

INSPECTION REPORT

Tiverton High School

Tiverton

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113548

Headteacher: Roger Kaye

Lead inspector: Mrs Susan Chamberlain

Dates of inspection: 26th - 29th April 2004

Inspection number: 258837

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	1184
School address:	Bolham Road Tiverton Devon
Postcode:	EX16 6SQ
Telephone number:	01884 256655
Fax number:	01884 243364
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sue Robinson
Date of previous inspection:	27 April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Tiverton High School is larger than other secondary schools (1184) but, temporarily, has a falling roll, a situation which will be remedied next year. The school has recently gained Visual Art Status. It has been recognised by Investors in People and has a Sportsmark gained in 2003. At present, the school is being led by a acting headteacher after two rounds of interviews failed to produce an appropriate candidate. The head-designate has now been appointed and will take up his post in September 2004.

The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (14.4 per cent) is broadly in line with the national average. There is a low percentage (1.1 per cent) of pupils whose first language is not believed to be English. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, (22.7 per cent) is above the national average. That of those with statements of special educational needs (4.4 per cent) is above the national average. Pupils enter the school with, overall, below average levels of attainment.

More pupils left the school than joined the school other than at expected times. However, the school's examination results were negatively affected by its willingness to take on pupils late in Year 11; these pupils joined with no coursework and could not enter GCSE but featured in overall totals.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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8941	John Fletcher	Lay inspector	
2200	Jim Stirrup	Team inspector	English, Drama
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics
3735	Alan Webb	Team inspector	Science
19613	Susan Thomas-Pounce	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31693	Tim Hanifin	Team inspector	Art
21806	Pat Swinnerton	Team inspector	Design and technology
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography
12825	Niall Carr	Team inspector	History
4749	Martin Ash	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good and improving school which provides a good quality of education. The school's beneficial ethos ensures that its pupils are cared for in a sensitive manner and are consequently able to learn effectively. The school is keen to include all pupils and provides well in this respect. It provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The newly acquired status, as a specialist Visual Arts School, builds on pupils' success in art and design, and provides greatly enhanced opportunities for pupils, partner schools and the wider community.
- Leadership by the acting headteacher is highly effective.
- Pupils' achievement is good and best in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is good. It is especially effective because the teachers know their pupils well and respond naturally to individual needs. Accordingly, levels of pastoral care are high; in addition, pupils are supported well by a number of very hardworking staff from outside agencies.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very good; a particular strength is the Life Academy course.
- Poor accommodation in design and technology is adversely affecting teaching and learning.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory.
- Literacy and numeracy are not consistently, nor rigorously, monitored across the curriculum.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is a strength. The resulting high standards are impressive and would be improved further by the planned improvement in resources to enhance learning across the curriculum.
- Community perceptions of the school are not as high as they should be.

There has been **satisfactory** improvement since the previous inspection. Standards of teaching and examination results have risen. There is a broader curriculum. The Senior Leadership Team is more cohesive. Improvements are evident in science and to a lesser extent in modern foreign languages. Resources in ICT, music and art have improved. Accommodation is better but still remains poor for design and technology. There has been insufficient improvement in the monitoring of literacy across the school. The requirement for a daily act of worship is not met.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement is good, overall. They achieve very well in ICT and music. In drama and art in Years 10 and 11, they also achieve very well. Achievement is unsatisfactory in physical education in Years 7 to 9. Standards seen are in line with those expected overall, but below expectations in English, French, German, geography, music, religious education and physical education in lower school and above expectations in ICT. In Years 10 and 11, standards are well above expectations in art, drama, ICT and music; above expectations in history and business education and below expectation in English, French, German and religious education.

Year 11 results

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

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

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **good**, in response to the good provision made by the school in the curriculum, in daily routines and in the ethos of the school. Pupils' attitudes to school and learning are **good** and improve over time at the school. Behaviour is **satisfactory** but exclusions are high. Attendance levels have improved but are still **unsatisfactory**. Punctuality to school and throughout the day is **good**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** and marginally better in Years 10 and 11. Approximately seven out of ten lessons are good or better and unsatisfactory lessons are rare. Excellent lessons occurred in ICT, English literature, music and science. Overall assessment is **good**. The curriculum is **good** overall. It is **very good** in Years 10 and 11. The school offers **very good** enrichment activities but these are not always taken up. Accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

The school is **very effective** in ensuring all pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Well informed support, advice and guidance are made available to pupils as they progress through the school. Pupils' views and opinions are valued and are increasingly being sought.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is **very good**. All are highly committed. Over recent months they have become a more cohesive group as a result of sound advice. Management is **good** despite a large number of staffing difficulties, following the national trend, over the past few years. Governance is **good**; the governing body draws on a wide range of expertise; it is supportive yet challenging.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers agree that teaching is good, that children are expected to work hard and they are pleased with the progress their children make at the school. A significant minority of parents did raise concerns about standards of behaviour. The vast majority of pupils enjoy school. They enjoy the new canteen and the very good food provided.

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

- On a regular basis, monitor rigorously literacy standards across the curriculum in order to raise standards of literacy.
- Address the negative perceptions of the school and build pride through the continued celebration and communication of success and achievement.
- Improve attendance by reducing exclusions and through the further use of strategies to motivate pupils to want to come to school.
- Improve the accommodation for design and technology.

to meet statutory requirements for collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, achieve well across the school. Those for whom English is an additional language achieve very well. The standards in work seen are in line with national expectations. In statutory tests and teacher assessments, standards by the end of Year 9 are below national averages. By the end of Year 11, GCSE results are in line with national averages.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- In Year 7, students achieve at a slower rate.
- Pupils make rapid progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Many pupils enter the school with particularly low levels of literacy.
- There is insufficient consistent monitoring of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

Commentary

1. Pupils' achievement is good across most subjects and years. It is best throughout the school in ICT, where project work is of a high standard, and music where pupils' confidence in singing is growing. It is also best in Years 10 and 11, in drama where pupils use a pre-written script as a stimulus for their own devised dramas and art, where drawing is well developed. However, it is satisfactory in science and history in Years 7 to 9, satisfactory in religious education in all years and unsatisfactory in physical education in Years 7 to 9. Achievement is good in all other subjects.
2. Although good in Years 7 to 9, achievement is not obviously so from results in statutory tests. This is because the school has to work hard on pupils' attitudes to learning, particularly in Year 7. Low levels of literacy amongst some pupils also contribute to this slow start. However, the school's efforts are rewarded and, by the beginning of Year 10, pupils are poised ready for GCSE where they do much better. Standards in the work seen are in line with expectations overall. However, they are below expectation in English, French, German, geography, music, religious education and physical education in Years 7 to 9 and above expectations in ICT. In statutory tests at the end of Year 9, results were below average when compared with all schools, with schools of a similar context and with schools with similar prior attainment.

Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.7 (35.0)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	33.6 (34.0)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	32.4 (32.1)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 251 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. In the work seen, in Years 10 and 11, standards are well above those expected in drama, art, ICT and music and below those expected in religious education, French, German and English. They are above expectations in history and business education. At GCSE level, pupils gained results in line with average all schools for grades 5A* - C, above average when compared with a similar context and well above average when compared with schools with similar prior attainment.

Key Stage 4

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	45 (41)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	78 (77)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	91 (89)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	31.4 (29.1)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 240 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Numeracy skills are in line with expectations nationally. However, although they are checked regularly in mathematics, they are not monitored across other subjects. Literacy skills are below national expectations in Years 7 to 9 and in line with these in Years 10 and 11. The poor levels of literacy exhibited by a number of pupils, when they enter the school, inhibits their ability to access the curriculum fully. The school does a great deal to help these pupils but it does not regularly monitor such skills in subjects across the curriculum. In this school, ICT skills are well above expectations and, inadvertently, help with literacy levels. Pupils really have a grasp of the necessary skills to access most packages they might need.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

5. Pupils' attitudes to school and learning are good and improve over time at the school. Behaviour is satisfactory but exclusions are high. Attendance levels have improved but are still unsatisfactory. Punctuality to school and throughout the day is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vast majority of pupils enjoy Tiverton High; show a genuine interest in school activities and, in most lessons, a desire to learn.
- The school works hard to manage unacceptable and harassing behaviour but immature behaviour restricts learning in some lessons.
- Exclusion rates are high and have increased in the last year.
- Despite good efforts to promote and encourage attendance, the overall level of attendance is unsatisfactory and below the national average.

Commentary

6. Most pupils say they like attending Tiverton High and that it is a good school. Observation in many lessons reveals pupils showing good levels of interest in their studies, getting enthusiastically involved in activities and becoming engrossed in their learning. In discussion, younger pupils showed relatively low levels of self esteem and confidence and were reluctant to engage in conversation, although they were positive about the school and about their learning. Older pupils were more confident and spoke enthusiastically about their experiences and particularly about the good range of extra curricular clubs and activities that they are involved in. Pupils commented favourably about trips and outings and Years 10 and 11 pupils were keen to mention how much they were enjoying the Preparation for Adult Life course and the opportunities for vocational studies and work experience.

7. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is satisfactory. Relationships are generally good and in most lessons pupils communicate openly and politely with adults. Interaction between pupils is usually supportive and involves amicable and helpful exchanges. In a few lessons during the inspection and despite the best efforts of the teacher to capture pupils' imagination and interest,

immaturity and poor social skills led to silly behaviour which disrupted learning. Arrival and departure routines are respected by pupils and are completed safely. At break and lunchtimes there are some boisterous games but pupils generally behave in a civilised manner and the school is an orderly environment. Movement in corridors between lessons can be difficult, particularly for younger pupils. The school works hard and consistently to promote acceptable standards of behaviour and deals effectively with bullying and harassment. Pupils say they respect the behaviour code and believe that the school deals fairly and firmly with incidents. Fixed term exclusions have increased in the last year as the behaviour code has been interpreted more rigidly. The high and escalating use of the exclusion sanction is impacting negatively on attendance and is not working as an effective deterrent.

8. Attendance levels have gradually improved over the last three years but are still below the national average for similar schools and as such are unsatisfactory. Absence rates increase as pupils progress through the school. The school has established rigorous systems to follow up unexplained absence and openly promotes the fact that absent pupils do not learn. Pupils and parents experiencing difficulty with attendance are supported sensitively. Punctuality to school is good and most lessons run to time.

9. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, in response to the good provision made by the school in the curriculum, in daily routines and in the ethos of the school. There are strong contributions in the Preparation for Adult Life programme (Citizenship), in religious education, English, art and music in particular. However, all subjects provide opportunities for pupils' social and moral development in encouraging them to express their views, to listen to others and to respect diversity.

10. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. They develop their own values and are encouraged to express their views sensibly. However, pupils do not have the opportunity to attend collective worship each day and this is a lost opportunity for pupils to reflect deeply and develop self-awareness and self esteem. Moral development is good. Pupils' have a strong commitment to fairness and justice in school, the community and the wider world. They accept responsibility for their own actions and it is a minority who misbehave. Social development is good. Pupils work together well in lessons and in extra curricular activities. Older pupils act sensibly as prefects and pupils of all ages develop responsible attitudes through the class, year and school councils. Cultural development is good, with particular strengths through the visual arts and in music. Pupils have many opportunities to appreciate their own and other cultures. Preparing pupils for life in a multi cultural society remains less well developed. The school has few links with individuals or communities of ethnic minorities, but the citizenship programme and religious education are developing this aspect of the school's work.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	7.8
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data :	3.2
National data:	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1147	327	1
White – Irish	5		
White – any other White background	10		
Mixed – any other mixed background	4		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2		
Black or Black British – African	1		
Chinese	3		
Parents/pupils prefer not to say	8		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

11. Teaching and learning are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good or better in seven out of ten lessons.
- Teaching is excellent in about one in twenty lessons.
- Teachers use a wide range of strategies, including those which exploit visual processes.
- Pupils in Year 7 do not learn as well as those in other years.
- Pupils with a range of learning difficulties and needs are taught well.

Commentary

12. A large proportion of lessons are good or better. In Years 10 and 11, nearly a third of lessons are very good and in some cases excellent. Teaching and learning are marginally better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Learning does not fully reflect the good teaching in Year 7 where teachers have a great deal of work to do to settle pupils and instil good working habits.

13. Excellent lessons start very well, recapping on previous work and quickly involving pupils. Lessons are brisk and purposeful. Pupils really enjoy learning. Teachers exhibit excellent subject knowledge, which they use to challenge pupils. Exemplified in a Year 7 ICT lesson, teachers use phases like “picture this”, “image you have”, “close your eyes and visualise”, all highly effective in motivating pupils and also exploiting the Visual Art Status of the school. In such lessons, the standard of discussion is high. Pupils’ response, in all ways, is positive; they show interest, sustain concentration and make very good progress. Most able pupils work independently and have charge of their learning; they are able to make sensible decisions based on the teachers’ exposition, questioning and consequent discussion. Teachers’ questions are carefully constructed to meet the capabilities of individual pupils and ensure that all pupils can contribute to the lesson. Questions flow

freely in both directions. This proved especially helpful in a Year 9 English literature lesson. As in a Year 10 lesson on parasitism, the rapport between teachers and pupils is often easy and informal but the environment is very informative. Pupils learn effectively individually, in pairs and in groups.

14. Good and very good lessons include the insistence by the teacher of the highest standards of behaviour. The conduct of the lesson signals high expectations and pupils are stretched effectively. Lesson content is well prepared and relevant material is easily available. Praise and encouragement feature in very good lessons. Lessons are clearly structured and teachers prompt and, when necessary, refocus pupils' efforts. Lesson objectives are clear. Teachers use a plenary session where she/he checks how well these are met. Pupils are encouraged to plan, investigate and gather information appropriately.

15. Most lessons are generally, well planned, have clear aims and interesting elements. In most cases, teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of strategies to help pupils learn. Deliberately, many pupils are given opportunities to learn either visually or aurally. Teachers often introduce practical tasks to allow those who need to use their hands an opportunity to excel. Pupils respond very well to these projects and when asked about their preferred subjects and learning strategies, they often identify those where they can participate physically. Teachers review pupils' work as lessons proceed. On paper, the monitoring of progress could be better but, on the whole, teachers know their pupils well and a natural checking occurs.

16. In less successful lessons, pupils' recall is often poor; they wait for the teacher to provide answers rather than attempting to answer themselves. Pupils provide unwanted commentary. Teachers try to continue to teach through noise rather than insisting on silence. Teachers fail to manage disaffection. Lessons often start better than they end. A slow deterioration occurs despite the teachers' anxiety and slow progress is evident.

17. Pupils with learning difficulties are well taught. The high levels of need, particularly with regard to low levels of literacy are dealt with well. More attention to GCSE courses may give some pupils a better access to the curriculum. The school is considering how to integrate these into their teaching.

18. Pupils who are particularly gifted or who are especially talented, learn well. Teachers provide extension activities and open ended tasks so they are properly challenged and able to make progress.

19. Pupils for whom English is an additional language, learn very well. Teachers ensure that they have full access to the good teaching available.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 143 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (4%)	31 (22%)	64 (45%)	41 (28%)	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.

Assessment

20. Overall assessment is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good whole school policy on marking, assessment, recording and reporting.
- Most departments have assessment systems which are well organised.

Commentary

21. The system for assessment, recording and reporting pupils' attainment and progress is developing well. General advice is given to help departments organise their own systems. A substantial whole school marking policy exists, which gives clear guidance to teachers, and they give advice to individual pupils. Departments appropriately assess pupils against National Curriculum levels or GCSE criteria throughout the year. The data is entered on the school system, and this is available to all staff on request. Detailed analysis of the data is carried out, and this is communicated to subject departments. Some departments have better systems than others, including having examples of pupils' work at different levels, but most are good or better.

22. The school organises a satisfactory level of reporting to parents: there is one evening each year when parents discuss their child's progress with subject teachers. All parents also have one full report once per year with grades and targets. If there is a cause for concern, the school contacts parents.

The curriculum

23. The breadth and balance of the curriculum are good in Years 7 to 9, very good in Years 10 and 11, with very good enrichment activities. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's visual arts status is reflected in the wide choice of art-based courses on offer in Years 10 and 11.
- An innovative and successful range of vocational and work-based courses is provided for Years 10 and 11 as an alternative to GCSE.
- A very good range of clubs, study support groups and other activities enriches the taught curriculum.
- The extra-curricular music provision is exceptional.
- A wide range of provision caters for pupils with special educational needs.
- Although the accommodation is satisfactory there are a number of deficiencies in the facilities for physical education and design and technology.

Commentary

24. The broad and balanced curriculum meets all statutory requirements except for the delivery of a daily act of collective worship. Provision is either satisfactory or better in all subjects in Years 7 to 9. A very small number of pupils are disapplied from French in order to provide additional support in literacy. The option to study German as well as French is taken up by a number of pupils in Year 8.

25. A number of strands of provision in Years 10 and 11 ensure the inclusion of all pupils. The range of GCSE courses is wide, especially in the area of the arts, where applied art, 3-dimensional art and photography have recently been added to the options as a result of the schools' visual arts status. Through partnerships with East Devon College and Bicton College, a number of applied vocational GCSEs, CLAIT courses and NVQs are offered; these are studied alongside a reduced GCSE curriculum in school. A new "alternative" curriculum involving the Life Academy and a curriculum based on extended work experience provides good and relevant courses of study for pupils who might otherwise exclude themselves from school. These pupils study basic skills, personal and social development and a choice of school subjects at a nearby centre.

26. The curriculum is enriched by a large number of expeditions, sports clubs, general interest clubs, study support groups, residential courses, theatre and gallery visits, and foreign journeys and exchanges to Germany and France. The music department's contribution is outstanding; pupils

have a choice of several bands, groups and choirs, most of which give high quality performances to parents and the community on a regular basis.

27. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Changes in the last year include the appointment of a manager to oversee all aspects of special and disability needs and the allocation of a suite of rooms to cater for different needs. The Behaviour Support Centre offers various programmes such as anger management or raising self esteem for those pupils who cannot control or moderate their behaviour. It is seen as a positive alternative to exclusion, with the aim of integrating pupils back into mainstream classes whenever possible. The "Sanctuary" is for vulnerable pupils, a haven from certain lessons on particularly difficult days, or to integrate pupils back into school after lengthy or traumatic absences. Pupils with specific learning difficulties follow a multi-sensory programme, withdrawn for one hour a week in a small group to improve their reading and spelling. The Learning Support Centre is for pupils who enter the school with very low literacy skills and who need intensive small-group sessions. Inspectors are concerned that this takes place instead of English lessons. Plans are in place to develop National Curriculum English alongside the literacy.

28. Well-constructed individual education plans are produced for each pupil with special needs and these are reviewed annually. Targets and success criteria are made clear and are available on the school intranet. Most teachers use these individual education plans well. Links are good with primary school special needs co-ordinators and with external agencies.

29. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and a programme is being developed to provide them with opportunities for extended challenge. For example, top mathematics sets have attended sessions at Rolle College and three Year 9 pupils have attended mathematics master classes at Exeter University. However, although some subjects provide many additional challenges for these pupils, this is inconsistent across the curriculum.

30. A course entitled "Preparation for Adult Life" incorporates a well-established citizenship element with personal and social education, covering the required range of topics from both areas in weekly lessons. A comprehensive careers education programme for all year groups is also a part of this course. A very good work experience programme for Year 10 pupils includes applications, interviews and feedback reviews with groups of employers.

31. The match of staff to the demands of the curriculum is good, with teachers well qualified in their specialist subjects. The school makes good use of links with teacher training institutions and of teachers' second subject expertise.

32. Accommodation is satisfactory with some significant weaknesses that have not been tackled since the previous inspection. The site is clean and well maintained. The most notable weaknesses are the many poor facilities in the design and technology department where there are now several health and safety matters in each of that department's specialist areas that must not continue to be disregarded. In physical education there are increasing pressures upon the use of indoor accommodation that are constraining standards and the breadth of the curriculum. There is no specialist dance studio and changing rooms are inadequate for large groups; there is only one toilet in each changing area for between 40 and 50 pupils. In contrast, the suiting of newer accommodation in English, mathematics, science, humanities, modern languages and music, with good office accommodation and some dedicated, if small, ICT suites within some departments, has had a positive effect on attitudes and standards of attainment. A few departments still suffer scattered, unfocussed accommodation, for example business education, drama and religious education. The newly-converted accommodation for art, about to be commissioned, has many very good features, overcoming present inadequacies and better reflecting the school's specialist visual arts status.

33. The provision of resources is satisfactory. However, there are some deficiencies. The design and technology department has scant equipment to deliver the CAD/CAM element of design and technology. Several subjects have problems accessing ICT for whole classes; the maths

department lacks practical equipment and some physical education equipment has been condemned.

Care, guidance and support

34. The school is **very effective** in ensuring all pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Well informed support, advice and guidance are made available to pupils as they progress through the school. Pupils' views and opinions are valued and are increasingly being sought.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is vigilant, has excellent procedures and is very effective in securing pupils' well being.
- Staff show consistently good levels of care and concern for pupils and they work sensitively to build trusting relationships with most pupils.
- The school has good systems to track and record pupils' academic progress and personal development.
- Good quality support, advice and guidance are effectively helping pupils to develop and to prepare them for adult life.
- Pupils' views are valued and there are increasing opportunities for them to influence aspects of school life and development.

Commentary

35. Comprehensive arrangements for child protection are in place and the school is both vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities. Staff show consistently good levels of care and concern and ensure that day to day activities are carried out safely. Appropriate supervision is always provided and full risk assessments are always undertaken in relation to visits and off site activities. Good systems ensure that identified hazards or safety concerns around the site are quickly eliminated. A number of health and safety concerns identified in design technology during the inspection are now being addressed by the school. Comprehensive records of incidents and accidents are maintained and the school is quick to inform parents of any illness or injury. The majority of pupils respond well to the consistent, caring approach and enjoy good, trusting relationships with tutors and teachers.

36. Good assessment procedures ensure that pupils' academic progress and achievement are continuously monitored and teaching staff are quick to intervene and support when difficulties arise. The practice of establishing targets for improvement for all pupils is inconsistent across subjects. The school is planning to introduce regular mentoring sessions at which all pupils can discuss achievements and agree targets and tutors can tailor additional support and guidance more effectively. Tutors know pupils well and are alerted through the rewards and sanctions system to any pupils experiencing personal and social problems. Very good, tailored guidance is made available to these pupils through in house support services supplemented by the good use of external agency professionals.

37. There are very good induction arrangements for new pupils and good support is provided to help pupils make appropriate post 14 option choices. All pupils have access to impartial careers guidance and the Preparation for Adult Life, citizenship and work experience programmes provide pupils with good information and experiences to support further study and career decisions.

38. Pupils' views are valued by the school. They are encouraged to express opinions on aspects of day to day life and routines at an individual level and through the Year Forums and School Council. Increasing opportunities are being taken to involve pupils formally in aspects of school development. For example, a group of pupils recently had the opportunity to interview candidates for the headteacher post. The pupils involved took the responsibility very seriously and governors confirmed that their input was helpful and valued.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

39. The school enjoys a **satisfactory** partnership with parents. **Good** links with the community enrich learning opportunities. **Good** and effective links exist with feeder primary schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are broadly supportive, but a significant minority holds some negative perceptions of the school.
- The school is working hard to develop the partnership with parents but many are reluctant to become involved.
- Community groups make limited use of school facilities, but the school uses community figures and organisations effectively to extend and enrich learning opportunities.
- Effective liaison with primary schools ensures a smooth transition for pupils.
- Good links with local colleges are effectively managed and extend the study options.

Commentary

40. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers agree that teaching is good, that children are expected to work hard and they are pleased with the progress their children make at the school. There is also positive support for the consistent level of care shown by staff, for the effective settling in arrangements and for the encouragement provided to encourage maturity and independence. A significant minority of parents did raise concerns about standards of behaviour, about consultation, about being kept well informed on the progress that their children are making and about the help provided to enable parents to support pupils with homework and learning at home. Behaviour in the school is judged to be satisfactory overall. It is acknowledged that there are incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour and some bullying, but it is felt that the school is working effectively to minimise disruption and to support the pupils involved. It ensures that rare incidences of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively.

41. The school welcomes parents into the school at any time and values the views and opinions expressed on aspects of school development and routines from those attending consultation evenings. Regular formal consultation of the whole parent body does not happen. The information made available to parents on progress is good. The annual report provides good quality data which effectively charts pupils' progress whilst consultation evenings give formal opportunities for parents to discuss achievement in more detail. About two thirds of parents attend these consultation sessions. The school is planning to introduce a brief interim report on a termly basis. The arrangements to involve parents of pupils with education plans are good and these parents get closely involved in reviews and target setting.

42. The school is trying hard to develop the partnership with parents and to encourage more involvement in children's learning at school and at home. Parents with worries are actively encouraged to contact school at any time and the school is quick to contact home if there are any concerns. A recent initiative, which is being received well by parents, is the practice of contacting home with good news of effort and achievement. Day to day communication is encouraged through planners which give a good record of homework assignments. The good quality weekly newsletter keeps parents informed of school development, pupil achievements and forthcoming events. Information on the curriculum topics being studied is regularly sent home and special evenings to explain the learning programmes are organised. Unfortunately attendance at these meetings is usually very low.

43. The school enjoys good links with the local community. Facilities are used by a few local sports groups and societies. Local community figures make regular contributions to the teaching curriculum and good use is made of local and regional community facilities to effectively extend and enrich pupils' learning experiences.

44. The school has developed good relationships with the main primary feeder schools and there is effective consultation and collaboration over transition arrangements. Links with other schools and colleges have been enhanced through the successful bid for Visual Arts status. The school interacts with other schools through sporting competition and participation in local events. There is increasingly close cooperation with local colleges over the provision of vocational courses and the 14 to 19 curriculum, with the result that resources in some areas are being effectively shared and all pupils are getting access to a wide range of learning facilities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

45. Overall, leadership and management are **good**. Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is **very good**. Management is **good**. Governance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteacher is highly effective.
- The senior leadership group restructuring is impressive as is the group itself.
- The school improvement plan is a detailed and well thought out document with strong emphasis on monitoring and teaching and learning.
- There are shortcomings in the management of religious education.
- Financial control is good.

Commentary

46. Leadership by the acting headteacher is highly effective. He took over the school at a time when the school lacked a leader. The acting headship was extended because the school only appointed a headteacher at the third attempt. He has done an extremely good job of keeping the ship afloat but, more than that, he has enabled it to move forward by taking advice as well as focussing on the new visual arts status. He is very well supported by his senior staff who have pulled together and have also adapted to a restructuring which enables a more cohesive approach. An involved and strong governing body has worked hard to ensure that the school maintains its identity. They know its strengths and weaknesses and were not prepared to accept a second rate candidate for the post of headteacher. Happily a new headteacher has now been appointed. He will take over in September, 2004. The governors have been pleased to take advice to ensure a clear direction.

47. The well-documented school improvement plan focuses on teaching and learning and promotes a monitoring culture. However, the monitoring of numeracy and literacy is insufficiently rigorous. Strategic planning is improving, but is inhibited by the changes in leadership. The school sets realistic targets which it normally meets. However, occasionally, these targets appear too high because the intake in, say Year 11, changes near to examination time. In January 2003, for example, the school took on four students who could not be entered for any examinations because either, they had not taken the courses offered, or they had produced no coursework. These pupils' results, which were negligible, counted on Tiverton's figures and lowered their overall point scores.

48. Middle managers, both pastoral and academic, are effective in their roles. Management in art, mathematics, music, ICT, citizenship and PSHE is particularly strong. Pastoral leaders ensure that pupils feel cared for and have somewhere to turn when necessary. Long term sickness has caused some disruption in the management of religious education. The head of department is back at post and with the support of a senior manager is improving the situation daily.

49. Financial control is good. The restrictive budget has meant some staff cuts which have been voluntary so far. When the roll increases in two years time, the school will be better able to keep its staff. The bursar ensures that all expenditure follows the principles of best value.

50. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. A clear vision of the comprehensive nature of special educational needs is evident in the extensive documentation produced by the co-ordinator this year. A committed team has been built up to manage all the different areas and all teachers and the 20 teaching assistants share this vision and drive for improvement. The special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) also oversees provision for the disabled, the Sanctuary for vulnerable pupils and the Behaviour Support Unit as well as the Learning Support Centre catering for literacy problems. Appropriate training takes place to provide skills to deal with all types of need, with the aim of full integration into mainstream classes whenever possible. The SENCO has developed very good links with all external agencies; with primary schools and deals well with the curriculum and financial aspects of special educational needs provision. Guidance is given to all teachers and teaching assistants.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,059, 055	Balance from previous year	108,739
Total expenditure	4,028,691	Balance carried forward to the next	139,103
Expenditure per pupil	3,327		

SEN ASSESSMENT

51. The effectiveness of this feature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils with learning difficulties are quickly identified.
- The system for assessment is good.
- All pupils on the register receive individual education plans.

Commentary

52. The identification process for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is **very good**. Regular meetings of the SENCO (SEN co-ordinator) with primary school staff provide detailed information on all pupils giving concern and transfer forms identify needs and intervention strategies. The cognitive ability test scores are closely researched to find those pupils whose verbal scores are well below non-verbal scores, which is an indication of literacy or specific learning difficulties. The SENCO interviews all pupils referred, including them in discussion of their unique problems and possible solutions. The Bangor dyslexia test is used to identify pupils needing the multi-sensory programme to improve reading and spelling ages.

53. The assessment system is good and improving. All pupils on the SEN list are assessed regularly and results recorded on their files in the learning support centre. Reading and spelling ages are tested every six months to check on progress and decide on next steps for those with literacy or dyslexic problems. CAT (cognitive ability tests) scores, National Curriculum levels and predicted GCSE grades are entered on the files for all pupils with special educational needs. Statements include all relevant factors and detail the provision for each need. These are met and assessed regularly.

54. Individual education plans (IEPs) are produced for all pupils on the SEN list: this is more than is legally required. They are well constructed and reviewed each year. All pupils are involved in discussion of their needs, targets and success criteria. Teachers also contribute to the review,

assessing progress related to the IEP targets. All IEPs are now accessible through the school intranet and are stored for reference in SEN files for each pupil.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4.

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

55. Provision in English is **good**

Main strengths and weakness

- Good teaching in the department promotes good learning and achievement in the subject.
- The department provides pupils with an imaginative English curriculum, though it needs to be extended to include a wider range of writing activities.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to use re-drafting skills in order to improve the quality of their work.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have sharp medium-term targets for improvement.
- Work does not always match the needs and abilities of all pupils, with more able pupils sometimes being inappropriately challenged.

Commentary

56. Attainment upon entry into school in all aspects of English is well below average. Pupils however achieve well in Years 7 to 9, with the results that standards improve by the time pupils are aged 14, though they remain below average. Standards in the most recent national assessment tasks in 2003 were well below average, both in comparison to the national average and schools with a similar intake.

57. The majority of pupils sustain good achievement in Years 10 and 11, with standards in the most recent GCSE examinations in 2003 being in line with the national average. This however was based on a restricted entry, with the majority of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) not being entered for GCSE. All pupils will be entered for GCSE English Language for the first time in 2004 with some pupils being entered for GCSE Media Studies rather GCSE English Literature. Lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' written work indicated that standards for all pupils in the current Year 11 will remain below average.

58. Pupils with SEN receive a good degree of support from their teachers and learning support assistants with the result that they make the same progress as all other members of their class.

59. Most pupils in school display satisfactory social oral skills, though many pupils are less secure in their ability to organise their ideas and opinions in a structured manner or to speak with confidence and in a fluent manner when engaged in anything like a formal situation. Standards in speaking and listening skills at 14 and 16 are below average.

60. Whilst a number of pupils in Years 7 to 9 have satisfactory technical reading skills, many pupils have under-developed reading comprehension skills with the result that they do not always understand the full meaning of the books they read. Few pupils read outside of school. Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 still have problems in understanding the layers of meaning in the demanding texts which form part of their GCSE studies. A number of pupils read only at a superficial level and have problems in reading for sub-text and appreciating how writers use language to convey tone, atmosphere, ideas and implied opinions. Standards in reading at 14 and 16 are below average.

61. Although pupils in Years 7 to 9 engage in a range of interesting writing activities there are too few chances for pupils to explore factual materials and appreciate how information can be conveyed

in different ways and styles. Whilst there are occasional chances for pupils to re-draft their work from rough to best there are too few opportunities for pupils to use this important strategy to improve the overall quality of their work in terms of content, styles and the use of more descriptive language.

62. Standards in written work at the end of Year 11 vary considerably. Whilst a minority of pupils are capable of producing work of a reasonable length, with a strong personal response supported by relevant evidence and quotations, a significant number of pupils find it hard to produce work of any real length and detail. Standards in written work at 14 and 16 are below average.

63. The quality of teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed, though pupils in the set classes in Years 7 to 9 are generally asked to carry out the same writing activities using the same worksheets. This sometimes means that more able pupils are inappropriately challenged. The school was somewhat late in introducing the English strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy, with the result that some teachers are still insecure in its use and application. The scrutiny of written work however, indicates that it is making a positive contribution to raising standards in the subject.

64. In those lessons deemed to be good and better, teachers provided pupils with a challenging range of oral, reading and writing activities within a single lesson, with each one supporting and extending skills in the other.

65. Leadership and management in the subject are very good. In the comparatively short time she has been in post, the Head of English, along with other members of the department, has put into place an interesting scheme of work for pupils in all years and has introduced a number of strategies to help raise standards in the subject, in particular, that of boys.

66. The department uses a satisfactory range of assessment procedures. Although most teachers provide pupils with targets for improvement, they are often generalised and lack a clear focus.

67. Standards in the subject have improved since the last inspection.

Drama

68. Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching in the subject contributes to pupils' good learning and achievement.
- The department provides all pupils with an imaginative drama curriculum.
- A number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are insecure in their literacy skills.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a limited knowledge of the working methods of influential directors and theatre practitioners.

Commentary

69. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and develop a satisfactory range of drama skills and techniques, with the result that standards by the time pupils are 14 are in line with expectations for their age.

70. Pupils make accelerated progress in Years 10 and 11 as they build on and extend their drama skills within an increasingly demanding range of drama activities. Standards by the time pupils are 16 are well above average. This was reflected in the most recent GCSE examinations in 2003 when over 80 per cent of pupils achieved an A*-C grade.

71. Pupils in Year 7 could be seen to be making satisfactory progress in their improvisational skills as they produced some interesting work based on a letter to an 'Agony Aunt' about teenage problems. Pupils in Year 9 displayed good drama skills as they began a new unit of work on scripted drama. They considered the nature of individual characters in the opening scene of 'The Diary of Adrian Mole'. During these two lessons pupils worked with interest and listened to, and valued, each other's ideas and opinions before arriving at an agreed framework for their pieces of work.
72. The well above average GCSE grades achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 is very much influenced by the interest and commitment that they bring to the subject. This was seen in a Year 10 lesson as pupils used a piece of scripted work as a stimulus for their own devised dramas. Pupils displayed a satisfactory understanding of physical theatre and were able to incorporate these ideas into their own work. A similar approach was observed in Year 11 as pupils used an extract from Steven Berkoff's 'Metamorphosis' as a stimulus for a piece of abstract theatre.
73. Although pupils in Years 10 and 11 have some knowledge of physical theatre they have a limited knowledge of the working methods and rehearsal techniques of influential directors and theatre practitioners and how to apply this knowledge to their own work.
74. Pupils are more secure in their practical work, rather than their written work, with a number of pupils tending to describe the activities they have been involved in, rather than evaluating the success, or failure, of their work and considering what they need to do in order to improve it.
75. The quality of teaching in the subject is good. Although not all teachers are drama specialists, they are secure in their subject knowledge and use it to good effect in the activities they provide for pupils. Teachers give pupils good advice and support and the chance to share, celebrate and evaluate, both their own and other's efforts.
76. Leadership and management in the subject are very good. The Head of Drama has introduced an imaginative and demanding scheme of work for all pupils and has put together a good range of documentation to support less experienced members of the department in their teaching.
77. All pupils are given the chance to take part in annual plays and musical productions. GCSE pupils perform their completed examination pieces to an audience of friends, family and teachers. The department makes a positive contribution to the local community when they perform a range of devised dramas to pupils in the school's feeder primary schools. Regular chances are given for pupils to see commercial productions of plays and musicals with the intention of extending their wider knowledge of theatre.
78. Standards in the subject have improved since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

79. Provision in the development of literacy across the curriculum is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff have been given the chance to attend a number of full day and twilight courses on literacy, with the current focus being that of writing.
- All departments have a policy for literacy within their area of work. It is expected that key words are on display and referred to and that medium term plans focus on the development of reading and writing skills.
- The evaluation of literacy across the curriculum is insufficiently rigorous.

Commentary

80. The English department was somewhat late in introducing the English strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy, with it currently being embedded in teacher's practices. Good examples of the development of literacy skills can be seen in mathematics, art and design, ICT, music and design technology. They are unsatisfactory in religious education. Although the school has focussed on the development of literacy skills across the curriculum for a number of years, it has yet to evaluate its impact on the raising of literacy standards within individual departments and across the school as a whole. Now would be an appropriate time.

