

# INSPECTION REPORT

## THE WESTGATE SCHOOL

Slough

LEA area: Slough

Unique reference number: 110105

Headteacher: Mr R Thomas

Lead inspector: Mr G Clements

Dates of inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> January 2004

Inspection number: 258853

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (non-selective)  
School category: Foundation  
Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 656

School address: Cippenham Lane  
Slough  
Berkshire  
Postcode: SL1 5AH

Telephone number: 01753 521320  
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Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr P Dale-Gough

Date of previous inspection: 16<sup>th</sup> March 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Westgate School is a co-educational, modern, non-selective school of about average size. It has recently been recognised by the DfES as one of the most improved schools in England. In 2001, following a brief visit by HMI, the school received a positive report which recognised many improvements made since the previous inspection in 1998. The roll has increased since the last inspection and is currently 652 pupils aged 11 to 16. The school is considerably oversubscribed. Overall, there are significantly more boys than girls in the school although, in Year 7, there are more girls than boys. Most pupils join the school at the start of Year 7 and stay at the school for five years. Very few join the school at other times.

The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, mostly with Asian backgrounds, is well above the national average. The proportion who speak English as an additional language, at 27 per cent, is well above the national average, but the number at an early stage of learning English is very low. Panjabi, Urdu, Bengali and Somali are the main languages spoken by these pupils at home.

There are 99 pupils (16 per cent) with special educational needs, which is above the national average. Of these, 42 have a statement of special educational needs. The school has additional resourced provision within the learning support department for two pupils with physical impairment, together with the well-established base for pupils with specific literacy difficulties. The school makes special provision for those with emotional and behavioural difficulty. Pupils learn alongside their mainstream peers for the majority of their time in school. There are 114 pupils (18 per cent) known to be eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. When pupils start at the school, their attainment is below average. A few pupils each year who have been offered grammar school places choose to join The Westgate School but, overall, the numbers of higher attaining pupils joining the school are very low.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
5317	Mr G Clements	Lead inspector	Citizenship
9446	Ms H Griffiths	Lay inspector	
32278	Mr D Roberts	Team inspector	English
32362	Mr K Warburton	Team inspector	Mathematics
31159	Mr C Simmonds	Team inspector	Science
20533	Mr D Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design
8089	Mr P Braide	Team inspector	Design and technology
22609	Mr P Grey	Team inspector	Geography History
8119	Mr D Milham	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
1995	Dr K Seager	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31549	Ms H Moulton	Team inspector	Music
23588	Ms C Ajitsingh	Team inspector	Community languages: Panjabi English as an additional language
22042	Mr J Challands	Team inspector	Physical education
4267	Mr N Bloodworth	Team inspector	Religious education
21899	Ms G Lawson	Team inspector	Special educational needs

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The Westgate School is a **very good school** where extremely positive attitudes to learning are fostered and pupils achieve to their full potential. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. In January 2004, the school was recognised by the Secretary of State for Education as one of the most improved schools in England and Wales. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is totally inclusive, racial harmony is excellent and the school provides very well for pupils of all abilities and ethnic backgrounds.
- Provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) is very good.
- The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and management is very effective.
- The drive to improve literacy has been very successful.
- Overall, GCSE results are close to national averages, and well above average in mathematics.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
- The school has very good systems to monitor pupils' progress and these are used very well to provide pupils with advice and guidance through tracking and mentoring.
- Overall, teaching is good, with very good features in most departments.
- There is some unsatisfactory teaching in music, history and modern foreign languages.
- The school provides good value for money.
- The achievement of pupils during their time in the school is good.
- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is very good and standards in ICT are high.
- The school has excellent links with the community.
- Current provision for music and drama is unsatisfactory.

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in 1998 when standards were below average and the quality of education was judged to be satisfactory. All the key issues have been addressed but the school is not fully compliant with the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Weaknesses in the music curriculum were addressed, but recent difficulties with recruitment have led to inadequacies in the current provision

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A\* – very high; 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.*

The school is successful in reaching its aim that pupils should be able to achieve their full potential. On joining the school, attainment is substantially below average but, by the time pupils reach the end of Year 9, their standards are only just below average. They are above average in mathematics and ICT but well below average in music.

There has been a rising trend in standards throughout the school since the previous inspection with a substantial increase in GCSE results last year when half of the Year 11 pupils gained five or more A\*-C grades. There are significant differences in standards of boys and girls in several subjects and some evident differences in performance by pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, with Asian pupils achieving more highly in English and mathematics, but there is no clear pattern in other subjects.

**Pupils' attitudes** to learning are very good. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and their teachers, are very good and most pupils work hard and behave well. The degree of racial harmony is excellent. Attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of teaching and learning is good in both key stages and has improved substantially since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning are good or very good in the majority of lessons and are only occasionally unsatisfactory. Improvements to teaching have been ensured through providing high-quality professional development. The impact of literacy training is particularly evident. Training of all teachers in the use of ICT has also been effective. Teachers use assessment when planning their lessons and they meet the individual needs of pupils effectively. The overall quality of assessment is good but there is some inconsistency.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is well matched to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. The time allocated to music and drama in Years 7 to 9 is low and does not enable pupils to make good progress. All pupils are given the opportunity to follow a vocational course in Years 10 and 11.

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. Support, advice and guidance for pupils at all stages are very good. Procedures for tracking pupils' progress, setting individual targets for improvement and providing support through mentoring are very effective. The school has excellent links with the community from which pupils benefit.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher, governors, senior management team and other staff share a common belief that all pupils can succeed. They take pride in the school and are determined to build on good practice to improve the school still further. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. He has provided the drive, perseverance and vision necessary to bring about the considerable improvement that has been made since the previous inspection.

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

Parents have very positive views of the school, reflected in the heavy oversubscription for Year 7 places over recent years. Their questionnaire returns and nearly all comments at the parents' meeting showed very strong support and recognition of the school's much improved reputation in the local community. Pupils express very high levels of satisfaction with their education. The findings of the inspection team strongly endorse parents' and pupils' positive views of the school.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise standards and the quality of provision in music and drama throughout the school.
- Raise standards and the quality of teaching in history in Years 7 to 9.
- Ensure that best practice in respect of assessment, the use of ICT and the challenging of the more able pupils is disseminated throughout the school.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the school policy on collective worship is implemented.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

The school is successful in reaching its aim that pupils should be able to achieve their full potential. Achievement in relation to individual potential is good. On joining the school, attainment is substantially below average but, by the time pupils reach the end of Year 9, their standards are just below average. They are above average in mathematics and ICT but well below average in music.

There has been a rising trend in standards throughout the school since the previous inspection with a substantial improvement in GCSE results last year when half of the Year 11 pupils gained five or more A\*-C grades. There are significant differences in the standards of boys and girls in several subjects and some evident differences in performance by pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, with Asian pupils achieving more highly in English and mathematics.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong whole-school focus on literacy has been a major factor in raising standards and enabling pupils to achieve well.
- Results in mathematics exceed national averages at GCSE and in national tests at the end of Year 9.
- Standards in ICT are good throughout the school because of the carefully planned curriculum.
- Standards in music and drama are low in Years 7 to 9 as pupils receive too little experience in these areas.
- The high level of commitment and support for pupils who have English as an additional language enables them to achieve well.
- Pupils with statements of special educational needs achieve very well as the extensive support they receive is carefully tailored to their specific individual learning needs.

#### Commentary

1. The overall attainment of pupils entering the school in Year 7 is below average and very few pupils have gained above average results in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science at age eleven.
2. Results in the end of Year 9 national tests in 2003 were just above average in mathematics, close to average in science and below average in English. In the previous year, results in English were just above the national average.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.6 (33.5)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.8 (33.6)	35.4 (34.7)
science	31.4 (29.9)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 123 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Pupils make good progress in English and science and very good progress in mathematics. There are noticeable variations in the performance of girls and boys in these core subjects. Girls achieve more highly in English, boys achieve more highly in mathematics but, in science their standards are similar. Standards observed during lessons and in the sampling of pupils' work in English were better than last year's test results indicated. In other core subjects,



observations matched test results. There were no significant differences in the attainment of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and overall their achievement is good. Pupils with statements of special educational needs make very good progress towards achieving their individual targets because their individual education plans identify clearly the support they need to receive.

4. By the end of Year 9, the standards achieved by pupils in ICT are above average. Pupils learn basic skills in Year 7 and then extend and improve these skills effectively through application in most curriculum areas in Years 8 and 9. Standards in art and design, citizenship, design and technology, Panjabi and physical education are close to those expected nationally of 14-year-old pupils. In modern foreign languages, geography, history and religious education, although pupils have made good progress since they started at the school, their standards have not reached national averages by the end of Year 9. Standards in music remain well below average and progress is unsatisfactory, as pupils have not received regular specialist teaching throughout the key stage.

**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	50 (33 )	50 (48 )
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (95 )	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (99 )	96 (96 )
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	33.9 (29.9 )	34.7(34.7)

*There were 125 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

5. In 2003, the school was placed 22<sup>nd</sup> in the DfES list of schools with the most improved A\*-C GCSE grades. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 were close to the national average with 50 per cent of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C grades. As the prior attainment of these pupils on joining the school was considerably below average, these results represent substantial value added by the school. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*-G grades was above the national average but the number gaining the highest grades was relatively low, reflecting the prior attainment of pupils when they joined the school. Results in mathematics, ICT and art and design were well above the national averages, results in science were just above and those in English just below national averages.
6. As in Years 7 to 9, there are significant differences in performance between boys and girls. In English, the difference in results between boys and girls reflects the national pattern, with girls achieving much higher results, but in mathematics, where nationally there is little gender difference in results, boys' results were much better than girls'. In both these subjects, pupils from Asian backgrounds performed better than other pupils. In child development, which is taken only by girls, results were above the national average.
7. In 2003, above average GCSE results were also obtained in art and design, business studies and with small groups in history and music. Results in geography and modern foreign languages, although below average, showed improvement since the last inspection. Standards observed during lessons and in the sampling of pupils' work matched these examination results in a majority of subjects but were lower in history and music.
8. Those pupils at the early stages of learning English make good progress in relation to their prior learning and achieve well. Most pupils with English as an additional language demonstrate in their subject lessons that they have acquired sufficient English language skills to function effectively and they are integrated well into the mainstream. In Years 10 and 11, subject-specific support helps them with their coursework and homework.

