

INSPECTION REPORT

WEOBLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Weobley, Herefordshire

LEA area: Herefordshire

Unique reference number: 116952

Headteacher: Mrs S Woodrow

Lead inspector: Mr D Driscoll

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th May 2004

Inspection number: 258849

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

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Terms used in this report

*Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools **after** Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**).*

Inspectors judge the standards reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	482
School address:	Weobley High School Burton Wood Weobley Herefordshire
Postcode:	HR4 8ST
Telephone number:	01544 318159
Fax number:	01544 318040
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs B Havard
Date of previous inspection:	5 th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Weobley High School is a much smaller than average comprehensive school that has grown in size significantly since the previous inspection. Almost all pupils are white British, with a very few Traveller pupils. No pupils speak English as an additional language. There are more boys than girls in every year group and this is most pronounced in Years 7 to 9.

Standards of attainment on entry to the school are now average. However, standards on entry in previous years have been much higher; pupils currently in Year 10, for example, joined the school with well above average standards. As the attainment on entry to the school has fallen, so the proportion of pupils with special educational needs has increased and is now above average, at around one in four pupils. One in 20 pupils has a statement of special educational needs – double the proportion of last year. Most pupils are on the register because they have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, but there is a very wide range of different needs represented in the school. The school has special resources for pupils with visual impairment, of whom there are three such pupils at present. The local education authority (LEA) provides the specialist staffing for these pupils.

Pupils come from a very wide area of Herefordshire. The majority arrive by bus and many more come from outside the school's catchment area than was the case at the time of the previous inspection. Socio-economic circumstances are broadly average. The school is part of a national initiative to improve schools that have indications of poor achievement. The school was awarded Sportsmark in 2001 and Sportsmark with distinction this year. The school has also been awarded the Eco-school's bronze award. There has been a very high turnover of staff in the last two years, including a new headteacher who started in September 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11933	D. Driscoll	Lead inspector	
9086	R. Watkins	Lay inspector	
33139	M. Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics
19596	B. Treacy	Team inspector	English
4145	C. Harrison	Team inspector	Science
10297	D. Cox	Team inspector	Design and technology
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design Religious education
15208	A. Briggs	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Music
15462	C. Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography History
3793	J. Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
11720	P. Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **poor** school in which teaching, leadership and achievement are poor; it gives **poor** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school has gone downhill in recent years as a result of poor leadership and management.
- Standards are only average by Year 11, reflecting pupils' poor achievement as a result of poor teaching.
- The provision for science, ICT and religious education is poor.
- The school is now starting to improve under the good leadership provided by the new headteacher.
- Behaviour is unsatisfactory, because too many teachers cannot control their classes.
- The curriculum is poor; it has not changed in response to the changing nature of the school's intake.
- Pupils do very well in design and technology as a result of very good teaching.

Improvement since the last inspection has been **poor**. Standards are worse and GCSE results have fallen, despite a higher attaining intake. Results in the national tests have improved faster than the national average because of rapid improvements in mathematics. Behaviour is worse; there are now more exclusions. Teaching is much worse. Most of the main weaknesses identified in the previous report remain.

In accordance with section 13 (7) of the School Inspections Act 1996 I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	C	E

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Achievement is **poor**. Standards are average by Year 9, but this represents underachievement for this group of pupils because they entered the school with above average standards. Pupils' achievement is very good in design and technology and good in music and physical education. Achievement is satisfactory in English, mathematics, art and design and citizenship, but pupils are underachieving in the rest of their subjects, especially in science; achievement is poor in religious education. The school has resolved the causes of underachievement in geography, history and foreign languages, so pupils' learning in lessons in these subjects is now satisfactory and is good in history.

Standards are average by Year 11, which is a poor level of achievement for these pupils. Pupils' achievement is very good in design and technology and good in music. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics, art and design, geography, history, physical education and

citizenship, but pupils are underachieving in English and foreign languages; achievement is poor in science and religious education and very poor in ICT. The school has addressed the causes of underachievement in English and foreign languages, so pupils' learning in lessons in these subjects is now satisfactory, but not good enough to have made up for the losses in the past.

The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11; visually impaired pupils achieve well. The achievement of the highest attainers, including those who are particularly gifted or talented, is poor. Girls generally achieve better than boys do, especially in Years 10 and 11. Standards are very low in ICT because of poor teaching, insufficient lessons and not enough computers.

Standards of literacy do not improve quickly enough because of an inconsistent approach to improving these skills and because the library is so poor.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **unsatisfactory**. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory. Attendance is average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **poor** quality of education. Teaching is **poor**. Teaching and learning are poor in Years 10 and 11; they are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have been unaware of their pupils' capabilities, so their expectations of them are too low. This leads to pupils becoming bored and they often misbehave, which some teachers do not have the skills to control. Marking is not good enough in many subjects, so pupils do not know what they have to do to improve. Teaching is very good in design and technology and good in history, music and physical education. Teaching is poor in science, ICT and religious education.