French, German and Spanish

81. Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Some teachers need to use the foreign language and pair work more in the classroom.
- Pupils do not check their written work carefully enough to avoid basic errors.
- Some pupils are not achieving the standards of which they are capable in GCSE examinations.

Commentary

82. Currently almost all pupils begin French or German in Year 7 and can continue with their first language to the end of Year 11. Some pupils also learn the language they did not begin in Year 7, in Years 8 and 9. Pupils can also begin Spanish in Year 10.

83. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been below national standards in French and German in recent years. French and German GCSE results have been below national standards; pupils' learning has been disrupted by changes in staff, but the results have been improving slowly and are expected to be higher in 2004. They have also been below most other subjects in the school. Results in Spanish have been in line with national standards. Overall performance in the lessons seen showed pupils working just below national standards in Year 9 and below in Year 11 in French and German. In all languages, pupils are stronger in listening, reading and writing than in speaking. Overall, there is a satisfactory amount of written exercises and sustained writing in all languages. However, pupils make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling, preventing them from achieving higher standards.

84. The overall quality of teaching in French, German and Spanish is good and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers are proficient in all three foreign languages and have good accents. They use French, German and Spanish for parts of the lesson to develop pupils' listening skills. Most use a little English to check understanding or explain grammatical points, but sometimes they use English too much. They plan a well organised sequence of activities, which involve the pupils in their learning. Pupils practise listening and speaking in pairs, but some teachers do not use this enough. Standards of discipline are good, but a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Teachers manage classes well and give pupils a variety of experiences in the classroom. They provide challenging tasks for the higher attainers and give support to those with learning difficulties. Most pupils, including the higher attainers and those with learning difficulties, are achieving according to their ability, but some are not fulfilling their potential. Most make satisfactory progress in lessons.

85. The quality of teaching ensures that the vast majority of pupils behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration and develop good study skills. Many pupils show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role plays and working independently.

86. Leadership and management is good; the head of department has developed a strong team spirit in the teachers. Teachers take pupils on visits to France and Germany, so that pupils can use the languages.

87. There has been good progress on the issues raised in the previous report.

MATHEMATICS

88. Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and Weaknesses

- Teaching is good, with many strengths from a committed team of well-qualified and experienced specialists, although with limited range of teaching/learning methods.
- Most pupils enjoy mathematics and are willing to work hard, with enthusiasm.
- Assessment procedures are good, with regular tests, thorough analysis and monitoring of individuals' standards, although marking is inconsistent and many pupils are not sufficiently aware of how to improve.
- Accommodation is very good, with a pleasant suite of rooms and spacious office.
- Numeracy across the curriculum needs further development and rigorous monitoring.

Commentary

89. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average, but equal to similar schools. Results in the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 were close to national averages in 2003, equal to 2002 although with less A* grades due to coursework problems. The difference between boys' and girls' results by the end of Years 9 or 11 varies each year and is not significant.

90. Pupils have below average attainment on entry and achieve well to reach national averages by the end of Years 9 and 11. In lessons, standards are in line with national expectations overall, but are lower in Year 7, where good work habits are not yet fully established. Several classes are split between two teachers, due to timetable constraints with part-time teachers and this affects pupils' continuity of learning. Many pupils have very low literacy levels and many have special educational needs. These achieve well in smaller classes where there are teaching assistants to provide intensive help. Good links with primary schools help the successful induction of pupils but practical learning methods are limited by resources and little access to computers. The focus on understanding concepts, rather than rote practice of skills, results in more secure learning. Investigational skills are developed, as in the Year 8 middle set statistics project 'Only Smarties know the answer', where pupils made decisions on how to process data using their existing knowledge of averages and graphs.

91. The very highest attaining pupils in each class are not always sufficiently stretched, although most pupils in the top sets are suitably challenged, as in the top set Year 9 revising higher level area questions ready for the imminent National Curriculum tests. More able pupils in Years 7 and 8 are given the opportunity to attend special sessions out of school and entered the Junior National Challenge during the week of inspection. Three Year 9 pupils, identified as 'Gifted', also attend master classes at Exeter University.

92. Years 10 and 11 are set by ability across the year, facilitating a better match of work to pupils' prior attainment and aptitude. All pupils follow a modular GCSE course at an appropriate level and almost all are entered for the final examination. They are very well prepared, as seen in Year 11 lessons working through past papers, with detailed guidance on strategies. Teachers know their classes thoroughly and relationships are very good, with an admirable use of humour to encourage pupils. Year 10 sets 2 and 4 were challenged to discover the n th term in sequences, stimulated to

think hard and use algebra appropriately. New resources such as a data projector, combined with worksheets, helped very weak pupils in the Year 10 bottom set, many with special educational need, draw reflections and lines of symmetry. Set 8 pupils moved to a computer room to visualise reflections using the newly acquired dynamic geometry software. All pupils have copies of relevant test-books, a positive resource.

93. Teaching is good, with all lessons at least satisfactory, three quarters good or better and many very good, an improvement since the previous inspection. All teachers had good subject knowledge and awareness of how pupils learn. Planning and structure of lessons produce effective starter sessions and improving plenaries, but with a limited range and variety of teaching and learning activities at present. Very good questioning techniques and clear explanations helped pupils learn and whole class discussion was handled successfully. Pupils were encouraged to explain their own methods and reasoning and learnt from each other. Teachers' class management was very good, reflected by the positive attitudes and good behaviour of pupils.

94. Assessment procedures and structures are good, with regular tests giving indications of NC levels or GCSE grades. Most pupils know their level, but are not sufficiently aware of how to improve and need greater guidance. Since the previous inspection assessment has improved, as has the formal monitoring of teaching and learning. Homework is set regularly for all classes and usually completed, but not always marked thoroughly, with too few constructive comments or detailed corrections. The policy for pupils to mark their own classwork is often not adhered to and much work in books is unmarked. Files are kept of pupils' tests and projects and achievement of individuals is monitored closely, with coloured charts showing added value over time and with good analysis of data.

95. Leadership is very good in this effective department, with vision, a shared sense of direction and commitment among the team of experienced specialists. Curriculum changes have been managed effectively and schemes of work are being well developed, with appropriate coverage of all attainment targets. However, citizenship is not yet sufficiently emphasised and there are no policies or guidelines on the spiritual and cultural dimensions of mathematics. Accommodation is very good, with a suite of rooms, one for each teacher, a spacious office and separate resources or work-room. Overall improvement since the previous inspection and predominately in the last three years is good, with better teaching and rising standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

96. Competence in mathematics is satisfactory. Number skills are well taught by the specialist teachers in the mathematics department and are used effectively in some subject areas. Music was a very good example of shape, order, pattern and balance being used very well in the creation of composition and performances. Number skills were found to be good in Business Studies in dealing with costs, production figures and drawing up accounts. Graphical skills were seen to be good in geography where lower attaining pupils were able to draw and interpret graphs with varying scales, with the help of a teaching assistant. Good graphical skills were also evident in science and the triple science group used calculators competently. In ICT lessons calculation and graphical skills were developed and used well. In other subjects numeracy was underdeveloped or neglected, although pupils were able to cope with any demands.

97. Whole staff training sessions have been held and the mathematics department have a clear and comprehensive policy. Some departments have numeracy policies but this is not standard. The Key Stage 3 Strategy Group is responsible for the co-ordination of numeracy across the curriculum. At present, this co-ordination is inconsistently effective and insufficiently rigorous.

SCIENCE

98. Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- A wider than average curriculum in Years 10 and 11 caters well for all levels of attainment,
- Assessment procedures are excellent, but routine marking is insufficiently consistent and pupils need advice on how to improve,
- Staff knowledge of pupils is very good and pupils are well-supported by their teachers, but the level of non-teaching support is insufficient and the lack of help with literacy difficulties hampers progress for many low-achieving pupils.

Commentary

99. The standard on entry is below the national average, largely due to low reading abilities for a substantial proportion of pupils. In 2003, the Year 9 national tests maintained the improvement shown in the last three years, but results remain slightly below the national average at the top levels. Based on prior attainment, these results are in line with those for other similar schools. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. At GCSE in 2003, pupils taking the separate sciences were above national levels in biology and physics and matched them in chemistry. Double Award candidates matched national results for A*-G grades, but were below national averages for A*-C. All candidates for the Single Award gained a grade in the A*-G range and in addition 28 gold, silver and bronze awards were gained in the non-GCSE Certificate of Achievement course. Overall, standards are average and pupils' achievement is good at this level.

100. Standards seen during the inspection were sometimes better than examination results indicate; this is partly attributed to pupils' reluctance to consolidate their work by re-learning it. In general, boys contribute more willingly than girls and their attainment reflects this. Practical work is done safely and competently in all years and most pupils produce neat written records with good graphs and diagrams. Pupils with special needs match their classmates in oral and practical work, but there is insufficient non-teaching support to allow these pupils to reach their full potential in written work. An excellent assessment system, which allows under-achievement to be identified quickly, facilitates target setting and enables pupils to be monitored individually. Pupils in all classes support each other well, willingly giving help over minor problems.

101. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teaching is good across all years but learning lags behind, being mainly satisfactory. Pupils' individual needs and enthusiasms are well known to staff who incorporate contributions into the lesson and give unobtrusive support where it is needed. Objectives are shared with pupils and are reviewed at the end of each lesson so that pupils can judge how well they have learned. Marking does not give sufficient written guidance on how to improve and incomplete work is often not followed up. Challenging tasks with time limits provide a good pace for work. The increasing use of ICT techniques and resources as new equipment becomes available is allowing teachers to use different and more stimulating new methods. Although a minority of low-attaining pupils lacks the self-discipline to conform to normal standards of good manners, the school's system for dealing with poor behaviour works well. Most pupils respond well to good teaching and their attitudes and behaviour are good. Investigational work for examination assessment is well developed in Years 10 and 11 and results in well presented reports. Advice on improvement here has clearly been heeded and successive investigations often show an increasingly good standard of report.

102. Leadership and management are very good. The school's Visual Arts status is reflected in the increasing use of initiatives such as 3D models, wall-projected computer simulations and video clips as well as pupils' display which enlivens lessons in a way that was not possible before.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

103. Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in ICT are above average.
- Very good quality teaching results in effective learning.
- Very good progress is made by all groups of pupils.
- All ICT teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- Pupils enjoy working with ICT and they work well together.
- ICT is not sufficiently developed across the curriculum. The planned improvements have yet to be implemented.

Commentary

104. This department is a strength of the school. Standards are rising year on year. In the work seen, high standards are being maintained. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils achieve standards above the national average. This represents very good progress. Results in the 2003 GCSE ICT examination were well above the national average. Higher attaining pupils apply their knowledge and skills well to produce good quality individual project work. Achievement across all years is very good.

105. Pupils' attainment on entry is below expectation. Pupils come into in Year 7 with a limited experience of ICT. The school has implemented the government strategy. This has led to improved ICT lessons. Throughout the curriculum, there is an emphasis on developing skills and autonomy. All pupils demonstrate an awareness of how ICT tools and information sources can be used to support learning. They have appropriate skills to work independently.

106. Teaching and learning are very good, with some outstanding teaching observed. Lessons are planned very well; teachers explain tasks clearly and use the time well. Teachers have developed appropriate strategies for enabling good learning to take place. Pupils achieve well because teachers have excellent subject knowledge, set high expectations and use assessment data to plan to meet individual pupil needs. There is challenge for those who find the work easy. Sufficient focus is given to the information pupils need to know about the quality of their work and what they need to do to improve. Teachers are good at helping individuals and providing specific, targeted help to particular groups of pupils. Pupils' learning is enhanced by positive attitudes. Very good relationships exist between each other and between themselves and their teachers.

107. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The curriculum team leader has a very clear sense of direction for the development of the subject. Assessment of pupils' achievement is providing the department with a very good, sophisticated recording and tracking system. Level descriptors, together with contextual analysis of progress and identified next steps in learning, are available and used well. Pupils can easily see what they know and what they need to concentrate on. This is an example of how the subject has kept abreast of recent developments and requirements. The checking of pupils' work and of teaching is regular and helps to inform and improve teaching strategies.

108. Technical support staff make an excellent contribution to both pupils' progress and teachers' management of lessons. They ensure systems operate effectively. The number of computers has increased significantly. Investment in ICT has been very carefully managed and best value principles applied, however to date, this has been based on external sources of funding which may not in future be relied on to sustain and expand resources. ICT is a strength in the school's drive for improvement and much hard work has been undertaken in the development of this subject. Improvement has been very good and this impressive development will be further improved by the planned expansion in resources to enhance learning across the curriculum.

Information and Communication Technology across the curriculum

109. Overall the use of ICT in other subjects is satisfactory; pupil competence is very good. There are examples of good practice in music and science, but in many subjects opportunities are limited. Not all subject areas have specific software. More specialist equipment is planned but the school is not yet in a position to capitalise on increased teacher confidence and pupil competence in ICT. Lack of resources has prevented many subject teachers delivering the statutory ICT component of their own national curriculum requirements.

110. ICT lessons ensure pupils are well prepared to apply their knowledge and understanding of computer program. Inclusion of further ICT resources are planned and this identified area for improvement, together with more open access for pupils outside lessons, will increase opportunities and ensure consistency across the school. Monitoring cross curricular progress is at an early stage of development.

HUMANITIES

Geography

111. Provision in geography is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achieve well.
- Good leadership and management provide a framework where all staff and pupils are valued.
- Assessments linked to the National Curriculum and GCSE units are very constructive, but pupils' day-to-day work is not regularly marked.
- Data resulting from assessments is very well used to monitor pupils' learning and improve provision.
- There is not enough access to ICT to meet the full requirements of the National Curriculum.
- Fieldwork provision in Years 7 to 9 is not as comprehensive as it could be.

Commentary

112. In 2003, GCSE results were above the national average and were better than school results in general. Girls' results were better than boys', but the gap between the two is not significantly wider than the national gap. Work seen during the inspection is of an average standard, with higher attaining Year 11 pupils generally above average, but the majority average and below. This represents good achievement. The emphasis in Year 11 lessons during the inspection has been intensive revision sessions, teaching pupils a variety of techniques for classifying and remembering information and giving them practice interpreting mark schemes and examination rubrics by setting them to grade the answers of other, anonymous, pupils.

113. Work and lessons seen during the inspection suggest that by the end of Year 9 standards are average, which represents good achievement from entry to the school, when geographical and literacy skills were below average. The improvement in the quality of learning through these year groups is very marked, with pupils developing their presentation and analytical skills very rapidly, as they are systematically taught to think for themselves and learn independently.

114. Pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented also achieve well. In many lessons they are well provided for by work suited to their level of need. For example, in a Year 10 group studying population growth, pupils were given three differently prepared graphing sheets, adjusted to their individual needs, so that all succeeded in producing and interpreting a clear picture of exponential growth. Teaching assistants are well briefed and work in partnership with teachers. However, provision for these pupils is not always so well thought through and there were occasions

when a class with a range of needs was all expected to learn at the same rate, from the same strategies.

115. Teaching and learning are good across Years 7 to 9, very good in Years 10 and 11, with no unsatisfactory lessons observed. In the majority of lessons, very good planning and organisation made very good use of the time available. Group and pair work develop the social skills of pupils extremely effectively and in all the lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 they were able to learn by co-operating and thinking for themselves. However, in some of the lessons in Years 7 to 9, minor elements of restless behaviour endangered the concentration of the majority of the class and slowed the pace of learning. In the majority of lessons, very good management coupled with good relationships produced a learning ethos that enabled pupils to enjoy their lessons. Teachers have high expectations of effort. Moral and cultural themes are effectively tackled through work on such topics as economic development and management of the environment.

116. Work is assessed through questioning and discussion and through regular assessment assignments that enable pupils to understand how they can improve their performance. However, day to day marking of work is inconsistent and as a result, many pupils go several lessons without knowing whether their work is of an acceptable standard. The assessment data kept by the department is comprehensive and well used to monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum.

117. The department is well led and managed by the humanities team leader who is also co-ordinator for geography. He leads by example, both in classroom practice and by supporting his hard-working team in ensuring that the best is provided for the pupils. Schemes of work have recently been re-written and these are well supported by a comprehensive bank of resources. However, the delivery of this otherwise good curriculum is hampered by difficulty in accessing ICT equipment for whole-class use and also by a limited amount of fieldwork opportunities, particularly in Year 8.

118. Improvement since the previous inspection, especially over the last three years, has been good. GCSE results have improved, as have standards of teaching and learning and rates of achievement. Better schemes of work and improved national curriculum assessment procedures complete the picture. With the good structures that are in place, the department has the capacity to improve further in the future.

History

119. Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement across all years.
- Appropriate methods of differentiation are used to raise standards.
- The quality of teaching and learning are good.
- Good management and leadership of history aids standards.
- The limited ICT provision does not aid independent learning.
- Literacy levels hinder the development of writing about history.

Commentary

120. Standards on entry at Year 7 are below average. Achievement from Year 7 to Year 9 is good as it is in Years 10 and 11. This is as a result of good teaching and learning. The achievement of girls is higher because they concentrate harder on the tasks set for them. Those pupils with special needs do comparatively well because of the inclusive nature of the classroom activity.

121. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average for a majority of pupils. Teacher assessed attainment levels at the end of Year 9 also show consistent improvement and are approaching the national average. Standards at the end of Year 11 are slightly above average. In 2003 GCSE results for the A* to C grades continued the pattern of improvement over recent years. Examination standards are solidly above the national average. Pupils with special educational needs progress as expected. These pupils receive in-class support. History makes a good contribution to the support of literacy, but more work is required. The subject demands high levels of reading and writing skills, which a significant minority of pupils do not possess. The trend over three years has been one of improvement, with boys doing better, but not as well as girls. Although pupils are confident speakers, there are weaknesses in written pieces in terms of spelling and use of grammar which limits standards. An exciting innovation in 2004 offers the highest attaining pupils the opportunity to take AS level history after school, in order to extend their capabilities.

122. The quality of teaching and learning are good. In Year 7, pupils begin to understand the causes and consequences of the many invasions England experienced. All know the story of 1066. Year 8 can retell the events of the Crusades. Pupils in Year 10 and 11 recognise the economic reasons behind the two World Wars and can write about the theory of National Socialism. Teachers have good subject knowledge. In the best lessons this enables them to challenge pupils, promote higher-order thinking skills and deliver effective plenary sessions. Good learning attitudes shown by a majority of pupils and good pupil management skills ensure that lessons and activities progress without interruption. The lack of ICT in the classroom means that an opportunity is lost to further develop independent learning. Teachers plan for ICT development to promote individual responsibility for learning. Homework set matches the work covered in lessons and marking is supportive.

