in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.
- There is insufficient time to meet requirements in French in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- There is not enough use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum.

Commentary

16. In Years 7, 8 and 9 all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, as well as religious education, drama, personal, health and social education and citizenship. Provision in science, history and geography, music and citizenship is good, but there are some statutory breaches to the curriculum. Provision in ICT is unsatisfactory because pupils do not cover the data logging and control aspects of the curriculum. There is insufficient time allocated to religious education for the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus to be met. In addition, the time allocated for French is insufficient to deliver the programmes of study.
17. In Years 10 and 11 enthusiastic efforts have been made to broaden and tailor the curriculum to meet the wide range of pupils' needs. In addition to GCSE courses in National Curriculum subjects and some others such as drama and media studies, a range of vocational and work related courses is offered. These are improving the motivation of otherwise disaffected pupils, and are helping to raise the standards they attain. These courses are a significant strength of the provision in Years 10 and 11. There are opportunities for alternative accreditation in some subjects for pupils for whom GCSE is not appropriate which is positive. However, again, there are some statutory requirements that are not met. Pupils who do not take a GCSE

course in religious education do not currently have any regular timetabled provision for the subject. Although there are plans to cover religious education in specifically designated curriculum days, the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are not currently being covered. A modern foreign language has been made optional. Only a small number take French in Year 11 and none in Year 10, but these pupils have not been formally disapplied from the subject as required. There have been problems in teaching the ICT curriculum in Years 10 and 11, in part due to staffing difficulties, but the appointment of new, specialist staff means that the curriculum is now being covered. However the use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum is a weakness and it is not used enough as a tool to deepen pupils' understanding.

18. Pupils with special educational needs have access to the full curriculum. Additional curricular provision to meet pupils' particular needs is good but there is little of it and many pupils who could benefit from intensive developmental work in literacy do not receive such support. The alternative curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is not aimed specifically at pupils with special educational needs but in practice it caters well for many of them. Learning mentors also help many pupils with special educational needs gain more from what the school offers. Provision for pupils in the Resource Base is good. They have full access to the National Curriculum as well as some additional specific support. A good variety of enrichment activities for pupils who are identified as being gifted and talented helps to cater for their needs.
19. Good attention is given to promoting pupils' personal development through the curriculum. There is a personal, social and health education programme which includes sex and relationships education and attention to drug misuse, which is valued by pupils, and a good quality citizenship programme that is promoted through most subjects and more generally within the school. Drama makes a positive contribution to the development of pupils' personal and social skills. The school provides a daily act of collective worship for pupils. The school holds some specific, 'flexible' curriculum days to broaden the range of curriculum experiences offered to pupils and to enrich provision. These are used imaginatively and often involve outside groups and the use of a variety of strategies aimed at promoting a positive attitude to learning. The focus of these days has included aspects of democracy, the working of parliament and health and science. The school provides a satisfactory range of activities outside the classroom more routinely. In art, for example, pupils work with artists in residence and visit art galleries and museums. There are some opportunities for pupils to take part in music activities and there is an annual school production in which pupils with musical and dramatic interests participate. There is a limited range of extra-curricular sporting opportunities for pupils, although the school uses the facilities of the leisure centre on site to extend the variety offered. Uptake for some is low. However, there are a number of school teams and some pupils gain local and national representative honours.
20. The school has had considerable difficulties in recruiting a full complement of suitably qualified teachers in the past few years, having to rely on the use of supply teachers in many subject areas, including in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This has had a negative impact on the quality of teaching and on pupils' achievement. The situation, although not fully resolved, is now much improved. Most subjects are now fully staffed. Problems remain in English, design technology, modern foreign languages and ICT, although the latter is due to be fully staffed in the near future. There is a small number of unqualified staff, but this does not have a detrimental impact on pupils' experiences. On the contrary, some are very effective.
21. Although accommodation for some subjects is satisfactory, and the school makes as good a use as it can of what is available to it, it is not adequate in all areas, and overall, accommodation is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient specialist rooms for drama, media studies, music, science and textiles. There are not enough general classrooms for the numbers of pupils on roll, and some are too small and in need of general maintenance. The humanities teaching block, despite some refurbishment, does not provide an effective learning environment and the textiles and resistant materials workshops have some deficiencies. There are limited outdoor facilities for physical education and games, although the school has shared access to the community leisure centre which helps to compensate for the deficiencies. Social space for pupils is also limited. There have been improvements for food technology and ICT, however, and two science laboratories have been refitted. The gymnasium is to be upgraded and a dance studio and fitness suite are due to be built in the near future. The City

Learning Centre based on the site improves the ICT facilities available to pupils. Staff work hard to make the learning environment as pleasant as possible. The school has a well-established programme for planned maintenance and it is in satisfactory internal decorative order.

22. Resources are satisfactory for most subjects. There are not enough for religious education in Years 7 to 9. There is not enough equipment for the data logging and control aspects of ICT, and, in some subjects not enough access to ICT hardware and sometimes insufficient software. Resources for physical education are limited.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are **good**. Pastoral support is **good**. Weaknesses in the monitoring of pupils' progress result in the provision of academic support and guidance being **unsatisfactory**. **Good** procedures are in place to seek and respond to pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Health and safety procedures are good.
- Pupils work in a caring environment where they have access to good pastoral support.
- The views of pupils are sought and valued.
- Assessment information is not always used effectively to provide well targeted support and guidance for pupils' academic needs.
- Not all pupils with special educational needs are identified appropriately.

Commentary

23. This is a school which cares for pupils well. Members of staff are very sensitive to the pastoral needs of pupils. The very good relationships which are seen across the school community help to ensure that pupils have the confidence to share any concerns they may have. They particularly value the services of the mentoring team who have good knowledge and training in welfare matters, and who liaise effectively with key members of staff on issues such as special educational needs and general health concerns. Pupils also comment very favourably on the quality of supervision provided by their teachers. In the words of one pupil, "You never see a corridor or a stairway without a member of staff there, and there are always several teachers about in the playground." Good advice and guidance are provided to all members of staff on child protection procedures and effective use is made of the curriculum to raise pupils' own awareness in this area. The school has responded well to the criticism in the previous report about the health and safety policy. Good procedures for risk assessments and for the administration of first aid are now well established and the overall provision is good.
24. The school works effectively with the Connexions service to provide careers information, advice and guidance for pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11. Local businesses cooperate well, providing support with mock interviews and opportunities for all Year 10 pupils to gain at least two weeks' work experience. A structured programme of interviews and career evaluation exercises caters properly for the needs of the more vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and those in public care.
25. The Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs is implemented and an accessibility audit has been completed in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Act. Individual education plans have been produced for pupils with special educational needs including those in the Resource Base, but most targets on the plans are not specific enough to be as helpful as they should be and they do not identify strategies for teachers to use to help pupils to meet their targets. Although they are reviewed twice each year as required by the Code of Practice, subject teachers are not involved in the formal review process, which is not therefore sufficiently robust. Subject teachers do not keep individual education plans to hand and although they record pupils' placement on the

register in their mark books, many have little further knowledge of the specific needs of pupils or of their targets. Around one tenth of pupils from the school's own catchment area are identified as having special educational needs, which is below the national average. The overall low level of prior attainment of pupils suggests that a higher proportion of pupils than have been identified are likely to have special educational needs, and there are pupils who would benefit from specific support, for example in literacy, who do not receive it currently. Through the Excellence in Cities initiative ten per cent of pupils have been identified as gifted and talented. A good range of enrichment activities has raised aspirations amongst pupils and led, in some cases, to an improvement in performance, although pupils' needs are not addressed as a matter of routine in all lessons yet. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are assessed on entry to school to ascertain their level of fluency and support requirements. Although no pupils are currently at early stages of fluency, a learning mentor who speaks five Asian languages provides good general support to the pupils and their families.

