

INSPECTION REPORT

WARLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Oldbury

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 104011

Headteacher: Mr J Martin

Lead inspector: Mr R Drew

Dates of inspection: 1 – 5 March 2004

Inspection number: 258846

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	970
School address:	Pound Road Oldbury West Midlands
Postcode:	B68 8NE
Telephone number:	0121 544 7521
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Ash
Date of previous inspection:	12th January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Warley High School is an 11 to 16 comprehensive school serving the district of Warley in the urban West Midlands. With 970 pupils, its size is broadly average. Eighty-two per cent of its pupils are white and the remainder represent several ethnic minority communities, particularly Asian (Indian) and Black (Caribbean and mixed race). While about 7 per cent of pupils use English as an additional language none is at an early stage of language acquisition. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs (SEN) register at 18 per cent is now broadly average, though in previous years it has been over 40 per cent. On balance pupils are disadvantaged socially and economically and, according to national test results in their primary schools, enter the school with well below average prior attainment. The school has recently acquired specialist sports college status, having already gained Artsmark, Investors in People and Sports Coordinator status.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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11975	T McIntosh-Clarke	Team inspector	Music
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good and effective school, improving rapidly. Pupils' achievement or long-term progress is very good because teaching and learning are very good and leadership and management very successful. Spending is broadly average so the school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is very good and standards are rising rapidly across the school.
- The headteacher's leadership is excellent, supported by very good leadership and management from other key staff.
- Teaching and learning are very good, with examples of excellence in several areas.
- The school's ethos is very positive. Pupils are eager to learn and behave very well, responding to excellent moral guidance and mentoring from staff.
- Attainment by middle and lower attainers is much higher than that in similar schools.
- Target-setting and monitoring of academic progress are very effective.
- Achievement is particularly good in design and technology, modern languages and art and design.
- Test and examination results for high-attaining pupils at the end of Years 9 and 11 are not as high as they might be, but are improving as a result of action by the school.
- Boys' underperformance at GCSE has been very marked, a problem being tackled by the school but not yet eliminated.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is narrower than it should be and fails to meet requirements for ICT provision.
- Parents are highly supportive and there are very good links with the wider community.
- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory, despite much recent improvement.
- Spiritual development is promoted only satisfactorily.

The school has improved very substantially since the inspection of 1998. It has dealt well with the key issues raised at that time. In addition, standards have risen noticeably, facilities are far better and expectations amongst pupils, staff and parents have been transformed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good. Pupils begin with well below average standards, but they improve rapidly. By the end of Year 9, English, mathematics and science test results match national averages. Trends over the last few years have been strongly upwards, with results improving at a faster rate than nationally, confirmed by standards seen during the inspection. Most other subjects match national levels of attainment, indicating very good gains across Years 7 to 9. Achievement is particularly good in art, design and technology, modern languages, history and geography, but is only satisfactory in ICT, hampered by limited access to facilities. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Results are currently below average but are rising steadily. Future targets are challenging, but pupils are working at the levels required to meet them, which would substantially close the gap between school and national standards. CSE/GNVQ results are considerably higher than at the time of the previous inspection. Lower and middle attainers make very good progress. Higher attainers made less progress in the past but now achieve well, confirming the recent sharp rise in A* to C passes. Achievement is particularly good in art, design and technology, modern languages and history. Pupils with special educational needs make good overall progress. Achievement by gifted pupils is satisfactory, but an increasing range of strategies is now in place to raise their standards. Boys underachieve at GCSE by more than the national margin and black pupils collectively reach slightly lower levels than nationally. The school has taken remedial action on both issues, but it is not yet possible to judge their impact.

Pupils' personal qualities are developed very well by the school. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. **The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very successfully.** Pupils receive very effective personal support and guidance. Moral and social guidance and the school's mentoring of many individual pupils' progress are particularly impressive features of its work.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided is good. Teaching and learning, and the support and guidance pupils receive are all very good and the curriculum is satisfactory overall.

Teaching and learning are very good. During the inspection, teaching and learning were very good in a significant proportion of lessons and excellent teaching was seen in several lessons in different subjects. Unsatisfactory teaching was minimal. Teachers are consistently very good at encouraging and involving pupils and excellent at insisting on high standards of behaviour. Lessons are well planned. Pupils are eager to learn, apply themselves very well and behave particularly well. There is impressive teaching and learning in all subjects, with both being consistently very good in art, design and technology, English, history and modern languages. Teaching in citizenship is satisfactory.

On balance, **the curriculum is satisfactory.** Across Years 7 to 9 it is good. In Years 10 and 11 there are strengths but the curriculum fails to meet ICT requirements and has limited vocational provision. However, the school has already begun to counteract these shortcomings. There are very successful extra-curricular activities for all year groups. The accommodation hinders the efforts of several departments to improve provision and raise standards.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality is very good. Leadership by the headteacher is excellent; other senior staff provide very good support and middle management is good. Since his arrival in 1999, the headteacher's vision and energy have transformed the school. New strengths, especially a determination to raise academic standards, have been added to existing ones, such as care for pupils. Staff and pupils now work to entirely new, higher, expectations and standards are rising as a result. The school is very effectively managed, with efficient, imaginative planning and very thorough monitoring procedures. Governors are effective: they show a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and act well as critical friend to the headteacher and his colleagues. They fulfil most statutory duties well, but not those regarding ICT and the act of worship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils think very highly of this school, expressing an unusually high level of satisfaction with every aspect of its work, both at the well-attended parents meeting and through the questionnaires to which so many responded.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Pursue the current focus on raising the standards amongst higher attainers, including those deemed gifted, so that their performance at GCSE matches national levels of A* to C passes.
- Eliminate boys' underachievement by monitoring existing strategies and introducing new ones.
- Actively seek improvements in accommodation and resources in the library, science, music, drama, media studies, geography and physical education and in the fabric and decorative order of large areas of the campus.
- Widen the range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and improve the teaching of ICT across the curriculum, in line with the school's existing plans.
- Promote greater scope for spiritual development in lessons and through assemblies and tutorials.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Extend ICT provision in Years 10 and 11 and provide a daily act of collective worship for pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils achieve very well. They currently reach standards that match national averages at Year 9 and are just below average at Year 11. These pupils have progressed very well from much lower than average standards when they first entered the school. Girls reach higher standards than boys, especially in Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall achievement across Years 7 to 11 is very good.
- Results in core subject (English, mathematics and science) tests in Year 9 have risen sharply to match national averages. Achievement in these and other subjects in Years 7 to 9 far exceeds local and national rates.
- GCSE/GNVQ results are rising and the school has set itself challenging targets; work seen during the inspection indicates these are attainable.
- GCSE results indicate very good achievement by middle and lower attainers, with attainment for these groups already in line with the national average for all schools.
- At GCSE, pupils achieve better in art and design, design and technology, German, history, food technology and physical education than in their other subjects.
- Test and examination results for high-attaining pupils at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are not as high as they might be, but are improving as a result of action by the school.
- While improving steadily, GCSE results are below average overall; in science, English literature, mathematics, ICT and religious studies, results are lower than pupils gain in their other subjects.
- Boys reach lower standards than girls at GCSE and by more than the national margin.

Commentary

1. Pupils enter the school with prior attainment that is, on balance, well below average. In previous years, this deficit has been even more marked. However, by the end of Year 9, results match national ones in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science (see table below), indicating that their progress is very good in lessons and is matched by equally good long-term achievement. At the end of Year 11, results, while below the national average for all schools, match those for similar schools. These pupils had low levels of attainment at the end of Year 9 so have achieved well across Years 10 and 11. This essentially reflects the high expectations placed on pupils, the very effective teaching and very good monitoring systems now typical of the school. Monitoring involves a great many pupils thought liable to under-achieve in mentoring programmes which boost their confidence and improve their study skills. The outcomes are very beneficial.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.5 (31.9)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	34.8 (33.8)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	33.0 (32.7)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 184 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Standards have risen in Years 7 to 9 at a much faster rate than nationally, especially amongst middle and lower attainers. The proportion of level 5s gained, as well as the average scores in all three core subjects, has risen since the previous inspection, but particularly since 2000. Other subjects have also improved noticeably in recent years, especially modern languages and religious education. The whole school has

acquired new urgency and skill in the issue of raising standards, prompted by the current headteacher's new priorities, strongly supported by existing heads of subject, who have been quick to respond, and by very good new appointments in, for example, science and modern languages.

- GCSE/GNVQ results at the end of Year 11 are rising at an increasing rate. Those for 2003 were the best the school has had; targets for 2004 and 2005 would take standards up to national levels for pupils who began with well below average attainment. Work seen during the inspection shows that those in Years 10 and 11 are working at the standards required to reach such targets. This is a marked improvement on standards at the time of the previous inspection, and indicates the effective contribution of setting challenging goals and using assessment data to monitor and direct progress.