9. Pupils with statements of special educational needs achieve very well. The support they receive through individual tuition, small group literacy work and in-class support carefully tailored to their specific individual learning needs enables them to make significant progress and sometimes surpass the targets set for them. Pupils develop increasingly effective skills and strategies in reading, writing, spelling and organisation. By the end of Years 9 and 11, pupils are prepared well for national tests and GCSE examinations.

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

Pupils' attitudes are **very good**. Behaviour is **very good** in Years 10 and 11 and **good** in Years 7 to 9. Attendance is **good**. Relationships continue to be **very good**. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Nearly all pupils show very good interest in their learning, work hard and behave very well in their lessons and around the school.
- Relationships are very good between adults and pupils and among pupils.
- Pupils have a strong sense of community and support one another very well.
- Pupils have a good awareness of right and wrong and are responsible and mature.
- Attendance has been rising steadily over recent years and is now good.
- Punctuality is good.
- The degree of racial harmony is excellent.

### Attendance

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

Authorised absence	
School data	6.1
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.8
National data	1.1

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

10. The school has effective procedures to monitor attendance and to help the very small number of families with attendance problems. The school receives good support from the education welfare service. Parents are aware of the importance of good attendance and do their best to ensure that their children come to school.

### Exclusions

The number of exclusions is above average, but none has been permanent.

#### Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean

#### Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
386	23	0
1	0	0
11	0	0
30	0	0

Mixed – White and Asian	6	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	109	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	45	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	20	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	15	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	5	2	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	9	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	14	0	0

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

11. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection. It is good, and often very good, in lessons, assemblies and around the school because teachers have high expectations of their pupils. The school's code of conduct places a strong emphasis on courtesy and pupils understand well what is expected of them. They are very well supported by the tutor system. The moral development of pupils is very good. They fully understand the difference between right and wrong and are responsible and mature. The school has very good systems for rewarding high standards of behaviour and attendance. It also has good procedures for monitoring inappropriate behaviour through the report card system and by the behaviour support team.
12. The school has had considerable success in enabling pupils to manage their own behaviour and develop positive attitudes to learning. Even pupils with the most challenging behaviour learn different patterns of response and achieve well through the sensitive and skilled work of their teachers and the very good relationships throughout the school.
13. A high proportion of parents feel that behaviour in the school is good and that their children are not bullied. There is a very high degree of racial harmony and the school logs the rare racial incidents carefully. Bullying is taken very seriously by the school and pupils in interviews and in the questionnaire did not feel that it was a problem. The many favourable comments included tributes to the teachers' encouragement (as one pupil said, 'they always help'), the support of their tutor groups and the friendly atmosphere.
14. Pupils feel safe and secure in school. Because teachers have high expectations, pupils are thoughtful, helpful and understand the importance of personal responsibility. Pupils are open, helpful, confident and friendly to visitors. Teachers foster a strong desire to learn and, consequently, pupils have a real commitment to their work, and their concentration and perseverance are very good. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson on Romeo and Juliet, the teacher's enthusiasm kept pupils engrossed. Pupils are eager to contribute to discussions and work very well both independently and co-operatively. Pupils with special educational needs have a very positive and enthusiastic attitude to their work. They are confident they will succeed because of the good relationships they establish with learning support staff and class teachers who are generally aware of their specific needs.
15. Relationships are very good, fostered from the beginning by the buddy system. Younger pupils commented on the help and support given to them by older members of the school and through the prefect and tutor systems. In Year 11, pupils may choose a mentor from teachers or support staff. This scheme has proved very supportive to them. Adults offer them good role models and examples of courtesy and fairness. The peer mentoring system has been very

successful. An independent counselling service is offered to pupils referred by heads of year and, in another initiative, the school has organised a counselling service aimed specifically at Afro-Caribbean boys.

16. Pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) have positive attitudes to learning with others. They respond well as they gain confidence and feel secure. They collaborate well with each other as a diverse and multi-lingual group and they are happy to share their experiences and learning with each other. They also relate well to their language support and other teachers and classroom assistants by showing their appreciation of the help they receive. They show much interest in school life and participate fully in school activities.
17. Pupils are proud of their school. They are eager to take up the many opportunities for responsibility offered by the school and to participate in the many school activities and clubs. They demonstrated their responsibility by their rapid, disciplined evacuation of the school when an electrical fault triggered the fire alarm. All pupils, without exception, behaved calmly and with good humour. Post-16 students working in the school contributed well to the good order.
18. Pupils' social development and sense of community are further promoted through the school uniform, school council, tutor groups, assemblies and the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Pupils are encouraged to think of others by raising money for charities. Pupils' spiritual development is now good. Collective worship almost complies with statutory requirements and pupils have the opportunity to reflect on sensitive issues in PSHE and religious education. They show good respect for the feelings, beliefs and opinions of others as a result.
19. The school has responded well to the previous report and provision for pupils' cultural development is now good. Festivals of the major world religions are celebrated and pupils have numerous opportunities for visits to European countries. The diversity of foreign language teaching has been increased and Panjabi classes have boosted the self-esteem of some pupils. The work with Creative Partnerships on a Bollywood theme has included pupils from a variety of backgrounds.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching is **good** and has improved substantially since the last inspection. Assessment is **good** and there is some **very good** practice in the monitoring and support of pupils' progress. The curriculum is **good** and is designed well to meet the individual needs and abilities of pupils. Links with parents are **very good** and the school has established **excellent** links with the local community.

### Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning experienced by the pupils is **good** in all year groups and has improved substantially since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning are good or very good in the majority of lessons and are only occasionally unsatisfactory. Improvements to teaching have been ensured through providing high-quality professional development. The impact of literacy training is particularly evident in lessons, in pupils' work and in the helpful, stimulating displays around the school. Teachers use assessment to inform their planning and they plan their lessons to meet the individual needs of pupils effectively. The overall quality of assessment is good but there is some inconsistency.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons very well.
- Teachers establish very good relationships with pupils and give them the confidence to succeed.

- There is some very good practice in the use of assessment to inform pupils of what they need to do next to improve but this is not consistent across departments.
- Teachers respond well to the training they have received, particularly in literacy and ICT, and use a variety of teaching strategies and activities which encourage pupils to discuss and question.
- Teaching is occasionally unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.
- Efficient use is made of teaching assistants and technicians to support learning.
- Pupils work collaboratively but independent learning skills are underdeveloped.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 106 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	24 (23%)	44 (42%)	29 (27%)	8 (8%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

20. In a high proportion of lessons, approximately two-thirds, teaching is good or better. A high proportion of the very good teaching and learning was seen in mathematics, science, ICT and child development. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. In Years 7 to 9, a small number of lessons in history, French, geography and music were judged as unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen.
21. Teachers' command of their subjects is good and they teach with enthusiasm. Many have excellent, up-to-date knowledge and this allows higher attainers to be challenged and lower attaining pupils to be well supported. The school's decision to adopt a four-part lesson as a variation to the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has made significant impact as it provides a secure foundation for planning. Lively starting activities engage pupils' interest, and evaluative plenaries reinforce learning that has taken place during the lesson. In a very good mathematics lesson, the introductory activity in using graph paper to construct cuboids engaged the interest of all pupils as the routine was simple but they could then develop from a concrete to an abstract context as they gradually recognised a pattern in their results. The teacher demonstrated some of the wonder of mathematics and her enjoyment in teaching it by taking time to explain the concept of perfect numbers.
22. Most teachers recognise the individual needs of pupils, and their planning reflects this, such as in a physical education lesson where good progress was made by pupils in developing their volleyball skills. The teacher identified clear targets for pupils at the beginning of the lesson and he then provided a very good range of activities for them. His intervention with individual pupils and with the whole class clearly instructed pupils on how to improve. By the end of the lesson, pupils of all abilities improved several basic skills and were able to apply them in a competitive game situation.
23. In the most effective lessons, teachers make the content relevant to pupils. In an ICT lesson around the subject of encryption, pupils learned about the necessity for confidentiality in using e-mail scrambling. The teacher related the topic to the real world, considering social implications when exchanging and sharing e-mail in a modern day society. In modern foreign languages, the teacher used French extensively to teach historical information about French culture and society. At the same time, pupils' literacy needs were supported through dictionary work, including bilingual dictionaries, and through identifying the key words used in the lesson.
24. Planning for literacy and numeracy across the curriculum has been embedded by most teachers in their lesson plans. In a geography lesson, for example, there was a strong focus on literacy. Pupils developed confidence in talking about the subject of migration as well as learning the appropriate language to use when talking about a subject where sensitivity and understanding are needed when giving a personal viewpoint. The teacher reinforced key words

learnt during the lesson and also took the opportunity to help pupils learn about the use of the apostrophe.

