

# INSPECTION REPORT

## THE AVON VALLEY SCHOOL

Rugby

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125764

Headteacher: Mr M Braine

Lead inspector: Mr A Henderson

Dates of inspection: 17 – 20 May 2004

Inspection number: 258799

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Secondary modern  
School category: Foundation  
Age range of pupils: 11-16  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 907

School address: Newbold Road  
Newbold-on-Avon  
Rugby  
Warwickshire  
Postcode: CV21 1EH

Telephone number: 01788 542355  
Fax number: 01788 572050

Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr John Swanwick

Date of previous inspection: 15 June 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Avon Valley School is a secondary modern school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16, situated in the north-west fringe of Rugby. It is slightly smaller than average but is oversubscribed and growing in size. At present there are 907 pupils on roll with slightly more boys than girls, and numbers have almost doubled since the last inspection. Most pupils are drawn from the immediate area although, with its increasing popularity, the school now receives pupils from more than thirty primary schools. The school is non-selective, but the LEA operates a selective system which provides grammar school places for about one-third of its pupils. As a result, the attainment on entry until recently has been well below average. The attainment of the present Year 7 is below average, an indication of parents' recognition of the school's achievements. Pupils are drawn from a diverse area, with most from areas of considerable social and economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above average. It includes 48 pupils with wide-ranging statements of need mostly for specific learning, or behavioural or physical problems; at over five per cent of the roll this is well above average. The vast majority of pupils are indigenous white with the remainder from mixed race, Asian or black origins. Just one pupil is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is about average. Since the previous inspection the school has achieved both Investors in People and Healthy Schools status, has gained both Artsmark Gold and Sportsmark Gold, and been awarded two Schools Achievement Awards in recognition of its very positive progress. From September 2004, the school has been designated as a Specialist Performing Arts college.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2932	A Henderson	Lead inspector	
11457	J Beattie	Lay inspector	
32113	J Byrom	Team inspector	Mathematics
11508	C Griffin	Team inspector	English as an additional language English
22985	J Sparkes	Team inspector	Science
32672	S Hammond-Evans	Team inspector	Art and design Design technology
23926	D Howorth	Team inspector	Geography
14841	M Duffey	Team inspector	Information and communication technology History
2626	M Thompson	Team inspector	Modern languages
20490	P Wilson	Team inspector	Music
19452	A Pearson	Team inspector	Physical education Religious education
15678	J Radford	Team inspector	Drama Special educational needs Citizenship

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services  
 Anglia House  
 Carrs Road  
 Cheadle  
 Stockport  
 SK8 2LA

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a very effective and successful school that is providing a high quality of education for all its pupils.** It has many excellent features, and has very few weaknesses. Throughout the school, pupils are achieving very well because teaching is very good. Standards are now average by both Year 9 and Year 11. Leadership is excellent and management is very good. **The school gives excellent value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The ambition, vision and excellent leadership provided by the headteacher ensure a sharp focus on standards, and are keys to the school's many achievements.
- GCSE results are much higher than those achieved by similar schools, and include an exceptionally high proportion of the highest A\*/A grades in art and design, drama and physical education.
- The very good overall quality and consistency of teaching ensures that pupils achieve very well; even so, standards in English and mathematics could be improved further.
- There is unusually rich provision for enhancing pupils' learning beyond the normal curriculum, notably in the performing arts and sport; this supports pupils' personal and social development very effectively and fully engages them in the life of the school.
- Provision for special educational needs is very good.
- The school cares very well for all its pupils and, as a result, the quality of relationships, attitudes and behaviour are major strengths.
- Basic numeracy skills receive too little attention across the curriculum.
- The use of ICT by subjects to enhance pupils' learning needs more consistent application.

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection in 1998. There are now twice as many pupils; standards are higher and teaching is better. Issues raised by the previous inspection have all been successfully tackled, although the requirements for daily worship are not consistently met in some tutor groups. The school's exceptional improvement since 1998 has twice received national recognition.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Overall, pupils' achievement throughout Years 7 to 11 is very good.** Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are average overall. They are below average in mathematics. In most other subjects, standards are average although in art and design they are well above average. Given their starting points when they join the school, pupils are achieving very well at this stage. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are also average overall. English and mathematics are lower than average; standards are well above average in art and design, drama and physical education reflecting a high level of pupil achievement in these subjects. At this stage, pupils are also achieving very well in French, ICT and music. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve very well throughout the school. In 2003, the school exceeded its challenging targets for GCSE. Girls' results are higher than those of boys' but the gap is closing; the results for boys in 2003 showed significant improvement.

**Pupils' personal qualities are very good overall,** fostered by very good pastoral support.  
**Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also very good.** Pupils' attitudes to school

are extremely positive and are reflected in the high attendance rates. Behaviour is very good, and the high quality of relationships throughout the school is a major strength.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The overall quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school.** Teaching is excellent in art and design. It is very good in drama, physical education and music. Elsewhere teaching is consistently good, except in Years 10 and 11 in religious education and citizenship where it is satisfactory. Arrangements to support pupils with special educational needs are very good. As a result, pupils of all backgrounds and particular needs learn very well because teaching has high expectations for their achievement and the fulfilment of their potential.

The school provides a very good curriculum. There are a growing variety of academic and work-related courses matched well to pupils' aspirations and capabilities, enhanced by an excellent range of activities beyond the normal provision. The school takes very good care of all its pupils; they are equally valued and respected, and their progress is very well monitored. The school values its very good partnership with parents, and excellent links with the local community and other schools and colleges that positively enhance the learning experiences of pupils across the school. All of these strengths play their part in ensuring pupils are achieving very well.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management overall are very good.** The leadership of the headteacher is excellent, and is providing energy, drive, vision, and very high expectations of what can be achieved. With very strong support from the senior management team and staff, there is a shared commitment and determination to improve further the quality of education. These factors are important in explaining the school's popularity, growth and success. The impact of management is very good, with the regular review and evaluation of performance and checking on progress particularly strong features. Governors fulfil their responsibilities very well, providing very good support for the school and properly holding it to account.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Both parents and pupils hold the school in very high regard and have notable confidence in it. Their views are justifiable, particularly with regard to the very good quality of teaching and the progress children make. Parents are especially pleased with leadership and management, and the arrangements for helping their children to settle in; they feel very strongly that pupils are expected to work hard and that teaching is good. These views are strongly endorsed by the pupils, who also appreciate the positive atmosphere and very good relationships in the school.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise standards in English and mathematics, and close the gap between their performance and that of the highest achieving subjects in the school.
- Ensure that the skills of numeracy are promoted effectively in all subjects.
- Ensure a widespread development and application of skills in ICT in all subjects.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Given their well below average standards on entry to the school pupils, over a third of whom have special educational needs, are achieving very well. Boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds make secure initial progress, reaching average standards by Year 9 which reflect very good achievement. Standards at the end of Year 11 are also average, again representing very good achievement for these pupils.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are average, and much higher than those of similar schools.
- GCSE results for the higher grades A\* and A are very good in art and design, drama and physical education.
- Pupils do particularly well in art and design because of excellent teaching.
- Pupils are achieving very well throughout the school and make very good progress overall because they are very well taught and keen to learn.
- Standards in English and mathematics are not as high as those in many other subjects, and could be improved further.
- Literacy skills are average and are developing well, but numeracy skills require more attention.

#### Commentary

1. When pupils join the school at the beginning of Year 7, their standards until recently have been well below average. This profile is strengthening and, for the present Year 7, results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of their primary schools are below average. The school administers further standardised tests in Year 7 which confirm this picture. Results from this testing indicate that, until recently, the school has received few higher ability pupils, and that the proportion with below and well below average ability was much higher than is normally found in a typical secondary school. For the present Year 7, there is a broadly average distribution of pupils across the full range of capability, providing a further indication of the shifting pattern of attainment on entry.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.9 (32.5)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	32.6 (31.2)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	32.6 (31.9)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 152 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 were below the national average; results in both English and mathematics were well below average, whilst in science they were below average. In all three subjects, pupils did not do as well as expected given their Year 6 test scores in 2000 and the school did not meet its targets which were ambitious. The trend in these national test results matches the national rate of improvement, and there is no significant variation between the overall results for boys and girls.
3. Overall, standards seen in lessons are broadly average in Years 7, 8 and 9, and are stronger than test results would indicate. They have risen because of improvements in the quality of



teaching and learning. As a result of these, pupils are now making very good progress and are achieving very well.

4. Current standards in Year 9 are below average in mathematics and are average in English and science. Given their starting points, pupils are achieving well in these core subjects and making good progress. Nevertheless, standards could be raised further in these subjects; in mathematics numerical skills, in particular, could be improved.
5. Standards seen in lessons in most other subjects are average or above by Year 9; pupils are making at least good progress and are generally achieving well. Although standards in French are below average, pupils of all abilities are achieving well in response to good, challenging teaching. Pupils are achieving very well at this stage in design and technology, physical education, music, drama, and most notably in art and design where standards are well above average.

**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	44 (44)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88 (88)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	35 (33)	34.7 (34.7)

*There were 138 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

6. Since the last inspection GCSE results at the end of Year 11 have improved in line with the national rate and, based on pupils' average points scores, are now average. There has been a marked improvement in results for the A\*-C grades since that time and, in particular, in the recent performance of boys. Whilst girls do better than boys generally, the gap is closing and, for 2003, is now less than the national variation.
7. In 2003, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades at both A\*-C was below average, and for five or more A\*-G grades was average. Results for those gaining one or more A\*-G grades were well above average. Few pupils fail to achieve GCSE passes in at least five subjects, and pupils with special educational needs do very well in examinations. When comparison is made with those schools whose pupils achieved similar results in their Year 9 national tests in 2001, the school's GCSE performance is well above average. Commendably, the school exceeded its challenging targets for GCSE performance.
8. GCSE results for subjects in 2003 were well above average in physical education, humanities and business studies, and were above average in drama, science and media studies. Results were close to average in most other subjects, but were well below average in English, mathematics, design and technology and music. In 2003, pupils performed less well in English, mathematics and ICT than in their other GCSE subjects. They did significantly better in art and design, drama and physical education, where more than 30 per cent of passes in each subject were A\* or A grades (more than double the national proportion).
9. Overall, the improving GCSE results are testimony to both the very good quality of teaching and learning. They also reflect the effectiveness of the school's procedures for tracking pupils' progress and supporting them individually. Other strategies designed to help raise boys' attainment are also having positive impact, such as broadening the curriculum to give a wider choice, including increased vocational opportunities, and revisiting schemes of work to ensure that what is being taught is attractive to both boys and girls. Pupils say that these strategies are supporting them well and helping them to do better. Considering their well

below average standards when they joined the school, it is a considerable achievement that so many leave the school with five or more GCSE successes.