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	40 (33)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	89 (90)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	30.1 (31.0)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 183 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- In some subjects, achievement is particularly good. While progress is good overall, pupils currently show very good gains in their learning in art and design, design and technology, history and modern languages. In recent GCSE examinations in art and design, design and technology, German, history, food technology, physical education and music, results are better than pupils reach in their other subjects. These subjects have very effective leadership and have also acquired consistency and high quality in teaching and strong expertise in monitoring pupils' progress. At the time of the last inspection, standards in science were a source of particular concern, since they involved all pupils and were very much below average in Year 9 tests and at GCSE. Work seen during the inspection shows a marked improvement, confirming the rising trend in recent Year 9 results and indicating that GCSE targets closer to national levels in science are being met by current Year 11 pupils.
- Some groups make particularly effective progress. The school's A* to G results at GCSE show that middle and lower attainers have long equalled the standards reached by such pupils in all schools, and the gains they make in Years 10 and 11 are usually very good. The same groups generally match teachers' predications made for them in Year 9 tests. Higher-attaining pupils have improved in recent years but not to the same degree and do not do as well as they might in Year 9 tests and GCSE results. In recent core subject tests, especially in mathematics, and to some extent science, too many of the most able pupils in Year 9 have not reached the levels predicted for them. At GCSE, the proportion of A* to C passes is below the national level for all schools, and until 2003 was below that for similar schools. Less than half the national proportion of A* passes were gained in 2003. Work seen during the inspection showed that this tendency was still present, although declining because of actions being taken by the school. Gifted and talented pupils already achieve especially well in art and design, where they benefit from individualised learning programmes and from contact with a sculptor in residence. Much has also been done to analyse causes and take remedial action, and the school's gifted and talented programme is very well organised and extensive. Overall, however, it has not yet had time to have the impact it seeks, however, so improvement is still required.
- Boys underperform in Year 9 tests but by less than the national margin. At GCSE, however, it is by a wider than usual margin. The school has put in place a wide range of strategies to counter this problem:

single-sex teaching groups; classroom styles that emphasise practical involvement

and heavy use of ICT; and the mentoring of underachieving pupils and those who are badly motivated. These strategies are helping to improve provision for boys, as confirmed by interim results for the current Year 11.

7. Only recently has the school begun to analyse its results by ethnic group. These show patterns which broadly match national performance at GCSE, but the school's Asian (Indian) pupils do marginally better than the average for their ethnic group. Both black and white pupils perform less well than nationally. The school has plans in place to pursue analysis further and take action on any important findings. Similarly, there is insufficient data to distinguish the progress made by pupils with English as an additional language from that made by pupils in general, but action on this issue is already in hand.
8. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They achieve well in many areas. For example, they gain GCSE grades at A* to C in some subjects, including art and design, design and technology, and physical education. They also make good gains in improving their reading, sometimes making two years progress in less than one year. Pupils with statements of special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set at their annual reviews. These include behavioural, social and educational targets. There is a need for additional assistants, however, because pupils have no support in many lessons where it would help learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance and punctuality have improved and are now satisfactory. Attitudes and behaviour, including the incidence of exclusions, are very good. Pupils' personal development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Behaviour is very good as a result of excellent strategies to achieve high standards.
- The school promotes good relationships and racial harmony very well and relationships are very good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong, and of the responsibilities of living in a community.
- Insufficient opportunities are planned to develop pupils' spiritual awareness.

Commentary

9. Pupils' attitudes to school and to learning are very good. In many lessons, they show a desire to learn and to do well. They are keen to participate in activities outside of their timetabled lessons. Pupils of all abilities who were spoken to during the inspection expressed very positive views about their school. They feel that their views matter and that staff are genuinely interested in helping them to achieve their best. They are very well behaved, both in lessons and as they move around the school between lessons, at break times and in the dining hall. Relationships between groups of pupils and between pupils and staff are very good. Generally, pupils collaborate well together and mutual encouragement is often evident in, for example, physical education. Friendships and teachers were cited as some of the best things about coming to this school. Pupils feel safe and secure and there is very little bullying. Any that does occur is dealt with swiftly and fairly. The minority of pupils who feel less positive about school and whose attitude or behaviour fails to reach the high standards expected are well supported. The use of the Learning Support Centre, Inclusion Room and involvement of learning mentors is very effective. Exclusions are very low for a school of this size.
10. Pupils learn mature and responsible attitudes at school and benefit from the very good role models that staff provide. They know how to behave without adult direction; pupils working off-site at a public fitness centre worked alongside members of the public in a mature and sensible fashion. Pupils displayed excellent moral awareness in a discussion about the Berlin wall, and the morality of dividing a city. In the best lessons, they work with great self-confidence, purposefully and thoughtfully, and achieve well.

For example, in drama, pupils analysed performances and applied independent thought to develop their dramatic techniques, with limited intervention from their teacher.

11. Pupils are encouraged to become socially responsible by, for example, training as “Buddies” to befriend junior pupils when they start at the school. Others take responsibility as prefects, or members of school council. Year 8 pupils who act as receptionists show great thoughtfulness for the needs of visitors and undertake their duties seriously.
12. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures in a variety of ways, often through discussion in religious education, history and citizenship. In art and design, they look at work of different artists from a range of cultures and apply new ideas to their own work. In music and drama, they participate in performances and concerts, both within the school and with young musicians from other schools.
13. Opportunities are often missed when spiritual awareness could be promoted. When this is explicitly planned for, pupils respond very well. For example, in art and design, their consideration of natural forms enabled pupils to achieve some beautiful pieces in pottery. In science, they considered global warming and showed a good understanding of the issues surrounding MMR vaccination. Assemblies, although sometimes reflective, are not used well enough to support spiritual development. Pupils attend a short assembly only once or twice a week, and the school does not meet its statutory requirement for acts of collective worship. Tutor periods are not sufficiently well used to promote personal development; although they may deal with moral and social issues of school life, little is done to promote spiritual or cultural development.

Attendance

Attendance is above the average rate for secondary schools in the local education authority and is now in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is in line with the national norm. Procedures to monitor and improve attendance have been tightened up over the past year and it continues to improve. Punctuality is satisfactory. Pupils arrive promptly for lessons, but too many arrive during the first ten minutes of the day, missing much of the registration period.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	8.0	School data :	0.5
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Black or Black British – Caribbean

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
802	3	1
40	0	1
28	1	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are very good. The formal curriculum is satisfactory and there is a very good range of extra curricular activities.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning have improved dramatically since the previous inspection and are now very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall teaching quality is very good, and there are instances of excellent teaching.
- Pupils are eager to learn: their attitudes are very good, which greatly assists their progress in learning.
- Teachers' relationships with pupils are very positive. Staff show great skill in encouraging and involving pupils, while insisting on the highest standards of behaviour in lessons,
- Teaching and learning are particularly good in several subjects, namely art and design, modern languages, design and technology, history and English.
- While teachers use medium- and long-term target-setting very well, day-to-day assessment in lessons is only satisfactory.
- Teachers show good awareness of the specific learning needs of boys, gifted and talented pupils, ethnic minority pupils and those with special educational needs.
- While many strategies have recently been put in place to help gifted and talented and ethnic minority pupils realise their full potential, these goals have yet to be met.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 143 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7 (5%)	53 (37%)	50 (35%)	29 (20%)	3 (2%)	0	0

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

14. Teaching and learning in the school are very good. Of the lessons seen, the quality was at least satisfactory in 98 per cent and at least very good in 42 per cent and included some quite excellent teaching in a minority of lessons across several subjects. Since the proportion of satisfactory teaching and learning in 1998 was only 85 per cent, with very good quality in less than 20 per cent, there has been a very marked improvement since the previous inspection. The headteacher and senior colleagues have placed much emphasis on analysing ways to improve teaching and learning and on ensuring that new approaches are followed closely. As a result, teachers' desire to raise standards has been given new impetus and is constantly encouraged, directed and supported. The vast majority of lessons now have a very clear and effective structure; pace is good; there is a good awareness of the targets to which pupils are working, challenging and supporting the great majority of pupils.
15. Attitudes to learning at the time of the previous report were mixed, with too little commitment from a large proportion of pupils and significant unsatisfactory behaviour in class and around school. Pupils also lacked awareness of their own potential. The current headteacher made it a priority on his arrival in 1999 to establish positive attitudes, pride in the school and commitment to learning. Eagerness to learn is now a most distinctive feature. Attitudes and behaviour in class are very good, study skills are good and pupils are very well informed of the levels to which they should aspire. This improvement stems from the fact that across school life in general there are clear, unambiguous guidelines, a consistent application of policy, constant encouragement of pupils and very close cooperation with parents. Equally, one of the strongest features of teaching is the consistency with which staff insist on high standards of behaviour. Pupils have grown to value this secure and positive learning environment and are choosing to support the strong work ethic that it has produced.

16. The quality of teaching and learning are particularly good overall in several subjects, notably art and design, design and technology, modern languages, history and English. All subjects have shown improvement since the last inspection, but given the weaknesses evident at that time in science and religious education, the progress made in both of these departments has been particularly marked. In all of these cases, the crucial features have been strong decisive leadership and clear and very high levels of expectation, both of pupils and colleagues. Assessment data is used well and heads of subject are particularly thorough and rigorous in their monitoring and support of teaching.
17. Teachers are analysing and trialling strategies to get boys more actively involved in lessons and more effective in consolidating and recalling their knowledge. Lessons are increasingly building in particular tasks for gifted and talented pupils and techniques for extending their skills and knowledge. These pupils are also supported by a growing out-of-lessons programme. A good start has been made recently on seeking ways to raise the achievement of some groups of ethnic minority pupils. However, these are all areas in which teaching has yet to reach produce the improvement it seeks and further understanding and action are required.
18. While the school uses medium- and long-term target-setting very well, day-to-day assessment in lessons is only satisfactory. Teachers vary considerably in their practice from very effective to broadly satisfactory. The best lessons include several very valuable sessions of testing of previous knowledge and reinforcing current points of learning through follow-up questions. These lessons also point pupils towards aspects of their learning at that particular moment which could help them reach their longer-term goals. Other teachers use these strategies intermittently and can miss opportunities to incorporate into each lesson the small-scale steps needed to maximise progress in learning.
19. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good. Support assistants are very effective, encouraging and maintaining good levels of interest and concentration. Individual educational programmes give useful advice to teachers, who often show a good understanding of how to set work at just the right level. In a small number of lessons, however, there are not enough support assistants for the needs of the group, and this restricts learning to a level that is no better than satisfactory.
20. Teachers are aware of which pupils are registered as gifted and talented and almost all ensure that they are provided with sufficiently challenging work. Each department has a teacher with special responsibility for gifted and talented pupils. These teachers meet each half term to share good practice.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, with many strengths and some limitations.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 7 to 9, all requirements are met and the curriculum links very well with pupils' experiences in primary school.
- Very good quality staffing ensures that the curriculum is taught and supported well.
- The enrichment programme of extra-curricular activities is very good.
- The provision for personal, social and health education is very good.
- Careers work is well organised.
- Not all the aspects of the ICT National Curriculum are covered.