26. Although there is some good practice in assessment, there are weaknesses and a lack of consistency that result in the provision of academic support and guidance not yet being satisfactory. Not all assessment by subject teachers results in pupils being given specific and precise feedback on how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. There is some useful tracking of progress across subjects, especially for pupils in Years 9 and 11, but this is not well enough established for all pupils. Analysis of assessment information and performance data is not yet thorough or systematic enough, nor does it involve all appropriate staff, to ensure that maximum use can be made to promote improvement in pupils' attainment. This area has been identified as a priority for development by the school.
27. Pupils appreciate the opportunities they are given to express their views and the great majority recognise that the school is interested in what they have to say. Sometimes the exchange of views can be observed in the classroom, when, for example, teachers discuss with pupils their progress on specific projects and agree the most constructive way to achieve their objective. In a more formal way, pupils' views are expressed through the questionnaires and the meetings of the school council. Some pupils feel that they are not always treated with respect and their opinions are given insufficient weight when they complain, for example, about the state of the girls' toilets. It is, however, a matter of record that such issues are discussed at the most senior levels in the school, although instant solutions are not always found. There would clearly be value in ensuring that all pupils are aware of the deliberations that ensue from pupil representation and the problems that have to be resolved before changes can be made.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents and other schools and colleges is **satisfactory** and its links with the community are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school values its partnership with parents and works hard to develop it.
- The headteacher is very active in building productive links with the local business community.
- The school has a constructive relationship with the other educational and leisure institutions with which it shares the site and with other local secondary schools.
- Curricular links with local primary schools are not developed well enough to promote good continuity in learning when pupils start their secondary education.

Commentary

28. The school's links with parents are satisfactory and the information provided to them complies with legal requirements. The school values its partnership with parents. Good efforts are made to keep parents informed about school events through the regular newsletter, for example. Much effort is made to involve them in their children's learning. Most parents have positive views of the school. This is evident in the fact the school is popular and regularly over-subscribed. It was also evident in the overall responses to the questionnaires sent to parents prior to the inspection and in the meeting held for parents. However, some less favourable views were expressed by a significant minority of parents, particularly about the information given to them about their children's work and progress. There are some weaknesses in the arrangements for communicating such information to parents. For example the homework diaries are used inconsistently by several teachers and the information available to form teachers on review days lacks detail, especially on assessment, in some subject areas. The school has recognised these shortcomings and is in the process of streamlining access to data so that it can be used more effectively in the production of annual reports and progress checks. The majority of parents take advantage of the opportunity to discuss their children's progress on review days. Although a small proportion of parents do not think so, the school is keen to know parents' views of the school and two questionnaires to parents have been circulated during the past year. However, there is less opportunity for open discussion with them. The effectiveness of parental support is limited by the modest response by many parents to the school's initiatives. Not all parents ensure that their children attend school and too many take their children out of school during term time for holidays.
29. The headteacher has been very successful in building supportive links with local businesses. The restrictions he has placed on pupil movement during the lunchtime break, and his morning "sweep" of the area surrounding the school are greatly appreciated by trades people and shopkeepers. The changes are said to have virtually eliminated the poor behaviour that existed prior to this. In the wider community the school has been able to attract business sponsors for several curriculum areas and there is good involvement of local businesses in careers guidance and work experience opportunities. There is a harmonious relationship with the three other educational and leisure institutions with which the school shares the site and resources. The headteacher has also made good use of his contacts with local specialist schools for the sharing of expertise and skills, notably in the fields of ICT and modern languages. The relationships with local primary schools are not so well developed. The transfer procedures for pupils entering the school in Year 7 are satisfactory, and the pastoral support for them is good. Pupils settle quickly and their parents feel that the induction arrangements are good. There are few curricular links, however, resulting in some discontinuity in learning which impedes the progress that pupils make on transfer to the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is **good**. Leadership and management of other key staff are **satisfactory**. Governance is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about improvement within the school.
- The headteacher with the support of staff and governors has successfully established an inclusive school community which is distinguished by a high level of racial harmony.

- Financial management is very good.
- There is inconsistency by key staff in the application across the school of rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures to ensure uniformity of practice and promote improvement.
- Some statutory requirements are not met.

Commentary

30. Leadership by the headteacher is good. Since taking up post he has demonstrated a strong commitment to develop the ethos of the school, improve pupils' quality of experience and raise standards. The school's strengths and weaknesses have been identified and communicated well to staff who share the headteacher's commitment and give good support. Changes in the curriculum, in teaching and learning styles and a restructuring of the management team have taken place in a climate characterised by openness and professionalism. Difficult decisions have been made with confidence, integrity and sensitivity. The headteacher, with the support of staff and governors, has successfully established an inclusive school community which, because of the very good relationships and respect shown to pupils, is distinguished by a high level of racial harmony. The management of change has been informed by an understanding of good practice and a concern to communicate that understanding so that all involved are clear about their roles and responsibilities. There is good delegation. The initial target of moving the school out of challenging circumstances has been achieved with improved GCSE results and there is a recognition that standards need to rise further and a strong commitment to making sure that this happens.
31. The school improvement plan is appropriately structured and detailed and includes explicit success criteria. It is a helpful tool for school improvement. There has been honest and rigorous self-evaluation at senior level resulting in a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses within the school. A clear line management structure has been established with senior managers acting as critical friends to specific departments, although the way in which the role is carried out varies across departments and is not always sufficiently directive. The leadership and management of key managers across the school, including of heads of faculty and of subjects as well as for other specific aspects such as special educational needs, are satisfactory overall and good in a number of areas. Managers are strongly committed to the pupils, and are working hard to develop good practice. Their general responsibilities are appropriately defined, but there is a lack of clarity about precise expectations of practice and a lack of rigour and consistency in the way in which responsibilities are carried out. For example, there is variation in the way teaching is monitored within subject areas, with a lack of clear definition of the relative roles of heads of subject and their senior management critical friend. There is inconsistency in the practice of assessment of pupils' work across the curriculum and a lack of clarity in the analysis and use of performance data. Occasionally, the total responsibilities of a post holder, such as those for the special educational needs co-ordinator, are too wide-ranging and onerous to be adequately undertaken by one person. Performance management is securely in place and there is a satisfactory system for professional development.
32. Governance is satisfactory. Since his appointment the headteacher has put new processes in place to provide governors with detailed information, enabling them to more clearly identify the school's strengths and weaknesses and contribute to strategic planning. The governing body includes a wide range of expertise and useful contacts in the business community. The school has benefited from this, particularly in the development and use of a management information system. Full governors' meetings benefit from the prior exploration of issues in committee. There have been difficulties in recruiting governors though at present there is a full complement. A number of new appointments have yet to develop particular roles and interests. Although most responsibilities of governors are carried out appropriately, statutory responsibilities for ICT, religious education and modern foreign languages not been met in full.
33. The management of the school's finances is very efficient and this is a considerable improvement from the last inspection when it was a main weakness. All issues identified then have been resolved. The finances are complex, due to the school managing some budgets for services for other organisations that share the site. This necessitates a system of recharge which means that cash flow is not as much within the control of the school as it would otherwise be, and this is largely responsible for the small deficits which sometimes occur. The financial manager, appointed after the previous inspection, has implemented a wide range of measures aimed at keeping close management of expenditure and income and the governors,

through the finance committee, exert sound oversight. Expenditure is linked to the school development plan and procedures are in place to obtain best value. Expenditure per pupil is high, in part due to the additional funding for the Resource Base. Given that the school provides a satisfactory quality of education that enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily, sound value for money is provided.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,047,980
Total expenditure	2,116,189
Expenditure per pupil	3,556

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	55,153
Balance carried forward to the next	-13,056

RESOURCE BASE FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Provision in the Resource Base is **good**.