10. Standards seen in lessons in Years 10 and 11 are similar to the picture presented by these GCSE results, and are average overall. In subjects, standards are well above average in art and design, physical education (GCSE), and drama, and are above average in ICT. Standards are below average in English, mathematics and design and technology, and generally average in other subjects. Achievement, however, is excellent in art and design (where teaching is at times inspired), and very good in drama, music, physical education(GCSE), French and ICT. In other subjects achievement is at least satisfactory, and is predominantly good.
11. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of the very good quality of teaching and support that they receive. Well-planned classroom support, carefully adapted tasks, and effective intervention programmes enable pupils to make very good progress towards their individual targets. GCSE and GNVQ results in 2003 showed that pupils with special educational needs gained accreditation in a wide range of subjects. This represents very good achievement in relation to their standards on entry to the school. The progress made by these pupils, and by pupils of different backgrounds and capabilities, including those identified as gifted and talented, is very good.
12. Standards of literacy are average, and have improved since the previous inspection. Good progress has been made using the national framework for literacy development, and subjects are now planning systematically to support this in the work they undertake. Numeracy is below average and, as yet, too little attention has been given to the use of mathematics to support learning in other subjects. Standards in taught ICT lessons are improving, and are average in Years 7-9, and above average in Years 10 and 11. In other subjects, its use and development is variable because, despite improving provision, issues of access and specialist equipment remain. Most subjects have clearly identified where pupils would use ICT in their planning, but some are not yet realising these plans.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attendance level is high. Their attitudes to their class work, and to all the extra-curricular activities which the school provides, are very good. Behaviour is very good throughout the school. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has excellent procedures to encourage pupils to attend and these are very effective.
- The school sets very high standards of behaviour and pupils respond very well to these expectations so that their conduct is very good throughout the day.
- The school takes every opportunity to recognise and reward good conduct and achievement.
- A minority of pupils sometimes behave in an unacceptable way but poor conduct is never tolerated and is always taken seriously.
- Pupils' attitudes to work in class and to all the extra-curricular activities the school provides are very good and, sometimes, outstandingly good.
- Pupils respond very well to the strong provision made for their personal development.
- The arrangements for a daily act of collective worship in tutor periods needs sharper monitoring.

## Commentary

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.2	School data	0.3
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.*

13. Pupils, their parents and the school work very well together to achieve a level of attendance which was well above the national median over the last academic year, and this year it is likely to be even higher. The incidence of unauthorised absence is below the national median. 99 per cent of pupils who completed the pupils' questionnaire say that they enjoy school. Procedures to maintain a high level of attendance are excellent. The school takes great care to include and support all its pupils and to reward all positive attitudes. Punctuality is good overall, some pupils are sometimes unavoidably delayed by traffic conditions. The school records and monitors pupils' attendance and punctuality with great care and always seeks a reason for absence by telephone if they have not been advised already. Timekeeping is good during the day, and all the pupils respond well to the demands and expectations of a busy community.
14. Pupils have a strong sense of ownership of the school and are proud of the part they play in the school's many achievements, activities and climate of success. They have a very high degree of trust in the school staff. They are very keen to learn and take a full part both in lessons and in the wide range of extra-curricular activities which enrich and extend their learning. Pupils work well with each other and take a good deal of responsibility about the school. They help younger pupils, and those new to the school, and help primary school pupils become acclimatised to the opportunities and challenges of secondary school. Pupils who have special educational needs usually have very good attitudes towards their work. They are fully integrated in classes and generally behave well. They also take part enthusiastically in the wide range of out-of-school activities that the school provides.

## Exclusions

### *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	800	49	1
White – Irish	5	1	
White – any other White background	2		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	29	17	
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	2	1	
Mixed – any other mixed background	6		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	37	2	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	14	5	
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	1	
Chinese	3		

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

15. Pupils respond very well to the very high expectations of good conduct in school. Behaviour in assemblies is exemplary, whilst movement through the school and behaviour at lunchtime reflects a pleasant, friendly, social community in which every individual is respected and plays a part. A small minority of pupils sometimes behave in a way which is unacceptable. The school has a robust response to poor behaviour and has temporarily excluded pupils, including some from different ethnic backgrounds, in a number of instances. Pupils who bring banned substances into school are permanently excluded. During the last school year, 55 pupils were excluded temporarily and one pupil permanently. Since September 2003, the number of exclusions has been considerably reduced. Pupils play a very active part in maintaining an orderly community and all understand that bullying or oppressive behaviour are not tolerated. Any such incidents, both in and out of school, are reported and taken seriously. Consequently, the pupils, including those who are new to the school, feel confident and secure.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

**Pupils' response to the wide range of extra-curricular provision is outstanding.** The school provides activities to meet every interest, and the pupils, in their turn, participate with the greatest enthusiasm. The inspection week coincided with the school's musical theatre company's performance of songs from Chicago and Little Shop of Horrors. The production involved about fifty pupils including several from Year 7 and Year 8. All the pupils showed an outstanding sense of performance, skill and talent achieved by dedication and commitment and a determination to achieve the highest possible standards. A similar level of professionalism was provided by pupils who helped stage the production. This was one of several performances presented during the year and is just one example of the school's commitment to the highest standards of provision for pupils and of the pupils' remarkable ability to take on new and challenging experiences.

16. Provision for pupils' personal development has improved since the previous inspection and is now very good. The school has made good progress in dealing with the key issue for action identified at the time of the previous inspection, which required the co-ordination and planning

for pupils' spiritual development to be improved. This is now good and more subjects provide opportunities for spiritual development, for example, through seizing opportunities to explore values and relationships. The main strengths come from history, English, drama and religious education where this is particularly strong.

17. Assemblies provide a good start to the day for pupils. These occasions are used to celebrate pupils' achievements as well as providing opportunities to allow them to consider issues such as the importance of 'trust'. The school does not shirk from challenging pupils to reflect on difficult issues such as the real nature of love for one another, as portrayed by St. Paul. The requirement for collective worship is met well in assemblies through reflection and prayer and pupils are involved, for example, through role-play or reading biblical and other appropriate texts. The governors do all that can be reasonably expected to ensure that the statutory requirement to provide daily collective worship for all pupils is met but, although well planned for, occasionally this does not take place in the time pupils spend with their tutors at the beginning of the day. Sharper monitoring is needed to ensure greater consistency.
18. This is a school which places a very high priority on, and makes very good provision for, pupils' moral and social development. Its success in this is amply illustrated in the high standards of behaviour and quality of relationships evident throughout the school. Reconciliation lies at the heart of its behaviour policy, and this can be seen in the way that pupils are encouraged to show practical demonstrations of their acknowledgement of responsibility for their own actions when relationships sometimes break down. Teachers are very good role models and pupils come to appreciate fairness because it is shown to them. Moral issues, including matters of personal and group responsibility feature strongly in religious education, history, geography, science, drama, citizenship, English and the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Other subjects such as mathematics, French and physical education also play their part in seizing opportunities to contribute to pupils' moral development as they arise in lessons.
19. Pupils are taught to recognise their responsibility to those less fortunate than themselves in the local area and beyond. They respond very well indeed to the opportunity provided by the school's well-established link with Ethiopia, having raised impressive sums of money in support of needy children in that country. The developing school council and the strongly established prefect system provide opportunities for pupils to accept responsibility in their own community, and the school makes all pupils aware of the importance of showing hospitality to visitors. The strong profile of performing arts and physical education within the school, together with opportunities provided in most other subject areas, ensures that there is a wealth of opportunity for pupils to take responsibility in lessons and work co-operatively with one another in a broad variety of settings.
20. In addition to the quality and wide range of opportunities to both appreciate and participate in cultural activity through dance, drama and music, most curriculum areas also help pupils to appreciate cultural diversity and respect values and beliefs which may differ from their own. This is reinforced very well through whole school initiatives and involvement with multicultural events in the local community. Provision is very good yet, despite the overall strength of this aspect, the school is keen to further develop pupils' experience and appreciation of the cultural diversity, which is not evident in the local area.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the school provides a very good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are very good. The curriculum is very good with outstanding enrichment opportunities. Pupils benefit from high quality care, support and guidance. The school has a very strong community identity, has a very good partnership with parents, and has developed excellent links with other schools and colleges; all these substantial strengths support pupils' learning very well.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall. The assessment of pupils' work and its use to promote their progress are also good features.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of both teaching and learning are consistently strong throughout the school.
- Very good relationships and high expectations of what pupils can achieve underpin the very positive atmosphere for learning.
- Art and design teaching is excellent at both stages.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations and encouragement by working hard and trying their best.
- Involvement in the national Key Stage 3 strategy and in training new teachers benefits both teaching and pupils' learning.
- Insufficient attention is given to the development of pupils' numeracy skills.
- More widespread opportunities are needed for pupils to use ICT to extend their learning in other subjects.

### Commentary

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 104 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2%)	34 (33%)	46 (44%)	21 (20%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	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.*

21. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. During the inspection, teaching in four-fifths of lessons seen was at least good, and in one-third was very good or better. Teaching is at least good in most subjects. Throughout the school it is excellent in art and design, and very good in drama, physical education and music; it is also very good in ICT in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in citizenship throughout the school, and in religious education in Years 10-11. This general consistency of teaching quality is a major strength of the school and serves pupils' needs very well. Both parents and pupils are right to recognise and appreciate the very good quality of teaching provided by the school.
22. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in consolidating and further improving the quality of teaching and learning. This is the main reason for the school's marked progress since that time. The consistency of teaching quality is testimony to the effectiveness of action taken by the headteacher and senior staff in monitoring lessons and working with subject leaders on plans for improvement. This has been augmented by the school's professional development programme and by techniques adopted from the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. All these, together with the very good school involvement in the Graduate Teacher Training Programme, have generated critical review and the identification both of effective teaching and how pupils learn best.