Commentary

21. There is a detailed policy that provides a clear philosophy and rationale for curricular organisation. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is broad and all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught. By not including drama, the school has missed an opportunity to extend the curricular opportunities for all pupils. The use of a 'collapsed day' is a useful device and enables the pupils to experience different activities such as the REAL game in Year 8. There are very good curricular links with primary schools through the excellent work with Year 4, 5 and 6 pupils, and this helps pupils make a very effective start to their studies in Year 7.
22. Many of the arrangements for Years 10 and 11 are good. There is a good range of GCSE courses, including child development, drama, media studies and statistics. In addition, five pupils are studying GCSE Latin outside the normal school timetable. There is some provision for vocational work through Applied GCSEs in leisure and tourism and business studies. A significant proportion of pupils study catering or construction through a link with a Further Education College. The school has well-developed plans to widen this range of vocational courses in the next school year.
23. The provision for personal, social and health education is very good. It is imaginatively and efficiently organised and given adequate time on the curriculum. It is presented to pupils in ways which allow them to contribute fully to discussions and to relate well to the issues covered.
24. Careers work is well organised in spite of the very limited accommodation. Although some work starts in Year 8, the main programme begins in Year 9 with the consideration of options and extends through Years 10 and 11. In these last two years, pupils have one lesson per week for approximately half a year. This is a short period of time, but there is a wide variety of teaching and learning styles that give pupils the opportunity to learn and develop individually and as members of a group.
25. There is very good support for learning outside the school day, with a wide range of activities. There are homework sessions, sports training and orchestra practice. A significant number of pupils take part in Buddy training and use their skills in Year 7 and in local primary schools. Every Thursday evening there are House activities. Pupils value these activities and there is a high participation rate. All Year 9 pupils interviewed were involved in after-school activity.
26. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They are educated with their peers for the great majority of time, and adaptations are made to meet the needs of individuals. For example, small groups are formed to improve literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, the groups that meet in the library before lessons are fostering a real enthusiasm for reading books. The learning support centre caters for pupils with a range of difficulties, particularly social and behavioural, and it provides a very positive and supportive learning environment.
27. Good extra-curricular arrangements for gifted and talented pupils include history master classes, an Easter special school at a local language college in French and German and study activities linked with West Bromwich Albion Football Club, such as working out profit margins and the best pricing arrangements for seating at football games.
28. However, there are a few areas where the curriculum is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, the school has not ensured that all aspects of the ICT curriculum are in place as insufficient attention is given to control technology, and several subjects do not fulfil their statutory requirements to use ICT. This was an issue at the time of the last inspection. The reduction in time for the teaching of science in Year 10 is making it hard to teach the course content as effectively as the department would like.

29. Although much improved since the last inspection, accommodation is still unsatisfactory. Geography, for example, is still housed in temporary classrooms and most of the laboratories are unsuitable for modern science teaching. The use made of the old and inadequate buildings is excellent, imaginative, and focused on the effects on pupils' learning and welfare. The state of cleanliness and maintenance of the buildings and site are a credit to those responsible.
30. Resources for learning are unsatisfactory overall, though recent increases in the finance available for materials, combined with rigorous monitoring of expenditure, have effected significant improvement. The newly re-opened library represents a significant benefit to pupils but is not yet sufficiently stocked with up-to-date books and cannot accommodate sufficient pupils. The already planned and funded increase in the numbers of computers will largely correct the present inadequacy in provision of ICT equipment.
31. The school is very well staffed, both in subject teaching areas and in support staff. Management goes to great lengths to recruit specialist staff from a wide range of sources. Non-specialist teachers are responsible for only a small proportion of teaching, in religious education and science.

Care, guidance and support

The procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. The support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development are very good. The extent to which the school seeks to involve pupils in its work and development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Induction arrangements for pupils who join in Year 7 are excellent.
- Pupils have very good opportunities to express their views.
- The buddy system contributes to a very effective support system.
- Tracking of pupils' personal development and achievements is very good.
- The first session in the day is not always used as effectively as it could be.

Commentary

32. The school is rightly proud of its positive ethos of providing an environment where all pupils, whatever their age, ability, gender, or ethnic origin, can be safe, secure and happy. Excellent induction arrangements ensure that all pupils joining the school in Year 7 have visited the school on several occasions and met members of staff and specially trained pupil "Buddies". Their needs are well known and effectively met as soon as they start at the school.
33. Very good procedures are established to deal with health and safety and child protection issues. The school deals with medical and first aid needs very well. Health matters form part of the personal, social and health education programme. An efficient meals service is provided at lunchtime. As far as the building allows, pupils with physical needs are looked after well, although access to some parts of the school is restricted.
34. Pupils have access to well-informed support, advice and guidance, securely based on monitoring. They reported that advice on making choices during Year 9 on GCSE or college courses is very helpful, and careers guidance from the school, the Connexions team and visiting college and work providers enables them to make decisions about their future with confidence. A very good computerised system has been established to monitor personal development; initially this monitors incidents so that appropriate support is provided at an early stage. As the system grows, the positive aspects of personal achievement are being added. Attendance is monitored carefully and problems identified; a system of first-day response to absence has been set up and the school works closely with the local education authority on attendance matters.

The first session of the day is used for administrative purposes, including registration, and some pupils

and tutors use this as social time. A significant minority of pupils arrive after the first bell and the sessions are not planned to provide a thoughtful start to the school day.

35. Good assessment procedures in all subjects enable the school to track achievement in all subjects. Records are analysed so that underachievement of groups and individuals can be identified. Pupils with special educational needs are identified at an early stage and good support given. Gifted pupils have been identified and strategies are being devised to ensure that these pupils reach their potential. In some subjects, where differing achievement of boys and girls was identified, separate teaching strategies have been implemented. The school is clearly committed to raising attainment and uses data well to achieve this goal. Realistic targets are set for the whole school and these are clearly communicated to pupils and parents. The Review Days with parents have been well received and pupils set targets to improve their performance in all subjects. Pupils are confident that they receive the help they need to improve the standard of their work: they know how they are doing and what they must to attain higher standards.
36. The school seeks the views of pupils through year group forums with the head teacher and senior staff, and pupils have regular opportunities to contribute to school development through the operation of the school council. An annual survey is conducted to monitor the pupils' perception of bullying; the results show a decline in the severity and number of incidents over the years. Pupils' contribution as "buddies" to school life and to the induction of new pupils is greatly appreciated by all involved and the school has gained national recognition for its work in this field.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good. The quality of links with the local community and with other schools and colleges is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The links with primary schools are excellent and enable pupils to adapt well to the school's expectations.
- Parents are provided with very good reports about their child's progress.
- Parents are very committed to helping the school.
- The school has established very effective links with other schools and colleges.
- Effective community links contribute to pupils' achievements and personal development.

Commentary

37. Parents express a high level of satisfaction with the school. A large number attended a meeting before the inspection and particularly praised the leadership and the high expectations that the school sets for their children.
38. Information provided to parents is very good, and there are ample opportunities for them to have sufficient discussion with teachers or form tutors about their child's progress. Annual progress reports are very clear and, in conjunction with the review days, enable pupils and their parents to understand what should be done to achieve more.
39. Information provided to parents of pupils who have special educational needs is also good, and a large proportion of them attend the annual reviews, which helps these pupils make progress.
40. Parents contribute well to school life by their attendance at target-setting review days and teacher consultations, as well as drama and music performances. There is a thriving parents and teacher association which organises fund-raising and social events; through these efforts

they made a very significant contribution to the school's successful bid for Sports College status. Most parents ensure that their children attend regularly and communicate well with the school using pupils' planners.

41. Parents' views are regularly sought, for example, through a survey of Year 7 parents about how well their child had settled in.
42. With other local high schools, the school has worked with local colleges to extend the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Vocational courses are studied by over a third of pupils in each year group. The shared arrangements are well managed. Links with colleges and local businesses make very effective contributions to careers education and the provision of work experience placements in Year 10. The school works effectively with the local Connexions team for post-16 choices. Members of a local church-based team called "KRUNCH" contribute to the assembly programme and a team of mentors meet weekly with pupils who benefit from this experience. A group of disabled people work in school once a week with pupils studying for an Asdan award, an experience valued by both groups and which makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.
43. The school works closely with its main feeder primary schools and has developed a very effective programme of after-school provision for pupils in Years 5 and 6. The ease with which pupils settle into high school is a result of the excellent links that have been established in this area.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good and are helping the school become increasingly successful. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is excellent.
- Management systems are very effective.
- Middle managers lead subjects well and in many cases very well.
- Leaders and managers are particularly successful at encouraging positive attitudes amongst pupils and high expectations amongst staff.
- Monitoring the school's work is carried out very effectively.
- Governors show very good knowledge of their school and are good at holding the senior managers accountable.
- Financial management is very effective.
- Governors have yet to ensure statutory compliance with ICT and the act of worship requirements.