The curriculum is poor; it fails to meet statutory requirements or the needs of the changing intake of pupils. There is a good range of extra clubs and activities. Provision for special educational needs is good in the additional needs department, but unsatisfactory in the rest of the school, because there are not enough support staff and teachers have not been trained to meet the pupils' needs. There are not enough computers and the library is very poor. The quality of guidance and support for pupils is satisfactory. The school has a recently improved, and now satisfactory, partnership with parents, local schools and the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school has declined as a result of **poor** leadership and management; although the new headteacher is providing good leadership. The school has lacked direction because of poor leadership and members of staff have not been supported or managed properly as a result of poor management. Governance is poor because governors have been too uncritically supportive and have not intervened to stop the school's decline.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those pupils and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting.

Parents are very unhappy with the education their children receive and have many major concerns, especially about teaching, behaviour and the way the school has been managed. They are pleased with the impact made by the new headteacher. Pupils too are unhappy; they complain about the quality of teaching they receive and the behaviour of other pupils.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by heads of department.
- Raise achievement by improving the quality of teaching, especially in science, ICT and religious education.
- Ensure teachers set work of an appropriate standard for their pupils and manage their behaviour.
- Ensure all work is marked thoroughly.
- Modify the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils.

And, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure pupils are taught the requirements of the National Curriculum in ICT and the locally agreed syllabus in religious education.
- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
- Ensure all parents receive reports on their child's progress in ICT and religious education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are average by the end of Year 9 and 11. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and poor in Years 10 and 11. Parents complain that there is no 'added value' at the school and they are correct; GCSE results last year were in the bottom five per cent of schools in the country when the pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 are taken into account.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils, particularly higher attainers, achieve poorly in their GCSE examinations given their standards on joining the school; GCSE results are falling.
- Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are improving faster than the national average because of improvements in mathematics.
- Achievement is particularly poor in science, ICT and religious education.
- Pupils achieve very well in design and technology.

Commentary

1. At the time of the last inspection, pupils were joining the school with standards that were broadly average, although those pupils in Year 11 had lower levels of attainment because of a number of lower attaining pupils who joined the school late in their school careers. However, standards on entry were improving and peaked with the current Year 10 and 11 pupils whose standards were well above average on joining the school. As GCSE results started to fall, however, the standards on entry also started to fall and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs began to increase.
2. The pupils who took the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 joined the school with well above average standards; they underachieved in the English and science tests, gaining results that were above average when they should have been well above average at least. In mathematics, on the other hand, results were well above average and pupils did as well as they should have, given their standards on joining the school. Results have been improving faster than the national average, but this masks significant differences between the different subjects. Results have been rising rapidly in mathematics since 2000, but have been falling recently in English and in science, although results in science improved significantly in 2003. The improvement in mathematics is a result of having a department that is led well and where the staffing has been relatively stable.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.1 (35.1)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	37.8 (35.6)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	35.4 (33.7)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 101 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. The pupils who are currently in Year 9 joined the school with standards that were generally above average. These pupils' standards are now average overall and they are underachieving. Pupils are underachieving in science, ICT and religious education where achievement is poor, because of unsatisfactory or poor teaching. Pupils are also underachieving in geography, history, French and German because they have not been taught well enough in the past. However, in these four latter subjects pupils are now learning at least as well as they should in lessons because the teachers have changed, although the improvement in teaching has come too late to make up for the ground lost by the pupils in the past. Pupils do as well as expected in English, mathematics, art and design and citizenship; they do well in music and physical education. Pupils' achievement is very good in design and technology.
4. The situation is worse in Years 10 and 11, where standards are average but pupils' achievement is poor; their standards should be well above average given their attainment on joining the school. The worst of the problems are in science, ICT and religious education. In science, standards are below average, which represents poor achievement. Achievement is also poor in religious education, where standards are well below average. In ICT, standards are very low and achievement is very poor. Pupils are also underachieving in English, French and German. However, whereas in science, ICT and religious education the reasons lie with continuing poor teaching and problems with the curriculum, the problems in English, French and German have been sorted out and are no longer a big issue for the school. Pupils do as well as expected in art and design, mathematics, geography, history and physical education; they do well in music and very well in design and technology.
5. The GCSE results in 2003 were average in English, mathematics and French. Results were below average in science and German, well below average in geography and very low in history. Results were above average in design and technology and religious education. The situation has improved in geography, German and history as a result of changes in staffing. Standards are also now higher than those suggested by the examination results in design and technology where there is a continuing trend of better standards as a result of very good teaching and a shared determination to improve. In religious education, on the other hand, the GCSE results mask the low attainment of the great majority who do not study the subject to examination level.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	45 (55)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (97)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	33.8 (35.8)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 82 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were average overall. However, results have generally been falling since 1999. Although results are still average overall, they have

fallen from being close to above average to very close to being below average, despite improving standards on entry to the school of the pupils involved. Lower attainers did very well in 2003, and their performance in examinations has been improving over recent years. However, the school has not responded to the increasing proportion of higher attaining pupils joining the school and it is these pupils who did poorly in the 2003 GCSE examinations, as they usually have done since 1999.