23. Teaching in art and design is excellent. However, across the school, examples of very good teaching feature in almost every subject inspected. Teachers know their subjects and requirements for examination success very well, and their enthusiasm, even passion for some, is communicated to the pupils and creates an atmosphere of confident enquiry in many lessons. In an excellent art and design lesson developing coursework projects for GCSE in Year 10, for example, the teacher's exuberance, understanding of the subject and very high expectations inspired confidence and resulted in very high standards from totally engaged pupils. Teachers' careful planning, very positive presentation of their subjects, and expectation that pupils are engaged in critical analysis and review were clearly illustrated here, and notably in other lessons in dance, drama, physical education and music.
24. The clarity of the beginning of lessons is a strong feature of the most successful teaching. Teachers are effectively setting the scene, explaining the aims of the lesson and ensuring their pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn and why. This positive feature of the Key Stage 3 initiative is clearly impacting in many subjects. Pupils' progress and understanding is regularly checked in lessons, and drawn together in effective summaries. Very good use is made of homework to support learning in class. A Year 9 geography lesson in which pupils explored environmental issues in National Parks demonstrated many of these qualities. In this lesson, the clarity of organisation, the benefits of sustaining a good pace from the outset and of keeping pupils challenged were clearly evident and resulted in high levels of pupil achievement. Teachers generally have a good awareness of setting time limits to activities to ensure that lessons move at a good pace and best use is made of the somewhat long double periods.
25. The management of pupils is a considerable strength of the teaching. Relationships are very good. Teachers are very good role models and relate well to pupils, providing a high level of individual support and encouragement. This, together with their high expectations of what pupils can achieve, of behaviour and response are high - very few pupils fall short of these and their motivation and commitment to their work, in and out of lessons, are notable. Many teachers are good listeners and treat all pupils with equal respect. As a result, the school is free from tension and confrontation, and has a strong atmosphere of trust and consideration that enables pupils to thrive in their learning and personal development. This high level of trust was clearly seen in a very good Year 7 PSHE lesson where pupils were able to confidently explore sensitive issues arising from alcohol abuse.
26. All teachers are aware of the need to promote the basic literacy skills in their subjects, and are successful in this. There is a general level of consistency of approach throughout the school; the very good use of writing frames and key words in geography is an illustration of best practice, and of the general success of the school's work in improving literacy. Numeracy features less strongly, and has not yet been the focus of similarly rigorous attention throughout the school. The use and application of ICT in subjects is well planned, but not sufficiently realised in some subjects because of lack of access to computers, or suitable specialist equipment.
27. Pupils with special educational needs usually learn very well because they are keen to succeed and are very skilfully supported. Teachers are well informed about the range of needs, and are adept in matching their teaching styles and learning materials to pupils' requirements. Support staff work closely with subject teachers to ensure that their pupils know exactly what is required of them, and what they have to do in order to improve. Staff know their pupils very well, and the very good relationships developed over time have a significant impact on pupils' personal development and achievement. Very good support for learning was seen, for example, in English, mathematics, design and technology, drama and French.
28. Assessment of pupils' performance is used well overall to inform teaching and learning and to monitor pupils' progress. Use of assessment is satisfactory in English, science and citizenship; in all other subjects it is good or better. It is used very well in design and

technology, drama and physical education in Years 7 to 9; assessment in art and design is excellent.

29. Departmental reviews to analyse examination results and monitor progress of pupils and groups in Years 9 and 11 are carried out twice a year by senior staff. Underachievers are identified and strategies to raise standards are implemented. Progress checks for all pupils take place annually at present and will be increased to twice a year from next September. All pupils have target grades for every subject and in most subjects pupils are aware of what to do to improve. The use of attainment data by subject departments to track the progress of teaching groups is not yet universally developed. The school places strong emphasis on assessment for learning and new approaches are being piloted this year in the performing arts subjects. Appropriate homework is set regularly, according to a timetable, for all pupils regardless of ability and this contributes well to pupils' learning. The standards of marking are, however, inconsistent across the curriculum. The marking of pupils' work is very good in art and design, and design and technology but only satisfactory in English and science, and in mathematics in Years 10 to 11.
30. A cohort of gifted and talented pupils is identified in each year, and the register is updated. Pupils are encouraged to put their names forward and progress in subject achievement, arts and sport, leadership and intra-personal skills is monitored on a regular basis by a designated governor. The school provides a range of extension activities for identified pupils and there is a good level of involvement in activities in English, French, performing arts and physical education. Arrangements are in place to improve the provision in science and mathematics with a forthcoming "Space Week" event to look at these subjects in real situations. Although the quality of the overall provision is good, the strategies for raising the achievement of gifted and talented pupils are not yet clearly defined in lesson planning in many subjects.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum has improved and is now very good. It meets all statutory requirements. An excellent programme of enrichment enhances the taught curriculum and contributes to pupils' very good personal development. Staffing is good, particularly the number and quality of learning assistants to support pupils with special educational needs. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has enriched and extended its curriculum, taking full advantage of its impending specialist arts college status so that there is a very good range of subjects throughout the school.
- Almost all pupils take part in a very extensive range of extra-curricular activities.
- Curriculum planning is excellent overall, and at least good in most subjects.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Work-related education is outstanding.
- PSHE is very good.

### **Commentary**

31. The curriculum provides very good learning opportunities for boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds. It enables them to make very good progress as they move through the school. Provision for performing arts, within and outside the curriculum is very good reflecting the specialist status of the school.
32. In Years 7 to 9, the breadth of the curriculum is very good. Drama and dance are taught very effectively as separate subjects in addition the National Curriculum subjects, religious education and PSHE.



33. The breadth of the provision in Years 10 and 11 meets the needs, interests and aspirations of pupils of all abilities, from those seeking mainly academic courses to those whose aptitudes lean towards vocational and work-related learning. Pupils have a wide choice of subjects from three options which, in addition to their compulsory subjects, means that they can take up to thirteen GCSEs. A high proportion take performing arts subjects. The provision of excellent work-related courses at a local college or with training providers adds coherence and progression in the 14 -19 age range. A number of initiatives provide programmes of learning individually matched to the needs of pupils who have become disengaged from education. These programmes are highly successful in promoting the attendance, self-esteem and confidence of the very small numbers involved.
34. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and they have full access to the National Curriculum and other courses. They are taught almost entirely in classes with other pupils. They are very well provided for through effective grouping arrangements and very good classroom support. Well-focused small sessions help students to get to grips with literacy problems and behavioural difficulties. There is a very good match of support staff to the curriculum. Accommodation and resources are good. The inclusion room offers a welcoming area in which pupils feel secure, and younger pupils make good use of the specialist ICT programmes to improve their literacy skills.
35. There are considerable strengths in the collegiate approach to planning the curriculum. The provision is reviewed every two years. Recently Year 9 pupils have selected courses from a highly innovative 'three pathway' choice, each route tailored to meet the learning requirements of a different group. Another innovative and exciting development is the plan to provide post-16 performing arts courses on the school site in collaboration with a local college.
36. The school organises an outstanding range of learning outside school hours. Revision and booster classes contribute effectively to the school's results. The list of clubs, visits, trips and other special activities, like Young Enterprise and the Duke of Edinburgh Award, is exhaustive. Participation in the many musical, dance and drama events, like the recent production of 'Fame', is excellent because there are three casts. Another production entitled 'Shout' enabled many pupils who had been unable to perform in 'Fame' to show their considerable talents to the public. There is a very good range of recreational and competitive sport and most pupils participate in inter-form activities.
37. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. It is very well planned and taught. The school also pays careful attention to developing pupils' skills of personal study, target setting, presentation skills and teamwork. The programme is further enhanced for those pupils who take part in the Young Enterprise and Duke of Edinburgh's Award schemes. Pupils are very well prepared to be aware of their own needs and well-being, to continue to develop skills, to grow in confidence and to take an active role in society.
38. The match of teachers to the curriculum is good overall, although there are some unqualified staff. There are two temporary staff in the science department, but replacements have been appointed. Teachers have a wide range of experience and expertise. The provision of support staff is very good and they provide effective support where needed.
39. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. It is very good in physical education, good in religious education, ICT and music and satisfactory in other subjects. There are insufficient science laboratories so that some lessons are taught in classrooms, but when the current building programme is finished, any accommodation problems should be resolved.
40. Resources are generally satisfactory enabling pupils to achieve well although in some departments, such as mathematics, art and design, music and science, there is a shortage of ICT equipment. Resources are very good in physical education. The library facilities are satisfactory although the book stock is below the recommended level.

## Care, guidance and support

The school provides very well for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. All pupils, including those who have special needs, have very good help and guidance from teachers and classroom assistants. This helps them to learn and achieve very well. The school has very good procedures and practices to seek and respond to pupils' views. Procedures to make sure that pupils work in a safe and healthy environment are good. Relationships between pupils and staff, induction and transition arrangements for new pupils, and advice on further study and career opportunities are all excellent.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pastoral care provided for pupils, whatever their needs and circumstances, is outstandingly good.
- The school has very good procedures to monitor pupils' academic progress and to help them to achieve their potential. Additional staff in classrooms make sure that all pupils, including those who have specific needs, have equal access to learning.
- Transition from primary education is managed very well. Excellent opportunities for the older pupils to make informed choices about further study and careers make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The school responds immediately to any identified hazards in school, premises are checked regularly for safety and security, and risk assessments provide for the safety of pupils in and out of school.
- Pupils play a significant role in the running of the school community and their views are respected.

## Commentary

41. Pupils' response to the inspection questionnaire indicates a very high level of satisfaction with the school, reflecting a climate in which every member of the community is respected, individual needs views are taken seriously, and good work, conduct and achievement is celebrated. The school council is purposeful and alert to any ways in which to enrich the education provided, improve communication among pupils and continue the school's very good commitment to charity work.
42. Form tutors provide individual care and are always alert to the needs and views of their group. Learning managers play a key part in the pastoral care provided for every member of their year group. The school has excellent procedures to provide pupils with a smooth transition from primary school. Older pupils play a prominent part in guiding and supporting the new entrants. Many primary pupils take part in joint school performances with Avon Valley and benefit from the 'Maths Circus'. The school makes sure that any specific needs and talents are recognised and provided for when pupils join Year 7. Close monitoring of pupils' personal and academic progress by learning managers and form tutors identifies any areas in which extra support is needed and pupils are helped to overcome any difficulties so that, whenever possible, problems are resolved before they grow. Pupils respond very well to the reward system which identifies and recognises every significant achievement.
43. Classroom assistants provide expert attention to any pupils' specific needs in lessons and throughout their school day. The school gives very good guidance and support to pupils with special educational needs. The systems for identifying and monitoring students in need of extra help are very effective, and individual and group learning plans give clear information on particular needs and support arrangements, as well as useful advice to teachers and parents on suitable learning activities. The high quality of the classroom support is one of the strengths of the school. The school's very good partnership with the local support services enables pupils to benefit from specialised help when necessary.

44. Very good procedures to provide for pupils' health and safety on visits support the school's determination to provide pupils with a very wide range of experiences to enrich their education. Premises are monitored regularly for any health and safety issues and any concerns are attended to immediately. The Healthy Schools award indicates the importance the school attaches to pupils' awareness of safe and healthy living. Child protection procedures are in place and all staff know what to do if they have any concerns. The school provides expert support for any pupils' specific difficulties in any area of school and personal life, involving outside agencies when necessary.
45. The school and Connexions service co-operate very well to provide excellent information and guidance on pupils' further study and careers after leaving school. The programme to prepare pupils to make these important decisions starts in Year 7. All pupils are encouraged to think about their ambitions and skills, and are very well informed about opportunities open to them so that they can make well informed choices of learning in Years 10 and 11, and after leaving school. The school makes excellent use of ICT to provide pupils with the most up-to-date information and advice.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Links with parents are very good, and questionnaire results and discussions with them indicate their very high level of satisfaction with the school. Parents' involvement in their children's education is good and the very large majority of parents are very pleased with the school's response to their concerns. Links with other schools and with the community make an excellent contribution to pupils' education and personal development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are very well informed and included in procedures to transfer pupils from primary schools and, when they leave school, to transfer to further and higher education and employment.
- The quality of written information, about the school and individual pupils' progress, is very good.
- The school provides parents with good opportunities to consult teachers, and teachers respond well to their questions or concerns.
- Parents have good opportunities to support their children at school productions and sports fixtures.
- Procedures to work in partnership with the community and with other schools are excellent.