Commentary

44. The headteacher leads the school with vision, energy and a determination to complete what he starts. The quality of his leadership is excellent. His ambition for the school is evident in every aspect of its work. It is explicit in assemblies, policy statements and all communication with parents, and pupils know that they are part of a school striving confidently towards being the "best in the borough". In his four years in the post, as well as leading by example, he has been highly successful in drawing out the best qualities of colleagues, building on existing strengths and creating very effective teamwork. While unwilling to accept less than full commitment from all staff and pupils, his praise and genuine appreciation of their efforts has ensured that the school's ethos is highly supportive as well as challenging. Pupils, parents and staff show great pride in their school.
45. Senior managers, led by the headteacher, consult well with colleagues, assess the school's needs very accurately and set clear targets for improvement. For instance, they have placed great emphasis on raising expectations in terms of academic standards and pupils' attitudes. It is also clear that the school is committed to expanding its role in the community and to further transforming its facilities. All these issues are communicated particularly well to pupils and parents, the mechanisms for achieving them are realistic and well understood and the accountability for success in each area is clearly defined. A positive feature of senior management is the high level of responsibility given to individuals who lead and manage such areas as pupil mentoring, staff development and finances with considerable independence, while still keeping colleagues closely informed of developments.

46. In addition, the headteacher and senior colleagues carry out very thorough and effective programmes of monitoring. It is this that has enabled them to know just how well teaching is developing and pupils are responding to new expectations and how likely targets are to be met. More lessons are observed than usual, with constructive advice well received. Detailed and systematic monitoring of pupils' personal and academic progress has led pupils to expect consistent support from staff and leaves them in no doubt that an equally consistent and good response from themselves is expected. Close monitoring such as this means that senior managers can refuse to accept anything less than high-quality implementation of all initiatives and, as a result, improvement is taking place at a rapid rate. Already, because of the headteacher's galvanising influence and determined teamwork, many aspects of the school have been transformed since the previous inspection.
47. Leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are good. A great deal of progress has been made since the previous inspection, and the weaknesses identified then have been effectively tackled. Induction of new staff is very effective, and there is a strong sense of teamwork in the work of the department. However, the tracking of pupil progress, and the analysis of assessment data are not used well enough to promote rates of progress that are better than good. The new Code of Practice is securely in place, and there has been sound progress made in fulfilling the requirements of the Disability Access Act 2001, although some problems remain in providing suitable access to the upper floors.
48. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is very well organised. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic. She also leads and co-ordinates gifted and talented provision for the local consortium of schools. Assessment procedures are very good as is the tracking and support given to individual pupils. This includes help and guidance from individual learning mentors if the pupils need or ask for it.
49. Thorough and effective performance management arrangements benefit the school, considerably. They are rigorous and supportive. Staff new to the school follow a very good induction programme and receive very good support. The school also makes effective and helpful contributions to the initial training of teachers. Professional development opportunities are widespread, well managed, and carefully linked to the requirements of the staff and the school.
50. Tutors and heads of subject contribute well to leadership and management across the school. They give good direction to colleagues and plan well the teaching and learning in their areas. In many cases, very good quality has been a feature for some years, for instance, in art and design, design and technology. Elsewhere, there has been a recent and very marked improvement, for example, in science, modern languages and religious education.
51. Governors carry out their duties well. They are extremely committed to the welfare of the school, have made a highly successful appointment at headship level and are very well informed about school life. Attendance at meetings is high and committees operate and communicate efficiently. The governors have insisted that senior management convince them of the wisdom of their policies and practice and have attempted to ensure that all statutory duties are fulfilled. The great majority are, but ICT provision in Years 10 and 11 has shortcomings of which they were not aware, and the act of worship requirements are not met, although improvements have been made to assemblies through the regular involvement local clergy.

Financial information

Financial management is very good. The school monitors its spending very efficiently. The school has received a complimentary audit of its finances from the LEA office. As the table below shows, it has carried above-average amounts across financial year boundaries. This has allowed the school to time its spending well. For example, extra staff have been appointed ahead of an increase in pupil numbers instead of after their arrival, and new facilities are put in place at the start of a new term, not part way through it. The school has been very successful in seeking additional funding to improve provision, particularly through gaining specialist sports college status and its sports coordinator role, but also through a range of other sources. Together, these funds and astute use of "best value" principles are allowing the school to improve rapidly its previously poor facilities.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,982,560
Total expenditure	3,006,043
Expenditure per pupil	3,168

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	264,076
Balance carried forward to the next	240,593

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good, leading to pupils learning very well.
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour play an important part in their development.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Boys' attainment is not as high as girls' attainment.
- Pupils do not read as extensively as they should.
- Computers are underused as a means of developing learning.

Commentary

52. Results of the national tests in Year 9 are average. They have improved over the last three years. They demonstrate very good achievement compared to pupils' prior attainment. Pupils achieve very well from their low levels of attainment on entry to the school.
53. Standards of Year 9 work seen during the inspection are average, confirming that pupils are achieving very well. Pupils' writing is carefully presented and imaginative. Higher attainers use a wide vocabulary, but vocabulary is limited elsewhere. Pupils are confident speakers and listen to each other respectfully. They enjoy their reading in class, but do not read sufficiently for enjoyment outside class, which limits their experiences. A contributory factor to this is the unsatisfactory nature of the library. This has now re-opened, but stocks are, as yet, uninspiring. Pupils write with understanding on Shakespeare, and high attainers explained clearly how the relationship between Macbeth and Banquo changes through, *Macbeth*. Pupils are well prepared for their Year 9 tests. Girls' attainment is higher than that of boys.
54. Results in the GCSE examinations are below average. They are better in English than in English literature, but the school enters almost all pupils for both examinations. Girls do far better than boys. More pupils than average gain grade C, but fewer than average gain grades A* to B. These results show very good achievement from pupils' prior attainment in Year 9. Pupils gain similar results in English to those gained in their other subjects, but do less well in literature.
55. Standards of Year 11 work seen during the inspection are below average, but only marginally so. Higher proportions of pupils are now attaining grades A* to B. Girls' standards are higher than are boys', but some boys are attaining very high grades. Pupils achieve well over Years 10 and 11. Higher attainers write accurately, but many lack variation in sentence structure and extensive vocabulary, which limits their expression. They analyse structure and stylistic devices in, for example, poetry, ably. Because of the wide range of attainment in the higher-attaining sets, some texts chosen for study are too limited to extend high attainers and the gifted and talented, sufficiently. Middle attainers use quotation to support their ideas well. They use paragraphs accurately. Sentences are simple, with, 'and', and 'but', used too often. Lower attainers prefer speaking and listening to writing and need much support. Their writing is lively, but inaccurate in spelling and punctuation. Their writing improved considerably when they were taught how to construct more complex sentences using, 'although'. They are hesitant readers, but understand content and character. Some have missed course work because of absence.
56. Pupils with special needs make very good progress across the school. Teachers and assistants work closely together and pupils' needs are well known. They join in well with lessons and are given much individual help.

57. Teaching and learning are very good. Management of pupils and discipline are excellent, resulting in very well-behaved pupils and classrooms that are business-like and productive. Teachers have high expectations, both of work and behaviour, and pupils try very hard to improve. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives; pupils know what they are doing and get through a lot in the lessons. Interesting and varied methods, such as the effective use of the whiteboard or lively role-play, maintain pupils' interests. Group-work is frequent and well managed. Pupils in Year 9, for example, improved their own play scripts after listening to each other's in small groups, at the same time developing confidence in reading aloud. Though computers are used well as a management and teaching tool, pupils do not use them sufficiently. Assessment is used well in many ways and pupils know how to improve their work, but teaching does not use levels sufficiently in Years 7 to 9 as a means of encouraging pupils to raise their standards.
58. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department and the second in department complement each other in their strengths. They lead a strong team who work together well as a dedicated unit to provide opportunities for all to improve. The monitoring of teaching and attainment is good. Weaknesses, such as the underachievement of boys, have been identified and various strategies put into place to try to remedy them. The department has made good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards, teaching and assessment procedures have improved and new developments in English have been successfully introduced. Computers, however, are still under-used.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Standards of literacy across the school are below average. They are improving and are average by the end of Year 9. Pupils have many opportunities to develop ideas through speaking and listening, thus improving understanding. Pupils in a Year 8 design technology lesson, for example, successfully reported their findings to the whole group. Pupils in history are encouraged to use specialist terminology regularly, thus developing oral skills well. Pupils are helped to write accurately and at length, for a variety of purposes. Important words are displayed prominently in subject areas and taught carefully. Pupils read aloud and for research in some lessons, for example, science. However, the library, though improving, is not used sufficiently and is not the stimulating environment it should be. The literacy policy has been introduced well, an improvement since the previous inspection. It is well monitored and helpfully managed. Teachers see the importance of developing pupils' literacy in their efforts to raise standards across the curriculum.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving throughout the school.
- Pupils achieve well as a result of very good teaching that promotes very positive attitudes and very high standards of behaviour.
- Very good leadership of the department means that there is a strong commitment to further improvement.
- Assessment procedures are effective in showing pupils how to improve.
- Teachers do not use the foreign language enough in their lessons and consequently pupils' speaking skills are not as well developed as they could be.

Commentary

60. GCSE results in 2003 were broadly in line with the national average after being well below average in previous years. Pupils perform better than they do in most other subjects. Girls perform better than boys. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 shows that standards match the national average.
61. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is very good. During the last two years, standards have risen to above-average levels as a result of improved teaching styles. Pupils develop a sound foundation in their use and understanding of the foreign language. Speaking skills are very well developed in situations controlled by the teacher, but pupils are less confident when required to answer questions spontaneously.
62. They continue to achieve very well in Years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 11, pupils work to standards above average. Speaking skills still lag behind their writing skills. Pupils' understanding of spoken and written language is good.
63. Teaching and learning are very good, and sometimes excellent, throughout the school. Teachers conduct their lessons at a lively pace that sustains pupils' interest. They plan their lessons very well and help pupils to develop their language skills through a wide range of appropriate activities. Pupils apply themselves to their work very well and maintain very high standards of behaviour. Teachers do not make enough use of the foreign language in everyday exchanges with their pupils. Consequently, pupils do not develop their speaking skills to the same level as their listening, reading and writing skills. Projectors and computers are used very well in lessons to help pupils develop their language learning. Teachers contribute effectively to their pupils' literacy development by making them think about patterns in language. Teaching assistants provide very good support and make an important contribution to the very good learning and achievement of pupils with special educational needs.
64. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Changes in the management of the department in the last two years have resulted in improved standards, achievement and teaching. The head of department has a very clear vision for the development of the subject. Effective monitoring has created a cohesive team that has a shared commitment to raising standards further. Assessment procedures are very good and enable pupils to know how to raise the level of their performance.
65. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. After falling sharply, standards are improving rapidly as a result of a strong emphasis placed on the use of highly effective and well-planned teaching and learning strategies.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress because very good assessment of their work tells them how they are doing and what they need to do to get better.
- Pupils learn well because of good teaching and because of their very good behaviour and attitudes.
- There has been very good improvement since the last inspection due to very good departmental leadership and management.
- Some lessons were not as clearly presented or inspirational as the majority of those observed during the inspection.