7. A similar situation is seen in the standards of the current Year 11 pupils. In general, higher attainers do poorly, because the work is generally aimed at the lower attaining pupils so higher attainers find it too easy. Boys tend to become bored and distracted more quickly than the girls, so their behaviour deteriorates and they get less work done, which is why boys do worse than girls on the whole. Traveller pupils achieve as well as others. Outside of mathematics, there is very little provision for those pupils who are particularly gifted in academic terms. Pupils who are talented sportsmen and women are given the opportunities to excel, as are some talented musicians, but some talented musicians have been actively prevented from studying the subject to GCSE, because they do not have the time to join the choir or orchestra. This policy has now been changed. However, lower attainers too are now underachieving, because their behaviour is not being controlled in lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory and they are not being taught the subjects to which they are entitled. In religious education, for example, the higher attainers in Years 10 and 11, who have chosen to study the subject, do well, whereas it is the lower and middle attainers who do badly because the work is too difficult or their behaviour is not controlled.
8. Pupils with special educational needs do better than others, and have done well in the past. However, as with the higher attaining pupils, the school has not changed to accommodate the needs of the increasing proportion of pupils with special educational needs and these pupils are now underachieving in Years 10 and 11, although their achievement is satisfactory in other years. Pupils with special educational needs do well in the visually impaired unit and the additional needs department. In these specialist areas, the work is carefully tailored to help pupils improve. The base for the visually impaired is well equipped to enable pupils to learn more easily. Those with learning difficulties achieve well in meeting the targets of their individual learning plans and develop greater confidence in their own abilities. Pupils in Year 11 take several GCSEs and nearly always gain a grade. In the main school, however, achievement is not as good as it should be because material in lessons is sometimes too difficult for pupils to understand, and behaviour deteriorates. There are not enough support staff to cope with the rise in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs in lessons, despite an increase in staffing this year.
9. Standards in the basic skills of mathematics are above average throughout the school. Language and literacy skills are above average in Years 7 to 9, but only average in Years 10 and 11, where ingrained bad habits are holding pupils back. Standards of basic competence in ICT are well below average in Years 7 to 9 and very low in Years 10 and 11.
10. Throughout the school, the reasons for the underachievement are complex. In most cases it is down to unsatisfactory teaching, either currently or in the past, but there are also problems with aspects of the curriculum and accommodation that mean that pupils are not achieving as well as they should do, or as well as the teaching would merit.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Personal development is worse than at the previous inspection and is unsatisfactory overall. Attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory. Development of spiritual and cultural understanding is limited and is unsatisfactory. Moral and social development is satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many pupils are unhappy with important aspects of life in school.
- Attitudes and behaviour deteriorate in lessons where teaching is weak.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the range of cultures contributing to life in their own country are too shallow.
- Opportunities to help pupils develop personal values and beliefs are not used effectively enough.
- Pupils show a good sense of initiative and social responsibility when given the opportunity.
- Effective steps are taken to maintain levels of attendance.

Commentary

11. Pupils value some features of the school's provision, for instance many talk enthusiastically about the wide range of extra-curricular sports in which they participate. However, older ones in particular have serious reservations about how the school provides for their learning. In addition many pupils are unhappy about the poor behaviour that arises. Parents too express considerable concerns about behaviour.
12. The concerns about behaviour are justified. Around the school behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils are mostly sociable and friendly, though boys are occasionally over-boisterous. In lessons, attitudes and behaviour vary enormously. Pupils are, at heart, mostly prepared to learn. They work willingly and behave well when the teacher captures their enthusiasm by interesting tasks, as frequently happens in design and technology for instance. However, their response deteriorates in a significant minority of lessons, when they meet with dull content unmatched to their needs and when management of behaviour is inadequate. Year 7 pupils tend to behave better than others. Older ones are less tolerant of boring work and a degree of disaffection creeps in. Girls tend to be quieter and less actively disruptive than boys. Pupils with special educational needs respond very well when in separate sessions; they trust the specialist staff and want to learn. Those pupils with identified behavioural difficulties similarly behave well when they get the extra support they need, but at times become disruptive if it is lacking.
13. Exclusions are used strictly but fairly in response to really poor behaviour. There are more exclusions now than at the previous inspection, because of the way behaviour has worsened. There are signs of a slight decrease in incidents of misbehaviour, following the recent introduction of advice for teachers in behaviour management.
14. Opportunities for spiritual development are limited. In assemblies the provision for reflection on topics such as self-esteem gains a satisfactory response, but during tutor periods there is little encouragement to consider uplifting themes. Opportunities for prayer or reflection on their own

or others' religious beliefs are not given to all pupils on a daily basis. The planned religious education curriculum suggests a significant contribution to spiritual development for most pupils, but flaws in delivery mean this is spoiled by poor behaviour. The lack of religious education for many Year 11 pupils also limits spiritual development. This all contributes to the lack of self-control and missing respect for others' feelings that underlie the poor behaviour seen in unsuccessful lessons. In some instances pupils show so little concern for teachers' feelings that they wilfully set out to agitate them.