### **Commentary**

46. The vast majority of parents are very positive about every aspect of their children's education. They are particularly pleased with their children's happiness in school, their personal development and progress, the pastoral care and the quality of teaching and teachers' expectations, and the leadership and management of the school.
47. Parents are included very well in the school's procedures to welcome their children into secondary education. They have many opportunities to attend and support their children at school performances and sports fixtures as welcome members of the community. The Friends of Avon Valley supports the school with fundraising activities and much appreciated help with performance evenings. Parents are well represented on the governing body.
48. The school reports give parents a very good assessment of how well their children are achieving, including a page completed by the individual student setting their targets for the future. Parent consultation evenings give them a clear idea of how well their children are progressing in relation to their assessment results and targets. Parents are included well in any extra initiatives to raise their children's academic achievements and personal progress. The school has a good policy to respond quickly to any parents' questions or concerns.

49. Parents make a good contribution to their children's progress by supporting their work at home and monitoring their progress by signing planners every week. Some parents help with sports coaching and several work in school providing very good links with the community. Parents are well informed about further and higher education and career options and can help their children make important choices. Specialist staff in school provide up to date information for parents and pupils on all the latest initiatives and opportunities available for all pupils.
50. The school has excellent links with other schools and colleges and with the community. Links with feeder primary schools provide pupils with a happy and smooth transition to secondary education and include many curricular links. Older pupils benefit from courses which, linked with other secondary schools, include vocational subjects studied at the local college of further education. The school has close links with local special schools and units and has hosted pupils from other schools to special events. Pupils benefit from taster days at University and exchanges with French pupils. Sport, music and drama links with other schools and colleges and with the community provide pupils with very good opportunities to develop individual and team skills, as well as enhancing their personal and social development.
51. Representatives of the community and local colleges play a very valuable part in pupils' careers education. Christmas and Easter are celebrated in the local church with special performances, the Christmas Christingle Service performed in co-operation with a children's charity. Visits by the police and other essential services contribute to the pupils' knowledge of citizenship and personal safety. Local businesses provide careers and Young Enterprise business experience. Pupils have made links with many charities and have contributed very well to fund-raising activities locally. Local sports clubs use the school sports facilities every night. The school has developed strong community links via the performing arts and is alert to opportunities to bid for awards and take part in initiatives.
52. The school has a very good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs and they are pleased with their children's achievement. There is an effective system of communication between school and parents through the pupils' planners, and parents contribute to the reviews of their children's progress. Transitional arrangements are excellent, so most pupils settle confidently into new routines when they move from one phase of education to another.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The school is very well led and managed overall. The headteacher's outstanding leadership, along with very good leadership from key staff, has brought about the exceptional growth and development of this successful school. Management is very good. Governance is very good also.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher's vision, energy and leadership have been instrumental in the school's exceptional growth and improvement, and its popularity with pupils and parents.
- Senior staff and those in other key positions work very well as a team and contribute very strongly to the highly effective leadership and management of the school.
- Strategic planning involves and motivates all staff.
- Leadership is highly successful at ensuring that boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds are fully engaged in the life of the school, and that all staff are nurtured in their professional development.
- School management, including financial administration, is very good.
- The leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are very good.
- Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

## Commentary

53. The leadership of the headteacher is inspirational. The remarkable improvement in the school's performance coincides with, and results from, his appointment in 1992; since then the school has continually improved in response to his ambitious vision and clear direction. He has the whole-hearted support of both governors and senior staff, and his vision is widely shared. Tough decisions have been faced and taken effectively, for example, in tackling management issues in English and design and technology. This is a secondary modern school in a highly selective area yet it is a thriving and lively community that has grown in popularity and has almost doubled in size since the previous inspection. Standards and results are improving, are now average compared with all schools nationally, but are well above the average of similar schools and pupils' achievements are very good. The school has many outstanding features and fully deserves its rapidly growing reputation within and beyond Rugby. The success of the school has led to the headteacher supporting and advising heads of schools in another local authority as part of a government team helping to raise standards.
54. Excellent strategic planning involves all staff through a collegiate style of leadership. Current plans involve developing the school's newly acquired specialist status to provide post 16 performing arts courses on the school site in partnership with a local college. Teamwork at all levels is highly effective. The headteacher's determination to raise standards and achievement even further within a very supportive learning environment is shared by all staff. It is communicated very effectively to pupils and parents who, as a result, fully endorse the outstanding leadership of the school. They recognise that the quality of its work is unusually good, and is testimony to the clarity of leadership, and to the commitment and dedication of staff. Loyalty to each other and respect for each other create a 'family' ethos throughout the school and its community. (As such, it has become a special place to be where anything is possible for everyone).
55. Leadership and management are successfully promoted at all levels in the school. That of the senior staff and learning team is very good. Opportunities for leadership are widespread. At subject level the leadership of art and design, drama and work-related education is excellent. Leadership in the performing arts is also a major strength. It is very good in all other subjects except design and technology and religious education where it is good and in citizenship and science where it is satisfactory.
56. The governing body does its work very well. Governors work closely with the headteacher and senior staff, take an active role in the leadership of the school and make a positive contribution to the decisions that help shape its direction. They know the school well - its weaker areas as well as its strengths - and are committed enthusiasts for its success. This allows them to be critical, checking regularly on standards and the quality of education provided, including setting challenging targets for the headteacher and for GCSE examination results. Statutory responsibilities are fulfilled well, and their financial management is stringent. Overall, governance is very good.
57. The school is very well managed and runs very efficiently. At all levels, communication is very good. The school gathers and uses data effectively to analyse its performance and ensure that standards and quality of its provision are as high as they should be. Particularly strong is the school's commitment to, and organisation of, the training and professional development of staff. The programme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and the school's involvement in the Graduate Teacher Training programme are further examples of very good practice that bring tangible benefits to the school. As a result, staff are happy and effective.
58. Curriculum managers are held to account for their subject's performance. They are encouraged to analyse and reflect on their work and areas of responsibility, and to review their results and check on the quality of teaching and learning taking place. Most are

responding well to this accountability, following the strong lead provided by the headteacher and senior staff. As a result, management is a substantial strength in art and design, and drama, and is very good in French, ICT, geography, performing arts, and physical education. Whilst generally good elsewhere, in both English and science there is room for a sharper, more systematic checking on the quality of teaching and learning.

59. A very well-managed system of pastoral care ensures a positive ethos where pupils know they are well looked after and encouraged to do their best. It provides an open, enabling culture that builds their confidence and self-esteem. Their personal development and progress is very well tracked and supported, for example, through the arrangements for the very well planned programme for PSHE. However, the good arrangements for a daily act of collective worship in tutor periods should be monitored more closely to ensure consistency.
60. The quality of the leadership and management of special educational needs is very good. There is a very clear sense of purpose and a total commitment to the well-being of all pupils facing difficulties. Very effective teams have been created to cater for the different areas of need. Statutory requirements in relation to pupils with statements of special educational need are met, and the specific grant is very well used for its designated purposes. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The school has responded very well to the challenge of catering for the increasing number of pupils who come into the school with special educational needs. Standards of achievement have risen and the high quality of support has been maintained.
61. Financial management is very effective. The budget is kept under regular and close review. Financial management is well thought through, and has enabled major, on-going, and much needed improvements in accommodation. The principles of best value are central to management and the school is constantly reviewing its performance compared with others, and seeking the most competitive pricing for its spending. Financial administration is impressive indeed. Taking all factors into account, the school gives excellent value for money.

***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,809,902
Total expenditure	2,810,808
Expenditure per pupil	3,099

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	67,815
Balance carried forward to the next	66,909

# **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**

In this curriculum area, the focus was on English, English literature and French which were inspected in depth.

#### **English**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The recently appointed head of department is developing an effective team approach.
- Good teaching helps pupils to achieve well while the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good and they work hard.
- The initiated process of improvement to schemes of work in Years 7-9, accompanied by a sharper focus on learning outcomes, requires completion.
- Teaching and learning should focus more closely on helping pupils write complex sentences with improved clarity, accuracy and control.
- The department needs to make better use of assessment to set challenging targets and to monitor progress towards them.
- More rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning is needed.

#### **Commentary**

62. The results in the 2003 national tests for fourteen year olds were well below average and broadly in line with the pupils' standards on entry to the school. However, potentially higher attaining pupils did not do as well as they should have done. Results were also below average in 2002. In GCSE the proportion achieving grades A\*-C was significantly below average and slightly lower than might have been expected given the pupils' previous results. The average grade was also below average but indicates good achievement from lower attainers. The high entry rate meant that a higher proportion of pupils gained a grade in the A\*-G range than in most schools. The proportion at A\*-C was lower than in 2002, and pupils did less well in English than in their other subjects. In English literature results were below average in 2003.
63. In the current Year 9 standards are broadly average. In Year 11, the proportion working at grade C or higher is below average. Achievement is good in each year. This improving picture reflects decisive and effective action taken by the school to improve achievement and raise standards. The leadership is resulting in a sharper focus on required skills. Across the school, pupils make good progress in reading; their responses to texts show good level of understanding, analysis and the ability to use evidence to support opinions. Pupils also make good progress in the development of their vocabulary. Speaking and listening are above average in Years 9 and 11 with pupils making well-structured and thoughtfully reasoned contributions. Standards of extended writing are not as high as reading and speaking and undermine the potential achievement of middle and potentially higher attaining pupils. These pupils are not consistently secure in paragraphing. When attempting to write with a more complex sentence structure, weaknesses in punctuation and standard expression lead to a loss of control and clarity. However, pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. They successfully enter for tests and examinations in Years 9 and 11; they respond very well

to well-structured teaching focused on their needs; they benefit from their teachers' and support assistants' high levels of expectations and encouragement.