The Resource Base is funded by the LEA through the school budget for pupils with statements of special educational need for moderate learning difficulties. Thirty two pupils are currently on roll.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Teaching is good and learning support assistants support pupils well.
- Resource Base pupils are equal and valued members of the school community.
- Management of the Resource Base is good, with effective leadership and a strong sense of team-work.
- There is strong commitment from senior managers to the Resource Base and full cooperation from other staff.
- Individual education plans do not always identify pupils' specific needs or offer teachers enough guidance for meeting them, especially in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

34. The standards attained by pupils in the Resource Base are well below national levels in most subjects. Occasionally higher standards are reached, such as for one pupil who gained a good result in the mathematics test at the end of Year 9 in 2003. Pupils are entered for tests and examination where possible and appropriate, although relatively few pupils take the Year 9 national tests in English because of difficulties with literacy. At the end of Year 11, most pupils gain at least one pass at GCSE. Practical and creative subjects such as drama, art, textiles and physical education are the most popular and are where pupils attain the highest standards. Pupils generally take pride in their work and present it neatly.
35. The standards attained by Resource Base pupils, although well below average, nevertheless represent good progress overall and they achieve well in relation to individual targets. Occasionally some individuals make even better progress, exceeding expectations. Pupils are given opportunities to experience success in a personal sense as well as academic. Older pupils achieve well on accredited link courses with the local further education college, and when undertaking work experience in the community. Resource Base pupils perform well on personalised skills development programmes. They grow in self-esteem and confidence and in general reach appropriate levels of maturity.
36. The quality of the specialist teaching observed was good. Staff know pupils well and have very good relationships with them. Planning is thorough with learning objectives clearly outlined. Pupils understand what is expected of them and respond well. Mainstream teaching of Resource Base pupils is good overall, with pupils learning well for example, in history, science, music and English. Some very good teaching was seen with the pupils in art in Years 7 to 9, and in physical education in Years 10 and 11. Skilled learning support assistants support pupils well and make a very good contribution to their learning. Less effective teaching occurs when teachers are inexperienced in dealing with Resource Base pupils and are not familiar with their individual education plans and so are unaware of pupils' particular needs. Pupils from the Resource Base display very positive attitudes towards learning. They behave well as a rule and respond to the stimulation provided by teachers. They are aware of the needs of others and generally work cooperatively with their peers.

37. The school ensures that the Resource Base pupils are equal and valued members of the school community. All have access to the full National Curriculum. Pupils of the same age are taught together in groups, and are joined by other students for some lessons such as art, drama, personal, social and health education and development and citizenship. They take part in the usual school routines and activities. Following assessment of their basic knowledge and skills, pupils are also benefiting from specialised and specifically targeted small group work. Pupils' progress is closely monitored. All have individual education plans that are reviewed twice a year. Although the plans act as a general guide for teachers, they do not identify all difficulties and do not contain enough specific and precise detail on strategies to overcome them, especially for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Most parents give good support, attending annual reviews and presentations, staying in close contact with the school and supporting learning at home.
38. The Resource Base is well managed and effectively led. The organisation of the team of learning support assistants by the experienced and hard working special educational needs co-ordinator is good and there is a strong sense of teamwork. Record keeping is thorough. The need to clarify pupils' specific needs more thoroughly and to develop teachers' understanding of them and skills to meet them has been identified. The work of the Resource Base is greatly valued by the school with strong commitment from senior managers and full cooperation from other staff. The school copes well with the variety of learning difficulties as well as with the additional difficulties that many pupils have, such as speech and language, physical co-ordination and emotional and medical problems.
39. The good practice reported at the last inspection has been maintained, despite re-organisation of the Resource Base. There have been improvements in resources and there is now greater use of ICT.

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well below average and fewer pupils enter for GCSE English literature than is the case nationally.
- GCSE results improved from 2002 to 2003.
- Lessons are well planned and there are good relationships and in the best, pupils are stimulated and work at a good pace.
- Relationships in the classroom are good, encouraging pupils to work well.
- There is inconsistency in the teaching of the curriculum and the practice of assessment as a consequence of insufficiently rigorous monitoring.

Commentary

40. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were very low. Staffing difficulties resulting in a consequent lack of continuity in pupils' learning contributed to this. The staffing situation has now improved and strategies are in place to raise standards. These are having a positive impact and the standards of work are now below average. The standards of the highest attaining pupils are broadly average, but many pupils have literacy difficulties – poor reading skills, limited vocabulary and capacity to write at length – which keep standards below average. Pupils listen well. They share ideas sensibly in group talk, generally respond simply but clearly to questions and often contribute ideas enthusiastically. Pupils are happy to read aloud, though some read slowly and painstakingly, and can find information in and respond to a good variety of texts. Many pupils, however, need the guidance of workbooks and task sheets and their understanding of vocabulary is limited. A good range of writing is produced, in a variety of forms for different purposes, and increasingly extended pieces are undertaken. Writing is often affected by lack of vocabulary and uncertain spelling.
41. GCSE results in English language in 2003 were well below the national average, though they improved from 2002. Results in GCSE English literature are better than in English language but fewer pupils enter for literature, and the proportion entering is lower than the national proportion. Standards of work seen during the inspection are still well below average, but improvement is evident because of the improved staffing and a greater focus on teaching and learning strategies. Pupils listen well. Higher attaining pupils make perceptive contributions in class and good use of opportunities for group discussion, but, while others participate enthusiastically, their contributions are more limited. Pupils respond well to their reading, aided by the provision of a variety of analysis guides. They produce a good volume of extended writing. It is well planned and the quality of expression is improved by the process of drafting and revising, though only the highest attaining pupils are able to express themselves fluently and with a good range of vocabulary without teacher support. Many pupils make good use of ICT to inform their work and improve its presentation.

42. By the end of both Year 9 and Year 11 achievement is satisfactory. Standards of attainment on entry to the school are well below average. The poor results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were a consequence of problems with staffing, and currently pupils' achievement in relation to their capability and previous attainment is satisfactory. Results in the GCSE examinations are well below average, reflecting the well below average attainment of the pupils on entry, and they improved from 2002 to 2003. By the end of Year 9 there is no significant difference in the achievement of boy and girls. Boys, however, do significantly less well by the end of Year 11 because they find it difficult to write at length in the examinations without teacher support. Throughout the school setting arrangements, a suitably modified programme of study and support in the classroom enable pupils with special educational needs to achieve satisfactorily in relation to their capability and very few leave without a qualification in English. Pupils from different ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as other pupils.
43. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some good and very good features. Teachers have a good range of experience. Good relationships in the classroom encourage pupils to contribute. Lessons are well planned to engage pupils. The scheme of work is comprehensive though there is some inconsistency in its delivery, which prevents pupils sharing a common experience. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 consolidates pupils' knowledge and understanding of language, in accordance with the national strategy, and in Years 10 and 11 pays close attention to GCSE requirements. In the most successful lessons pupils are stimulated and work at a good pace. In other lessons the pace is slower, the range of activities more limited and pupils are not sufficiently challenged. There is some inconsistency in the practice of assessment. Pupils' work is regularly marked and their efforts praised but in Years 7 to 9 the extent to which National Curriculum levels are used is too variable, as is the amount of guidance offered to all pupils on points for improvement.
44. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a commitment to raising standards and progress has been made. Planning is good, records are kept of pupil progress and regular meetings enable staff to work to a common purpose as a team. Teaching and learning have been monitored, though not yet by the head of department. The inconsistency in the delivery of the curriculum and the practice of assessment is a consequence of this insufficiently rigorous monitoring.
45. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. After a period of decline in standards as a result of staffing difficulties there is evidence of improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

46. There is good awareness of the need to develop literacy skills across the curriculum, which are currently below average. There is a clear school policy, the development of which was a key issue in the previous inspection, and this is having a positive impact, although it concentrates on strategies for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Literacy skills on entry to the school are well below average. Pupils have satisfactory support to enable them to meet the literacy demands of different subjects, and they consequently make satisfactory progress. A variety of strategies is in use. Departments reinforce the understanding and use of key subject vocabulary and many monitor correctness of written expression. Pupils undertake a range of writing tasks for different purposes. There has been some emphasis on the importance of oral work, particularly in group activities, though this is an area for development. There is evidence of good practice though monitoring of it is currently limited which reduces the

extent to which it is shared. The literacy coordinator is relatively recently appointed and this aspect of the work of the school is at an early stage of development.