15. Cultural development similarly does not have a high enough profile. There are occasional visits to theatres, art galleries and museums. Good consideration is given to aspects of art and music of other cultures. However, little is done to make pupils aware of how other cultures contribute to our own knowledge and civilisation. To some extent pupils are not fully prepared for life in modern Britain. They are too vague about the breadth of beliefs and cultures to be met beyond their own local area.
16. Pupils make satisfactory gains in moral and social understanding. Older ones often show mature and sensible attitudes; for instance, nearly half of Year 11 are selected as prefects and their training helps them carry out their roles capably. Some relevant topics are studied and pupils gain a good grasp of issues such as fair trade. They know the difference between right and wrong despite the times when their behaviour does not reflect this understanding. They play fairly to the rules in sports and work together, helping each other, in the better lessons. Pupils know that bullying or other harassment is unacceptable and the few instances reported are resolved. The few pupils from minority backgrounds are well integrated in the school community, as are those with special educational needs or physical disability. The school has introduced new opportunities for pupils to help others by supporting charities. Outside speakers add to pupils' awareness of their own circumstances compared with those of many others in this country and beyond and the needs of others. They respond readily and with generosity to these good opportunities, showing initiative and organisation. In lessons, though independence and responsibility are inconsistently encouraged, pupils are at times over-dependent on the teacher because initiative is not promoted enough.
17. Attendance is satisfactory in all year groups, despite the disenchantment with learning seen in some lessons. The school highlights the importance of regular attendance. Awards are used effectively to motivate pupils, and administrative staff make a phone call home on the first day of any unexplained absence. Staff take good steps to identify any emerging pattern of poor attendance and to tackle concerns, in partnership with the education welfare officer.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	480	40	2
Any other ethnic group	2		

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded. The number of pupils on roll is for the current year

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2002-2003) (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.8
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.9
National data	1.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and poor in Years 10 and 11. The assessment of pupils' work is unsatisfactory. High proportions of parents are unhappy with the quality of teaching, in particular the demands made of pupils by teachers and the failure of teachers to treat all pupils equally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do not learn enough in science, ICT and religious education because the teaching is poor.
- Teaching is very good in design and technology, where pupils learn very well.
- Much of the work set for pupils is too easy, and pupils underachieve because teachers are not aware of their pupils' capabilities.
- Marking is poor so pupils do not know how to improve.
- Teaching does not always engage pupils and poor behaviour results and teachers do not manage this effectively.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 105 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (4%)	8 (8%)	37 (35%)	35 (33%)	15 (14%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)

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.

Commentary

18. The quality of teaching experienced by pupils has declined in recent years; teachers have not been trained in new techniques and have not received enough support in dealing with the changing nature of the school's intake. This academic year, under the leadership of the new headteacher, teachers have received training in the national strategies, behaviour management and how to use the data that is at last being made available to them. This training, coupled with intensive support for some weaker teachers, is having an effect on the quality of teaching, but there is still a long way to go before a better situation is reached. One in every five lessons fails to reach a satisfactory standard, and the proportion of teaching that is good or better is much smaller than usually seen.