64. Teaching and learning are good with some very good features. Particular strengths are the teachers' subject knowledge, encouragement of the pupils, careful and detailed lesson planning and their use of a varied and motivating range of learning methods. Teaching assistants are well-deployed. Consequently, pupils make good progress in their ability to respond to texts; they work hard during lessons; their levels of concentration and behaviour are very good. When lessons seen during the inspection were less effective the pace was too slow and it took too long for pupils to have the chance to start working collaboratively or independently. Teachers' use of very direct and insistent questioning techniques bring pace and purpose to lessons but, in general, not enough questions give the pupils chance to make and explore more open ended responses. The grading and use of National Curriculum levels to assess pupils' work are accurate. However, despite some very good practice, marking does not specify frequently enough the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' work. Teachers have complete records of the pupils' prior attainments but do not make best use of them to set aspirational and challenging targets. The planned introduction of formal assessment tasks for Years 7-9 will enhance the monitoring of pupils' progress towards targets. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of the pupils' ICT and numeracy skills.
65. The subject leadership is very good. The recently appointed head of department is embarking on a transformation of the department. She is a very good role model who is establishing a strong sense of shared purpose among the teachers. She understands that curriculum planning requires better collaboration and a sharper emphasis on learning outcomes. This is already resulting in better standards in Year 8 where the extended writing of higher attainers is securely of above average standards and often well above. The management of the department is satisfactory at present. Evaluation of results is good but more systematic monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and learning are required as are opportunities to share good practice via lesson observations. It is too soon to gauge the impact of recent improvements on results. Consequently, with results since the previous inspection rising in line with the national trend, improvement has been satisfactory.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

66. The school makes good provision to support the development of the pupils' literacy skills. Overall, inspectors deemed standards of literacy to be broadly average. Notable strengths in standards were observed in physical education, drama, art and design and geography. In these subjects pupils received good opportunities to develop their extended writing; there were plentiful opportunities for speaking and listening in a structured and purposeful manner; pupils were required to use a range of reading methods to locate and analyse information. The imaginative use of word mats in geography not only provides pupils with the relevant geographical vocabulary for a topic, but also gives excellent examples of helpful general vocabulary to support coherent explanations.
67. These developments have been supported by good use of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and the Literacy Strategy in particular. Literacy provision is well coordinated by a member of the English department. The guidance for teachers is effective. Targets for improving standards and teaching are clear and attainable. The methods used to check on provision and further development needs are especially effective, guiding attention to the key facets of literacy provision. The coordinator is clear-sighted about further development needs including more systematic evaluation of provision. Good provision is also made for pupils with below and well below literacy levels. Teaching assistants make a notably good contribution to raising these pupils' standards through directly taught and well-focused materials.



## French

Overall, the quality of provision in French is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well due to good teaching and very good preparation for examinations.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, they enjoy lessons and make very good progress overall.
- Leadership and management are very good and the department works as a successful team; this has led to a trend of rising standards.
- The use of French by teachers and pupils for the conduct of the lesson is inconsistent and sometimes insufficient.
- Opportunities for independent learning are limited.
- By Years 10 and 11, pupils' grammar and use of tenses are secure generally, although there are inaccuracies in the writing of average pupils.

### Commentary

68. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below the national average. However, there has been a trend of continuous and rapid improvement in these results since 2001. During the inspection pupils' attainment was just below the national average. This represents good achievement from pupils' starting points in French on entry to the school. In GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003, pupils reached average standards and did better in French than in most other subjects. Standards in the current Year 11 are also average overall. Pupils of all abilities achieve very well in Years 10 and 11, given their prior attainment.
69. Listening and speaking skills develop well overall, and often very well, in prepared course work for GCSE examinations. Role-plays, general conversation and presentations are thoroughly prepared, using a range of tenses, sophisticated vocabulary and constructions and pupils include opinions in their responses. They memorise vocabulary well, but mispronunciation of basic words is too frequent. Confidence in spontaneous conversation is much lower. Knowledge and understanding of grammar and literacy skills develop well and sometimes very well throughout school. In a Year 8 class of lower attaining pupils, for example, pupils successfully used a range of reading strategies and their knowledge of French grammar to understand a lengthy passage of French about a trip to Paris. This included successfully translating vocabulary they had not previously encountered. They used grammatical terminology, such as past participle and infinitive, correctly. Writing develops well and, by Year 10, higher and middle attaining pupils write descriptions of their work experience and letters to their pen friends with confidence, showing a good grasp of a range of tenses. There are, however, too many inaccuracies in the work of some middle attaining pupils.
70. Teaching and learning are good overall, and occasionally very good. Teachers are experts in their subjects and prepare pupils very well for examinations. They have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and insist on the completion of regular homework, which consolidates and develops pupils' learning. Lessons are well planned and meet the needs of all pupils, for example, in Year 9 high attaining boys and girls are taught in separate groups, covering the same ground, but using very different approaches to learning. Boys appreciate the 'hands on' style adopted and the frequent use of competition, whilst girls respond well to a more academic approach. Both groups achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well, and are supported effectively by learning assistants who have a good knowledge of the department.
71. Lessons are well planned to cover all language skills and provide opportunities for consolidation and extension work. A wide variety of activities is used including games, competitions, songs, use of computers which engage and motivate pupils and lessons

proceed at a fast pace. Teachers make effective use of the foreign language assistant to work intensively with groups of pupils. Pupils are made clear about the learning objectives of each lesson and are aware of how well they progress. They assess their own and other pupils' work with understanding, and targets for improvement are set. Opportunities for independent work are limited, however, and the use of French for the conduct of the lesson by teachers and pupils is inconsistent and sometimes insufficient. Pupils have good and frequently very good attitudes to their work. They take an active part in classroom activities and volunteer confidently to present their work, though some pupils, particularly boys, are diffident about speaking French for day-to-day matters that arise in the classroom. They work hard and with concentration.

72. Leadership and management are very good. The curriculum manager is a very good leader and role model for an effective, hard working team. Standards and examination results have risen sharply since the last inspection and, overall, improvement has been very good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are improving and GCSE results are above average compared with similar schools.
- The leadership of the department is very good. The team of hardworking, specialist teachers is committed to building pupils' confidence and raising their attainment.
- Teaching is good throughout the school and pupils achieve well; the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Weaknesses in numeracy skills are affecting progress in mathematics and other subjects, particularly for middle and lower attaining pupils.
- Long term planning is good overall, but in Years 7-9 the needs of higher attaining pupils are not tackled in sufficient detail; individual lesson plans are usually very good. However, higher attaining pupils are not always fully challenged.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in teaching and learning, and marking in Years 10 and 11 is inconsistent.

### **Commentary**

73. In 2003, pupils' results in national tests taken in Year 9 were well below the national average. They were also below average when compared with schools of similar prior attainment. Results have improved steadily over the last four years at a rate in line with the national trend. Girls in 2003 did less well than boys, in contrast to the national picture. Currently, overall standards in Year 9 are below average but are continuing to improve. This reflects good achievement from pupils' starting points taking into account the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. There is little difference currently between the achievement of boys and girls, and pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
74. Pupils' GCSE results in mathematics in 2003 were close to the national average for the full range of grades A\*-G. The proportion of pupils achieving higher A\*-C grades was below the national average, but above average when compared with schools of similar prior attainment. This indicates good achievement, although pupils did less well in mathematics than in most of their other GCSE subjects. Significantly more boys than girls achieved higher grades in 2003, but girls did better than boys in 2002. Standards in the current Years 10 and 11 are below average and results are likely to be similar to last year, continuing the trend of good achievement. Boys and girls achieve equally well.
75. Pupils in all year groups are articulate and confident in answering questions and explaining their answers. They are well motivated and set out their work neatly and logically. Numeracy skills are below average and this affects progress of middle and lower attaining

pupils. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good, as a result of good teaching and very effective in-class support.

76. Teaching and learning are good overall, but higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged in some lessons. As a result, they make less progress than they should in those lessons. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9 was good or very good in all lessons seen. This is because lessons are very well structured to enable pupils to learn in small steps, and pupils receive very effective one-to-one support from both teachers and learning support assistants. Lessons are usually very well planned, with clear learning objectives which are shared with the pupils. Teachers use a range of teaching strategies, including paired and group work, with good emphasis on pupils using and applying their mathematical skills to real life situations. The national strategy to improve teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is used well overall, but questioning sometimes lacks depth and pupils are not always given sufficient opportunity to explain their methods. At present there is insufficient use of ICT in mathematics lessons, both as a teaching aid by teachers and by pupils to enhance their learning. Good long term planning ensures that teaching enables pupils to consolidate their knowledge, understanding and accurate use of simple number, algebra, geometry and statistics. Homework is used well to complement classwork and consolidate learning. The quality of marking is good in Years 7 to 9 but in Years 10 and 11 it is inconsistent; in some classes it is not detailed enough to help pupils improve and occasionally is too infrequent. Teachers use regular tests at the end of units of work to monitor pupil progress and to address any weaknesses. Work is referenced to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades and this is shared with pupils so they have a clear understanding of how well they are doing. Relationships are good and pupils are attentive and diligent in most lessons. However, in a minority of lessons, the pace of learning is slowed by pupils chatting and not giving their full attention to the teacher.
77. Leadership of the subject is very effective and management is good. There is a clear vision for raising pupils' aspirations through a range of initiatives, including pupils' entry for the UK Mathematics Challenge and links with Warwick University. Teachers work together very effectively and regularly discuss and share good practice. They are committed and give their time generously to help pupils through revision lessons and drop-in sessions. They make a valuable contribution to whole school initiatives, including mathematics activities for primary school pupils. There are very good schemes of work for pupils in Years 10 and 11, which meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. In Years 7 to 9 there is good planning for middle and lower attaining pupils with very good support materials for pupils with special educational needs. However, there is insufficient planning for the needs of higher attaining pupils, which restricts progress of these pupils. Planning for the use of ICT and its implementation is insufficient to meet pupils' needs and entitlement, due to a lack of appropriate resources. The department sets appropriate individual targets for all pupils based on the results of national tests at the end of primary school and at the end of Year 9, and progress of individual pupils and of groups is monitored regularly. Test and examination results are used well to inform lesson planning. The monitoring of teaching and learning is good overall: lessons are observed, teachers' lesson plans and mark books are checked and pupils' work is examined. However, follow-up action has not been rigorous enough to improve the quality of marking in Years 10 and 11.
78. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards are rising in Years 7 to 9 with the result that pupils are now better prepared for work in later years. The effect of this is evident in the significant improvement in GCSE results. The presentation of pupils' work is now good, and assessment is clearly linked to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. The national strategy for improving teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is contributing to rising standards.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

79. Despite below average numeracy skills, pupils are able to apply their knowledge and understanding of mathematics satisfactorily in some subjects. For example, pupils use their graphical skills competently in science, geography, and ICT. They are able to interpret and analyse data in physical education and modern foreign languages; they use formulae in science and ICT. In art and design, work on scale and proportion contributes to pupils' understanding and use of measure in real-life situations. The school has a well-written numeracy policy and subject teachers are aware of it, but there has been little follow-up to the extent and effect of its application in practice. There is little evidence of planning for the teaching of mathematics across the subjects of the curriculum, and pupils' use is too often incidental. As a result, there is insufficient focus across the school on raising achievement in mathematics.

## SCIENCE

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at the end of Years 9 and 11 are improving.
- Teaching and learning are good, leading to good pupil achievement.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are very good.
- The use of ICT by pupils is underdeveloped due to a lack of resources.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning needs to be formalised.