25. Teachers' expectations are generally high, providing very good challenge to pupils. In most lessons, the needs of different pupils are met well. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified in every subject area and teachers often plan extension activities, although at times, more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged.
26. Most teachers employ a range of strategies effectively to reinforce the school's teaching and learning guidance, that 'there are no behaviour problems, only pupils with learning difficulties', but a few teachers have yet to acquire the skills to engage all pupils fully. In a Year 11 English lesson, a group of lower attaining pupils made very good progress in their understanding of the characters and plot of a play because of the teacher's obvious enthusiasm and her skill in deploying a range of methods and resources that were appropriate to the ability of the class. The lesson was conducted at a brisk pace, using an abridged text, graphic displays, well-structured worksheets and well-chosen video clips. Throughout the lesson, the pupils remained on task in an atmosphere that was good humoured and purposeful.
27. In the best lessons, teachers probe pupils' understanding through challenging questions that prompt and require pupils to explain their thinking fully. In less successful lessons, questioning of pupils is superficial, with simple explanations and basic ideas being accepted by the teacher, rather than deeper knowledge and explanation being sought. In some of the weaker lessons observed, for example in history, there was too little interaction between the pupils, with the teacher's input of factual knowledge dominating the lesson and leaving little opportunity for either collaborative or independent work.
28. The use of ICT by the teacher to enhance the pupils' learning experience was planned well in a number of lessons. In a modern foreign language lesson, the teacher was supported well by an ICT specialist so that, while the language teacher used French extensively, the ICT specialist helped to give instructions through the use of an interactive whiteboard. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively in several subject areas to raise interest and improve attention.
29. There are pockets of very good practice in helping pupils to develop their independent working. In applied business studies, for example, pupils are given the responsibility to contact a local business on which to focus their coursework and, in child development, pupils have to establish a trusting relationship with a family in order to complete a case study on a young infant. However, pupils in many lessons have yet to learn the skills of working independently of the teacher. In drama, for example, pupils worked hard to develop their speaking skills when under the direct supervision of the teacher but, when asked to work independently, they found it difficult to apply themselves.
30. Teachers use resources and time very effectively. Lessons start promptly and they are fast paced. Pupils quickly apply themselves to work. Teaching assistants are very effective in their roles and make a significant contribution to the good progress made by pupils. Many have developed some subject expertise, know the pupils and their specific needs very well and liaise very effectively with subject staff. Where a support teacher is present, planning for partnership teaching is often very effective, such as in a science lesson where the senior laboratory technician demonstrated specialist practical technique most effectively to the pupils. Support for pupils with English as an additional language is effective because the support teachers speak some of the community languages fluently, such as Panjabi, Urdu and Hindi, and they make effective use of school-made and acquired bilingual materials. Some teaching assistants lead literacy support lessons for small groups of Year 7 pupils. Learning in these lessons is good as pupils benefit from the greater individual attention they receive in completing work that is matched well to their needs. As well as running regular courses for teachers and induction for new teachers, some learning support teachers also model lessons and team teach in order to share good practice.

31. The use of assessment data to inform teaching and learning is good. School policy is rigorously implemented by most departments. Very good practice was observed in modern foreign languages, ICT, mathematics and science where very good tracking of pupils, including those with special educational needs, ensures they make very good progress. In one mathematics lesson, pupils were stimulated by a thriving learning environment because the teacher's accurate assessment of pupils' abilities enabled her to plan a very effective lesson. She devised activities so that the pupils learnt a routine process that they repeated until they understood it thoroughly before responding with, and developing, their own ideas. Pupils learnt the importance of having a systematic approach to mathematical investigations and developed their skills at interpreting numerical data.
32. Overall, the quality of marking is good but there is some inconsistency. For example, the marking of coursework in child development is exemplary. At regular intervals during the completion of their individual child studies, the teacher gives every pupil detailed written feedback on each section of work, giving a clear assessment on the quality of their work and guidance on how to improve it further. Consequently, the relationship between the teacher and pupils is reinforced as the self-esteem of pupils is raised and they recognise the teacher's strong commitment to their success. In a few subjects, marking is less effective as it does not aid pupils' understanding of how they could improve.
33. Arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting the progress of pupils with special educational needs are good and meet statutory requirements. Procedures for identifying pupils' needs are thorough and inform the efficient deployment of teaching assistants. Staff know their pupils' needs well, through carefully-planned and detailed assessment, and they have the expert knowledge to meet them. This ensures highly effective teaching and very good achievement for pupils with specific literacy difficulties. Teachers are provided with detailed information about pupils' abilities, learning difficulties and special educational needs and they plan their lessons accordingly. Individual education plans provide appropriate information and set useful generic targets. In a minority of subjects, they are now beginning to be used to set specific targets for pupils and to assist in monitoring progress. Assessment of pupils who have English as an additional language is effective and the progress of these pupils is reviewed regularly.

## **The curriculum**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The focus on literacy in all areas of the curriculum has had a major impact on raising standards.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT in English and in art and design in Years 7 to 9.
- Vocational opportunities are offered to all pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Drama is not a regular feature of the experience of 11- to 14-year-olds.
- A good range of activities after school supports and enriches work done in lessons.
- Pupils who have English as an additional language have full access to the whole curriculum.
- There are few opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities in music.
- There is insufficient curriculum time for music, particularly in Year 8 and Year 10.
- The school offers a very wide range of modern foreign languages.

### **Commentary**

34. The school is successful towards achieving its aim that each pupil will follow a balanced and challenging programme that is designed to meet their personal needs and abilities. Strenuous efforts are made to ensure that all pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs, have access to the whole curriculum. The strong focus on literacy across the whole curriculum has had a major impact on raising standards. In response to a key issue from the previous inspection, religious education now meets the requirements of the Slough Agreed Syllabus. A detailed audit of citizenship provision

has ensured that the statutory requirements are covered through the content of PSHE lessons, supplemented by contributions from numerous other subjects. Tutorial periods are used effectively to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills.

35. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 has been restructured since the last inspection and now offers a rich choice in languages – French, Spanish, German and Panjabi – with all pupils able to choose two to study in Years 8 and 9. The time allocations for most subjects, with the exception of music which is not offered in Year 8 this term because of temporary staffing difficulties, are appropriate. Within the English curriculum, insufficient time is given to drama and, as a result, those choosing to study GCSE drama have initial difficulties in Year 10.
36. In ICT, although discrete lessons are only timetabled for Year 7, arrangements for pupils to build on their skills in Years 8 and 9, through planned use of ICT in other subjects across the curriculum, are generally effective as pupils' achievement is good. Pupils experience the full range of applications as required by the National Curriculum but their opportunities are too few in English and art and design.
37. In Years 10 and 11, equality of curriculum access and opportunity is ensured for all pupils. All pupils follow a broad core programme of English, mathematics, double award science, a modern foreign language, ICT, physical education and a GCSE short course in religious education. In order to address their individual abilities and increase flexibility in their choice, they are able to choose from a wide range of options, including a vocational option such as business, engineering, construction and health and social care, several of which are taught at a local college. Although the core provision in physical education is minimal, pupils have plenty of opportunities for extra-curricular sport through the numerous activities provided jointly by a cluster of schools.
38. In every curriculum area, gifted and talented pupils have been identified. Their particular needs are usually addressed within their classes but several pupils have benefited from participation in out-of-school activities, including a residential week for six pupils from Years 8 and 9. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive good support for their learning. Although support from teaching assistants is not always available, most teachers compensate for this by providing relevant work and a range of appropriate resources which ensure that progress is at least satisfactory and often good.
39. Although technically fully staffed, the school has recently experienced difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers, particularly in music, which have adversely affected the quality of the curriculum provided. Currently, five teachers have temporary contracts. Most teachers are well qualified and their professional development has been supported through good training, particularly in the teaching of literacy within their specialist areas. The positive impact of this training is evident in the success of pupils at GCSE. Teaching staff are well supported by departmental assistants, some of whom are very well qualified.
40. The school has sufficient specialist accommodation to meet current requirements. The current building programme will provide a modern learning resource centre to replace the temporary library accommodation and improve the reception area. Accommodation is maintained well, and attractive and interesting displays throughout the school engage attention and stimulate learning. Resources in all departments are generally good.

## Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. The provision of support, advice and guidance, based on the monitoring of pupils' achievement, is **very good**. This is an improvement on the last inspection. The involvement of pupils through seeking and acting on their views is **very good**.



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The induction arrangements for pupils in Year 7 are very good.
- Adults know pupils very well and provide very good levels of support and care for their wellbeing.
- The school has very good systems to monitor pupils' academic progress and these are used very well to provide pupils with advice and guidance through tracking and mentoring.
- Arrangements for monitoring pupils' personal development are very good.
- The involvement of pupils in the school's work and development is very good.
- Careers and options guidance for all pupils is very good.

## Commentary

41. The school has good health and safety procedures in place. Staff and the conscientious site management team make regular risk assessments and checks of equipment. Security is as good as is practical during current building work. Arrangements for dealing with pupils' medical conditions are very thorough and many staff have received first-aid training. Thorough audits have been carried out concerning disabled access. Vandalism is rare and the site is reasonably free of litter. Procedures for evacuation of the school buildings in the event of an emergency are very effective as they are implemented swiftly.
42. The school has very good induction arrangements for new pupils. For pupils with special educational needs, good liaison with primary schools forms the foundation for an initial assessment which helps the school to make decisions about the necessary level of support. Teachers visit all primary schools to take classes and develop bridging projects in several subject areas. Year 6 pupils write letters to the school about their experiences. A residential visit early in the autumn term for Year 7 pupils, subsidised by the Education Action Zone (EAZ), helps new pupils to get to know one another and their tutors. Pupils in Year 7 feel welcomed into the school and settle in quickly. Arrangements for tutor groups are very efficiently organised. Procedures for child protection meet statutory requirements. Teachers and tutors receive appropriate training and maintain thorough confidential records of any concerns. Links with social services are satisfactory.
43. Staff have very good relationships with pupils, and the tutor system provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop trusting relationships with adults. The system of sanctions is now consistently applied. Parents feel very strongly that staff treat their children fairly. Pupils are also very well supported by the behaviour support service and reading mentors. Behaviour management support and advice are given to pupils who have significant emotional and behavioural problems. As a result, most of these pupils make good progress in overcoming their difficulties. The two pupils with physical impairment have good access to physiotherapy and are supported well in their lessons. Staff have a good understanding of their particular needs and meet them with sensitivity and skill.
44. All pupils carry out work experience in a well-organised programme in Year 10. Advice, including specific specialist advice for pupils with special educational needs, about Year 10 option choices, careers and further education, are very well structured to help pupils to make appropriate decisions. Academic assessment is used very well to track pupils' progress and inform pupils' individual targets. The extensive, effective mentoring procedures provide very good support to pupils and ensure that they understand what they need to do to improve their attainment. The PSHE programme makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.
45. The school has very effective procedures for seeking pupils' views, through the school council and regular surveys. Pupils have been consulted on such matters as the school uniform, and their views have a positive impact on school life. The Year 9 prefect group meets regularly with the deputy head of Key Stage 3, and pupils from Years 9, 10 and 11 have contributed ideas towards the pupil charter.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are **very good**. Links with the community are **excellent**. Links with other schools, colleges and universities are **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school.
- Information supplied to parents is very good.
- The school has very good links with its feeder primary schools and other schools, universities and colleges.
- Links with the local community are excellent.
- The mechanisms for the transfer of pupils are very good.
- There is no parents' association.