19. In some subjects, the training or the appointment of new staff have had a dramatic impact. Teaching is now satisfactory in English, geography, history, French and German, although it is easy to tell, from the gaps in pupils' skills and understanding, that this has not been the case in the recent past and consequently pupils have not learnt all that they should have done. Moreover, the teaching needs to be better than simply satisfactory to make up for the deficiencies of the past.
20. In other subjects, the impact has not been enough to improve the teaching sufficiently; teaching is poor in science, ICT and religious education, with examples of unsatisfactory teaching in several other subjects. The main problem with the teaching lies in teachers' inappropriate expectations of what pupils are capable of. Much of the work is far too easy for higher attaining pupils, particularly in science and ICT. In both of these subjects, work is repeated in different year groups, so Year 9 will find themselves doing exactly the same work as Year 7. While the work may be suitable for Year 7 pupils, it is far too simple for those in Year 9. The problem in religious education is completely different, in that the work is too difficult for the lower attaining pupils. This lack of understanding of pupils' capabilities stems from the way that teachers have not been told enough about their pupils' standards in the past.
21. When the work is too easy or too difficult, the pupils quickly become bored and irritable. This is more prevalent in Years 9 to 11, because pupils who have spent longer in the school become more and more frustrated with the teaching they receive. Eventually, they start to misbehave and teachers do not have the skills necessary to control pupils' behaviour. This is the main difference between the teaching in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11; pupils tend to put up with unsatisfactory teaching to a greater extent in Year 7 and so behave better. The increase in the number of pupils arriving at the school with behavioural difficulties has not been sufficiently matched by an increase in the number of support staff, so there are pupils and teachers who should be supported in lessons, who are not receiving the help to which they are entitled. However, it is not the pupils who are to blame; two classes that are known to misbehave with their regular teacher, behaved impeccably when taught by teachers provided by the LEA. Pupils also feel bitter about the way that the whole class may be punished for the misbehaviour of an individual, rightly seeing this as unfair treatment.
22. There are, however, other problems with the teaching. The school does not have enough computers, so pupils rarely get to use them in their lessons or see their teachers using them to make lessons more interesting. Many teachers spend too long talking to pupils rather than allowing them to be active. Older pupils have complained about being made to copy endless notes from the 'board in science, while those in ICT complain about not having access to the Internet for some months. Another big issue is the quality of marking. Few teachers mark work really well and in the worst cases, such as English, some pupils' GCSE work has gone unmarked for many weeks. Most of the work is merely ticked, so pupils have no idea of how to improve their work. In general, little attention is paid to correcting errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar so pupils' literacy skills fall behind.
23. There are, however, subjects where teaching is good or better. In music and physical education, teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and generate equal enthusiasm in their pupils. In these subjects, pupils are active and concentrate hard on their work because they are keen to succeed. Nowhere is teaching better than in design and technology. Here, teaching is often of the very highest quality. The work is demanding, but pupils relish the challenges they are set. Pupils get through huge amounts of work in a single lesson because the pace is so brisk that no time is wasted. The teachers in design

and technology also adopt an unusual, but highly effective, approach to GCSE coursework. Teachers limit the number of pages that can be produced, insisting on a fewer number of high quality pages rather than more of a lower quality. The approach works exceptionally well, with pupils gaining very high marks for this element of the examination.

24. Teaching and learning within the visually impaired unit and the additional needs department are invariably good. Staff have a very good knowledge of how pupils learn best, are cheerful and encouraging, and provide an interesting variety of activities to hold pupils' attention. Resources, such as computers, are very well used to help pupils improve. For example, a visually impaired pupil became increasingly skilful at touch-typing as the lesson progressed; and a Year 7 pupil, whose spelling was poor, benefited from working independently on a software program. Because staff are committed to do their best for pupils, attitudes and behaviour are very good. In mainstream classes, teaching assistants give very good support and have a positive effect on how well pupils learn.
25. Whilst there is a good deal of data on the performance of pupils when they enter the school, this is not used consistently by teachers to diagnose pupils' strengths and help them to overcome their weaknesses. Much work and analysis has been undertaken in checking the progress of pupils; however, the results of such analysis have not been used to drive up standards. The school has identified where pupils achieved well and where there are weaknesses but, again, the use of such information is inconsistent. The poor marking fundamentally undermines the assessment system.
26. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator uses information from the primary schools to plan programmes of work for pupils and to decide where to place teaching assistants. The weekly log, kept by all assistants, contains helpful points about how pupils are getting on. This, too, is used in planning. However, the analysis of the achievement of pupils in Year 9 and their performance in GCSE two years later is not rigorous enough to assess how well pupils have done.

The curriculum

The curriculum is poor overall; it is good in Years 7 to 9 and poor in Years 10 and 11. A good range of extra activities is offered. The school has sufficient teachers and accommodation but not enough support staff or resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do not receive the curriculum to which they are entitled in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' literacy skills do not improve because there is no consistent approach to improving these skills and the library is very poor.
- There is very little vocational education.
- There is insufficient support in lessons for pupils with special educational needs.
- Resources for ICT are inadequate and this results in pupils underachieving.
- Provision for gifted and talented pupils is poor.
- Many pupils participate in a good range of out-of-school activities.