Modern foreign languages

French

Overall, provision in French is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of department is very committed to the pupils and the subject.
- The head of department is a native speaker and as such has excellent subject knowledge.
- Standards in tests and examinations remain persistently low.
- Too little curriculum time between Years 7 and 11 and severe difficulties in staffing are contributing to these low standards.
- Procedures for assessing pupils and informing them of their progress are not fully developed.

Commentary

47. Standards indicated by the formal assessments in Year 9 in 2003 were well below the national average. Standards seen on inspection were below average. The improvement is due to the fact that the head of department teaches most classes once a week to provide some continuity to help compensate for the ongoing staffing difficulties. Pupils understand short dialogues, read short texts and write simple sentences with support. They cannot produce extended writing or use a variety of tenses. When speaking, pronunciation is approximate. Boys are more willing to speak in class although they are less accurate than girls. Pupils' attainment is well below average on entry to the school. The low curriculum time and lack of full time specialist teaching in Years 7 to 9 has a detrimental impact on pupils' achievement and results in it not being as good as it might be. However, the arrangements that the school has put in place to compensate for the deficiencies is helping to ensure that pupils do make satisfactory achievement. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment. There are no significant differences in achievement between ethnic groups.
48. GCSE results in Year 11 in 2003 were low. Very few pupils took GCSE, although all pupils entered achieved a graded result. Standards seen on inspection were well below average. No pupils are studying French in Year 10 this year. The Year 11 group is small. Pupils can read short texts, and understand simple dialogues with support and repetition. They cannot write complex sentences or paragraphs. Tenses are insecure and they struggle to express opinions. Given their low levels of attainment at the end of Year 9, the achievement of pupils taking French in Year 11 is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve satisfactorily, and there are no significant differences in achievement between ethnic groups.
49. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In effective lessons, teachers share objectives with pupils, use a range of presentation strategies, support language with visual aids and ensure a variety of activity including active learning. As a result, pupils respond well and learning is satisfactory. In some, but not all lessons, there is excellent subject knowledge resulting from the teacher being a native speaker. Occasionally the pace of lessons is slow and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to hear and use French. There is insufficient use of questioning to test pupils' understanding and teachers do not refer back to objectives to

consolidate learning. The department has linked with a language college in order to help improve these areas.

50. The leadership and management of the head of department are satisfactory. She is very committed to her pupils and promoting their entitlement to a worthwhile experience in French. There has been exceptional difficulty in recruiting staff, however, and the problems caused by this are compounded by the subject being given less curriculum time than is usual. Because of the problems recruiting teachers French has been optional to pupils in Year 10 in 2003, and none have chosen to study it. These pupils have not been correctly disapplied from the National Curriculum and this is in breach of statutory requirements. These difficulties have held back developments within the department, notably in assessment. Teachers do not share details of how they assess pupils' work with them, and marking does not always tell pupils what level they are working at and how to improve. The department gathers information from assessment, but its use to inform planning and teaching is underdeveloped. No pupils have the opportunity to study more than one language.
51. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. There has been some progress. Teaching and learning have improved, the scheme of work in Years 7 to 9 is more detailed, and relationships are better due to an improvement in discipline and better classroom management. However, staffing difficulties and low curriculum time are still having a negative influence. As a result test and examination results remain persistently low.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a positive ethos and a shared commitment to raising standards amongst the team of mathematics teachers.
- Although standards are not yet high enough, they are improving because of better staffing and developing curriculum planning.
- The good relationships between teachers and pupils result in a harmonious and purposeful atmosphere in most lessons and this helps pupils to make at least satisfactory progress.
- Day-to-day assessment and record keeping are inconsistent and not rigorously used to track pupils' progress.
- Teachers do not involve pupils sufficiently during the introduction and development of new topics and the potential for using ICT to enrich and support pupils' learning is not being realised.
- Monitoring is not ensuring consistency of provision and the routine sharing of many examples of good practice.

Commentary

52. Current standards of work in Year 9 are below the national average overall, with the attainment of individual pupils ranging from very low to well above average. Standards are higher than those achieved by pupils in recent National Curriculum tests. This is because improved and developing schemes of work, the department's response to national initiatives and recent improvements in staffing have resulted in a wider and more effective range of teaching and learning strategies. All pupils cover common topics at levels appropriate to their needs. Higher attaining pupils have good knowledge and understanding as demonstrated, for example, in their work on probability. Standards of work of many pupils across the ability

range, however, are impeded because of limitations in their capacity to retain knowledge and skills.

53. Standards of work in Year 11 are well below the national average. However, they are higher than indicated by recent GCSE results. The attainment of pupils ranges from very low to above average but is mainly well below average. Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 have experienced serious discontinuity in teaching earlier in their schooling. The legacy of unsatisfactory provision for these pupils continues to have a negative impact on standards but, despite that, almost all pupils display positive attitudes to their work in mathematics. Now that the department is fully staffed, most pupils are producing standards of work that are consistent with their ability and levels of attainment are increasing. The performance of pupils with average and below average prior attainment has been raised by providing an effective balance between remedying deficiencies in prior learning and the extension of topics to include work at more challenging levels. They now have a secure grasp of basic algebra, for example. However many pupils continue to have difficulty with the recall of knowledge and skills.
54. Pupils join the school with well below average standards in mathematics and, reflecting the positive impact of recent improvements in provision, achievement overall is now good. The absence of these improvements when current Year 10 and 11 pupils moved through the school continues to have an adverse effect on their attainment and progress, which means that a significant proportion of these pupils are not yet reaching the expected standard. However, for most pupils achievement is satisfactory and progress in some individual lessons is good. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. The support of their learning assistants is effective, of good quality, and not confined to those with designated needs. The quantity of work produced by many pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is less than that usually observed, some is incomplete and generally there is little use of ICT to support learning. The achievement of pupils, particularly those with average and below average levels of attainment, is often inhibited by weaknesses in the recall of prior learning. Teachers do not insist on written work being presented in a structured, logical format and this impedes pupils' ability to retain their learning. There is no discernible difference in the achievement of boys and girls, those who speak English as an additional language or different groups of pupils.
55. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although some lessons are good, especially for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teachers have good pupil management skills and the positive relationships between teachers and pupils result in lessons being conducted in a harmonious and purposeful atmosphere. Thorough preparation and planning are characteristics of nearly all lessons. The combination of all these factors enables pupils to sustain good levels of concentration so that they make at least satisfactory progress. Generally, there is an appropriate balance between consolidating prior learning and developing new knowledge and skills. The least effective feature of lessons is that when introducing new topics, teachers do not involve pupils enough in the discussion or in questioning. Consequently opportunities are missed to share ideas and concerns so that pupils' learning is largely passive. This sometimes leads to a loss of pace and challenge because the teacher is then occupied with replicating explanations on an individual basis. When given the opportunity, pupils make oral contributions with confidence and accurately use appropriate mathematical vocabulary. The quality of the marking of pupils' work varies and there is a lack of consistency in routine grading and recording. This limits the use of assessment for tracking pupils' progress and the speed with which instances of under-achievement are identified.

56. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. After a period of significant staffing turbulence in which energies were necessarily consumed with containment, a positive ethos has been established with a team of teachers who share a commitment to raising standards. Much is achieved on an informal basis but the management and monitoring arrangements are not yet sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistency of practice and the sharing of good practice. Staffing changes have resulted in a fluctuating pattern since the previous inspection, with a decline in the quality of mathematics provision followed by a recovery. Overall, in spite of difficulties, there has been satisfactory improvement. Although performance in National Curriculum Tests has improved, performance in GCSE examinations have shown little change.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57. Pupils' competence in mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum is below average. All teachers have taken part in a training day that has contributed to raising awareness of the potential contribution that mathematical skills can make across the whole curriculum. For example, lessons in citizenship use mathematics to help pupils to understand some of the issues relating to the financial aid provided to peoples in need. However, the potential for using mathematical skills across the curriculum is not being fully realised and its promotion does not have a sufficiently high profile. In some subjects there is little evidence of the application of numeracy skills but there are no specific instances of weaknesses in mathematics impeding progress in other areas.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving but they are still too low.
- Lessons are planned and structured well and offer appropriate challenge, but pupils do not always record what they learn in lessons effectively.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and younger pupils are better motivated than older ones.
- Leadership and management are clearly focussed on raising standards.
- ICT is not used enough to promote pupils' learning.
- Marking does not provide enough feedback to pupils on how to improve their work and although assessment data is recorded, it is not used to identify underachievement clearly enough.