### Commentary

46. At the parents' meeting before the inspection and through their returns to the questionnaire, parents expressed considerable support for the school in all areas.
47. The information supplied to parents is very good and helps them to fulfil their commitment to the home/school partnership agreement. Through annual reports and termly interim reports, parents receive comprehensive information about their children's achievements. The school prospectus describes clearly the nature and ethos of the school and the induction pack provides a very useful guide for new parents. Curriculum guides are offered to all year groups. The Year 10 Options booklet is clearly presented and helps parents to be involved in their children's choice of subjects. Very good communication is maintained with parents of children with special educational needs, for example through the home learning scheme. The governors' annual report to parents complies with requirements, although the section on special educational needs could include further information on success criteria. Regular newsletters are informative and raise the school's good reputation in the community through celebrating the successes of its pupils.
48. The school regularly seeks parents' views and attempts to address concerns, for example through organising target-setting meetings. Parents feel strongly involved in the school's work and that any complaints they may have are handled effectively. The home/school partnership agreement is taken seriously by parents. They value the homework planners as a means of communication between home and school, but these planners are not used consistently by tutors. Parents value the consultation meetings with teachers and their attendance is high. Members of staff, between them, speak most of the languages represented in the pupil population. They interpret information and translate it into languages such as Panjabi, Urdu and Hindi. When necessary to ensure effective communication with parents, they arrange for interpreters in other languages to be present at meetings.
49. The school has developed excellent links with the local community through its work experience and work-related learning programmes and through local business sponsorship of attendance awards, equipment and sports prizes and through the very effective Business Reading Buddies programme. The wide use of school facilities by a variety of sports and other organisations strengthens relationships.
50. The school has very effective links with many local schools through the cluster group. For example, as part of the induction process, teachers and pupils work in local feeder schools. Mentors train with pupils from other local secondary schools. Very good arrangements are in place for the transfer of pupils to further education and the school has developed very good and imaginative links with several universities. These include the Aim Higher programme, as well as training programmes for newly-qualified and overseas-trained teachers. Because of the very

good liaison of the learning support department with outside agencies, pupils with statements of special educational needs carry on their education when they leave school. Most of these pupils go on to college and, through good preparation for transition, show a clear understanding of their learning and future goals.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management of the school is **very good**. Leadership by the headteacher is **excellent** and management arrangements are **very good**. Governance of the school is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is totally inclusive and gives all pupils the chance to fulfil their potential.
  - Governors, the senior management team and other staff share a common philosophy – their pride in the school and a determination to improve the school still further.
  - All staff have been involved in strategies to improve standards.
  - The monitoring of progress towards targets and the evaluation of the impact of actions are very effective.
  - The management of the literacy programme has been excellent and the impact on standards has been considerable.
51. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Over the period of six years since the last inspection, he has provided the drive, perseverance and vision necessary to bring about the considerable improvement that has been made. The improvement in standards achieved has been founded on his belief in the potential of all pupils and his overwhelming desire to give all pupils the opportunity to succeed in a purposeful, inclusive, good-humoured learning environment. The radical change in the school's local reputation, recognised by parents, has been brought about by the determination with which closer links with local businesses and the community have been pursued and established.
52. The governors and staff take pride in their school and generally share in the same philosophy that pupils 'can do' and are united in their commitment to improve still further the quality of education that the school provides. Overall management and leadership in the school are very good. The governors and the senior management team have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This has been gained by thorough analysis of assessment data, regular department reviews and 'focus weeks', through good communication with staff and pupils and the mutual trust that exists throughout the school. Current priorities are expressed well in the school development plan. Individual responsibilities for leading actions are clearly assigned with realistic timescales and success criteria that are usually measurable. Although monitoring procedures, including the involvement of governors, could be made more explicit in this plan, very good communication between staff at all levels ensures that the pace of development never slackens and actions are usually completed according to schedule.
53. Since the last inspection, each of the key issues has been addressed systematically. Recommendations of the HMI visit report of May 2001 have also been followed. The impact of the steps taken to improve standards of literacy across the school has been most impressive and a major factor in the improvement of GCSE results across the school. Management of this expansive programme has been excellent. The teacher training programme has been comprehensive in addressing all aspects of literacy and has been provided to all members of staff. The positive influence on teaching styles is evident, not only from pupils' work but from the many displays in classrooms and corridors which promote high standards in literacy. Additional support programmes for pupils have been thoughtfully constructed to meet individual pupils' needs and rigorously evaluated to assess the effectiveness of the provision made.

54. Since the last inspection, significant and successful action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching. As the main focus of the school development plan, the management team has ensured that the whole staff is engaged in supported self-review and performance management processes. Professional development opportunities have provided time for the staff to talk together about teaching and to discuss effective strategies, content and methodology. An influential team of professional tutors has been established within the school to lead staff development. Several staff have shared their expertise more widely in the local education authority by supporting the training of teachers from other schools. Well-managed monitoring procedures are in place in most departments. Appropriate support, sometimes involving external consultancy, has been given to departments identified as underperforming, and to individual teachers where weaknesses have been identified. This practice reflects the management policy of challenging mediocrity, encouraging innovation and sharing expertise as widely as possible for the benefit of others. Appropriate leadership and management training has been provided at all levels.
55. Governance of the school is good. Since the previous inspection, governors have ensured that the school meets statutory requirements in ICT as all pupils cover each aspect of the National Curriculum in sufficient depth. ICT is led and managed very well and has become a strength of the school. The requirements of the Slough Agreed Syllabus are met in religious education as all pupils in Years 10 and 11 now follow the GCSE short course and some are studying to take the full GCSE. With the full agreement of governors, a pragmatic solution to the requirement for a daily act of collective worship has been reached. To arrange for every pupil to attend an assembly each day would be very difficult logistically. On two days each week, pupils attend assemblies which meet statutory requirements in their content. On each of the other three days, some tutor time is spent reflecting on a thought for the week. These sessions do not always meet strictly with requirements.
56. Governors have ensured that the school is in compliance with workforce reform legislation. To support administration, every department has access to a departmental assistant. Temporary relocation during the current building programme has been very carefully considered and the most efficient and least disruptive solutions found to several logistical problems. For example, by relocating the school's administrators to a nearby off-site office, space has been made temporarily for the physical education department whose accommodation is about to be demolished. This arrangement has not detracted from the good efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative support team. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They review policies regularly, making amendments when necessary, and use their wide, individual experience and expertise to support their decision making. They ensure that consultation, for example about changing the timing of the school day in September 2003, is thorough.
57. The learning support department, which includes EAL staff, is very well managed, effectively organised and carefully monitored. The good work of the head of physical impairment support and the behaviour support manager are also critical factors in ensuring the very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Outside agencies that provide specialist services to help pupils have also been very effectively engaged. Support staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and their deployment is organised well. Good communication is maintained informally and through regular meetings between learning support staff and representatives of departments in the school. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored, usually after detailed collaboration with individual subject teachers. Annual statutory reviews are in good order and fully comply with legal requirements. Individual education plans are detailed with specific and measurable targets and they are reviewed regularly. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties and the two named governors are well informed and very supportive.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,754,500	Balance from previous year	223,149
Total expenditure	2,630,446	Balance carried forward to the next	347,203
Expenditure per pupil	3,956		

58. Financial management and control are very good. Governors regularly receive updated accounts that enable them to monitor expenditure closely. Although the expenditure per pupil is well above the national average, the value for money provided by the school is good because achievement is good. Pupils achieve well in a school environment that is totally inclusive and is generally very successful in meeting the individual needs of all pupils. Resourcing of the school development plan is accurately estimated. The large balance carried over from the previous year is a judicious response to ensure that any unforeseen costs of the current building programme can be met without disadvantage to pupils. With the exception of minor shortages of desirable teaching materials, such as artefacts in religious education, departments are resourced well.

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of well-structured lessons and the teachers' good management of their classes.
- The high quality and excellent leadership of the school's provision for literacy have made a major contribution to the improvement in pupils' overall standards.
- GCSE results, especially in English language, have improved significantly over recent years.
- Results of 14-year-olds in national tests have fluctuated.
- Pupils do not have systematic, planned opportunities to use ICT resources to support their learning in English.
- Drama is not a regular feature of the experience of 11- to 14-year-olds.