Commentary

27. The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9 because the school provides drama for all pupils plus the opportunity to study a second language over and above the statutory curriculum. The curriculum is poor in Years 10 and 11 because pupils do not receive enough lessons in ICT or religious education. Pupils have very little access to computers and their achievement in ICT is very poor; they are not taught the requirements of the National Curriculum. Most pupils do not have enough lessons in religious education in Year 11 and the school fails to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. In science, almost a whole class of pupils follows a course in separate sciences. Most of these pupils did not have the appropriate level of attainment at the end of Year 9 to follow these courses successfully and consequently many pupils are underachieving. There is almost no vocational education, so the curriculum does not meet the needs of a sizeable group of pupils who would benefit from such courses. The curriculum has not moved with the times, although new plans for the next academic year include much more vocational education, religious education and ICT. The school fails to provide a statutory daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
28. Throughout the school, the lack of computers causes problems. The school has a single computer room with 20 computers and even this has only recently been upgraded. There are few computers of any quality in the rest of the school, which means that pupils are unable to apply the limited skills they have learnt and that teachers are unable to teach the requirements of the National Curriculum.
29. There is a good range of extra activities. A very wide range of sports is provided and well over 60 per cent of pupils participate regularly. Music is also strong in this respect, particularly the impact on standards made by visiting music instrumental teachers.
30. The strategy for improving pupils' literacy skills is unsatisfactory. The whole-school strategy is not implemented consistently. For example, in design and technology, there is very good practice; teachers focus on key technical terminology and insist on pupils using terms correctly. In other subjects, such as ICT, even teachers do not use the correct subject terminology. A further problem is the very poor library. The LEA library service estimates that the school is 3000 books short of what would usually be expected, and those that are in place are often old or in poor condition. There are no resources, such as computers or periodicals, other than books in the library. There are now plans in place to improve both the library and the ICT resources.

31. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is poor. Whilst gifted pupils have been identified, there is very little planned provision and these pupils underachieve badly in relation to that of which they are capable. Pupils who are talented have not been identified in all the appropriate areas and there is no special provision for them outside of physical education or music.
32. Overall, the provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. However, within the specialist areas it is good. Small group work is very well planned to help pupils improve their English and mathematical skills. At registration times pupils are given extra help. For example, on two mornings a week, Year 9 pupils help Year 7 pupils to improve their reading. This speeds learning. Teaching assistants make an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning. The two assistants attached to the visually impaired unit produce modified print sheets for pupils' lessons as well as offering in-class support. All teaching assistants have considerable expertise and link well with subject teachers to plan for lessons. However, there are too few assistants to support the increasing number of pupils who need extra help, especially those with behavioural difficulties. In mainstream lessons, while good use is sometimes made of the targets and strategies in the individual learning plans for lesson preparation, on other occasions teachers ignore them. As a result, pupils are not involved in the work, behave poorly and do not achieve as well as they should.
33. The curriculum is of a worse standard than that noted in the previous report. Requirements in religious education are not met and there has been very little development of ICT. Curriculum innovation has not kept pace with national developments.

Care, guidance and support

Staff give satisfactory attention to pupils' care, guidance and support. Satisfactory attention is given to finding out pupils' views and responding to them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pastoral care and support are good in most respects, but inconsistencies in managing behaviour detract from the quality of guidance.
- Educational guidance motivates pupils to improve, even though it is not always sufficiently clear about exactly how they can achieve this.

Commentary

34. Pupils often mention the friendly, caring attitudes of teachers as a strength of the school. Tutors show good understanding of pupils' needs for pastoral support and a team of heads of year was recently appointed, because the new headteacher recognised that the previous pastoral structure must evolve to meet the needs of the increased number of pupils. The heads of year are enthusiastic about their role and are steadily developing it; for instance, the head of Year 7 is helping improve transfer arrangements. Plans are well advanced to collect and use extra information from primary schools to add to the support for new Year 7 pupils. Another improvement is the more structured approach for praise and rewards and for responding to poor behaviour. However, management of behaviour is weak in a significant minority of lessons, so pupils feel that they are not always treated

fairly as sanctions are not applied only to those who deserve them. They particularly dislike the whole class being punished for an individual's poor behaviour.