Commentary

58. Results at the end of Year 9 in the national tests in 2003 were well below the national average with no difference in the performance of boys and girls. Standards seen during the inspection show an improving trend and are now below average. This is because a better staffing position and strategies adopted for improving attainment are beginning to have a positive impact. Pupils know basic scientific facts, but, while some can relate this to concepts being taught, the understanding of many is below average. Pupils' investigative skills are improving due to a greater emphasis on developing them. Pupils consolidate basic ideas well through their practical activities and develop a greater interest in science. Pupils carry out practical procedures carefully but the standard of their predictions and evaluations is still well below average. Written work is frequently incomplete.
59. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were well below the national average with the attainment of girls better than boys. Standards seen during the inspection are also well below the national average. Pupils carry out satisfactory investigations but their predictions and evaluations continue to be weak. Basic scientific ideas are misunderstood and poor recall and a lack of concentration are barriers to higher attainment.
60. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below the national average. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well, partly due to the increased emphasis on investigative work which is helping to motivate pupils. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. The gaps in learning caused by previous staffing difficulties are now being tackled, but have not yet been fully compensated for. Pupils with special educational needs and those of different ethnic backgrounds achieve satisfactorily.
61. Teaching is good for pupils of all ages, but it is better for pupils in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. The department is now fully staffed with specialist science teachers. Good lessons have challenging work, are structured effectively, and are delivered with interest at a suitable pace to involve pupils at every stage. Younger pupils are more actively engaged and motivated. This is due in part to the increased emphasis on teaching science investigations, particularly in Year 7, which is effective. Classes are managed well and a wide range of learning strategies is used. Introductory activities are not always imaginative and endings of lessons do not always consolidate or assess the learning that has taken place. The standard of written work is weak. Teachers do not ensure that it covers lesson content adequately, leaving

detail unrecorded, and so it is less useful to pupils as an aid to understanding or revision. Assessment procedures record the results of tests and indicate realistic targets but underachievement is not clearly defined. Marking is not sufficiently diagnostic, leaving the pupils with a lack of understanding of how to improve. The use of ICT to widen the range of learning strategies is not developed and there is a lack of equipment to provide data logging experiences.

62. The department is led and managed well. There is a clear educational vision and strategies to raise attainment have been introduced. The effect of these strategies is beginning to show in improved performance. Good action was taken to minimise the impact of the staffing difficulties. Curriculum plans have been rewritten but a structured homework schedule has not been written into them for Years 10 and 11 and so a potential mechanism for promoting additional learning is lost. There is good team work within the department. The accommodation is well maintained but the lack of a fifth laboratory causes a significant number of lessons to be taught in general classrooms which is unsatisfactory.
63. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards are still too low but they are improving. Investigative science is now much better and the quality of the worksheets provides greater challenge and effective support. The standard of written work has not improved enough.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average but are improving because of better curricular provision.
- There are gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge because of previous staffing difficulties.
- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons taught by specialists is good.
- There are too few resources to cover the full curriculum in Years 7 to 9.
- The new head of department has made a good start with identifying weaknesses and means of improving them.

Commentary

64. Standards are well below average overall in Years 7 to 9 because pupils have had inadequate experience of the subject. Standards in lessons seen are close to the national average for word processing and desktop publishing because pupils are now following an appropriate course taught by specialist teachers. Pupils can create simple presentations and use the internet for research. Their skills and knowledge of other aspects of the subject are well below average. This is partly because they have not yet had time to catch up for gaps in prior learning caused by the staffing difficulties and also because of insufficient resources for data-logging and control.
65. In 2003, results at the end of year 11 were well below average. No pupils gained pass grades in GNVQ examinations. Since new specialist teachers began this term, Year 11 pupils taking the full GNVQ course have all achieved pass grades for their most recent unit of work. All pupils in Year 10 now take a full GNVQ course or opt to study fewer units. Those following the full course are reaching average standards. Overall standards are still below average, but are rising because of improved provision. Pupils use computers confidently and are learning to work independently to solve problems.
66. Achievement is unsatisfactory for all pupils in Years 7 to 9 because they do not receive their full entitlement to ICT. Achievement is currently satisfactory in Year 10 and 11 because, in most lessons, pupils are benefiting from improved teaching and now follow appropriate courses in ICT. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory and in line with their prior attainment. Teachers have assessed pupils' learning needs and are using the information effectively to plan

lessons. The department is now well organised and managed and the quality of teaching by newly appointed specialists is at least good and often very good. Progress is further helped by the good attitudes of pupils who respond positively to increased challenge. However, until recently, achievement was poor in all years and pupils have yet to gain sufficient experience of ICT to close the gap between what they should know and can do and what they do know and can do.

67. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is at least good in lessons taught by permanent specialist teachers and occasionally unsatisfactory in lessons taught by temporary teachers. In the best lessons, teachers have very good subject knowledge and use successful, motivating methods to help pupils improve. Good working relationships between pupils and teachers lead to cooperation and good progress. Teachers skilfully help pupils to improve their writing and presentation of work and explain new work clearly. Teachers have good awareness of pupils' individual learning needs and help them effectively. In unsatisfactory lessons, teaching lacks structure and takes little account of previous learning so that pupils do not build on earlier experience. The assessment of pupils' work is thorough and constructive but teachers have yet to use it to set targets for individual pupils' progress.
68. Leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The new head of department has made a good start with identifying weaknesses and the means to improve them. Standards are improving because of action taken so far. Staffing difficulties are being overcome and a further appointment has been made to complete the specialist team. There have been improvements to accommodation and resources but problems with hardware sometimes slow lessons. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory overall, although the very recent developments give grounds for optimism.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. Provision for ICT in other subjects of the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall. Use of computers is satisfactory in English and is good in history and modern foreign languages for drafting and presenting work. There are several computers in most subject areas but access to resources is limited in geography and physical education. Although there is increased use of computers in the school this year, pupils develop a narrow range of skills and knowledge, mostly limited to desktop publishing and research. Provision is not monitored or co-ordinated and this is resulting in inefficient use of learning to help pupils to improve their work in other subjects. Insufficient equipment for data-logging and control restrict progress in these aspects and not all pupils receive their full entitlement to the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9. The school has this as a key area for development and the new head of department is starting to formulate plans to improve provision.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall as a result of teachers' very good relationships with pupils and the use of a range of stimulating teaching strategies.
- Tasks and materials are not sufficiently modified to meet the learning needs of all pupils, especially those with special educational needs.

- Pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm in most lessons so learn well.
- Formal assessment of pupils' work is very good.
- Leadership of the subject is very good and management is good.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

70. Standards in Year 9 have improved in recent years but are still below the national average. Pupils have a good geographical vocabulary and generally use it well though they are sometimes careless in their oral expression. They have a good range of geographical skills but Ordnance Survey map work is not well developed. Pupils are skilled in the methods of enquiry based work. Pupils have a well-developed sense of place.
71. There are no pupils taking the subject in Year 11 but the standards of those in Year 10 are below the national average. Pupils of high prior attainment have a good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of physical processes that they write of well, with good integration of diagrams, graphs and maps into their text. The standards of the majority of pupils are much lower as they are much less able to describe geographical processes clearly, they do not draw diagrams well and often leave work incomplete.
72. The achievement of pupils by the end of Years 9 and 11 is good overall. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A* and A at GCSE in 2003 was close to the national average and represented very good achievement. In formal assessments girls achieve better than boys but this difference is not easily evident in lessons as many boys are more actively engaged in their work than girls. Pupils from all ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language integrate well with each other and there is no obvious difference between them in achievement. Although their achievement is satisfactory overall, pupils with special educational needs do not always achieve as well as they could as tasks and materials are not sufficiently modified to meet their particular needs.
73. Teaching and learning are good overall. Some teaching is very good. Relationships with pupils in most classes are very good. Most teaching is lively and enthusiastic and engages the attention and interest of pupils. Stimulating teaching strategies are used to encourage pupils to think about their work and learn effectively. As a result, pupils overall are keen to respond and work well, individually and collaboratively. Learning support assistants significantly help the learning of pupils with special educational needs.
74. Formal assessment processes are very good. From Years 7 to 9 specific tasks are assessed at National Curriculum levels. Teachers' comments clarify why pupils achieve a particular level and how they can improve upon it in future. The curriculum is well developed with an appropriate focus on an enquiry-based approach. Pupils are able to make good use of ICT, most notably in their assessed tasks. However, access to ICT is very limited and it is not used as much as it should be. The development of literacy is emphasised and key words are prominently displayed in classrooms, but too many mis-spellings are uncorrected in pupils' writing. The opportunity for pupils to study geography in Years 10 and 11 has been much reduced by other curriculum developments. Accommodation is unsatisfactory as the rooms are too small, too few and are poorly heated and ventilated.
75. Leadership of the department is very good. There is a clear vision for the further development of geography in the school and the head of department has created an effective team. Management is good but monitoring the work of the department is not done thoroughly enough. Improvement since the last inspection is good although there is still too little use of ICT.

History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the GCSE examination have improved.
- Leadership and management are good and focused on raising standards.
- Good teaching in most lessons helps pupils to make good progress in their understanding of the past and their positive attitude helps them to learn effectively.
- Planning is not well implemented in some lessons and pupils' speaking skills are not as well developed as they could be.
- Setting targets for pupils to help them improve their work is inconsistent in quality.

Commentary

76. The standards attained in Year 9 are below average. This is because they have difficulty in analysing historical sources and most written work is descriptive, lacking supporting reasons for the views expressed. Higher attaining pupils reach standards which match the national average. They have sound subject knowledge and write well. Standards have risen over recent years and the gap between boys' and girls' attainment narrowed. This is the result of careful analysis of attainment, good lesson planning and well-structured assessment exercises.
77. GCSE results have improved considerably over recent years. In 2003, results were just below average. Almost all pupils entered gained a pass and reached their predicted grade. These improvements are due to good teaching focused on developing pupils' study skills and revision techniques. Standards in Year 11 are below average overall. Immature written style hinders pupils from effectively expressing their views. They can take information from sources but give insufficient evidence to support their conclusions. Girls generally attain a higher standard than boys because they take more careful notes and provide more detailed answers.
78. The attainment of most pupils on entry to the school is well below average. Good lesson planning and teaching enables pupils of all ages to make progress in their knowledge of the past and their achievement is good. The use of vocabularies, key-words and structured support for writing, enables all pupils to participate fully in lessons. The use of appropriate resources and carefully structured exercises is particularly helpful for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language and the achievement of these pupils is good.
79. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Some teaching is very good. There is also some satisfactory teaching. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to plan lessons which interest pupils and extend their knowledge and skills. Most pupils have a positive attitude and work hard. This contributes significantly to the effectiveness of lessons. In some lessons insufficient attention is paid to developing pupils' speaking skills and teachers are too easily satisfied with brief and undeveloped answers. Where teaching is only satisfactory pupils are not brought back to task quickly enough when they lose concentration and hurried conclusions do not reinforce what has been learned. Attention is paid in all lessons to developing pupils' literacy skills though the use of vocabularies, key words and prompts for writing. Pupils are encouraged to use ICT in their personal research and many use word -processing skills well to present their work.
80. Assessment is good. Work is thoroughly marked and helpful comment given. Target-setting for improvement, however, is inconsistent and the requirement for pupils to identify their targets is not met by all pupils.

81. Leadership and management are good, clearly focused on raising standards and to improving teaching and learning. Teaching is monitored and the line manager of the department promotes good practice. This has resulted in increased numbers opting for the subject in Year 10 and improved standards at GCSE.

82. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the results at GCSE, the quality of teaching, and in resources.

Religious education

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 does not meet statutory requirements and there is not enough time in Years 7 to 9 to meet the expectations of the agreed syllabus.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory for the majority of pupils, although it is satisfactory for those in the GCSE examination group in Year 11.
- Assessment does not give clear targets for improvement.
- Pupils are introduced to a range of religious traditions which contributes to their cultural development.
- Pupils are encouraged to respect the beliefs and values of others.
- There are not enough resources for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

83. The standard attained by pupils in Year 9 is below the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus. There is insufficient time to meet curriculum requirements and teachers cover too much in lessons. This leads to superficial treatment of the religions studied. Achievement overall is unsatisfactory. Pupils do make some progress however, in individual lessons and they respond well to opportunities to express their own views about matters of belief and conduct. The standard attained by girls is higher than boys because they are prepared to take more care over the detail and presentation of their written work.
84. Results at GCSE in 2003 matched the national average. The proportion of pupils who gained grade A was well above the national average. Almost all pupils did better in religious education than in any other subject and better than predicted. These are particularly commendable results since a much higher than average proportion of the year group was entered for the examination. Good teaching and careful examination preparation by pupils and teachers is the reason why these results were so good. Numbers in the current Year 11 GCSE group are lower and do not reflect the full range of ability in the school. The standard attained by these pupils is below average. This is because their written work is largely descriptive. They are weak at explaining the key features of the religions they study though better at expressing personal opinions on moral issues. Written work has improved in recent months and they are making satisfactory progress. The standard attained by girls is higher than boys because of more detailed and careful written work. The use of appropriate support material enables all pupils to participate in lessons. This is particularly helpful for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Consequently the achievement of all pupils in the examination group is satisfactory.
85. For pupils not following the examination course there is currently no provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11. Standards overall, therefore, are below expectation and achievement is unsatisfactory.
86. The quality of teaching in most lessons is satisfactory overall. It is occasionally good and there was one unsatisfactory lesson. Objectives are clearly stated and pupils are given good personal support. This is particularly effective for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who sometimes have difficulty in understanding the issues discussed. Discussion of different religious practices is sensitively handled, encouraging pupils to respect the views and beliefs of others. In the unsatisfactory lesson, planning was poor, resulting in pupils not learning as much as they could have done. Pupils' work is regularly checked and helpful comment given. These, however, do not set clear targets for improvement.

87. The curriculum introduces pupils to a range of religious and moral issues and visits to places of worship enhance pupils' learning. Current provision does not meet statutory requirements for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The school is aware of this and is planning to implement statutory requirements in the near future.
88. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department works closely with the head of faculty who provides good professional support. Accommodation is poor. Resources for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are insufficient to meet the range of ability in classes. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory because provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is not as good as it was then.

TECHNOLOGY

Design technology

Provision in design technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in textiles and pupils achieve well because of very good teaching.
- Standards are well below average in resistant materials because of staffing difficulties.
- Pupils are well behaved and have good attitudes to learning.
- Assessment of pupils' work is not used sufficiently to monitor progress and set targets for improvement.
- Aspects of accommodation for resistant materials and textiles are unsatisfactory and there is not enough equipment for the control elements of the curriculum.