Commentary

66. Pupils' results in 2003 were average in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests and below average in GCSE at Year 11. Test results have shown an upward trend above that seen nationally over recent years. GCSE results have been broadly static. In the last two years, girls have performed better than boys, largely as a result of an effort by the teachers to develop and improve girls' confidence in mathematics. Given that the pupils come to the school with well below average mathematical skills, these results show that the pupils are achieving very well.
67. The pupils' work seen in their books and during lessons reflects this position and shows very good achievement over time as might be expected from the national test and examination results. In Year 9, more than 70 per cent of pupils are approaching or above National Curriculum level 5. They can solve linear equations algebraically and use straight line graphs to convert from one unit of currency or distance to another. In Years 10 and 11, the higher-attaining pupils use the sine and cosine rules to solve problems in trigonometry. Those who find mathematics difficult are well catered for by being entered for an examination that enables them to accrue marks towards their GCSE in stages. In general, they have developed enough skills to be able to cope in normal circumstances, although some show a degree of uncertainty when handling percentages. Almost all of those seen were clearly capable of gaining a GCSE grade. The highest attainers in Year 10 are provided with extra-curricular classes and are studying more advanced work. They can solve quadratic equations by completing the square and handle indices effectively in algebra.
68. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress, as do their peers, including those few for whom English is not the first language of the home. Help from well-trained learning support assistants contributes strongly to this progress. Teachers are aware of which pupils need extra assistance and know their pupils well, so that even when there is no extra support available achievement is usually good.
69. Talented mathematicians make good progress. They benefit from setting arrangements, which keep them fully occupied in lessons, and from schemes of work designed to cover level 8 National Curriculum in Years 7 to 11. They are entered for the national mathematics challenge competitions, which they find interesting and in which some perform very well. The department is offering an enhanced curriculum for the higher-attaining mathematicians, with an accelerated programme from Year 7 leading to higher level GCSE in Year 10 and more advanced study in Year 11.
70. Teaching is good across all years. In over two thirds of lessons good, very good and excellent teaching gives rise to secure gains in knowledge and understanding on the part of the pupils. The teachers are well qualified and know their subject very well. Lessons are thoroughly prepared and delivered at good pace so that the pupils' interest is maintained and they work productively throughout, whether individually or in groups. Teachers mark the pupils' work carefully and fully so that pupils can see what they need to do to improve. Standards of presentation and of behaviour are very good because the teachers insist that they remain so. Homework is very effective because it is regularly set and well marked.
71. Relationships between teachers and taught are very good and make a significant contribution to the quality of learning. Pupils enjoy most of their lessons, as well as improving their mathematics in them. An excellent lesson in which Year 11 pupils were taught to recognise the algebraic characteristics of a graph of a straight line was one of those observed which exemplifies this, as did a very lively lesson on angles, with very good support for pupils with special educational needs, taught to a Year 7 group. In a minority of cases, lessons are uninspiring, and, in the case of the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, lacking in clarity. The challenge for the department is to continue in their quest to raise the quality of these lessons to that of the best.

72. Mathematics makes a good contribution to pupils' improving computer skills. Good and regular use is made of the networked computer room in the department, which ensures that pupils can use spreadsheets, databases and the Internet as part of their mathematical studies. They are also taught to use graphical calculators.
73. The leadership and management of mathematics are very good. Very good use is made of test and examination data to set targets for teachers to aim at with each class. Pupils set their own targets, focusing on areas of skill and knowledge where they know they need to improve. Teachers are observed teaching and these observations lead to targets for improvement that are effective in helping to raise standards. The head of department and the teacher who coordinates Years 7 to 9 work are both very good teachers. They provide very good role models for both staff and pupils and lead by example. There is a coherence about the department's work which stems from very good departmental organisation, efficient use of meetings and from effective and continuing staff development.
74. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have risen, Teaching is better, and pupils make better progress. The leadership and management of the department are also much improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

75. Pupils' mathematical and numerical skills are below average. None is denied access to basic understanding through lack of number skill, but the speed at which pupils work and the level of sophistication is lower than that found nationally. In art and design, pupils measure and estimate the proportions of a human face and body well enough to enhance their drawing. In design and technology, they show sound competence when measuring and weighing.
76. A good contribution to improving numerical understanding is made in most areas across the curriculum. Each department has a numeracy policy. Effective staff training on various approaches to calculation means that teachers are confident in helping pupils to improve their number work. The attention paid to improving pupils' mathematical skills in science, for example, is much better than usual. Teachers do not take it for granted that the pupils can understand units of measure. They check for understanding and relate their teaching to what is done in the mathematics department and elsewhere in the school.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management are resulting in rapid improvement in all aspects of work.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and show great commitment to their studies. This is in large measure due to very good relationships with teachers, who treat pupils with unfailing respect.
- Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is good and from Years 7 to 9, it is very good.
- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- The use of ICT to increase learning opportunities is unsatisfactory.
- Both the quantity and quality of specialised accommodation are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

77. Results in the tests taken by Year 9 in 2003 matched the national averages and were above those of similar schools. Both boys and girls performed equally well. There has been steady improvement in standards over the last five years. The attainment of all pupils in Year 9, when compared to their standards on entry to the school, demonstrates very good

achievement. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicated that overall, standards at least match the

latest results. If present rates of progress are maintained, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in the Year 9 tests will be greater than in 2003.

78. The 2003 GCSE results were below the national average but matched the performance of pupils in similar schools. Girls gained better results than boys. Over recent years, there has been steady but gradual improvement. Comparison with the same pupils' attainment in Year 9 shows good achievement by boys, girls and pupils of different capabilities. Levels of attainment in the present GCSE classes indicate that the rising trend is being maintained. Standards are still below the national average but the gap is narrowing.
79. The outstanding feature of teaching is the positive atmosphere created in all lessons. Pupils respond to the obvious commitment of teachers by behaving very well and working to the best of their ability. Teachers' determination to treat pupils as individuals is evident in the detailed comments made in exercise books. As well as marking written work, pupils' success in practical work is personally acknowledged. Planning is imaginative and most lessons involve activities that encourage pupils to think through scientific concepts for themselves and often include an element of fun. A lower-attaining group of Year 11 pupils gained a secure understanding of the properties of alpha particles in radiation because the teacher mimed their behaviour with great energy and humour. Dedicated and efficient technicians provide high-quality apparatus for practical work and pupils' experimental skills are well developed. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in small groups by teachers who are skilled in helping them to overcome their problems. Support staff are fully involved in these lessons and contribute much to the success of pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils who are particularly gifted in science are given many opportunities to extend their experience of the subject.
80. Occasionally, lack of clarity in planning and organisation leads to unsatisfactory learning. Even when pupils are not given sufficient or appropriate tasks, their behaviour and enthusiasm remain good.
81. Leadership and management are very good. Starting from a very low point, the present head of department has engendered an excellent ethos, strong teamwork and high morale. Throughout, he has been supported by colleagues, senior management and the local education authority adviser. Teachers and technicians now form a mutually supportive group dedicated to pupils' academic and personal development.
82. The quality of management is evident in the rapid and effective response to the national strategy for science education. New schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 underpin the rising standards and there has been significant improvement in teaching methodology. Innovative approaches to learning are becoming increasingly successful and the quality of teaching is closely monitored. At all levels, assessment of attainment and progress is very good. Pupils are directly involved in setting ambitious targets for themselves and given regular feedback on what actions are needed for success. There have been effective responses to whole-school policies designed to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and the department contributes well to the provision for citizenship.
83. Achievement in Years 10 and 11, although good, does not yet match that seen in Years 7 to 9. This is in part due to these pupils' earlier experiences of learning science at a time when the quality of teaching was not as good as it is now. Changes to the curriculum and associated schemes of work have been made and the effectiveness of the new arrangements, which include a reduction in lesson time in Year 10, is being closely monitored.
84. There are not enough laboratories and too many lessons have to be taken in ordinary classrooms, which limits practical work. Five of the six laboratories are in urgent need of complete refurbishment. Although large and made attractive with extensive displays of pupils' work, the provision of services (gas and electricity, for example) in these rooms is woefully inadequate for today's approach to learning science.
85. Teachers have good ICT skills and encourage the use of computers wherever possible. However, lack of specialist equipment such as temperature sensors and difficulties in obtaining appropriate access to enough computers limits the pupils' experience of using this technology.

86. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Leadership and management are significantly better and have effected the improvement in teaching that is responsible for the rise in standards. The potential for further gains is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The attitudes of pupils are very good.
- Teaching and learning of ICT are good.
- The 2003 results for GCSE ICT were above average.
- Leadership and management are good.
- There is no whole-school scheme of work to manage ICT teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- The demand for access to ICT resources outstrips supply and some subjects are unable to meet National Curriculum requirements.
- Standards of attainment are below the national average in Years 9 and 11.
- The National Strategy for ICT is not yet fully embedded.