### Commentary

80. The results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average, although the number of pupils achieving the higher levels was below average. Boys did better than girls, and these results were an improvement on those achieved in 2002. The overall GCSE results in 2003 were broadly average but, when considered separately, the results for both dual award and single award were above average. There has been an overall improvement in examination results since the last inspection.
81. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average in all years and the achievement of pupils is good, in view of their starting point when they enter the school. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is also good, largely due to the effective support that they receive. Pupils in Year 9 are able to label diagrams of the respiratory system and explain the functions of the parts, whilst Year 11 pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of the endocrine system. The written work of all pupils is of a satisfactory standard although their oral skills are better. Pupils are very well behaved during lessons and there are very good relationships between teachers and pupils. They listen attentively, are keen to answer questions, and remain on task during written work.
82. Teaching is good overall in all years and pupils learn well because of this. Lessons are well prepared and the teachers have sound subject knowledge, enabling them to give clear explanations to pupils to enhance their learning. Number skills are successfully practised in the use of scientific formulae and the drawing of graphs appropriate to the science curriculum. Attention is paid to literacy through emphasis on key words and pupils are given opportunities to read aloud and discuss topics in small groups. The use of ICT by pupils is underdeveloped due to a lack of equipment but the department hopes to tackle this issue shortly. Homework is set on a regular basis and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons. The marking of pupils' work is variable; some of it is very good and offers sound advice to pupils on areas for improvement, but some of it is superficial. Assessment takes place regularly in all years at the end of units of work.

83. At this stage, leadership and management of the department are satisfactory and staff are working well together to improve examination results. The new head of department has several good ideas that are yet to be developed, although some new initiatives have already been implemented, for example, a new scheme of work for Years 7-9. The monitoring of teaching and learning needs to be developed and formalised; at present it is very informal. There is a lunchtime science club for younger pupils and there are good links with a local university which hosts forensic science days for pupils. Accommodation is satisfactory, but there are insufficient laboratories so that some lessons are taught in classrooms, although there are plans for further laboratory space when the new school building programme is completed. Resources are satisfactory but are becoming depleted, largely due to the cost of setting up the new course for the younger pupils, and some of the larger apparatus is outdated. The department receives good support from two technicians. Improvement in science since the last inspection has been good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average in Years 10 and 11, and pupils are achieving very well because teaching is very good, and the course is well matched to their needs.
- ICT topics support learning well in other subjects of the curriculum, but the use of ICT by other subjects is too variable, and needs improvement.
- Extra support given to pupils by staff is helping to raise standards, and pupils are keen to do well.
- Pupils in Years 8 and 9 make good progress, but limited time slows their progress in Year 7.
- Assessment is good, although more attention is needed to improve pupils' literacy skills.

### **Commentary**

84. Pupils enter the school with varying experiences of ICT in their primary schools, and on entry their standards are below average. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are average, particularly in desktop publishing and data handling, and these standards are confirmed by inspection evidence. GCSE results in ICT in 2003 were below average and represent satisfactory achievement for the pupils concerned. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 now take GNVQ ICT Intermediate, and current standards are above average. These pupils are achieving very well, particularly the significant number of pupils of lower ability who are benefiting from very good teaching and from taking an examination better suited to their needs than the GCSE. Their achievement is also significant given that they are covering the course in less time than is usually allocated by many schools.
85. Pupils' achievement is good by the end of Year 9. Pupils in Year 7 make very limited progress, however, due to the lack of time given for teaching. This particularly impacts on less able pupils. In contrast, less able pupils in Years 8 and 9 make much better progress because more time is provided; step-by-step teaching, the additional support of teaching assistants, and material matched well to their needs, all contribute to their good achievement.
86. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are good across Years 7, 8 and 9. The behaviour of pupils and relationships between pupils and with staff are very good. A well-planned scheme of work is in place, teachers are knowledgeable and clear about skills and learning objectives. They have high expectations and set work of a suitable level. Regular assessments help pupils understand what they need to do to improve, but the overall presentation and organisation of pupils' work requires improvement. Marking needs to be more detailed to help raise standards of literacy. National guidance has been adapted to suit the needs of the school and the ability of the pupils, and the topics enhance other areas of the curriculum. For example, in Year 8 pupils were developing information sheets on healthy eating using various software. They showed good ability producing graphs, incorporating clip

art and using word art. This work complements work being done in physical education and mathematics. Other topics cover aspects of citizenship, humanities and English.

87. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the requirements of the new course and monitor pupils' coursework well so that they are aware of what they need to do to pass and improve grades. Pupils are well motivated and take full advantage of the extra time which staff make available to support them in their assignments.
88. The very good leadership of the department has meant that improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Management is good; staffing, resources, technical help and planning are all now in place and have resulted in good curriculum development, improving standards and achievement.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

89. Although good cross-curricular work is done in ICT lessons, the use of ICT in subject areas is too variable and is just satisfactory. The monitoring of the use of ICT across the curriculum is improving and the use of ICT rooms is currently audited. Teachers are now more competent and confident in their use of ICT having completed their specialist training, and they will be able to benefit from the introduction of inter-active whiteboards in classrooms from next year. Good use is made of ICT in French, geography, careers, and design and technology – although the CAD/CAM machines are underused. In English, the use of ICT is making a significant impact on the quality of extended writing for the higher attainers. In other subjects lack of equipment and or access is resulting in less use, and limited impact on learning.

### **HUMANITIES**

In this curriculum area, the focus was on geography and history in Years 7, 8 and 9, and on religious education in Years 7-11. The school offers GCSE humanities to all pupils in Years 10 and 11, and results for 2003 were well above average and represent very good achievement for those pupils. Three humanity lessons were inspected and samples of work were analysed. Standards are above average, teaching is good and pupils are achieving well.

#### **Geography**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management are very good and ensure that pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.
- Good teaching promotes good learning and helps other pupils to achieve well, although standards in geography could be raised further.
- The best teaching improves pupils' literacy skills, is challenging and uses a variety of learning techniques.
- There are insufficient opportunities to develop map reading and fieldwork skills.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes underpin their good achievement.

#### **Commentary**

90. Standards in geography in Year 9 are average. Given the below average attainment of pupils on entry to the school these standards represent good achievement. Girls and boys, and pupils from ethnic minority groups, make good progress as they move up through the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of the effective help they receive from learning assistants.
91. Pupils gradually expand their geographical vocabulary and increase their knowledge and understanding of places from a local to a world scale in topics such as tourism and rivers. In Year 9, higher attaining pupils link physical and human geography in detailed work on the cause and effects of earthquakes. They have a good knowledge of the pattern of economic development across the world and are beginning to understand the concepts of fair trade and sustainability. Middle and lower-attainers, including those with special educational needs, complete their work in less detail. For example, they do not fully explain the causes of global warming and their diagrams are only partially annotated. Computers are used effectively to support pupils' learning but map reading and fieldwork skills are not sufficiently developed.
92. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The best teaching has a clear focus on improving literacy skills, provides appropriate challenges, uses a variety of learning techniques and is well planned. For example, pupils made rapid gains learning about the benefits and disadvantages of tourism and the conflicts of land use in National Parks in carefully timed lessons. They were challenged to interpret photographs, maps, graphs and diagrams and helped to consolidate learning by making their own notes. Such lessons are exciting, capture pupils' interest and secure their very good attitudes to learning. 'Word mats' are innovative and enable pupils to learn and use key words very effectively, as in essays on the comparative impact of flooding in different countries. Teaching is less successful, but never unsatisfactory, where too much reliance is placed on learning from textbooks and opportunities are missed to summarise pupils' learning using basic techniques, such as spider-diagrams.
93. Leadership and management are very good, provide clear direction and very effective team building. Non-specialist subject teachers are well supported. Expectations of staff and pupils are high and standards are improving. Planning is well advanced so that timetable arrangements for next year will enable a greater proportion of subject specialist teaching. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## History

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 9 are above average.
- Achievement of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, particularly those of lower ability, is good.
- Leadership in the department encourages high standards.
- Teaching is good overall, but not consistently so.
- Marking could be more sharply focused on standards of literacy.
- The use of ICT to enhance learning requires improvement.

### Commentary

94. Standards reported in teacher assessments for Year 9 are above average and these standards are confirmed by inspection evidence. Some of the work sampled in Year 9 was of the very highest standard. The achievement of pupils is good, and some lower ability pupils are achieving very well. They enter the school with varied, but generally below average, standards in history. Pupils are, however, very well behaved and well motivated and this together with good teaching enables them to make good progress.

95. Teaching and learning are good overall, and often very good in some classes with lower ability pupils. Teachers set very high standards for behaviour and provide varied and challenging work. Their enthusiasm and ability to question and encourage pupils' understanding is a particular strength in the lessons observed. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, very good use was made of pictorial sources to explore the medieval understanding of heaven and hell. Pupils' oral responses showed they had grasped these realities and this helped them understand the role of the medieval church in the lives of ordinary people. In another Year 7 lesson pupils whose writing skills were poor, responded well to the enthusiasm and humour of the teacher; they showed a very good grasp in their oral answers of historical terminology such as 'stereotype', 'bias,' and 'balance' when looking at sources from the Norman Conquest.
96. Pupils' learning in history benefits from the fact that lessons are blocked as part of the humanities programme. This requires some teaching by non-specialists, together with a certain lack of continuity, and some lack of consistency in the teaching across all classes; however, it does enable pupils to consolidate their skills and understanding and this is very evident in the quality and variety of extended writing that pupils are able to produce in Year 9. Assessment tasks are in place at the end of each unit and these also help pupils to progress by giving them a clear idea of their National Curriculum levels and what they have to do to improve. Marking is also generally encouraging but it is not always sufficiently detailed to improve levels of literacy and pupils' work would improve if teachers assessed their work more as it was being completed in the classroom. At present, ICT is not used sufficiently to impact on pupils' learning.
97. Leadership of history within the humanities department is very good. Standards and pupils' progress have improved well since the last inspection. The schemes of work are well organised and materials and support are made available to all staff. This year, history is a very popular option for Year 10 and GCSE will be introduced in September.

## Religious education

Overall, the quality in provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and so pupils achieve well.
- The subject contributes well to pupils' personal development though opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and values are limited.
- In Years 10 and 11, exploration of the religious dimension of moral and social issues is inconsistent.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to use computers to support their learning.
- Attitudes to learning are good.
- The subject is well led and managed.

### Commentary

98. Throughout the school, religious education is taught as part of a general humanities course, and most lessons are taught by teachers who do not have a specialist qualification in the subject.
99. In Year 11, standards are broadly average. They are generally higher in those units of work which have a single 'religious' focus, such as exploration of proofs for the existence of God, than in those which overlap with other strands of the humanities. Here there is some unevenness between teaching groups in the extent to which religious viewpoints are considered in investigations of moral and social issues. Nevertheless, pupils' achievement



overall is satisfactory. In recent years, very few pupils have chosen to sit the short GCSE examination in religious studies and no current Year 11 pupils have entered.