35. Good attention is given to resolving any concerns about bullying or other harassment that comes to light. All pupils know that help is available from teachers, or else from the trained volunteers who provide the 'ear 2 help' peer listening service. However, these sources of support could be better explained. A number of pupils, especially boys, do not recognise that to ask for help with such problems is sometimes an acceptable and sensible choice. Good care is extended to pupils where other particular needs are identified. For instance, a lunchtime club offers a haven for pupils with special educational needs. Settled Travellers on roll are known and supported, so that their attendance and achievement are generally similar to that of other pupils.
36. Teachers and teaching assistants of pupils with special educational needs give very good personal support to pupils. The centre is open every lunchtime for pupils to receive help with homework or to play games. They respond well to this provision and improve their social skills. Individual education plans contain useful information for teachers on how different pupils learn best. Pastoral support programmes are put together in discussion with pupils who have behavioural difficulties, but not all teachers take into account what is written and this lessens the impact of these programmes. Pupils with visual impairment are well monitored by the specialist teacher and two teaching assistants, and relationships are very good.
37. Satisfactory attention is given to health and safety routines. In one respect though, care for personal well-being requires attention, as the school recognises. The boys' toilet accommodation falls below an acceptable standard. Maintenance of the toilets is neglected and boys' own responsibilities for ensuring the facilities remain in good condition are insufficiently reinforced.
38. The awards available for hard work encourage pupils. Pupils value teachers' willingness to help, for instance through the extra lessons offered for GCSE revision. Senior staff offer a mentoring scheme to Year 11 pupils, who appreciate it and suggest very sensibly that it should be extended. Instances occur where pupils get good support to help them recognise their own improvement over time but quite often support for self-assessment is embryonic and specific guidance about exactly how to improve is lacking.
39. The headteacher takes a lead in listening to pupils' views; older ones feel she treats them as mature individuals. Pupils are confident enough to write or talk to her about their concerns with the quality of teaching, for example in science and religious education, knowing that she will take them seriously. Suitable routines are in place to enable all pupils to put forward their ideas through the school council and through the development of the Eco-school project. One of the strengths of the support given to pupils with behavioural difficulties is the way they are involved in deciding their own pastoral support programmes.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school takes satisfactory steps to foster links with parents and they have a satisfactory involvement in its work. Liaison with other schools and colleges and with the community is also satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A high proportion of parents are unhappy about many aspects of the school's work.
- Increasingly, efforts are being made to work with parents to resolve problems and to share pupils' successes.
- Community links to enable work experience placements are good.
- Increased efforts are being made to improve the partnership with feeder primary schools.
- Annual reports do not always give a clear enough picture of a pupil's progress.

Commentary

40. A high proportion of parents are dissatisfied with the work of the school. Many do not feel welcome at the school, or that the school is interested in their views. They also recognise, however, that things are changing rapidly under the leadership of the new headteacher.
41. Staff recognise that parents would like a better flow of information and they are working to improve matters. A twice-termly newsletter now tells parents about events and developments and encourages them to submit their own queries and comments. This year parents were for the first time invited to an evening presentation about drugs education. Parents are given appropriate opportunities to comment on matters such as the changes currently planned to the structure of the school day. Links with the strongly supportive parent teacher association continue to be fostered.
42. Improving attention is given to informing parents of how their child is doing. Staff respond willingly to parents' queries. On occasion they take the initiative in contacting parents about emerging concerns; they generally find that parents give willing support. Pupils' achievements are also shared with parents; the new headteacher sends a congratulatory letter home about any particular success. The new pastoral structure means that heads of year are now also building links with parents. The format of consultation evenings has been changed and most parents are pleased with this, though their attendance is still rather low. Good steps are taken to inform and involve parents of pupils with special educational needs.
43. Although pupils' annual reports quite often give plenty of information, the quality is variable. The tutor's summary usually shows a perceptive understanding of the pupil. Subject sections often indicate the standard at which the pupil is working. However, explanatory comments vary from a good level of specific detail about the progress the pupil has made, to a bland list of the topics covered. Some reports make no mention of ICT or of religious education.
44. The good links established with a wide range of employers enable all pupils to attend a week of work experience during Year 10 and Year 11. Suitable links are maintained with post-16 providers of education and training. A few relevant links with other countries broaden pupils' experience; for instance, those involved talk enthusiastically of sports' trips to Holland. Many look forward eagerly to the recreational visits that they earn as end of year rewards. Occasional visitors have a worthwhile input; for instance, a police community liaison officer regularly contributes to the curriculum. However, the development of links to extend pupils' first-hand experience of the range of cultures contributing to life in Britain today is inadequate.
45. Links with other educational establishments are improving. The introduction of the Eco-school project was helped by expertise from a feeder primary school. Recent increased

communication within the local group of schools has resulted in a constructive exchange of ideas about how schools can aid each other's provision to the benefit of pupils. One useful outcome is the enhanced routines for pupils' induction into Year 7. A sense of partnership is established, giving a secure basis for further initiatives.

46. The additional needs department has good links with primary schools and with parents. The co-ordinator visits primary schools to get to know pupils likely to transfer to the secondary school and to attend Year 6 annual reviews for those with statements. Early in the school year there is a parents' evening just for parents with pupils of special educational needs, where useful information is shared. Parents say they are pleased with the provision the department makes for their children.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school has been poorly led and managed since the previous inspection. Governance, leadership and management are all poor, although the leadership provide by the new headteacher is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has declined over recent years as a result of poor leadership and management.
- There has been little in the way of direction or training for staff to keep their skills up to date.
- Governors have been too slow to intervene to ensure that pupils receive a satisfactory quality of education.
- The situation is now improving under the new headteacher.