123. Leadership is very good and management of history is good. There is clear direction for the subject. Teachers share a commitment to improvement within history. There is regular monitoring of teaching and of pupils' books to check standards and continuity of learning. The leader has a clear vision. There is effective use of local historical sites to help the learning in the classroom.

124. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Planning has been streamlined, assessment and monitoring procedures are now developed. The success of history is reflected in the positive response of most pupils. They willingly participate in class activities and show respect for the opinion of others. Attendance remains a problem. The levels of literacy detract from the quality of a significant amount of the written work produced.

Religious education

125. Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the short course GCSE examination have improved significantly.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Standards are affected by weak literacy skills.
- Staffing difficulties have affected the management of religious education and improvements in provision have not been maintained.

Commentary

126. Standards in the GCSE short course, taken by almost all pupils in Year 11, were below average in 2003. However, pupils did better in religious education than the school average for all subjects. Girls' results were better than the boys', in line with the difference nationally. Standards in this course have improved significantly over the last three years, from 24 per cent higher grades in 2001, to 49 per cent in 2003.

127. Standards in work seen during the inspection are below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of topics they have studied but many, particularly boys, find it difficult to show their knowledge in written work. By the end of Year 9, pupils know that there are different faiths and that what people believe affects how they live their lives. They recognise the signs and symbols of major faiths and can describe key features of worship. By the end of Year 11, pupils know that members of religious faith groups are guided by their beliefs in making moral decisions, for example, in maintaining the sanctity of life. Pupils develop their own beliefs and values and learn how to express them, while respecting the views of others. Higher attainers can describe the similarities and differences between different faiths; lower attainers can describe basic facts, but find it difficult to give reasons for their views. Standards in the optional full GCSE course in Year 10 are below average. There are particular weaknesses in their recording and organisation of written work and their achievement is unsatisfactory. There is no full course group in Year 11 this year.

128. Teaching is satisfactory and leads to satisfactory learning by the end of Years 9 and 11. Lessons are well planned and innovative and creative activities motivate pupils and help their learning. Teachers pose challenging questions and get pupils thinking for themselves. There is good teamwork with teaching assistants in some lessons and this helps pupils with special educational needs to achieve satisfactorily. There are regular visitors from faith groups to help pupils to gain a wider perspective on religious belief. However, teaching is inconsistent, because there are not enough specialist teachers who have the breadth of subject knowledge to explain and illustrate with a range of examples. Teachers have not used the exciting range of resources available through information and communication technology to support teaching and learning. There is no consistent push across the department on literacy skills and written work rarely provides a secure record of what pupils know. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Marking of work is irregular and does not tell pupils what they have to do to improve.

129. Learning is satisfactory for most pupils in all years. In lessons seen, pupils worked effectively on their own and in groups. Lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 however, find it difficult to concentrate for an hour and in a few lessons learning was affected by the unsatisfactory behaviour of some pupils.

130. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory. The subject leader has a clear vision, high aspirations and is a good teaching role model. The management of religious education is unsatisfactory. Progress was significantly affected last year by the long-term ill health of the subject leader and exacerbated because there is no other full time specialist teacher. Several teachers from other departments contribute to the teaching of religious education. They are experienced or well qualified in their own areas, but do not have the subject knowledge or time to lead improvements. The department did not undertake rigorous monitoring and evaluation of performance and there was limited progress in developing schemes of work.

131. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The move to a short course GCSE for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 was a good improvement and religious education continues to make a good contribution to pupils' personal development by helping them to develop personal values, to respect others and to appreciate diversity. However, weaknesses remain in the lack of specialist staff, inconsistencies in teaching, weak assessment and little use of information and communication technology. The scheme of work does not give sufficient guidance for teachers of pupils with specific needs, for example, those who are gifted and talented.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning enable pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy practical work and make quality products.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Very good classroom relationships promote learning.
- The poor accommodation is having a detrimental effect on standards.
- Provision for ICT particularly Computer Aided Design and Computer Aided Manufacture (CAD/CAM) is inadequate.

Commentary

133. Pupils enter the school with below average standards. Teachers' Assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show pupils achieving standards which are above average. Standards in the current work seen in Years 7 to 9 are average, representing good achievement and improvement. Pupils acquire a good understanding of the design process over the three years. They are able to design and make products and work safely with a range of tools and materials. Pupils enjoy making quality products, take a pride in their work and acquire useful practical skills. They are less enthusiastic about the design element of the subject and a significant number of folders contain unfinished work. Pupils find difficulty in generating a range of design ideas and weak sketching skills lower the standard of design work.

134. GCSE results in 2003 are average compared to all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining both A*-C and A*-G grades is average. Pupils achieved grades in line with their other subjects. Results show improvement over a number of years. The performance of girls and boys is similar to that seen nationally and represents a significant improvement in boys' performance.

135. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are average overall, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Pupils in graphic products in Year 11 however, are underachieving, because they are poorly motivated. This has not been the case previously. Pupils manufacture products to at least a satisfactory standard and a high proportion of very well made products were seen. Coursework folios show pupils are good at undertaking and analysing research related to their topic. Pupils are competent to use ICT, but are unable to use it as a tool when working independently because of inadequate provision. This applies in all material areas, but currently is most apparent in graphics because pupils cannot produce work to the expected standard. Specifications need to be more sharply focused to enable pupils to write better final evaluations. Planning the making and knowledge of Industrial applications are weaker aspects of coursework. Pupils have numeracy and literacy skills which are sufficient for subject requirements.

136. Teaching and learning are good. In the lessons seen, all the teaching was at least satisfactory and a significant amount of good and very good teaching was observed. The work is well planned to ensure progression and courses are suited to the needs and interests of pupils. Well produced support materials are effective in raising standards. A range of teaching strategies are used. These mean the needs of all pupils are met and improvements in literacy are promoted. Good classroom relationships have a positive effect on learning and on attitude and behaviour both of which are good. Assessment is good and pupils know what needs to improve. Pupils work well independently, in pairs and in groups. Displays of work celebrate achievement and show others what is achievable.

137. Good leadership and management give clear educational direction towards raising standards which is shared by a team who work well together. Technicians make a valuable contribution to the work of the department. Learning support assistants are effective in lessons where they occur, but are not always available in lessons where they could make a difference. Departmental resources are limited by a tight budget and provision for CAD/CAM is inadequate. The accommodation is poor and limits the type and scope of the work. It is almost impossible for pupils to undertake multi-material projects in resistant materials. Whole classes in food technology cannot do practical work at the

same time. The accommodation does not inspire pupils to opt for the subject in Year10 and contrasts sharply with the excellent provision for art due to be commissioned. There are a number of health and safety issues related to the design and condition of the building.

138. Improvement in standards since the previous inspection is good and has been most rapid in the last three years. There has been only limited progress, however, with regard to resources and accommodation which were criticised in the previous report.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- The standards that pupils achieve at GCSE are very high.
- The quality of teaching and learning on GCSE courses is very good.
- Pupils have had limited opportunities to use ICT and to work in three dimensions.
- Intervals between formal assessments are long, so that pupils are not clear about how well they are achieving and how they can improve.

Commentary

140. GCSE examination results in 2003 were very high and the best in the school. Almost half of the very large entry gained a grade A* or A. Many more girls than boys studied the subject; they significantly outperformed them. Standards are rising.

141. By Year 9 pupils reach standards that match national expectations. They achieve well as they follow a structured course, which focuses on establishing and developing art-making skills. Pupils with SEN achieve similarly well. Drawing is particularly well developed and most pupils can draw fluently and with confidence. The use of sketchbooks in Year 7 makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' work, though not in Years 8 and 9. Pupils' three-dimensional work and their use of ICT are currently less developed.

142. The large numbers of pupils who choose to study art and design to GCSE reach very high standards. Their achievement is very good, including those pupils with SEN. The well-structured course ensures that all pupils meet examination demands. There is strength in two-dimensional techniques. Sketchbooks are very well used to record information and images and to develop ideas. The use of ICT is less developed than other techniques. Year 10 pupils are achieving good standards on the newly introduced GCSE Photography course.

143. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall; it is very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are expert and knowledgeable. They use demonstration very well to teach or reinforce techniques so that pupils become increasingly competent. Work is well planned and very well structured to support the progress of pupils of all capabilities. The quality of ongoing and informal assessments is good but the intervals between formal assessments are long. This means that pupils are not always clear about how well they are doing and how they can improve.

144. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject manager has a clear vision for its future development and has played a leading role in the successful bid for specialist school status. The work of the department is very well monitored and there is a successful focus on raising standards.

145. Current accommodation is unsatisfactory and has limited the opportunities for three-dimensional work. Very limited access to appropriate equipment has limited pupils' use of ICT. These shortcomings will be soon resolved as the subject moves into newly refurbished and equipped accommodation. With a continued rise in standards, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Specialist status for the visual arts

146. The school was recently awarded specialist school status for the visual arts. An extensively refurbished building will soon provide generous studio facilities. The project has been well managed by senior managers and is nearing completion. There is wide support and involvement from partner primary schools and the community. This is reflected in the steering group which continues to monitor progress. Most of the targets for the first year have been met after two terms. A new GCSE photography course is already equipped and running and two more courses will run from September. There have been successful workshops days with visiting artists, and projects involving partner primary schools. An increased visual awareness is permeating the whole school and appropriate training will be offered to other staff in the summer term.

Music

147. Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very well qualified, extremely devoted and hard-working music staff is a very valuable asset. The exceptionally strong leadership, commitment and vision of the head of department promotes good teaching, learning and achievement that contributes to rapidly improving standards.
- There is very good, detailed planning and delivery of a broad, balanced curriculum for music.
- There are excellent opportunities for curriculum enrichment, including the very good work done by the 10 visiting music teachers who cater for some 10 per cent of the school's population.