#### Commentary

59. In GCSE English language in recent years, the percentage of pupils gaining at least a C grade has risen from well below the national average to close to the national average in 2003. In English literature, although the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was well below the national average in 2003, results have improved significantly since the last inspection. In the National Curriculum tests taken by 14-year-olds, results have fluctuated. In 2002, they were at the national average but, in 2003, they declined to well below the national average. Girls' results are better than boys', but the difference is broadly in line with the national pattern.
60. Standards of work seen in both Year 9 and Year 11 during the inspection were around the national average. Given that pupils enter the school with below average standards in English, this represents good progress and achievement. A principal reason for the pupils' good achievement is that the teaching is well planned, takes into account the ability of the pupils and is conducted at a brisk pace. For example, a group of lower attaining Year 11 pupils made very good progress in understanding Romeo and Juliet because the lesson contained a wide variety of teaching methods that constantly reinforced key aspects of the plot and characters. Teachers' good lesson plans draw heavily on the national strategy for raising the attainment of 11- to 14-year-olds. In lessons, teachers display a warm concern for the progress of their pupils which helps to sustain their motivation.
61. Good teamwork between teachers and their assistants helps those pupils with special educational needs to achieve well. Higher attaining pupils in the current Year 11 have benefited from taking their GCSE English literature examination early and then following an advanced supplementary (AS) course. In addition to boosting their self-confidence, this challenging course has enabled these pupils to discuss demanding literature with maturity and insight.
62. At the end of Year 9 and Year 11, standards of reading, writing, speaking and listening are around the national averages. Pupils contribute readily in class and volunteer to read aloud, even when they find some words difficult. Higher attaining pupils can write accurately, at length and in a mature style. Lower attaining pupils are less secure in their spelling, punctuation and grammar and tend to write descriptively rather than analytically.

63. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously, indicating how pupils can improve their standards. However, teachers do not routinely use National Curriculum levels in assessing the work of 11- to 14-year-olds. As a result, pupils do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of their likely levels. Pupils' opportunities to undertake research and to present their work in a variety of ways are limited because they do not have sufficient planned access to ICT resources. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have enough drama lessons. This limits their chance to develop skills in speaking and movement and to practise the techniques that they will need if they go on to study drama at GCSE.
64. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is good teamwork and a clear sense of direction, together with a commitment to raising standards. Teaching is monitored thoroughly and staff receive helpful support and guidance. Teachers share their expertise so that they take advantage of each other's good ideas. The clarity of purpose of the leadership is one of the main reasons for the substantial improvement since the last inspection when many aspects of the department were found to be unsatisfactory. Issues raised at that time have been addressed assiduously so that the department has been able to move forward steadily, with consequent improvement in the standards achieved by pupils.

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

65. The school's drive to raise the level of pupils' literacy is one of the principal reasons for the improvement in overall standards and results in recent years. The leadership of the school's literacy programme is excellent.
66. When pupils join the school, the standard of their literacy is below average. Standards rise as a result of the very good provision the school makes centrally through the range of subjects and during tutor time. For example, examination results in science have improved because pupils are now able to understand questions thoroughly and extract relevant information from complex texts. In most subjects, teachers emphasise essential vocabulary and give pupils the chance to explain their ideas so that they can clarify their thinking.
67. Personnel from the local education authority and funding from the Education Action Zone assist the literacy programme. The local education authority provision is particularly effective in helping those children who, on entry to the school, have difficulties with aspects of literacy. Training for school staff has been thorough and effective. There has been appropriate emphasis on the needs of those pupils for whom English is an additional language. All pupils' progress is systematically monitored and the programme adjusted to individual needs. Provision has improved substantially since the time of the last report.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **Modern European languages**

Provision in modern European languages is **satisfactory**.

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

- Good learning routines and class management result in good achievement in well over a third of lessons.
- Able pupils are challenged well in some top French sets and achieve highly.
- Assessment is good; pupils' progress is carefully tracked and they are guided by their targets.
- The school offers a wide range of modern languages.
- Accommodation and resources are good.
- Teaching and achievement are unsatisfactory in about a fifth of lessons, mainly because the unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of boys is not firmly controlled.

## Commentary

68. The proportions of pupils gaining GCSE grades A\*-C in French and German in 2003 are below the national average in French and well below average in German. The average point score in French is close to the national average. Results are rising after a big dip in both languages in 2001. Girls consistently outperform boys. Asian pupils do well.
69. Standards overall in Years 9 and 11 are below national averages, but they are in line with the national average in some French top sets in Years 8 and 9. This represents good achievement. High expectations and challenge, extensive use of the foreign language, good behaviour management and encouragement to participate are factors that contribute significantly to good and occasionally very good achievement in over a third of French and all Spanish lessons seen. Achievement is satisfactory overall, but unsatisfactory in German and in classes where unsatisfactory behaviour prevents progress. Many pupils lack the confidence to speak or write without written prompts. Pupils with English as an additional language often achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs usually achieve in line with others in their set, but often achieve well when given additional support.
70. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good or very good in Spanish and in well over a third of French lessons. These lessons have a slick pace, a variety of activities and new work is practised well to give pupils confidence to use new skills. Good, and some very good, team teaching engages pupils well. Teaching in a few lessons is unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory features are: too much use of English; insufficient oral practice so that pupils make mistakes and weak class management. Attitudes and behaviour are mostly good, however. Assessment is good. From the helpful marking of their work and their target grades, pupils know what they need to do to improve.
71. Leadership is good. The fairly recently appointed head of department supports newer colleagues and is supported well by senior staff. She has widened the range of languages taught and improved data collection to track pupils' progress. Management is good. Resources and assessment are organised well. The detailed lesson plans prepared for supply teachers minimise disruption of learning. All pupils learn French in Years 7 to 9 and most can learn German, Spanish or Panjabi. Good numbers continue to study two languages in Years 10 and 11. Staff turnover and recruitment difficulties have brought instability to the learning of some classes, particularly in German, which was without its main teacher during the inspection. The curriculum is enriched by visits abroad. Pupils benefit from the attractive display of particularly good language support.
72. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. More languages are offered. Standards are similar but there is less teaching of good quality. The use of ICT has increased; it is used effectively in a few classes, but not all teachers use it enough.

## Community languages: Panjabi

Provision in Panjabi is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Boys and girls who learn Panjabi have high self-esteem and are very confident.
- Pupils of all abilities have the opportunity to study for, and to enter, the GCSE examination.
- All pupils, and particularly girls, show a sound grasp of Panjabi and use it well in their activities.
- Teachers have a good command of the subject and know their pupils and families well to assist them in their learning.
- Panjabi makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to citizenship.
- The use of ICT is insufficiently developed.
- There is a lack of rigour in assessment and its usage, particularly in Years 8 and 9.
- The teaching of Panjabi does not begin until Year 8.



## Commentary

73. Pupils study Panjabi from Year 8 to Year 10 as a second modern language option. Overall standards in Year 9 are about average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although girls achieve better standards than boys. Year 9 pupils have a sound grasp of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, their listening and speaking skills are better than their reading and writing skills. They can engage in short conversations, such as hiring a taxi, and listen and respond well to audiotapes. They are able to apply basic grammatical elements in a variety of contexts. Standards of pronunciation are good. Year 8 pupils can recognise and decode sounds and symbols, though they sometimes confuse letter sounds. In Year 10, pupils' use of Panjabi shows an increasing flexibility in the use of verbs, singular and plural, and nouns and pronouns. Pupils are developing a sound understanding of present, past and future tenses. However, their independent reading and writing skills are developing at a slower pace than their oral skills. Year 10 pupils achieve well because they have good attitudes to learning and good relationships with their teacher. This accelerates their progress and they are on course to achieve their target grades in the GCSE examination.
74. The quality of teaching and learning is generally satisfactory with some good features. In the lessons observed, the teacher demonstrated a good command of the subject. Planning is mostly clear and purposeful with a good balance between the four language skills. This enables pupils to develop the techniques and skills necessary to improve. Methods and organisation of classes are appropriate to the needs and abilities of the pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, to help them to remain interested and focused. Expectations are high and clearly stated in relation to the examination requirements. There is a purposeful atmosphere in classes and occasional disruptions are dealt with effectively. Pupils' work is regularly marked and assessed, but is not regularly levelled and graded to help pupils know what they need to do to improve. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Cultural and spiritual awareness is high, enabling pupils to have high self-esteem.
75. Leadership and management of the subject are good and are enhanced by the commitment of the school to offer Panjabi to pupils as a GCSE option. Staffing is sufficient for the current numbers and teaching resources are adequate. Recently, the school has installed Panjabi software which has the potential to support pupils' learning. There are good links with parents and the local Panjabi community. Though the classroom accommodation is adequate, there is no specialist room where subject-related posters, key words or pupils' work can be displayed to raise the status of the subject. Since the last inspection, there has been a good improvement in the provision. It is now taught as an option in the school and is no longer only provided through lessons after school.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is very well led and managed.
- The quality of teaching is very good and GCSE results are above national averages.
- Pupils make very good progress throughout the school.
- Planning is developed well and the three-part structure is a feature of all lessons.
- Comprehensive assessment procedures are embedded in departmental practice.
- Planning does not always cater for all abilities within teaching groups.
- Boys achieve much better than girls throughout the school.

## Commentary

76. The overall achievement of pupils is very good. On entry to the school, attainment is, on average, below that found nationally. From the beginning of Year 7 to the end of Year 9, pupils, including those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, make good progress. By the time they reach the end of Year 9, standards are above those achieved nationally. The upward trend in results in national tests at the end of Year 9 has been maintained since the last inspection, with a marked increase in 2003. The progress pupils make in Years 10 and 11 is very good and GCSE results have improved steadily. The results for 2003 showed a significant increase over the previous year and the proportion gaining A\*-C grades was well above the national averages. At the end of Year 9, as well as at GCSE, the examination performance of boys is much better than that of girls.
77. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teachers work very hard to ensure high standards of behaviour and that pupils with special educational needs and those with behavioural problems are fully supported during lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Assessment, which informs future curriculum development, is a very strong feature of the department. Three-part lessons are planned well in line with the recommendations of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy but the provision of extension or support work, which challenges all pupils, needs further development. A range of questioning styles ensures that pupils remain focused throughout lessons. Teachers use clear and concise terminology to ensure that pupils fully comprehend the meaning and significance of new vocabulary. Homework is set regularly and the quality of marking of pupils' work is generally good with teachers providing detailed comments that help pupils to improve their understanding. Pupils are attentive, well behaved, take a pride in their work and exhibit interest and enjoyment in their lessons.
78. The department is led and managed very effectively. The head of department has a clear vision about the future of mathematics in the school. There is a strong team ethos within the department. The department is comprised of specialist teachers, and the head of department has worked strenuously to ensure all departmental staff support and work towards achieving his vision. A constructive departmental plan has been drawn up with appropriate targets that have been shared with staff. Data is used very effectively to track pupils' progress and to ensure that the curriculum is appropriate for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those identified as gifted or talented. ICT forms an integral part of the mathematics curriculum. The department is now focusing appropriately upon raising the overall attainment of pupils, in particular that of girls and pupils identified as being most able.
79. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The department has successfully dealt with all the issues of the last inspection, including raising the attainment of pupils throughout the school, especially in examinations at the end of Year 9 and Year 11, improving pupils' behaviour and greatly improving pupils' competence in mental and written calculations.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