Commentary

89. Standards are below average in Years 7 to 9. There are recent improvements in most areas of the subject because of a sharper focus on pupils learning about the materials they use. Pupils' understanding of theoretical work in resistant materials is restricted by their having had very limited specialist teaching recently. However, by Year 9, pupils have acquired a satisfactory understanding of the principles of the design process through opportunities to be taught by specialist teachers when studying work in other materials areas. Standards are above average in textiles because pupils benefit from very good teaching that encourages them to work creatively. For example, girls and boys in Year 9 learn to sketch their ideas very effectively for a range of modern leisure wear that they will design and make.
90. Standards are below average in Years 10 and 11 but are an improvement on those in the previous year because the curriculum is now more suitable to pupils' needs and interests. Pupils following the newly introduced vocational course in manufacturing are reaching satisfactory standards. In 2003, GCSE results were well below average for grades A*-C, but the proportion gaining A*-G was slightly above average. Results in textiles were higher than in other areas. Boys did significantly less well than girls overall. Boys do as well as girls in textiles because they are similarly highly motivated. In all years, written work is below average so pupils cannot always explain clearly in writing what they know and understand. The thoroughness of the completion of coursework in textiles contributes to higher standards in that area.
91. Achievement is satisfactory compared with prior attainment. It is good in textiles because pupils manage projects well and complete written work thoroughly. Pupils make good

progress with drawing in graphic products but they do not annotate work or explain it as it develops. The absence of specialist staff in resistant materials has a negative impact on pupils' achievement in that area, but the department provides specific work which helps to compensate. The technician provides very good support in lessons. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress because teachers know their needs and provide appropriate help. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are exceptionally well integrated and make similar progress to others. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their work.

92. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is sometimes very good, especially in textiles, occasionally good and mostly satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge. In the best lessons, teachers inspire pupils to work creatively and motivate them so that they approach very challenging tasks confidently and produce original work. In satisfactory lessons there are fewer opportunities for pupils to work independently and progress is not reviewed rigorously at the end of lessons. Teachers assess pupils' work satisfactorily but assessment information is not consistently used by all teachers to monitor pupils' progress and set targets for improvement. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils that lead to cooperation and to pupils making at least satisfactory progress.
93. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has good knowledge of strengths and areas in need of improvement. The recent introduction of a vocational course is having a positive effect. There are good relationships between staff but not enough sharing of successful practice. The difficulties with staffing are being managed well to limit disadvantages to pupils. Aspects of accommodation for resistant materials and textiles are unsatisfactory and there is not enough equipment for the control elements of the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is satisfactory overall, but there is not enough good teaching and there is some that is unsatisfactory.
- Standards are not high enough.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 and higher attainers achieve well.
- The head of department is ambitious for pupils.
- The pupils' basic skills of drawing are not good enough and sketchbooks are not used for a wide enough range of purposes.

Commentary

94. Teacher assessments made at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average, although these were a little generous. Examination results in 2003 were in line with the national average, the best in school. Pupils from the art department were amongst the few awarded GCSE A* grades. The boys' results were above the boys' national average. The standard of art and design now is below average across the school. Recent staff changes have interfered with continuity of learning. Work in Years 7 to 9 is clearly based on observational drawing and the design process although there is a lack of understanding for different purposes. They tend to

regard drawing as another way to make a picture than to analyse and record particular information. They apply tone carelessly, often destroying form instead of accentuating it. Sketchbooks are not used well enough for experimentation and investigation. Pupils generally have difficulty in talking or writing about their work. By the end of Year 9 pupils' design skills are strong, as when they took Celtic patterns and rearranged them into innovative compositions. GCSE pupils use computers to develop their compositions. The best Year 11 work has careful drawings of fruit, developed into original, innovative fabric or lino prints and low reliefs but the majority rely on unmodified imagery from worksheets and photographs from newspapers and magazines, and there is a lack of personal research. This lowers standards.

95. Pupils enter the school with very low standards in art and design. Achievement overall by the end of Year 9 is good, but it is better for pupils in Years 8 and 9 than in Year 7 because of the better quality of their earlier experience. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs, those from minority groups and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, with teachers boosting their confidence where necessary. Higher attaining pupils and those who are gifted and talented achieve well.
96. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is sometimes good and occasionally very good, but there is also some that is unsatisfactory. The best teaching and learning challenges pupils to experiment with materials and respond to the work of famous artists. For example, lower attaining pupils made very good progress finger-painting in Aboriginal style, using computers to modify their compositions. Lessons begin with an explanation of generally well-planned activities, although there is too much copying from worksheets. Many pupils lack confidence and are over-reliant on their teachers for guidance. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own or their classmates' progress are often missed at the ends of lessons. Learning in some lessons is unsatisfactory or poor because teachers do not always have the classroom skills or depth of knowledge to manage a minority of pupils who interfere with the learning of the others.
97. Recently acquired computers have improved the delivery of the National Curriculum. Pupils work with artists-in-residence and visit museums and galleries. Assessment is satisfactory. It is used to recognise weaknesses in the curriculum but not to set short term targets for pupils.
98. The leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory. The head of faculty is keen for pupils to achieve of their best, and subject documentation is aimed at raising standards. There is not enough detail as to how this will be promoted, however. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. The two rooms are on different floors and one is too small for large groups. Some of the furniture is old and damaged. However, staff make a significant effort to ensure a stimulating environment through creative display. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since last inspection. Some staffing changes have resulted in pupils' behaviour being less well managed and a lowering of standards. The use of sketchbooks remains under-developed. However, long term planning has improved. There is the capacity for further improvement within the department.

Drama

99. Drama is established in the curriculum as a separate subject in years 7 to 9, and as a GCSE option in years 10 and 11. Drama was sampled by seeing lessons taught to pupils in Years 7, 9 and 11 and by looking at the planning of pupils' work.
100. The standards in the lessons seen in Years 7 to 9 were in line with national expectations, and pupils were achieving well. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment participate with interest. They are familiar with the vocabulary of the subject and the requirements of behaviour in lessons. They listen carefully and follow instructions without difficulty. Many move comfortably although some are a little inhibited. Most understand the use of stage space. They can improvise dialogue, though often contributions are brief and lacking expression. They show imagination in preparing and performing improvised responses, for example, to the story of Faustus. Relationships in the lessons are good and pupils work cooperatively.

101. Standards seen in Year 11 lessons were well below average and this matches recent GCSE results. Achievement was, however, good. This reflects the fact that although pupils of all levels of prior attainment choose the course, a large proportion are of lower prior attainment. They are familiar with the format of play scripts and can read and prepare them for performance. They have a basic understanding of the characters they are playing and can speak in character, though with limited skills of voice and movement. They work cooperatively and show interest. They are, however, very dependent on the teacher's help and guidance to explore the scripts fully and plan their performances.
102. Teaching and learning were good in the lessons observed. Lessons are well planned and delivered with energy and enthusiasm. Poor accommodation for drama limits pupils' experiences but the subject makes a useful contribution to their personal and social development. Drama productions make a valuable contribution to the life of the school.

Music

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning lead to good progress for pupils who attend regularly.
- Achievement is good for all groups of pupils.
- Analysis of attainment is used to improve the work given to pupils.
- Marking is regular and gives pupils details of how to improve.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to use computers in music lessons.

Commentary

103. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 is below average. All pupils are able to use electronic keyboards with some competence for performance and for composition. Their listening and appraising skills are below average. This is because levels of general and musical literacy are below average. The department works very hard to improve these skills so that pupils are increasingly able to use a suitable musical vocabulary to describe the music they hear.
104. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average, but candidates did as well as expected and there are clear indications of a rising trend in attainment. There have been staffing changes recently in music which are having a positive impact and are raising standards. Overall, standards are now below average at end of Year 11. Pupils are able to produce compositions using electronic keyboards and acoustic instruments. Standards in composition and performance are below average and are well below average in musical appraisal. There is a small amount of performance and composing of a standard just above average. The department identifies pupils' musical and general literacy as a focus area and gives considerable emphasis to written work, key words and technical terms. This has begun to have a positive effect on raising aural attainment. Pupils have very few opportunities to use computers in music and few pupils develop the computer skills necessary to aid their composing and performing.
105. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average in music. The achievement of pupils across all year groups is good. The very good teaching they are now receiving is helping to compensate for problems experienced during past staffing difficulties. Pupils with

special educational needs and those from different ethnic groups as well as those who speak English as an additional language also achieve well.

106. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils benefit from energetic, committed and enthusiastic teaching. Care is taken to relate tasks to previous learning and lessons have a wide range of interesting tasks. This helps to consolidate pupils' learning and maintain interest. Teaching is characterised by very good preparation, a wide range of teaching styles and very thorough organisation. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. There is some work especially designed for pupils at a range of levels but not enough in composing and performing tasks to fully extend gifted and talented pupils. Work is regularly marked, spelling is corrected, and pupils receive helpful advice on how to improve. Marking underpins the strong focus on musical and general literacy found in lessons.
107. The provision for instrumental teaching is satisfactory. Instrumental teachers set targets for their pupils and keep records of pupils' progress. The visiting instrumental teachers' work is carefully managed and integrated into the work of the department. Extra-curricular work is satisfactory with pupils regularly taking part in musical activities. The performances and compositions of pupils are appropriately celebrated in musical events. There are regular large-scale school productions. Such opportunities have a strong and beneficial impact on the pupils' cultural and social development.
108. Leadership and management are very good. The department promotes literacy in all lessons and this helps pupils' musical and general development. The long-term monitoring and assessing of pupils' work are good. Attainment is analysed across the range of skills taught in music lessons and this information is used to develop the work offered to pupils. GCSE music results are analysed by component and the results used to target the areas needing improvement. Computer resources within the department are inadequate and there is a lack of music software. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, which, along with pupils' positive attitudes, promote good achievement.
- Leadership is good with a clear focus on raising standards.
- Assessment procedures are good and are developing pupils' understanding of National Curriculum levels.
- On site accommodation is poor and there are limited resources which hinder development of the curriculum.
- ICT to support pupils' learning is under-used.
- There is a limited range of activities to promote participation in sport.

Commentary

109. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below the national average, but these judgements were a little harsh. Inspection evidence shows standards are below the national average, with boys and girls attaining similar standards. During Year 7 to 9, pupils begin to apply their skills accurately. This was apparent in football, badminton and gymnastic

lessons. In Year 7 pupils begin to perform movement and skills with technical accuracy. By the end of year 9, many pupils are performing the same skills with more rigour. However, pupils' tactical awareness is less well developed.

110. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 take GCSE physical education as part of their core curriculum. Pupils continue to develop their skills. Practical performance outweighs theoretical knowledge for the majority of pupils due to weakness in literacy skills and the capability to answer questions accurately, and so standards in GCSE lessons remain below national expectations. Consequently in 2003, 35 per cent of pupil gained an A*-C grade pass. Although this is below the national average, it is above the school average and generally in line with predicted grades. The department achieved a 100 per cent A*-G pass rate in 2003. Pupils gain an understanding of how different types of exercise can contribute to their fitness and health.
111. Pupils' achievement in relation to well below average standards on entry is good across all year groups. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs, those from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is also good. The department has established a good climate for learning in which all pupils are fully involved.
112. Teaching is good overall and it promotes good progress and pupil success. Very good teaching and satisfactory lessons were also observed. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations. They plan in detail, give very good encouragement to pupils and engage them well. All teaching is characterised by good management and control of pupils. Teaching methods are appropriate to pupils' levels of attainment. Pupils are encouraged to improve through appropriately challenging tasks. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, planning is less detailed, approaches are less imaginative and demonstration is weaker. All teachers' quality of relationships with pupils is good. This produces lessons of high productivity, pace, participation and enjoyment.
113. Poor accommodation and limited resources restrict the breadth of curriculum and variety of sports provided for pupils. The department has made every effort to broaden the curriculum by using off-site facilities and so provision meets statutory requirements. Furthermore, the gymnasium is to be up graded and a dance studio and fitness suite are due to be built in the near future. The school uses the facilities of the leisure centre on site to increase the variety of extra-curricular activities offered to pupils, but overall there is a limited range of opportunities to promote participation in sport. Consequently, during the inspection there was very little uptake for activities on offer. Pupils do have the opportunity to participate on school teams, however, and a number of pupils gain local and national representative honours. Assessment procedures are good. Pupils are encouraged to understand National Curriculum levels and set individual learning goals. This is helping pupils understand how they can improve their work. The use of ICT is insufficiently developed in teaching and learning and for monitoring pupil progress. The marking of written work does not always guide pupils on how to improve.
114. Leadership of the department is good, with a clear strategic vision focussed on raising standards and action being taken in a variety of areas to promote improvement. However, the monitoring of teaching and delivery of the curriculum needs to be more rigorous. The department has a strong sense of purpose and is committed to improving provision for pupils. The department has maintained the positive aspects identified at the previous inspection.

115. Despite the good features, including the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, the overall provision for physical education is just satisfactory. This is due to the weaknesses outlined above, especially the poor on-site accommodation, lack of enrichment opportunities and under-developed ICT provision, all of which limit the development of the subject. Several members of staff within the department are senior managers within the school, and, while good practitioners, their additional responsibilities are limiting their capacity to support the development of the subject.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

GNVQ courses are offered in ICT and manufacturing. The ICT course was inspected and is reported on in the ICT section. A manufacturing lesson was observed and is reported on in the design technology section.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good.
- Pupils' achievements are good although boys achieve less well than girls.
- The innovative curriculum which makes good use of outside speakers encourages pupils to recognise their responsibilities.
- Standards are below average. Pupils acquire satisfactory knowledge of issues but their understanding is more limited.
- Pupils' attitudes are good.

Commentary

116. Standards are below average for pupils of all ages. Pupils acquire satisfactory knowledge of a range of relevant issues but their understanding of the related concepts is more limited. Pupils know about national issues such as the electoral system and parliament as well as subjects that touch their lives more closely such as the effects of smoking on the individual and society. Younger pupils have knowledge of issues relating to Children's Rights and the laws relating to family life. Sensitive topics such as homophobia, suicide and teenage pregnancy are covered in single sex lessons which enable pupils to participate in discussion more confidently and this is appreciated by pupils. Pupils from minority ethnic groups value the understanding and tolerance that open discussion of racism and prejudice is breeding. Although good use is made of ICT by pupils to word-process their work and ensure its presentation is of a satisfactory standard, they use unedited text downloaded from the Internet in their work too often. Much of the pupils' writing is descriptive rather than evaluative. The achievement of pupils of all ages in citizenship is good and they increasingly recognise both the rights and responsibilities of living in a community. Although both boys and girls achieve well, girls value the subject more and demonstrate a more thoughtful approach to the subject. Pupils with special educational needs and those from all ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language achieve well along with their peers.
117. It was not possible to observe any citizenship lessons during the inspection and so no judgement on specific teaching of the subject can be made. However, citizenship is taught both as a stand-alone

subject and within other subjects through which a valuable contribution is made. Pupils in mathematics consider the wider implications and sensitivities of handling data. Art lessons demonstrate the influence of ancient Egyptian society on art and architecture, while in science, Year 11 pupils discuss genetic engineering and global warming. A range of whole school activities contribute to pupils' learning being good. Very good school assemblies stress the responsibilities of individuals and groups within society. The daily 'thought for the day' in registration focuses on citizens' responsibilities as well as their rights. Visiting speakers, for example, from Crimestoppers, the Prison and Fire Services and Trading Standards enrich the curriculum. There is a School Council, which is actively involved with the Healthy Schools initiative and charitable work. A 'buddy bench' to support pupils who experience bullying is a School Council initiative. Pupils' achievements are recorded in photographic displays around school and in newspaper reports. Assessment of pupils' work is in its infancy and, although pupils receive a certificate of achievement, the grading system does not allow pupils to compare their performance with that in other subjects. There are plans to offer a new GCSE short course from September which will provide formal accreditation of pupils' achievements.

118. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is ambitious for the subject and has a clear vision for its future. Staff training is well managed. Detailed planning provides very good guidance for colleagues but there is no flexibility built in to accommodate discussion of important matters of current affairs as they arise.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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