Commentary

148. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show standards to be improving rapidly. Work in class confirms this and augurs very well for continuing rising standards in the future, especially given the very low attainment in music upon entry in Year 7. Results of small, but rapidly increasing, numbers of candidates in GCSE music are very good, especially given pupils' prior levels of attainment.

149. On entry to the school, pupils' standards of attainment in music are very far below average; often far less than national expectations of standards expected by the end of Key Stage 1. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show pupils' standards are only slightly below average, representing very good achievement, although some pupils still have difficulty with some important musical concepts. The majority have greater confidence in singing and playing both as individuals and in larger groups. The focus of pupils' attention, especially when listening critically and analytically to music, is improving significantly and provides a secure, if not yet sufficiently broad and deep foundation, for those rapidly increasing numbers who elect to follow GCSE courses. Much remedial work remains to be done in Year 10 as in Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 11, pupils' musical skills are further improved. Standards and achievement are both very good.

150. Teaching and learning are good, overall. They are never less than satisfactory and ordinarily good or very good with some outstanding features, e.g. Years 10 and 11 GCSE coursework, the development of individual's skills and their application in extracurricular activity, the particularly good and developing use made of ICT. In all year groups, the impact of very well qualified teachers and expert musicians is very clear in the detailed planning, preparation and presentation of lessons. Teachers' very high expectations of pupils' and pupils' engagement with music in performing,

composing and critical listening is characterised by unusual levels of energy and dynamism, coupled with sensitivity to the needs of individuals. This engenders very positive attitudes, behaviour and attention to the task in hand by pupils and pupils who clearly value their music lessons highly. Lapses in such very high standards are rare and then very well managed by the teachers. Consequently, every lesson observed had positive outcomes, especially in the high levels of achievement seen. Ten very expert visiting music teachers support the permanent staff, catering for voice, strings, woodwind, brass, percussion, piano or electronic keyboard and acoustic or electric guitar lessons provided for some 10 per cent of the school's population. The department also shares with others the benefit of one technical and three learning support assistants. Music staff and pupils demonstrate their enjoyment of music making and their commitment to the life of the whole school by their regular involvement in an exceptionally rich range of instrumental and vocal ensembles. They frequently perform in school concerts, shows, drama productions and further a-field in the local community at local primary schools, performing carols or other seasonal music and presenting concerts in the locality.

151. The department is exceptionally well led with very clear vision of musical educational priorities and unusually high levels of commitment. Management is good. The curriculum is broad, balanced and rich in its cultural and stylistic variety. However, it is constrained by available time and accommodation. It is regularly reviewed, revised and refined as changing circumstances demand. Planning for improvement is very good. The department makes significant contributions to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils, embodying the all-inclusive and very good ethos of the school. The very high expectations of teachers are continuing to improve standards rapidly.

152. There has been very good progress since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

153. Provision for physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in public examinations are above the national average.
- Teaching of examination classes is good.
- Time allocation for core physical education in Years 10 and 11 is insufficient to provide curricular breadth and balance and to address health and fitness.
- Access to ICT across the department and especially for GCSE pupils is unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory for dance.

Commentary

154. Results in GCSE physical education are well above average, but more boys than girls are taking the course. Projected numbers for 2004 indicate a more even gender split. Boys perform better than girls in the practical work, but girls do better in theory. GCSE dance is still below national average, but standards are rising as are numbers, but to date no boys are taking the course.

155. Standards seen during the inspection in GCSE are broadly in line with national expectation with most pupils achieving well. No Year 11 examination or core lessons in Years 10 and 11 were observed.

156. In 2003, Year 9 standards were above national average on teacher assessment showing a significant upward trend in the past three years. In Years 7 to 9, standards seen during the inspection were below average, but varied. There was some underachievement, especially amongst the more reluctant and lower attaining girls. Some of the most capable Year 9 pupils were not at the expected standard as a result of the failure to acquire and master basic skills earlier. Achievement is unsatisfactory at this level.

157. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching, especially in examination classes where activities are tightly focused and develop skills, with time on task to consolidate learning. Staff work together well, provide a range of expertise and give willingly of their time to run a variety of extra curricular activities. Learning in some lessons could be improved by a closer match of activities to the ability of the pupils. Lessons have a strong emphasis on acquiring and developing, with little attention to knowledge and understanding of health related fitness although in some lessons pupils take responsibility for their own warm-ups or leading groups. There are limited opportunities to select and apply skills and to evaluate and improve performance. Lessons are predominately whole class teaching with no differentiation by task or outcome which would challenge the more able and raise their standards of performance.

158. There have been two different subject leaders and significant staffing changes since the last inspection. The current subject leader, new in post this year, has made a good start in establishing a team spirit and a pooling of experience. Much detailed work has been undertaken, from a low base, to put in place a subject handbook and to update schemes of work to link more closely to the four strands and to include citizenship. The newly qualified teacher brings many strengths to the department and has successfully taken over the organisation of GCSE dance.

159. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have two hours per week curricular time providing breadth and balance. In core lessons in Years 10 and 11, curricular provision is below national expectation with provision focused currently on more recreational activity. This is being addressed to make the activities more rigorous with skill development. Accommodation is satisfactory, but disparate. A designated dance area, although part of earlier plans, has not been provided and classes can be rather nomadic. Whilst there is a designated classroom for theory work, it needs refurbishing to make it fit for purpose and networked so that pupils can access ICT to improve their learning.

160. Since the previous inspection in April 1998, but mainly over the last three years, improvement in physical education has been satisfactory.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

161. Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching helps pupils develop good attitudes to work.
- Teachers have good knowledge of modern commerce which raises standards.
- There are supportive relationships with pupils, whose progress is well monitored.
- Pupils achieve well.

Commentary

162. Pupils' standards on entry at Year 10 are average. By the end of Year 10 they are slightly above average. Most pupils gain in confidence during Year 11 and the standard of their work by the end of that year is above average. GNVQ results in 2003 were above average. Pupils are currently on a GCSE course. Recent examination results produced well above average A* to C grades. The clear assessment strategy used and the positive attitudes shown by most pupils cause their learning to be of a good quality. Boys have out-performed girls. Pupils make good progress as they move from Year 10 to Year 11. Writing is improving. There are a few errors in some scripts in the use of standard English. Teachers are aware of these mistakes and set about remedying them.

163. The teaching and learning are good. The key skills of communication and number are taught. Teaching is inclusive, ensuring that all pupils are challenged and supported effectively. In most lessons, all pupils are involved. Those with learning needs are provided with extra support. This means that these pupils progress at about the same rate as other pupils in the class. Pupils are

taught to think and write analytically. They know about profit and loss accounts. Pupils are aware of current economic trends. All pupils receive oral and written feedback targeted at improving their work. Pupils need to show more independence in their research, particularly that undertaken at home. Teachers expect pupils to be engaged in their own learning and to contribute some originality in their writing. Not all do so. Group work is well structured and it is generally productive. A variety of tasks are normally introduced so that pace and momentum are maintained. As a result of this effective teaching and the positive attitudes of most pupils, plus their hard work, learning is good.

164. Overall, leadership and management are very good. Leadership is very good. Management is good. The teacher in charge of business education is hard working and well informed about modern commercial practice. All work in classrooms and outside visits are monitored for effectiveness. A variety of strategies are used to assess the quality of learning. Planning is good and effective. High expectations are communicated to pupils who respond accordingly. Routines are established which support the efficient provision of business training. There has been improvement in business education over time.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

165. Provision in citizenship is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is very effective.
- Teaching is mainly good.
- Pupils' files are well presented and indicate good understanding.
- There is some repetition of tasks/topics across year groups.
- Successful role-play received standing ovation.

Commentary

166. The foundations for teaching citizenship have been laid firmly. There are clear programmes of study within which a good programme for PSHE is included.

167. Standards are at least in line with expectations. However, effective assessment procedures are not in place, following the national picture. Guide lines are awaited on this. Pupils' achievements are good, including those with special educational needs and EAL. Pupils gain good knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, the Children's Charter and the parliamentary system. They are becoming informed citizens through their exposure to citizenship studies. They investigate the idea of a school community, the work of magistrates and the process of law, including the jury system. Under the PSHE programme, they learn about sexual health, drugs misuse and implications of bullying.

168. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers manage groups well and take time to review ideas. Pupils in Years 7 to 9, learn how to be good neighbours. Teachers are enthusiastic and animated, their pace is brisk; they use a variety of teaching styles to cater for the different style of learning to which individuals respond. Older pupils have opportunities for paired discussion on matching a sentence to a crime. Their response was thoughtful, although rather passive. In another lesson, pupils demonstrated an increased knowledge of criminal law. They learned well the elements of arrest, summons and sentence. Pupils present their work well. Their commentaries indicate that they understand the topics and that they have thought out opinions which have been discussed.

169. Leadership and management are very good. A clear direction is evident and is supported by detailed documentation and pupils' work. The management of assessment has still to be

addressed. A specialist team is evolving slowly. Because the subject is new, some overlap exists between the tasks allotted to different year groups. The department is particularly proud, and rightly so, of its invitation to Whitehall to perform a "citizenship role-play". This resulted in four pupils with learning difficulties gaining a standing ovation for their efforts. The introduction of GCSE short course will add status to the subject.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
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	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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