Commentary

87. The 2003 teacher assessments of the standards of attainment of Year 9 pupils produced results that were below national averages. These assessments are reflected in standards attained in the classroom by the present Year 9.
88. The schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are comprehensive and ensure coverage of all the aspects of ICT required by the National Curriculum. The school is introducing the National Strategy for ICT and the improved level of challenge this offers is raising pupils' standards. This is most evident in Year 7 pupils. However, the present Year 9 has had a relatively poor experience of ICT in the school due to a lack of time allocation, reflected in the standards they attain. All pupils in the school now benefit from one period of dedicated ICT per week.
89. There have been a number of changes in the examination courses offered to Year 10 and 11 pupils. All pupils now follow a short course in ICT, an improvement on the previous situation when only those entered for the GCSE full course examination were taught ICT in any depth. The short course equips pupils with a good, but narrow, range of ICT skills. It does not cover all the National Curriculum requirements.
90. Last year's Year 11 class attained results in GCSE ICT that were above national averages. This was achieved by a small percentage of the cohort and the course has been replaced by an applied GCSE in ICT.
91. In Year 11, most pupils successfully create databases as part of their course. They create a range of business documentation, including posters and leaflets, to sound standards. However, because few are taught control technology, their overall attainment is below average.
92. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject that they share effectively with pupils through the support and advice they give in lessons and in well-judged marking. They have developed very good relationships with pupils and no time is lost

due to misbehaviour. Lessons are well planned and taught, though there is a need to develop further the Key Stage 3 ICT Strategy to make sure that the challenge it offers is more suited to the ability range of pupils.

93. Despite good teaching and very good attitudes, the overall achievement of all pupils in ICT in the school is just satisfactory. This is because the skills gained in ICT lessons are not adequately reinforced in other subjects across the curriculum.
94. Leadership and management are good. The head of ICT has only recently been appointed and has made an immediate impact. He has a clear view of what needs to be done. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in a number of areas, including improved resources and improved courses for all pupils.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

95. Cross-curricular ICT is not systematically provided. There is no whole-school scheme of work to co-ordinate the teaching of ICT across the range of subjects and no monitoring and evaluation. Resources are presently inadequate for the demands of a number of subjects, though the school has firm plans to remedy that situation. There is some good teaching of ICT in a number of subjects.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The response of pupils is very good and has a positive influence on their learning.
- The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is very good.
- GCSE results have improved steadily.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The department is very well managed and a strong team has been created.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory, has a negative effect on learning and creates problems for teachers.
- The department has inadequate resources, limiting the opportunities to extend pupils' learning.

Commentary

96. The department has been increasingly successful in raising standards because of teaching that is supportive and has high expectations. The good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning of most pupils contributes to their achievement.
97. Most pupils have had a limited geographical education when they arrive in Year 7, but by the end of Year 9, most achieve the national average, which is very good progress. Teachers' assessments show that most pupils attain level 5. The standards seen in lessons during the inspection confirm these results. Higher-attaining pupils recognise patterns of climate in Great Britain and are able to explain these patterns. When provided with opportunities to produce extended writing, some produce high-quality work. One boy wrote a clear and perceptive diary of life in the Amazon. Low-attaining pupils remember some of the words used when studying earthquakes, but their understanding is limited. Many pupils participate in the residential study visit to Dovedale, which enables them to develop good geographical skills.

98. In Years 10 and 11, the achievement of pupils is good. Many produce high-quality coursework based on their study of the Peak District. Higher attainers use a variety of graphs to analyse their work, but show little understanding of the appropriateness of the type of graph. Most pupils use the correct vocabulary when describing coastal features and have a good understanding of the processes involved.
99. There has been a steady improvement in results at GCSE because of the improved focus on technique and the provision of revision work. Results in 2003 were in line with the national average. Boys achieved better than girls, but this has not been the pattern in previous years. In lessons, there is no significant difference between boys and girls. Teachers are highly committed and provide good support to pupils. Although the amount of in-class support is limited, it is used well and low-attaining pupils achieve well. However, there is insufficient modification of material to suit the needs of all pupils. Teachers mark work regularly and there is good use of assessment to encourage pupils. However, the comments on classwork are sometimes vague and not as helpful as they could be.
100. The department is well led and a strong team approach is developing. The use of target-setting is developing but could be more focused and helpful to pupils. Equally, the analysis of examination data could be more rigorous in order to identify underachievement at an early stage. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, resulting in some classes having better access to geographical resources and stimulus than others. The fact that teachers do not have their own base results in limited teaching styles and extra stress for staff because materials and resources are not always available. The provision of resources is also unsatisfactory: the department has almost no ICT facilities, electronic weather station for data logging or Internet access. Nevertheless, teachers make as much use of the school facilities as they can. Fieldwork is a good feature of the department. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in tests, examinations and in work seen is in line with national expectations.
- Pupils make very good progress and there is high achievement.
- The teaching of history is very good, with some excellent features, which leads to very good learning.
- History is very well led and managed.
- Very positive relationships encourage and support learning.
- Pupils do not have sufficient access to ICT to enhance their learning.
- The department has not yet sufficiently refined its assessment procedures to include, as standard practice, ongoing in-class assessment.
- Pupils do not have sufficient techniques to retain and recall facts for examinations.

Commentary

101. Standards of attainment of pupils when they enter the school are well below average. At the end of Year 9, standards in work seen and in attainment tests are in line with national levels. Pupils develop a wide range of skills, including interpretation of evidence, prioritising of historical issues and the understanding of chronology. Higher-attaining pupils use their knowledge and understanding to identify, evaluate and use sources of information critically to analyse relationships between features of a particular period. For example, in their studies of the conditions in the trenches during the First World War, Year 9 pupils used photographs and films critically to understand more deeply, and more poignantly, life in the trenches for the ordinary soldier, irrespective of nationality. Overall attainment, both across time and in examinations, is hampered by the lack of retention skills, weak examination techniques and the lack of wider and deeper reading. All these impact deleteriously on pupils' attainment in examinations.
102. At GCSE, pupils' attainment is in line with national averages. Pupils develop their analytical skills effectively and higher-attaining pupils demonstrate a high degree of sophistication in their interpretation of historical polemics. For example, Year 11 pupils, in their studies of the Hungarian uprising of 1956,

pointed out the irony of the “reverse domino theory” that beset the Russian government of the time and led to the brutal and ruthless crushing of the uprising by the soviet army.

103. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Boys and girls achieve equally well, although boys are better at oral work than girls, whose work is better presented. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in line with other pupils, because their teachers know them well, use good differentiated materials and provide effective guidance in lessons. Master classes are held to encourage gifted pupils in Years 7 to 9, but there are areas of their learning, particularly in Years 10 and 11, such as wider and deeper reading and examination techniques, where they are not always fully challenged.
104. Teaching is very good overall, and was excellent in one lesson. A similarly strong profile of teaching applies to all years. Teachers know their subject very well. They have an obvious love for it and this commitment is strongly communicated to pupils, providing a firm basis for learning. Lessons are planned well and teachers use a wide range of methods that support learning well. There is appropriate emphasis on literacy and high expectations are set for reading and for the use of correct technical language. Writing, however, particularly in examination conditions, is still a relative weakness for most pupils. Homework is set regularly and marking is well focused, supporting progress, learning and achievement. The lack of interactive white boards in the classrooms and limited access to ICT hamper additional teaching methods and strategies to enhance independent learning skills.
105. Learning is very good. Very good relationships underpin learning because pupils listen intently to each other and work well together in all years. Pupils behave very well, with high concentration and focus.
106. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has produced documents that underpin much of the good work of the department, particularly, but not exclusively, in the area of formal assessment. In this he is supported particularly effectively by the senior management of the school and by his colleagues, whom he, in turn, supports. He and his colleagues are very good role models of commitment to the maintenance of the highest standards. Diagnostic and formal assessment is a strength of the department. However, in-class ongoing assessment to monitor and evaluate pupils’ learning and achievement within individual lessons is still underdeveloped across the department.
107. Overall, there has been very good improvement since the previous report, particularly in pupils’ learning and achievement which is reflected in their improving levels of attainment over the last two years.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the subject is very good and management is good.
- Teaching is good.
- Achievement is good in Years 7 to 11.
- All levels of attainment are catered for.
- Literacy and wider reading are insufficient to develop pupils’ learning and research skills.
- There is insufficient access to ICT to help enhance pupils’ work.
- Assessment is not yet fully developed.

Commentary

108. There were no teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003. Standards of work seen in class and in pupils’ notebooks are below those found in similar schools, although some higher-attaining pupils’ standards are in line with national norms. Lower-attaining pupils describe the key beliefs of the religions studied and can interpret religious symbols, but cannot yet explain how selected features of religious life and practice make a difference to the lives of individuals. Higher attainers show understanding of what

belonging to a religion and a community involves, and they form their own view of how religious issues can impact on the whole range of human activity. For example, Year 9 pupils studying Buddhism are aware of how the clash of the religious ideals held by the Dalai Lama and the political ideas held by the Chinese communist government led to the invasion of Tibet. Boys are often quicker to respond in oral work than girls, though the written work of girls is more neatly presented.