100. Standards seen in Year 9 are close to average which represents good achievement in relation to pupils' starting points on entry to the school. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well because the work is appropriately adapted for them. Knowledge and understanding of the key features of Christianity and other major world faiths which they study, such as rites of passage and pilgrimage, are generally sound. Most pupils understand how belief can influence action but do not use this enough to reflect on their own values and beliefs. However, higher attainers can explain how belief helps some people to make sense of difficult questions in life such as suffering. Pupils present their ideas and the results of their investigations in a good variety of ways, though not enough use is made of computers. A strong feature of the work seen is the way in which assessment tasks require pupils to write at length.
101. During the inspection, few religious education lessons were available for inspection and judgements about the overall quality of teaching rely to a large extent on the evidence from pupils' written work. This indicates that teaching is satisfactory overall, and better in Years 7 to 9 where links with the agreed syllabus are clearer. Well-designed resource booklets and good quality textbooks also serve non-specialist teachers well. However, in general, learning activities and assessment tasks are more suited to enable pupils to learn about the religions which they study than see, for example, how the learning can help them to make sense of their own lives. In the lessons seen, teaching and learning was good. Lessons were well planned and challenged pupils with interesting learning activities which also supported the further development of their reading and writing skills. The ethos in which the subject is taught supports pupils' personal development well and successfully encourages their full involvement in the learning.
102. Leadership and management are good, though more could be done to share existing good practice and further develop assessment tasks to ensure fuller coverage of the attainment targets for religious education. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory with the issues raised largely resolved, although fewer pupils now gain a qualification in the subject.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

In this curriculum area, the focus was on design and technology, and included courses in resistant materials, textiles and food technology.

### **Design and technology**

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Current standards are above average in food and textiles technology.
- Excellent assessment informs and targets teaching and learning.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Drawing, designing, and the development of ideas needs to be improved, together with better use of ICT.
- The choice of projects in resistant materials technology limits progress, particularly for higher attaining pupils.

## **Commentary**

103. GCSE results at A\* to C were well below average in 2003. Current standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are above average and represent very good achievement as pupils join Year 7 with below average standards in this subject. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 show below average standards but represent satisfactory achievement given their below average standards at the end of Year 9. The overall profile indicates a trend of rising standards. In food and textiles technology, pupils make particularly good progress as a result of good teaching linked to clear objectives in the GCSE or the National Curriculum programmes of study. Achievement is currently held back in resistant materials by poor choice of project tasks that limit the experience of materials and processes. More opportunity needs to be created for construction and development ideas through high quality projects and materials.
104. Overall, teaching and learning are good in all years. Assessment is excellent and has become a tool for targeting the teaching and learning for the department. All teachers have an excellent database of current and past achievement of all pupils in their classes and use it to redefine their lesson objectives. Computer aided designing and manufacturing is underdeveloped in textiles because of a lack of appropriate equipment; in resistant materials, where suitable equipment does exist, not enough use is made of computer assisted work. Drawing and idea development needs greater emphasis so that all pupils can develop personal approaches to design problems, and so that the highest attaining pupils can reach their potential. Pupils show a very positive attitude to learning and behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils with special educational needs are identified and helped to make good progress across the department, and particularly in Years 7 to 9.
105. Leadership and management of the subject have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. A well balanced curriculum exists in Years 10 and 11, with GCSEs available and vocational courses. This gives more opportunity to match the needs of the pupils with a two year course that suits them. The department is well organised with an excellent assessment system in place. Good team work and strong support for new teachers are features of the department. Technical support is very good and makes a significant contribution to the strong team atmosphere and to the learning of all groups of pupils.
106. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards have risen particularly in Years 7 to 9, and this profile of rising standards is set to impact on standards in Years 10 and 11.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

In this curriculum area, the focus was on art and design, drama and music which were inspected in depth. The school offers GCSE media studies in Years 10 and 11 and results for 2003 were above average, indicating good achievement for the pupils concerned. Dance, previously within physical education, has recently been introduced as a discrete subject leading to GCSE. Two lessons were sampled, one in Year 10 and one in Year 7. Standards are average, teaching is very good, and pupils are achieving very well.

The school has recently been awarded specialist performing arts college status, and plans are well advanced for the introduction of further new courses.

### **Art and design**

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are excellent, and pupils' overall achievement is excellent as a result.
- Excellent drawing and paint skills are developed.
- Excellent assessment informs lesson planning and targets learning.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.

- There is a wide range of media and artistic outcomes, but ICT is not used sufficiently.

## Commentary

107. GCSE results in the range of A\*-C were average overall in 2003, with more boys and girls achieving A\* and A grades than the national average. Current standards are well above average in all years and achievement in relation to their standards when they begin in Year 7 is excellent, as they enter the school with below average standards. These standards represent excellent achievement and are made possible by excellent teaching and the constant promotion of very high standards.
108. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are accurate with assessment across the whole department used as a tool for planning and refocusing the teaching and learning for pupils as well as teachers. Standards seen show a rapid improvement as soon as they enter the school and this is sustained through all years. In Years 7 to 9, pupils create lively images with card, lino prints, paint, plaster and paper, which demonstrate high levels of competence in working with line, shape, colour and tone. They use sketchbooks on a regular basis and these show a rapidly growing confidence in the use of colour and texture. Extension and enrichment opportunities for the gifted and talented pupils are provided. Pupils with special educational needs are identified and make excellent progress across all years. From this strong foundation, pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to make rapid progress and are achieving high standards; so much so that work seen in Year 10 is already reaching the highest A\* and A GCSE standards.
109. Teaching and learning are excellent in all years. A vast range of wet and dry media are used throughout the teaching and enables pupils to explore ways of working that best suit them and maximises success. Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils and an atmosphere of challenge, inspiration and success exists. This atmosphere for learning is maintained by very focused individual advice which encourages pupils to think further and explore ideas for themselves. Great trust exists between pupil and teacher which helps them take risks in this supportive atmosphere. The positive, articulate and very good attitude of the pupils is a major strength of the department; as a result, pupils try their hardest in lessons. Observational drawing and painting are very well developed and have produced many intense and vivid outcomes; this enables pupils to make rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject. The possibility of using ICT to extend and enrich the pupils has yet to be developed within the classroom; image and photographic manipulation software needs to be more available.
110. Leadership and management are excellent. The shared ambition, direction and energy of the staff in establishing the subject as a major influence in the school are very positive features of the department. The subject leader provides visionary leadership with an excellent curriculum. A very good teamwork approach exists with high quality dialogue about the teaching and learning agenda. Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent; standards, teaching and learning have improved considerably and no issues remain from the previous inspection.

## Drama

Overall, the quality of provision in drama is **excellent**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average at GCSE, and above average in Years 7 to 9.
- Inspirational leadership ensures very good teaching and learning so pupils are very well motivated and achieve very well.
- Pupils make excellent progress in developing their confidence and communication skills by taking part enthusiastically in a wide range of school productions.

- Very good systems of assessment enable pupils to understand how to improve their work.

## Commentary

111. GCSE results in 2003 were above average in the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C. Standards were higher than those of the previous year and significantly better than the national performance. Both boys and girls achieved very well. They did better in drama than in most of their other subjects, and passes at the highest A\* and A grades were more than twice the national rate.
112. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. This represents very good achievement as pupils come into the school with standards in drama that are below average. Both boys and girls are keen to do their best, and their very positive attitudes are an important factor in their achievement. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in developing self-assurance and taking an active part in class and group performances. In Year 11, standards are well above average and are consistent with the GCSE results. Analysis of course work and observation of practical tasks shows that pupils have built well on the skills they have acquired in previous years. They work together very effectively in groups to produce impressive performances of great sensitivity and spirituality, such as the interpretations of different verses in a poem, showing how the writer communicates through imagery, rhyme and structure.
113. Teaching is very good and leads to pupils' very good learning and excellent attitudes. Because teachers are very confident in their subject knowledge, they help pupils to build on their strengths and give them the confidence to tackle new learning. Lessons have challenge and pace, and the management of large numbers of pupils within the spacious area of the drama studio is particularly impressive. Teaching is well matched to different abilities, and pupils who have special educational needs benefit from high quality support. A significant strength of the department is the very good system of assessment and target setting, which makes a very important contribution to the raising of standards. Evaluation of performance by teachers and pupils is an essential ingredient of every lesson, with the result that even the youngest pupils develop a critical awareness of their own work and that of others, and become accustomed to thinking out ways of moving to the next level of attainment.
114. Leadership is inspired. As director of performing arts, the head of drama has an impressive clarity of vision and an unswerving purpose to increase and broaden the opportunities for pupils' personal development by helping them to discover their talents and enabling them to gain confidence in production and performance. Pupils' achievement in lessons is strengthened by a host of activities, involving for instance, work with local primary schools, a large annual school production, smaller projects and collaboration with other secondary schools. The subject is managed in an excellent way. Very effective teams have been created and complex planning has resulted in a successful bid for specialist performing arts college status.
115. Improvement since the last inspection is very good and the subject has gone from strength to strength. Standards have risen, a drama studio has been created, and future planned improvements will enable pupils to benefit from very well equipped working areas. The school has gained the Artsmark Gold and has been designated a pilot school for the National Arts Award. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## Music

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning lead to very good progress for pupils.
- Strong extra-curricular opportunities provide many occasions for pupils to perform.
- Marking promotes pupils' musical and general literacy.
- Music computer work has yet to be fully introduced in Years 7 to 9.

## Commentary

116. GCSE results in 2003 were below average. This was out of step with the previous year's music results when all pupils gained grades A\*-C. In addition, the standards observed in lessons indicate average but rising standards.
117. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 is broadly average. The standards achieved by pupils in Year 9 are good when compared with their attainment on entry, which is overall below average. Achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. At the end of Year 9 all pupils are able to use electronic keyboards and tuned percussion with some competence for performance and for composition. However, pupils in Years 7 to 9 have few opportunities to develop necessary computer skills. Listening and appraising skills are near average; the department works hard to improve musical vocabulary so that pupils are able to describe the music they hear. Singing is used well in many lessons. There are clear indications that standards are rising and overall progress is quickening.
118. Overall, standards are near average at end of Year 11. Pupils at this stage are able to produce compositions using electronic keyboards and computers. Standards in composition and performance are near average as are standards in musical appraisal. The department identifies pupils' musical literacy as a focus area and gives emphasis to key words and technical terms. This has had a positive effect on raising attainment in appraising music. Pupils' achievement is very good, given their well below average starting points at the end of their Year 9.
119. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Pupils benefit from very well-organised teaching and high standards of care. Lessons are carefully linked to previous learning and lessons promote a wide range of interesting tasks - this consolidates pupils' learning and maintains their interest. Teaching embodies good planning and a range of very effective teaching styles. There is some work especially designed for pupils at different levels and this helps pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Marking underpins the strong focus on technical language found in many lessons.
120. The provision for instrumental teaching is good. The number of pupils taking lessons in school is average in relation to the size of the school. The visiting instrumental teachers' work is carefully managed and integrated into the work of the department. In the best instrumental lessons, teachers set targets for their pupils and encourage them to meet the challenge of instrumental grade examinations. As yet the department does not officially record its many grade examination successes.
121. Leadership is very good and management good. The department promotes literacy and numeracy in lessons; 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. Accommodation is quite good but computer resources within the department are barely adequate.
122. Extra-curricular work is very strong with pupils regularly taking part in a range of musical activities in the school and in the community. Standards in vocal work are high. There are regular large-scale school productions. Such opportunities have a considerable impact on

the cultural and social development of pupils and help promote the strong cultural ethos within the school. There has been good improvement since the last report.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

### Physical education

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good and results in pupils' very good achievement.
- GCSE results, including those at the highest A\* and A grades, are well above average.
- A very good programme of extra-curricular sport enhances the quality of the overall provision.
- Pupils with special education needs are very well supported and so achieve as well as other pupils.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to, and enjoy, their learning.
- Assessment procedures are not linked closely enough to National Curriculum levels.