80. Much work has been undertaken to raise the profile of mathematics across the curriculum, including whole-school training, resource development and targeted support for other subjects. This work has contributed to success in raising pupils' numeracy skills. Mathematics is now integrated into most schemes of work but very few lessons observed included mathematics in lesson planning and delivery. Pupils in Year 7 work through numeracy booklets during tutorial time once a week and each topic includes work of varying complexity so that every pupil is challenged. Pupils apply their mathematical skills well in science, for example to produce charts, carry out calculations, analyse distance-time graphs and manipulate formulas to evaluate experimental results. In modern foreign languages, they use basic skills to produce bar charts using data they have collected, and work with currency conversion, timetables and the 24-hour clock. Practising their numerical skills in most other subject areas helps them to consolidate their understanding.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers plan very well to address the needs of all pupils.
- GCSE coursework is good and examination results in 2003 were close to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils achieving higher grades in GCSE is relatively low.
- There are very effective strategies to improve literacy.
- The setting of homework is inconsistent.
- ICT is used much more than at the time of the previous inspection to support learning.

### **Commentary**

81. Results for pupils in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average in 2003. They have improved considerably since the previous inspection and at a rate faster than the national trend. Overall, boys did better than girls. However, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in these tests, although higher in 2003 than in 2002, was low when compared to results in similar schools. At GCSE, science results in 2003 were a significant improvement on those for the previous year. The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades was only just below the national average in 2003. Boys achieved better than girls. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades of A\* and A was well below national figures and reflects their attainment on joining the school. There is a need to address this by developing a structured extension programme for pupils who are gifted in science.
82. Standards in the current Year 9 are in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement, as the majority of pupils entered the school with standards that were below average. Very effective strategies are used so that pupils of all abilities and, in particular, those for whom English is an additional language, show improved literacy skills which support their understanding of science. For example, in a Year 9 class studying a topic on light, the teacher broke words down into syllables, defined each word simply and used phonics to help pupils' pronunciation of scientific words. This strategy led to pupils carrying out their experiment confidently and successfully, being able to communicate in the correct scientific language.
83. Standards in the current Year 11 are average and achievement is good. As a result of the strong emphasis on developing literacy skills, pupils' presentation and spelling have improved and the quality of coursework is now good. The improved coursework marks have helped to raise standards in GCSE. Pupils plan, observe and evaluate well, but still have difficulty with the analysis of results.
84. Teaching is good with some very good features. Teachers share good practice and this helps to improve their planning, which is very good. This results in the pupils experiencing a wide range of activities. This, linked with the very good pace and the encouragement offered to the pupils, allows them to learn more quickly. Assessment procedures are good and areas of underachievement are rapidly identified, allowing the teachers to give extra support to these pupils. Homework tasks given to similar classes vary in quantity and quality, making it difficult to compare how well they achieve in relation to one another.
85. Leadership and management of science are good. The head of faculty has welded together an effective team of teachers and technical staff who plan collectively and have updated the schemes of work, with all taking responsibility for different areas. Observation and evaluation of lessons are helping to raise standards by identifying areas where teaching may be improved, thereby improving learning.
86. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Practical investigations are now very well supported by ICT, particularly in the area of data logging. Accommodation is

now good with the five laboratories being ideal places in which to teach and learn. A sixth laboratory is currently under construction.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management are very good.
- The use of data to monitor pupils' progress and set targets is very effective.
- Teaching and learning are consistently very good.
- Pupils' attitudes, application and behaviour are very positive.
- Examination coursework is of very good quality.
- Further development is needed in the use of ICT in English and in art and design in Years 7 to 9.

### **Commentary**

87. Overall, the standards attained by pupils in all year groups are above average and achievement is good. Pupils are enthusiastic, work hard and behave well in lessons. Relationships are very good in all lessons and pupils respect the equipment very well. Whilst results in National Curriculum assessments last year were below the national average, the work of current Year 9 pupils shows strengths in many aspects. More boys than girls are achieving at the higher levels. The National Strategy has been successfully introduced in Year 7, where pupils have discrete ICT lessons, and they develop ICT skills through topics that are carefully planned and linked to other subjects. The PowerPoint presentations produced by Year 7 pupils reflect good use of colour, text and imported images. In Years 8 and 9, standards continue to improve as pupils build on their skills through use of ICT in the majority of subjects across the curriculum. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress.
88. In Years 10 and 11, standards are good. The vocational GCSE course has been introduced successfully and is proving to be popular. Results in 2003 were substantially above national averages and a considerable improvement on previous years. More girls than boys achieved the higher grades. All pupils who do not follow an examination course study a core skills course linked to business education. Pupils are taught the purpose and use of mail merge as part of their examination preparation and how businesses use mail-merge techniques. They are able to present business letters of a professional quality and merge them with database information well. When learning about the advantages and disadvantages of encryption, they are challenged very well by the task of devising and using their own codes. They acquire new knowledge and increase their understanding quickly.
89. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Pupils respond well and the very positive attitudes of many leads to them making very good progress. Lessons are planned well and move at a very brisk pace. Teachers engage pupils well at the beginning of lessons with short starter activities and then introduce main activities very clearly, often with very effective PowerPoint presentations. These enable all pupils to understand the tasks. Good support materials, sometimes in electronic form, are available to help with independent learning. Very good support is provided by a specialist teaching assistant. Teachers end the lessons well and reinforce learning through good plenary sessions. Through self-evaluation of their coursework, pupils learn to address examination criteria more sharply. Commercial software is being introduced to aid e-learning for all pupils and has great potential for raising achievement even further.
90. Leadership is very good and has resulted in much improved results in a very short period of time. The department is very well regarded in the area, supporting and liaising with schools

locally, as well as mentoring graduate trainee teachers. New courses have been introduced and there is clear strategic thinking. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching take place regularly and are helping to raise standards. The subject provides well for pupils of all abilities and is playing a major part in raising standards across the curriculum, with the creative use of ICT being stressed. Management is very good, confident and well informed. Comprehensive assessment procedures with pupil tracking and target setting are in place. The network manager and technician are very well supported with professional development and play key roles in the smooth running of the systems.

91. There has been very good improvement and much investment since the last inspection. Control technology is now taught within the design and technology curriculum and the use of ICT across the curriculum is much improved. Discrete lessons are now taught to all Year 10 pupils. Assessment is now secure in Key Stage 3 and subjects are contributing to ICT assessment in Year 9.

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

92. All pupils are introduced to the cross-curricular nature of ICT through the taught course in Year 7 and they then continue to build on and develop these skills in many subjects. In design and technology, they develop control skills which they demonstrate by quickly building up a sequence of commands to control a set of traffic lights. They are taught key technical words which help them to draw flow diagrams. Very good use of ICT is made in several other subjects. For example, in a geography lesson, where pupils learnt about the destructive effects of volcanoes, pupils gained much knowledge and understanding in a very short period of time through the teacher's very effective use of a PowerPoint presentation to introduce the topic. Pupils are able to further their knowledge at home through selected Internet sites. The science department makes very good use of a comprehensive range of data-logging equipment to carry out investigations that would be far more difficult using traditional methods. Many pupils use ICT to improve the quality of their examination coursework. In art and design, pupils use scanning and digital imaging techniques to illustrate their work. Pupils take good advantage of lunchtime clubs and after-school catch-up lessons to access ICT facilities. A small minority of subjects have yet to address how ICT can be used to improve teaching and learning and raise standards.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

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

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11.
- ICT is used effectively in teaching geography.
- Literacy is developed well within lessons.
- Standards in Years 7 to 9 are low.
- Teachers' comments on pupils' work are not precise enough to help pupils improve.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is unbalanced in favour of the acquisition of knowledge.

#### **Commentary**

93. Standards in the current Year 9 are below average. Although higher attaining pupils produce work that matches expectations, the middle and lower attaining pupils do not. Teacher assessments in 2003 confirm these standards. In 2003, although GCSE results were well below the national average, a third of the pupils entered gained A\*-C grades which represented

a considerable improvement on results in previous years. The quality of work being produced by current Year 11 pupils indicates higher standards than last year.

94. From a below average starting point in Year 7, pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is good. Pupils develop secure mapping skills in Year 7 and a sound understanding of patterns and processes through studying volcanoes and earthquakes in San Francisco and Japan, rivers and flooding in Bangladesh and farming and industry in Britain. They develop understanding of environmental issues through studies of the Brazilian rainforest and global warming. Pupils use geographical terms accurately and, by Year 9, many are writing well as a result of the strong emphasis placed on literacy. However, fieldwork skills are less well developed and pupils have insufficient opportunities to pursue structured enquiries outside the classroom. Overall, the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is unbalanced in favour of acquiring factual geographical knowledge rather than developing their conceptual understanding. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make good gains in their knowledge by building upon their previous learning through studies of coasts, population and development.
95. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9, although it ranges from unsatisfactory to very good; it is good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are engaged well by the use of ICT. A teacher's PowerPoint presentation on volcanoes, for example, helped pupils to learn at a good pace through the effective display of pictures and diagrams. In some lessons, teachers convey enthusiasm for the subject through effective use of their voice and this immediately motivates pupils and helps them to stay on task. They make good progress as a result. In other less satisfactory lessons, the teacher talked for too long and did not ask questions that challenged pupils to think carefully before answering. Teaching often has a strong focus on literacy. Spelling, sentence construction and punctuation are all improved as a consequence. Teaching has less impact where pupils read text from books without any purpose, or have to reread a passage to answer questions. In a GCSE lesson, the teacher improved pupils' written answers to an examination question on water-borne diseases by carefully explaining the mark scheme but, on other occasions, extended written work is set without a mark scheme which could guide pupils to achieve their best. Comments on pupils' work are insufficiently precise to help pupils celebrate what they do well and point the way towards improvement. At the end of some lessons, the review did not give pupils sufficient time to reflect upon their learning.
96. The leadership of the department is satisfactory and the management is good. The head of faculty has identified priorities for improvement which should raise standards in the course of time. Since the last inspection, increased use of ICT, new assessment tasks, additional resources and better schemes of work have ensured satisfactory improvement.