109. Generally, pupils' attainment across time is affected by their low levels of literacy, which do not match their oracy. Nevertheless, from their levels of attainment on entry to the school, which were well below the national average, pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well and make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers, despite the lack of in-class support, because teachers know them well and offer additional support in class. However, insufficient attention is paid to the identification and development of talented pupils.
110. Religious education in Years 10 and 11 is in a state of flux. The statutory provision, which is attended by all pupils, is taught in a carousel with citizenship, though the overlapping elements of the courses allow the provision to meet the requirements of the local agreed syllabus. A GCSE short course is an option for these pupils, and it is increasingly being taken up as the subject gains academic credibility in the school. Pupils study a range of contemporary moral issues from a religious point of view and relate them to their own lives. Standards seen in class and in pupils' notebooks during the inspection are below national norms.
111. A small group of pupils study for the full GCSE course. Their results in 2003, from a very small cohort, were in line with national averages. Work in class indicates standards that are slightly below national averages, though higher-attaining pupils produce work in line with national expectations. Yet even these pupils lack confidence when dealing with the complexities of analysis and evaluation in examinations. These weaknesses stem, in part, from low levels of literacy and a lack of wider reading. Textbooks are insufficient at this stage of pupils' learning, and access to ICT facilities, including full access to the interactive white board, is not yet firmly established. Nevertheless, given their prior attainment at the start of Year 10, pupils' achievement is good.
112. Teaching is good. Teachers display a strong commitment, which is effectively communicated to pupils, providing a firm basis for learning. Lessons are planned well and teachers use a range of methods. There is appropriate emphasis on aspects of literacy, such as the use of correct technical language. However, pupils' own independent learning and writing are still not developed sufficiently. Learning generally reflects teaching, and most pupils learn successfully and achieve well. Pupils show application to their work. They settle and continue to concentrate, and they show pride in their work, although some pupils' presentation could be improved.
113. Religious education contributes effectively to the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by providing them with knowledge and insight into concepts of right and wrong and asking them to apply those concepts to the range of fundamental issues that confront them in real life. There is also some study of other faiths, which teaches pupils to appreciate the diversity of those faiths.

114. There is a comprehensive assessment policy for the department that is based on sound principles and achievable outcomes. However, there is a lack of progressive assessments, particularly those which deal with assessments in lessons. The department is staffed predominantly with specialist teachers. Their knowledge and expertise allows the department to meet effectively the requirements of the syllabuses and the needs of pupils.
115. There are few artefacts but some good videos that augment the paper-based resources of the department and these effectively aid learning. However, the department does not make sufficient use of visits to places of worship of the major religions in the local region.
116. Leadership of this relatively small department is very good and management is good. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision concerning the future of the department. She is committed to raising both the image of the subject and standards at all stages and has the support of the senior management team and her colleagues in the department. She has initiated a review of schemes of work and is implementing them, together with more uniform and comprehensive assessment procedures. Under her leadership, the department has produced a range of strategic planning documents, which support all aspects of the department's provision. She has not been in post long enough to see them all reflected in the daily activities of the department.
117. The department has made good improvement overall since the last inspection and particularly good improvement in key areas such as the production of schemes of work and laying the foundations of assessment.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and leads to very good achievement for pupils.
- GCSE results have been rising.
- Standards in food technology are very high.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' work are very thorough.
- The relevance of design and technology to the personal and social development of pupils is woven into teaching methods very effectively.
- Standards in resistant materials are well below average.
- The range of computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment is not wide enough.

Commentary

118. In 2003, teachers' assessments matched the national average for pupils at the end of Year 9. Improved assessment procedures have provided an accurate picture of pupils' performance and observations during the inspection confirmed that pupils are attaining average standards at this stage. Because pupils enter the school with well below average attainment in design and technology, this represents very good achievement. Pupils develop good practical skills and have a good understanding of practical processes. Teachers use every opportunity to link pupils' work with their personal development and they develop an understanding of the importance of technology in everyday life and the need to exercise responsibility in its use. Higher-attaining pupils develop adequate graphic skills to record and develop their ideas effectively, and some Year 9 pupils can use three-dimensional drawing well. Homework is used very effectively to support independent learning and, because it forms an integral part of the following lesson, pupils appreciate its value and the need to complete it at the right time. Sensory tests in food technology provide very good opportunities for pupils to use technical vocabulary and develop a range of appropriate words to describe the characteristics of a food product. The structured nature of many projects enables pupils of all levels of attainment to respond to all aspects of designing and making. Pupils with special

educational needs are guided through the work whilst higher attainers have the opportunity to extend the work on their own initiative. Higher-attaining pupils can write detailed evaluations of their work. Because the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 provides pupils with a broad range of technological experiences, they move on to examination work from a strong base of knowledge and well-established working procedures.

119. GCSE results in 2003 were above average and have been rising steadily in recent years. Comparative figures show that pupils perform better in technology subjects than in many of their other subjects. Girls perform better than boys, but the school has recognised this and has modified some of its curriculum content and teaching methods to improve boys' performance. When examination results for each area are considered separately, food technology results are very high, graphics results are above average and resistant materials results are well below average. Despite poor results, comparative figures show that pupils' achievement in resistant materials was better than in many other subjects. These differences in standards are reflected in observations of work and lessons seen during the inspection. Higher-attaining pupils in food technology and graphics can produce high-quality research, analyse a task and present the information with a good combination of computer and hand-drawn techniques. In resistant materials, pupils work to a good design methodology, but whilst practical skills are good, only a few higher attainers develop their work in an individual and independent way. Achievement in technology continues to be very good.
120. Teaching and learning are very good. There is a small amount of satisfactory teaching but most is good or very good. Planning for lessons is very thorough and, in most cases, is carried out using a range of techniques appropriate to pupils' aptitudes and levels of attainment. In one satisfactory lesson, pupils' learning would have been transformed had the very detailed lesson plan been implemented with greater pace and rigour. In a very well taught food technology lesson, the brisk pace, varied techniques and activities and clear explanations and expectations all enabled pupils to develop a good understanding of the criteria by which we judge a food product. Teachers foster very good working relationships with pupils, and there is a very good working atmosphere in most lessons. Teachers successfully emphasise the importance of personal responsibility and consideration for others, and standards of behaviour are high.
121. Very good leadership and management have brought about many improvements since the last inspection. Accommodation is now better, although some areas still need to be refurbished. There have been improvements in ICT resources. Better assessment procedures now provide teachers with an accurate picture of pupils' attainment and progress and have been a key factor in improving standards. Pupils are well informed about their attainment and what they have to do to improve. Consistent approaches to teaching designing and making have led to improved standards. The curriculum is broad and balanced and pupils have good opportunities to extend their work during after-school activities. An experiment with single-sex teaching in Years 7 and 8 has yet to be evaluated, but early indications suggest that this may be of benefit to the performance of both boys and girls.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Drama is not taught as a discrete subject in Years 7 to 9. Pupils gain some experience in English lessons, where drama is effectively used as a method of studying literature. Results in GCSE drama in 2003 were well above average, with a high proportion of students gaining the highest grades. They vary over the years, but always show very good achievement. All 11 pupils in 2003 were girls. Standards in Year 11 are above average, with an even mix of boys and girls. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject, which inspires pupils to high standards. Teachers and pupils work very well together to develop and improve their group performances. Assessment criteria are used well to show exactly what is required. High standards are achieved despite the unsatisfactory accommodation because of the excellent motivation of the pupils and the dynamism of the teaching.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good, and pupils' achievement is very good as a result.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Standards in Year 11 are above average.
- ICT is not used widely enough to create and manipulate images.

Commentary

122. In Year 9, standards are average, as confirmed by teachers' assessments. Pupils' achievement is very good considering their standards on entry to the school in Year 7, which are well below average. Their research work is very strong, and they investigate thoroughly the work of a range of artists, such as Picasso and Braque. Their textiles work is delicate, and they create sensitive and attractive pieces using sacking, small twigs and leaves. Their observation drawing from musical instruments shows a rapidly increasing understanding of the use of line and tone. However, much of their work is on too small a scale, and their broader media-handling skills are not fully developed as a result. In addition, while ICT is used extensively for research, it is not used to create or manipulate images widely enough to fully extend pupils' own work.
123. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, results were below average. In recent years, results have varied according to the prior attainment of pupils who choose to take the subject. Most pupils do better in their art and design than in most of their other subjects.
124. In Year 11, standards are above average, and are better than recent results. This is because current pupils' standards when they started the course were higher than those in recent years. Pupils' achievement continues to be very good. Their three-dimensional work is of a very high standard, and they make very large, brightly coloured masks, based on the art of other cultures. These are richly coloured with intense blues and reds, enlivened by gold and copper highlights. Their pottery is ambitious in scale, and reflects very effectively the earthy shapes and textures of the natural world. In addition, their watercolour wash is bright and sensitive and shows a rapidly increasing confidence in using fluid media and saturated colour.
125. Teaching and learning are very good. A strong feature of the teaching is the very detailed planning, which sets out a clear direction in the work. Lessons are broken down into stages, so that pupils experience success and build on the gains in learning in each stage. They are required to evaluate their work constantly, make decisions, and carry these forward to the next stage. For example, in a lesson on developing compositions, pupils had to research the work of artists, identify key elements of their styles to develop, and then go on to experiment with materials. They then had to analyse the results of these experiments before moving on to sketching out their final pieces. As a result, their work was broken down into easily managed stages, each with a clear focus. They became engrossed in their work, and very good learning was the result.
126. Leadership and management are very good. There is a strong focus on raising standards, and a very clear vision and direction in the work of the subject. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards in Year 11 are above average, and pupils now achieve very well. In addition, the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils study the art of other cultures very thoroughly, investigate themes such as the violence and aggression seen in war and visit a number of art galleries.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- The quality of teaching, including instrumental teaching, is good.
- There is not enough ICT equipment for this to be an effective support for learning in music.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities.
- Too few pupils have instrumental tuition.