### Commentary

123. In the most recent years, examination results have been well above average and have continued to improve. In 2003, most impressively, over a third of the grades obtained were in the A\*-A range, and pupils' performance in physical education was better than in the vast majority of their other subjects.
124. Standards seen in Year 9 are above average which represents very good achievement in relation to these pupils' well below average starting points in the subject in Year 7. Pupils' capacity to improve their performance by observing and talking to each other about their work is strong. Their knowledge and understanding of the effects of exercise on the body and their ability to prepare safely for different types of strenuous physical activity is better than found in most schools. They make very rapid progress because basic skills are very well taught in Year 7 and, from the outset, they are also taught how to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils also develop very positive attitudes to learning in response to the teachers' high expectations and this also contributes to their very good achievement. The progress made by the lowest attainers and pupils with special educational needs is particularly good because the teachers are highly skilled at matching the work to their capabilities, even in technically difficult games such as badminton. Well planned support from their learning assistant also enables pupils with a physical disability to make equally good progress.
125. Standards in core physical education in Year 11 are average and pupils achieve well. Progress is very good in trampolining, where the highest attainers help other pupils and video technology is used effectively to analyse performance. Standards in GCSE classes are well above average in both practical and theoretical aspects of the subject and pupils' achievement is very good. Standards in coursework are high because this aspect is very well planned and monitored. Throughout the school, standards are supported by pupils' extensive participation in extra-curricular activities, the quality of which has been recognised in the school earning the prestigious Sportsmark Gold award. Standards and quality of dance provision in the school also contribute well to the overall picture in physical education.
126. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. It was at least good in all of the lessons observed, and occasionally it was outstanding. Chief among many significant strengths is the quality of lesson planning which carefully matches learning to pupils' capabilities and interests across the whole ability range and ensures that they are given a very clear understanding of what to do to improve. This works well because the teachers use their own

expertise well to question pupils and make them think about their learning. Activities, including those in examination revision lessons, are demanding, interesting and enjoyable. Teachers' expectations are high, and they encourage a strong sense of fair play and mutual support. Opportunities for pupils to use computers to support their learning, for example, by recording and analysing data obtained through participation in a health related fitness programme, are good. Assessment procedures are good. They involve pupils well in the process but could be linked more closely to attainment levels.

127. Subject leadership and management are very good. Monitoring is used effectively to improve the subject performance, but there is still more scope to use the results of analysis of assessment information in target setting. Standards, examination results and the quality of the provision have improved well since the previous inspection.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

**A mixed Year 7 class half of whom have special education needs, including three with statements. This is their second badminton lesson and the emphasis is on learning both skills and tactics through playing the game.**

"Shuttlecock! Tramline! Drop shot! Just a few of the key word shouted out as, faces flushed with excitement and exertion the pupils ran out of the sports hall at the end of their badminton lesson. They had just finished talking about their learning and successfully identified how well they had each improved. "Just like in science, we're going to conduct an investigation" the teacher had said at one point near the beginning of the lesson. This, to see the effects of different types of shot, was the main objective successfully achieved by involving the pupils closely in observing each other's performance in a series of carefully stepped activities. Each was analysed in discussion with the pupils to identify how it added to the overall picture. The purist might scoff at the quality of the shots, but by the end of the end of the lesson, most of these pupils had grasped and could apply one of the game's key concepts – move your opponent around the court then apply the winner. This had been done by creating a huge expectation of this lower attaining class.

A salutary reminder that it is often we that place the limits on what our pupils can achieve.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

In this curriculum area the school offers vocational GCSE courses in health and social care, ICT and leisure and tourism. In addition, about a fifth of pupils in each of Years 10 and 11, follow a variety of work-related courses at a local college or with training providers.

ICT was inspected in depth and has a separate subject report. Lessons in other courses were sampled.

### **Vocational GCSE courses in health and social care and leisure and tourism.**

128. GNVQ part 1 foundation level results in both these subjects were below average in 2003. Fourteen pupils achieved merits and sixteen passed, gaining the GCSE equivalent of two E to G grades. There were no distinctions and six pupils were ungraded. These results represent good achievement in relation to pupils' well below average attainment at the start of the course.
129. In health and social care, standards in the two lessons seen were above average. In Year 11, pupils were using good revision techniques consolidating their understanding of stages of human development. However, half of the class was absent and records clearly indicate that overall standards are below average. In Year 10, everyone was present and all used computers competently to produce tables of their dietary intake. The teacher very skilfully led a session during which pupils assessed each other's diet, increasing their knowledge and understanding of nutrition and the constituents of a balanced diet. Key features of good teaching include excellent relationships and the effective use of a wide variety of learning techniques, enabling pupils to achieve well.
130. One lesson of leisure and tourism was observed in which pupils were learning how to analyse the business development of a theme park. They used computers well to produce a

Power-Point slide. Teaching was good, but learning was satisfactory because of the lack of concentration of some pupils during the theory part of the lesson. Despite the very good efforts of the teacher to ensure their total engagement, too many were off task so that achievement was only satisfactory in the lesson. Although standards are below average they represent good progress over time.

131. Vocational GCSEs are a double award but are taught in half the time advised by the syllabus and that allocated in most schools. This is very demanding, especially for middle and lower attaining pupils.

### **Work-related learning**

132. Star 14. These courses are for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and take place on one day per week at a local college or with a training provider. The school's timetable is carefully constructed so that these pupils do not miss lessons in other subjects. Pupils select one course from a wide range of vocational areas and all lead to nationally recognised certification. They provide more practical methods of learning as well as continuity and progression on courses spanning school and college. They are relevant and thoroughly enjoyed by pupils.
133. The organisation, leadership and management of these arrangements are highly effective. From the outset, pupils and parents are fully involved in a detailed induction process and high expectations of standards of work, attendance and behaviour are made clear and contracts are signed. Staff from school are based at the college all day and attendance is rigorously monitored. Communication between all parties about progress and standards is comprehensive and regular.
134. During the inspection, lessons were seen in child care, plumbing and catering. Teaching and learning were excellent in all areas because of teachers' expertise, planning and the use of first-rate resources and accommodation. Pupils are treated as young adults, respond accordingly, and make rapid progress not only in acquiring new knowledge, understanding and learning new skills but also in terms of their personal development.
135. @ctive 8, New Start and Firebreak. These initiatives provide programmes of learning individually matched to the needs of a very small number of pupils who have become disengaged from education. They are not achieving well in school and are at risk of permanent exclusion. The programmes involve extended work-related education at college or in work experience, and are highly successful in promoting pupils' attendance, self-esteem and confidence.
136. The school organises a variety of enterprise days, a careers convention, practice interview days and two weeks of work experience for all pupils. Therefore, the overall quality of provision of work-related education is outstanding.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

In this curriculum area, both citizenship and PSHE are taught within an integrated humanities programme. PSHE is very well planned – pupils learn about personal safety, healthy living, sex education, drugs and substance use and abuse. In 2003 the school gained the Healthy Schools Award. Two PSHE lessons were inspected; standards are above average, teaching is good, and pupils are achieving well.

#### **Citizenship**

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



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- An excellent programme of school and community based activities enables pupils to achieve very well in developing responsible attitudes and self-assurance.
- Careful planning has resulted in the incorporation of different aspects of citizenship into subject programmes of study but, in most subjects, there is little reference to citizenship in lessons.

## Commentary

137. Citizenship is taught, together with PSHE, within the integrated humanities programme. During the week of the inspection it was only possible to see lessons in Year 10, and so judgements are based on information provided by the school, discussions with teachers and pupils, and an evaluation of written work.
138. Standards are average in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, and both boys and girls achieve satisfactorily. By Year 9, most pupils have an informed understanding of citizens' rights and responsibilities and are aware of some of the different ways in which views are formed and expressed. Information is recorded in a variety of ways that range from note taking and illustrations to formal writing, such as letters of protest to the local authority about controversial building projects. By Year 11, pupils can explain the essential features of democratic government, and they work effectively in groups and pairs, for example to create vote-catching policies for a future general election.
139. It is not possible to make a judgement on teaching and learning in citizenship lessons in Years 7 to 9 because of insufficient evidence. In Year 10, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are well resourced with carefully planned activities to give pupils experience of collaborative working in practical aspects of citizenship. However, planning does not always take into consideration the limited amount of time available in single periods, with the result that the aims of the lesson are not always fully achieved. Assessment of pupils' progress is good. A formal assessment scheme is in place and pupils contribute to this by evaluating their own work and commenting on their progress.
140. In the subjects of the curriculum the teaching of citizenship is satisfactory. Departments have identified the links with citizenship in their programmes of study, but in lessons seen during the inspection there was little evidence of exploration of citizenship issues. The exception was in art and design where the connections were well made.
141. The strongest area of achievement in citizenship is pupils' active involvement in the wealth of out-of-school activities that the school provides for their personal development. They respond very well to these opportunities, and grow in self-confidence. They show responsible attitudes to themselves and others, talk to visitors with assurance, and are very good ambassadors for the school. Pupils of all ages become members of the School Council, and raise considerable sums of money for a range of charities, both local and national. They take part enthusiastically and competently in school performances and in sports activities, and broaden their horizons through trips to places of interest in this country, and also through cultural visits and exchanges abroad. A weaker area of achievement is the limited amount of knowledge and understanding of citizenship gained by pupils through the subjects of the curriculum. The reason that standards are not higher in this area is that teachers do not make do not make pupils clearly aware of the connection with citizenship in the themes of the lesson, and pupils do not make the link themselves. Overall, achievement in citizenship is satisfactory.
142. The quality of leadership and management in the subject is satisfactory. There has been careful planning for citizenship lessons to ensure that all strands of the subject are covered, and good systems of assessment have been set up. Written tasks are well adapted to the requirements of pupils with special educational needs. Monitoring of the teaching

arrangements has resulted in the decision to improve the quality of the provision by teaching citizenship, together with PSHE, in a lifelong learning course, instead of within humanities. The priority for development is to provide further staff training in order to improve the teaching of citizenship across the curriculum. The school management of the enrichment programme, which contributes to the provision in lessons, is excellent.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	1
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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