## History

Provision in history is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and standards are low.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 focuses too strongly on the learning of facts.
- Standards in Years 10 and 11 have improved and history is more popular as an option choice than in previous years.
- The use of common assessment tasks to support teacher assessments.
- The teaching of literacy has had a positive impact on the quality of written work.
- Comments on pupils' work are not precise enough to help them improve.

## Commentary

97. In Year 9, standards are below national expectations, just as they were at the last inspection. Teacher assessments made last year confirm this. The standards of work of higher attaining pupils match national expectations but those of middle and lower attaining pupils do not. Unsatisfactory teaching is the main reason for this, allied to a curriculum predominantly focused on the teaching and learning of knowledge. GCSE results have improved. At the time of the last inspection, GCSE results were well below the national average but last summer they exceeded it, albeit with a small number of pupils. Standards in the current Year 11 are close to national standards.
98. Across Years 7 to 9, pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily. Pupils make secure gains in the development of their knowledge of British history through the study of political changes like the Norman Conquest and the economic and social changes provoked by the Industrial Revolution and the development of the British Empire. Opportunities to develop skills in using evidence to draw conclusions about the past or to test interpretations or describe, link and prioritise causes are less well represented in the schemes of work. In Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve well, making good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of international relations during the twentieth century. Here, they are given opportunities to consider new knowledge and connect it with previous learning as well as to debate different points of view, for example about the policy of appeasement in the 1930s.
99. At the last inspection, teaching was satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Currently, it is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and continues to be good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching has most impact when learning objectives and activities challenge and engage pupils; they are made to think hard about new knowledge and given time to link it with previous learning. The teaching of key words, sentence construction and spelling is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' written work. Little learning takes place when the objectives and activities are mundane and the pupils cannot see the value in what they are being asked to do. Too often, the learning objectives focus on knowledge alone which results in unfocused and unimaginative tasks that many pupils find just too easy. On these occasions, pupils are not engaged and inappropriate, off-task behaviour develops. On some occasions, activities do not match learning objectives, resulting in an inefficient use of time. The teachers' comments on work are not sufficiently precise to celebrate what pupils have done well and to point the way to further improvement. Simple questions frequently result in one-word or very brief answers and these are rarely probed. Pupils are not challenged to think about more open, higher order questions. In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and pupils lose interest. Most effective learning takes place when pupils are given opportunities to debate in groups and challenging questions to consider.
100. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory; the management of history is good. Satisfactory improvement has taken place since the last inspection, although the predominant style of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is a weakness. Numbers opting for history at GCSE have increased, as have standards, and the provision for literacy in the subject is good. The current priorities identified by the head of faculty should result in higher standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement across the school is good.
- Relationships between the teachers and pupils are very good and contribute positively to the good achievement.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual and cultural development of pupils.

- Good provision in Years 10 and 11 where all pupils follow a short GCSE course.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to visit places of religious interest and visitors to the school make little contribution to the religious education curriculum.
- Resources, including the planned use of ICT, are insufficient.

## Commentary

101. At the beginning of Year 7, standards are below the expectation of the Slough Agreed Syllabus and, by the end of Year 9, standards have improved and are near to the expected levels. Oral work often indicates an average level of knowledge about religious practices but the low literacy skills of many pupils restrict their ability to express themselves in writing. Weaknesses in standards relate to pupils' ability to analyse ideas and beliefs and to give an informed opinion about them.
102. Standards in Year 11 are in line with expectations. GCSE short course results in 2003 were below the national average. There are clear signs of standards rising as the course becomes established and the teachers and pupils become familiar with requirements. In the full GCSE course, standards in 2003 were broadly in line with the national average, which was an improvement on the 2002 results. Current Year 11 work indicates that standards are in line with the expectations for GCSE. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Most pupils are able to understand a moral and social issue, such as abortion, but are less skilled at explaining clearly the religious views on issues.
103. Overall achievement for pupils of all abilities in Years 7 to 9 is good. They make good progress in building a sound knowledge base about religion. They begin to understand how concepts such as symbolism and belonging can apply to religious practices. This was evident in the work on Sikhism where pupils developed an understanding of the 5 Ks and used this to explore the Sikh view of God. As they move through the key stage, pupils begin to apply religious teachings to issues of everyday life, such as suffering.
104. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The core of the teaching is carried out by a teacher in his first year of teaching with some of the course being taught by other experienced teachers. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They understand their pupils' learning needs, and support learning by providing resources linked to ability. Teachers' good classroom management and positive relationships with pupils create a good learning environment. Learning activities motivate the pupils and enable good progress to be made. Teaching strategies are, however, rather limited and restrict the learning styles. Teachers are working together to develop ways of assessing pupils' work in relation to the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. A good start has been made which now needs to be developed with more rigour. At present, there are insufficient opportunities in the programme for pupils to experience visits or visitors and to explore religion through the use of ICT. The basic book resources are in place but there are insufficient extra resources, such as artefacts and resources to meet the specific needs of the least and most able.
105. Leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. The subject is managed by the head of humanities, well supported by the specialist religious education teacher. Improvement since the last inspection has been good as the curriculum now meets requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in Years 10 and 11. All pupils follow a short course GCSE and the standards in this course have been steadily improving. The department has made good progress over the last two years and has the capacity to improve further.



## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the department is very good with a strong focus on raising standards.
- Joint working by teaching staff on projects across the department.
- Accurate self-evaluation by the department.
- Pupils who are distracted from their work need to be challenged more immediately.

#### Commentary

106. Although standards attained by pupils at the age of 14 remain below what is expected nationally, overall achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good, with girls outperforming boys. Pupils gain a good understanding of the design process and are improving their understanding of the application of their designs. Their ability to evaluate the usefulness of information sources to guide their work is weaker. Standards in food technology and graphics are close to national expectations and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils underperform in the resistant materials aspect, although the introduction of pupils' help books is having a positive impact on raising standards.
107. There has been steady improvement in GCSE graphics, with the work in progress of many pupils matching requirements for higher-level grades. Graphics and food technology remain stronger than resistant materials. In 2003, GCSE results in food technology were in line with national averages but results in other technology subjects were below their respective national averages. Pupils' design-and-make projects are varied, offering good opportunities for creative thinking. Discussions with pupils show that they are starting to think as designers, becoming more deeply involved and committed to their work. Pupils need further encouragement to consider how to deal with conflicting demands on their designs and explain more fully how their designs address diverse specifications. The range of criteria pupils use to evaluate a project is good. Products made by pupils are of satisfactory quality in resistant materials and are good in food technology and graphics. Overall achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good.
108. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are thorough and consistent in their planning. They use diverse methods in lessons with clearly stated objectives for pupils, and plenary sessions often recognise that these objectives have been reached. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject at the different key stages and conduct accurate assessments of pupils' work against national criteria. Teachers give clear explanations, demonstrations and appropriate support during practical work. Occasionally, however, teachers do not give sufficient immediate challenge to some pupils who stray off task or become distracted by others. In their schemes of work, teachers make good use of ICT and cater well for developments in literacy and numeracy. However, most pupils do not yet have the skills to use a computer-aided drawing package. Resources to support pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are carefully prepared and help all pupils to cope well in their lessons. As a considered policy to reduce gender stereotyping, the department has introduced male and female teachers into each technology area in both key stages. This practice has yet to have a significant impact as some GCSE groups in food technology and resistant materials continue to be dominated by girls and boys respectively.
109. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The head of department gives very good strategic leadership. Members of the new staff team support each other across a range of projects. It is necessary to complete revisions to the departmental handbook to ensure that all policies and practices are clear.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

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

- GCSE results are well above the national average.
- Teaching is good and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive and their behaviour is good.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 are below the national average.
- There is inadequate use of ICT in Years 7 to 9.
- Provision for gifted and talented pupils needs development.
- End-of-lesson reviews could be far more effectively managed.

#### **Commentary**

110. Overall, achievement in art and design is good. Standards on entry are well below the national average but, as a consequence of methodical teaching to develop basic skills, by the end of Year 9 some pupils reach the expected level and most others reach a standard just below the national expectation. The additional time currently available in Year 8 has had a significant impact on the improvement of drawing and colouring skills. The work that developed from observational drawings of fruit and knots in Year 8 is a good example. Pupils are involved in assessing their work and all are informed of their National Curriculum levels of attainment. They learn about the styles of famous artists, and this is influential in the development of their work. The growing glossary of art terms increases their confidence in the use of specialist vocabulary. A consistent approach to homework helps to reinforce this learning and also helps to develop independent learning skills. However, the development of both drawing and painting skills needs greater emphasis in Year 7, in conjunction with the homework programme. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated in all years and make satisfactory progress. Several benefit from additional support that helps them to manage their behaviour and learning outcomes more successfully.
111. Overall, pupils in Year 11 are working at levels that are above the national average. Results in the higher grades at GCSE maintained their upward trend of recent years, and were well above average in 2003. The numbers of pupils taking this option in the past have been low but are now increasing. Some pupils have developed good drawing techniques, as well as skill and sensitivity in handling a range of other media, such as oil, pastel and charcoal. They also develop good skills in handling three-dimensional media such as clay and construction materials. Preparatory studies, showing research and experimentation, are substantial in some cases. In many cases, work is finished to a good standard. Although there is evidence of the influence of famous artists and other cultures in the pupils' work, strong personal styles are not emerging. Provision for, and use of, ICT are good in Years 10 and 11.
112. Teaching is good in both key stages. Teaching is most successful in lessons that have a prompt, collective start, where probing questioning tests knowledge and understanding, and where tasks and pace are challenging. This could be more rigorous in Years 7 to 9 as part of the strategy for raising standards. Similarly, end-of-lesson reviews could be used more effectively as a means of evaluating outcomes and reasserting expectations. Homework is used consistently as a means of extending classroom learning. Diagnostic assessment, including individual target setting and monitoring, has also contributed to the raising of standards in Years 10 and 11. Whilst a small number of gifted and talented pupils have been identified, there are no planned opportunities for them to be appropriately challenged in art and design.