Commentary

127. Results in the GCSE examination in music in 2003 were above the national average, and over one third of those entered gained A* or A grades. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment was average both in Year 9 and in Year 11. The difference between GCSE results and standards in Year 11 reflects the different experience of pupils in the current group.
128. Pupils achieve well. Most enter the school with attainment levels well below average, many unable to maintain a steady pulse in singing or the playing of instruments. As a result of a systematic, diagnostic approach, most pupils in Year 9 have developed an independent attitude to composing, can play simple melodies on a keyboard, and co-ordinate ensemble parts well. However, there is some underachievement, partly because pupils, who work together in one room, cannot clearly hear their music. Boys are more easily distracted by this and achieve less well than girls. Pupils understand musical conventions and can clearly relate music to mood, but their recall and retention of technical terms is unreliable. In Year 11, pupils understand the importance of organisation and structure and compose authentic-sounding pieces in a variety of genres. Higher-attainers perform well, but average attainers lack confidence in performing other than simple pieces. Pupils readily identify features of music they have studied in detail, but their ability to respond to a range of different examples is inhibited by their lack of broad experience. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils, and the small percentage of pupils who have instrumental tuition achieve better than others.
129. Teaching is good and has a number of very good features. Teachers are well qualified and versatile. Lessons are planned well, with good attention to progression and the appropriate level of challenge, which enables pupils to learn systematically from year to year. Relationships are very good and pupils respond enthusiastically. Strategies to broaden and enrich pupils' musical experience are very successful, especially for younger pupils. Group work on Balinese music and Salsa bands in Year 7 is particularly effective in correcting pupils' difficulties with maintaining a regular beat. Occasionally, pupils' different abilities are not properly met in tasks set, and a number of pupils need better-developed practical skills to be able to realise their musical ideas. In some lessons, time is not always used to the full, causing more able pupils, boys especially, to underachieve.
130. Leadership and management are good, and there are good procedures for the monitoring and induction of new staff. Regular assessment and information gained from analysis of examination results influence future planning, and rigorous marking ensures that pupils know how to improve. However, day-to-day assessment does not have as much impact as it could have. Appropriate support for gifted pupils and for pupils with special educational needs is planned into schemes of work. The implementation of the school's literacy policy is particularly successful and pupils take a pride in accurate, neat work. Unsatisfactory provision for ICT hinders pupils' attainment, as does the unsatisfactory accommodation.

131. After-school activities include weekly rehearsals for the swing band, which plays at a most creditable standard, and booster classes for GCSE pupils. Trips to professional concerts are at present restricted to GCSE groups, and few practising musicians from any cultural tradition visit the school. Good contact with parents and the community is maintained through regular concerts and visits to local primary schools.
132. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement across Years 7 to 11 is good.
- Standards in GCSE show a big improvement and the most recent cohort demonstrate standards that are above national average.
- Practical performance is underpinned by good standards of behaviour and conduct.
- Pupils' understanding of the principles of attack and defence in games is limited.
- There is no assessment information of pupils on entry to the school.

Commentary

133. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are average in games, dance and gymnastics. Pupils exhibit a variety of skills in basketball, often accompanied with technical accuracy. While some lack controlled execution, others are at an advanced stage and perform confidently in competitive games. However, the key principles of attack and defence are not fully understood. In gymnastics, there is a good understanding of the need for high-quality performance, evident in the balances and movement of both boys and girls. All pupils move apparatus and equipment safely and efficiently. In dance, the majority of girls show a good sense of rhythm and timing. Confidence in choreographing dance phrases is at an early stage of development. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 for pupils as a whole is good. Units of work allow pupils to pursue an activity to some depth.
134. Standards in core physical education by Year 11 are generally satisfactory and there are individual examples of exceptional performance. Many girls achieve well in trampolining and netball. Boys show good individual skills in football, but skills and techniques in cricket are limited and reflect a lack of prior experience. Across Years 10 and 11, achievement in core physical education is good because the programme allows pupils to select and build on activities that have been pursued in depth, such as netball, fitness work and football. Units of work allow pupils to acquire and develop skills, take on different roles and deepen understanding of how to develop aspects of fitness. The opportunity to gain accreditation through units such as the Junior Sports Leader Award enhance their development in these areas.
135. In GCSE, pupils achieve well, with over half of the most recent cohort gaining A* to C grades, above the national average and some of the best results in the school. Results indicate good achievement for an increasing number of pupils. Pupils preparing for GCSE exhibited good shooting and passing skills in netball and football, marking them out from the others in those sessions. Knowledge of rules and tactical considerations is sound. In fitness work, pupils show very good understanding of recovery rates and the effects of different types of training. In theory lessons, the majority of pupils show a sound understanding of how to plan a personal exercise plan. Although lower-attaining pupils struggle with the terminology, they make good progress in understanding the principles of fitness.
136. Achievement across Years 7 to 11 is good. A significant number of boys and girls develop and refine their skills in the strong extra-curricular sports programme. Rich opportunities are provided for a large number of pupils to engage in internal or external school competition. Clubs also exist for those pupils who wish purely to participate. Overall provision for sport is good. The department stresses the importance of appropriate behaviour, and the conduct of Year 10 girls working off-site at the local fitness

centre was impressive. Boys in Year 8 were successful in winning the 'Fairplay' award at a local rugby tournament during the inspection.

137. Teaching and learning are good overall, with a significant proportion being very good. There are challenging objectives and teachers provide planned progression at brisk pace, accompanied by helpful observations. In a Year 10 lesson, teaching was very good, extending pupils physically and encouraging them to reflect on the difference in recovery rates. Their numeracy skills were reinforced by plotting results on individual graphs. Distinctive features of teaching are the good command of the subject, the positive relationships between pupils and the teaching team and the healthy balance of individual, small-group and whole-class activity.
138. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a reflective culture and staff are committed to improvement and development. Good foundations have been laid for the recently gained specialist Sports College status. Assessment procedures have been reviewed, though there is currently no assessment of performance on entry to the school to enable progress to be measured. The role of school sports co-ordinator is under consideration and such developments exemplify the forward thinking of the department. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good, in particular the appointment of a virtually new teaching team who have restructured the curriculum and units of work. Furthermore, GCSE results show a marked improvement and an increasing number of pupils select the subject. The new sports hall enhances provision, although the gymnasium is an inappropriate venue for barefoot activities, and outdoor facilities are still poor.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

139. Provision in child development is very good. Examination results are above average and comparative figures show that pupils' achievement is high. The course has proved to be a popular addition to the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. One Year 11 lesson was sampled and teaching was very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for citizenship is very well planned as part of a wider personal and social education programme.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of how to become informed citizens is very good, translated into very responsible and mature behaviour around the school.
- The 'active citizenship' programme makes a significant contribution to the community ethos of the school.
- Subject areas strongly reinforce citizenship values through teaching programmes.
- Assessment of citizenship for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is at an early stage of development.
- In some lessons dedicated to citizenship, the quality of teaching fails to convey the full value of the planned programme.

Commentary

140. The school has chosen to teach the programmes of study for citizenship as part of the wider requirement for personal, social and health education. This programme provides a good balance of all the required components, and common themes enable pupils to see the interrelationship between ethical and moral issues and the practice of good citizenship. There is a very strong citizenship ethos throughout the school. Direct teaching of citizenship issues is strongly supported in all curriculum areas and by a strong programme of pupil involvement in the school. Consequently, pupils have a very good understanding of their rights and responsibilities as members of a community. The effectiveness of this can be seen in the high levels of responsible conduct to be seen around the school, and in the sense of pride in the school that pupils articulate well.

141. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 receive a structured programme of one lesson per week taught by form tutors. Because of the modular nature of the work and the timing of the inspection, it was not possible to see direct teaching of citizenship at this stage. Interviews, displays and pupils' work demonstrate that understanding of what it is to be an informed citizen is above average. A well-presented wall display by Year 8 pupils, for example, explored the system of British laws and the individual's responsibility in upholding them. The school encourages participation in schemes designed to promote active citizenship and participation rates are high. For example, 40 Year 9 pupils are currently undertaking 'buddy' training to enable them to act as mentors for Year 6 pupils. The effectiveness of this training was demonstrated when 120 Year 6 pupils visited the school for link activities during the inspection. Boys and girls on the scheme are enthusiastic and regard it as part of their responsibilities to be involved. Assessment of pupils' work in citizenship is at an early stage of development and is not yet used to build a precise picture of pupils' achievement.
142. In Years 10 and 11, religious education is included in the teaching carousel with a commensurate increase in time allocation. Tutors work in pairs to plan elements of the course, which allows for a degree of specialism in teaching each component. In addition, 'focus days' enable some aspects to be studied in greater depth. Teaching seen in lessons specifically identified as 'citizenship' was satisfactory overall. One unsatisfactory lesson was seen during which pupils were not enthused by the task and the slow pace allowed too much opportunity for pupils' attention to wander. In lessons where teaching was better, pupils demonstrated that they could work in an independent way, for example, to tabulate the results of questionnaires they had compiled and to draw conclusions based on the information. Pupils in Year 11 have been given the opportunity to study for short course GCSE citizenship and a high proportion have chosen to do so.
143. Very good leadership and management have ensured that citizenship occupies a prominent position in the school's declared aims. A curriculum audit has identified where opportunities for citizenship occur in subject areas and staff awareness of the issues is high. Consequently, each area of the curriculum strongly supports citizenship development. For example, in physical education and design technology, teachers clearly identify the citizenship content of lessons and make it clear to pupils what the lesson outcome will be, a strategy replicated in many other areas. In science, for example, teachers realise that a topic's relationship to citizenship needs to be explicitly explained to pupils. The school council and the headteacher's forum provide very good opportunities for pupils to express their views in a structured way. Pupils feel that their involvement in these bodies enables them to make a contribution to the school and to get things done. Election procedures for school prefects are a very good introduction to the democratic process. Participation in community events and fund-raising schemes is high. For instance, many pupils have been actively involved in raising funds towards the bid for Sports College status and in the process of deciding a new name for school. Schemes of work and lesson plans are very thorough. Teaching is monitored, but the often forthright and incisive observations do not always result in effective changes to classroom practice.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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