113. Attitudes and behaviour are generally good. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Art and design makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development but too little is done to address their spiritual awareness. Leadership and management are satisfactory and this reflects a period of part-time and temporary staffing changes in the past four years. This now looks to be more settled. There now needs to be a clearer and sustained focus on delivering and implementing the strategies needed to drive up standards in Years 7 to 9 and to monitor systematically and evaluate the learning outcomes in these years.

## Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**. At the time of the inspection, the new music teacher had been in post for only three weeks.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of music are well below average in Year 9 and below average in Year 10.
- There are few opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities.
- The planning and teaching of the four-part lesson are effective.
- Teachers recognise and value the positive attitudes of pupils and build on them in their teaching.
- There is insufficient curriculum time for music, particularly in Year 8 and Year 10.

### Commentary

114. Pupils' attainment in music on entry to the school is well below average. They show little understanding of the basic building blocks of music, such as dynamic or structure. Their musical skills are poorly developed and they struggle to play simple melodic and rhythmic patterns. In Year 8, music is not taught as a discrete subject. In Year 9, pupils' studies include song writing and they begin to develop an understanding of simple musical concepts, but the curriculum is heavily keyboard based. This prevents pupils with limited keyboard skills from accessing the whole curriculum. By the end of Year 9, standards are still well below average as pupils have had insufficient time during the key stage to develop an appropriate range of skills and techniques. In Year 10, pupils' attainment is still below national levels, but their positive attitudes towards learning result in improving standards. There is currently no GCSE music group in Year 11.
115. In lessons observed during the inspection, pupils were seen to work conscientiously in developing their composing and listening skills, being able to produce short riffs and musical hooks to use as techniques in developing their song-writing ability. They study a curriculum that includes music from Japan, Africa and India as well as twentieth century song. They learn to recognise musical genres, which include blues, rhythm and blues and ballad. No differences in standards are evident between the different ethnic groups of the school.
116. Achievement in music is unsatisfactory, partly because the time given to music prevents pupils from retaining musical knowledge and practising their skills on a regular enough basis. Schemes of work do not identify the progressive acquisition of skills. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 are still showing very basic performance and composition skills. Achievement within Year 10 lessons observed during the inspection, however, was satisfactory. Pupils begin their GCSE course at a low level of musical skill, but they work hard to improve their instrumental skills and they begin to develop an understanding of musical techniques and devices. Pupils' positive attitudes and work ethos ensure that progression within lessons is satisfactory. They enjoy their music making and they work collaboratively. Little use of ICT is planned, and this is an area which needs further development to help pupils achieve fully, particularly those with lower-level musical literacy skills.

117. Teaching is mostly satisfactory, being strongest in Year 10. In the best lessons, pupils are motivated and engaged in their learning. The teacher circulates well to support pupils' group work and his questioning of the class ensures that pupils revise their knowledge before being given a new task to complete. Pupils understand what they have to do because of good aural demonstration by the teacher. Where teaching is weak, pupils are unclear about the work in hand, low-level tasks are set, questioning of pupils is not challenging and does not probe pupils' own ideas and the pace of the lesson is slow. Pupils move off task and it becomes difficult to regain their attention and motivation.
118. Very recent staffing changes mean that leadership and management of the department are at an initial stage and are currently unsatisfactory. Schemes of work are being revised and this is a priority. Clear expectations, which state the skills and knowledge that pupils are expected to have achieved, are not yet in place. Assessment opportunities, which illustrate what pupils know and can do by the end of a unit of work, are not identified. Opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities are very limited and the numbers taking up instrumental lessons are very low. These participation rates need to be increased.
119. For a short period after the last Ofsted inspection, the school achieved some stability in staffing and this resulted in standards rising and good GCSE results being gained by a small group of pupils in 2002. Unfortunately, and despite real efforts by the school to recruit and retain staff, difficulties in staffing have recently re-emerged. This has prevented the department from making sufficient progress since the last inspection.

## Drama

As part of the inspection of expressive arts, drama provision was sampled through observation of a Year 11 lesson, observation of a visiting theatre group activity and scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work.

Provision for pupils to participate in drama is **unsatisfactory**.

120. Drama is available as a GCSE option but, in recent years, examination results have been well below national averages. Drama is not taught as a discrete subject at Key Stage 3, instead being provided through the English curriculum. Inconsistency in teaching drama in Years 7, 8 and 9 results in pupils having a lack of knowledge and skills for embarking on GCSE. In the one Year 11 lesson observed, pupils struggled to recall knowledge taught in the previous lesson. After a good deal of teacher prompting, pupils were able to give limited explanations of dramatic techniques such as freeze-frame and tableaux. Standards observed in the lesson were below average as pupils found it difficult to stay in character for a reasonable length of time. Poor concentration prevented them from achieving high standards of performance when working independently of the teacher in group activities. When under direct supervision though, achievement improved and pupils were able to produce a scripted piece where voice projection was clear with good articulation and expressive tone. Pupils knew what work they had to produce for their coursework but they did not know the level of their work. They listened to each other's views with interest and respect, showing positive attitudes to learning and enjoyment of their lesson.
121. The drama department is very well supported by a number of residency schemes which include Wild Card Theatre Company, Reduced Indian Film Company, Trading Faces Physical Theatre Company and numerous other initiatives organised through the Creative Partnerships scheme. Pupils have had the opportunity to perform in local street theatre festivals and in St George's Chapel, Windsor. During the observed partnership, pupils from various year groups achieved high standards of work. Through an improvisation based on the theme of creation myths, pupils produced a series of extended sequences which developed their creative skills and their kinetic memory. These additional opportunities make a significant contribution towards the drama experiences of pupils of all ages.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality teaching and learning in all lessons results in good progress and achievement.
- There are good relationships between staff and pupils in all lessons.
- Assessment is not providing appropriate information for pupils to help them improve in both core and GCSE physical education.
- A good range of activities after school supports and enriches work done in lessons.
- The time allocated for physical education for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is low.

### Commentary

122. Standards obtained by pupils in Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement as standards of Year 7 pupils on joining the school are below average and they experience a wide range of activities during their first three years in the school. During Years 7 to 9, pupils apply many of the appropriate techniques and skills to volleyball, where standards are average. In dance in Year 9, the range of girls' movement is good, although their quality of movement overall is below average. Standards obtained by pupils in Years 10 and 11 are also average overall although, in a GCSE practical lesson, skills and technique in table tennis were above average. The GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average, although they were a significant improvement on the 2002 results. Evidence from GCSE coursework indicates that standards conform to the national average. Pupils have a good understanding of many aspects, including physiology and anatomy and the principles of training, although there is little evidence of pupils applying this knowledge to practical situations. The ability of all pupils to observe, analyse and to plan performance is unsatisfactory. Most pupils have a good understanding of the need for a range of warm-up activities before physical exercise.
123. The quality of teaching and learning was good in all lessons observed. Teachers convey their secure knowledge of the subject to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities, involving both individual and collaborative learning, is also a feature of these lessons and class management is good. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and pupils respond with enthusiasm to all lessons. In the best lessons, teachers use their assessment of pupils' performance to improve their teaching and focus more directly on addressing pupils' weaknesses. Pupils rarely observe and evaluate the performance of each other and are rarely set clear individual targets for improvement. Through their marking of GCSE theory work, teachers are not providing enough information to help pupils make appropriate progress and pupils are often not aware of how well they are performing relative to GCSE assessment criteria. ICT is rarely used and several opportunities to do so are being missed in the GCSE course. There is a good range of activities for pupils after school to support and enrich the work done in lessons.
124. The head of department was appointed at the beginning of this year and has already had a significant impact on both the direction and progress of the department. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The day-to-day organisation of the department is very good. All members of the department work extremely well together and have a clear focus on teaching and learning linked to the achievement of pupils of all abilities. There is a consistent approach to teaching across the department. Opportunities for monitoring teaching and learning in the department and for the department to share good practice are still developing. The department development plan identifies appropriate priorities, and very good progress is being made in meeting targets. There is not enough time in lessons in Years 10 and 11 to cover the National Curriculum in appropriate depth and the range of activities is also

limited. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. All teachers in the department are specialists and teaching is now consistently good. The monitoring of teaching and learning is still developing but is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Accommodation is being improved by the current building programme.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

These were not a focus of the inspection. One lesson in applied business studies was observed. The quality of teaching and learning was good and pupils developed a satisfactory understanding of the different types of stakeholders that a business involves. Reference to everyday examples helped pupils' understanding and a few pupils responded well by giving full verbal answers to the teacher's questions. Others listened attentively but did not offer their own responses. Writing frameworks were used effectively to help pupils structure their written coursework and pupils were challenged to take responsibility for making individual contact with local businesses by letter.

All other vocational courses are taught at a local college.

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

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

It was not possible to observe any PSHE or citizenship lessons. Through staff interviews, scrutiny of pupils' work and curriculum documentation, it is evident that the citizenship curriculum meets statutory requirements and the standards achieved by pupils in Years 9 and 10 are average.

## 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	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
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	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	3
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).*