Commentary

47. The school has declined since it was last inspected; GCSE results have fallen, teaching has got worse and pupils are now underachieving badly. Nobody has stopped the decline in recent years and the only real improvements in the school's performance can be traced back to individual staff, who have implemented changes on their own initiative, or to the arrival of the new headteacher.
48. The leadership of the school has not provided any guidance on where the school should be going or how it should get there. There is no evidence of any whole-school planning for the previous year, so the school had no priorities for improvement. Targets for the performance of pupils have been revised downwards when it became apparent that pupils were going to underachieve. Nobody has been ensuring that the performance of all staff has been assessed properly and some targets for their improvement have been either inappropriate or non-existent. In some of the worst cases, members of staff have not been reviewed at all or, in the case of the two deputy headteachers, asked to monitor their own performances. Some new teachers have had little or no training by way of induction to the school. The new headteacher has taken swift action to deal with ineffective teaching, but has been unable to move as quickly as she would wish as records on weaker teachers are incomplete and/or they have not received the support to which they are entitled in the past.
49. The two deputy headteachers have borne the brunt of poor leadership. One invented his own system for measuring achievement, but his results, which clearly showed where pupils were doing well or poorly, were largely ignored or even discredited. The work carried out clearly showed that teachers were insufficiently informed about the changing nature of the intake, but nothing was done. The other deputy carries far too heavy a workload, making it impossible to carry out all her roles effectively; only this year, for example, have heads of year been appointed to assist with the management of the school's pastoral care.
50. The school's financial management has been particularly poor and the LEA now runs the school's finances. The lack of any priorities meant that the school could not target its funds to the areas where they would do the most good. Instead, money was simply placed into a central 'pot' and then spent as the need arose. This had a devastating effect on the school. Firstly, the school's spending went out of control and the budget fell further and further into deficit. Secondly, funds were not spent for the purposes they were allocated. For example, £37,000, which should have been spent on pupils with special educational needs, was spent on other items, leaving the school short of teaching assistants and leading to problems with behaviour in lessons where pupils are not supported. This unsatisfactory management was not the fault of the co-ordinator for special educational needs, who leads her team well, as she had no control over the budget. The school has far too few computers, despite, oddly, spending on ICT resources being well above the national average in the previous financial year. Very little has been spent on the library, leaving it a very poor resource. The results of these latter two spending decisions are plain in the standards of ICT and literacy in the school.

51. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has forged a united team of staff who give unstintingly of their time to help pupils enjoy school. Improvement since the last inspection is good in that teaching and learning within the department, the work of teaching assistants and links with other departments are all more effective. However, the good work of the department is not built on sufficiently in the main school to help pupils achieve as well as they could.
52. Perhaps the worst aspect of management has been the very poor level of training that staff have received; spending on training was half the national average in the previous financial year and nothing was spent on bringing help from outside. As a result, teachers have not ensured they are up to date with the current demands of the job; therefore, the quality of teaching has worsened rather than improved. The failure to respond to the changing needs of pupils entering the school has led to widespread underachievement, even on the part of lower attainers who have done well in the past. Similarly, middle managers have not received enough training, so many too are unaware of aspects of management that are expected in schools today, such as the analysis of data or the monitoring of their team's performance. In consequence, many middle managers, including deputy headteachers and heads of department, have tended to work in isolation and have reached a situation where they are not able to carry out their roles effectively. Where there has been a close-knit team with a determination to do well, such as in design and technology, the subject has flourished. In other subjects, little has been expected of managers or they have not received enough support to be able to do their job properly. Leadership and/or management that is unsatisfactory or poor has had a significant impact in English, science, geography, history, ICT and RE, usually because of insufficient emphasis being placed on improving the quality of education provided and pupils' achievements. Some new heads of department are now starting to improve the situation, such as in history and geography, but there are still weaknesses in several subjects; particularly ICT, science and RE.
53. Governors share some of the responsibility for the school's predicament. They have been too supportive and failed to take decisive action when it became clear that groups of pupils were underachieving year by year. Parents complain about complacency on the part of some governors, and they are correct. Targets for the school's performance have been too low and targets for the performance of the headteacher, such as to learn to use a digital camera, have been inappropriate in a school that has been going downhill. They have failed to ensure that pupils are taught enough religious education or ICT to meet statutory requirements.
54. One bright area in the school's leadership and management is the good leadership provided by the new headteacher. She has carried out a thorough evaluation of the school and is well aware of the problems it, and she, faces. An action plan has been drawn up to address the deficiencies, prioritising the underachievement of pupils who are about to take their GCSEs. This has already had an effect; the proportion predicted to gain five or more higher grades at GCSE was below average in September, but this had been improved to average by the time of the inspection. There has been a huge amount of training, with all departments receiving help with the national strategies and intensive support for weaker teachers; there are clear signs of improved teaching since the start of this academic year. Disciplinary action has been instigated against those whose teaching is not good enough and who are not responding sufficiently to support. The budget deficit has been wiped out and finances are now, again, under control. Parents say how much the situation has improved since the arrival of the new headteacher, but agree that much still needs to be done.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,662,610
Total expenditure	1,549,106
Expenditure per pupil	3282

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-24,996
Balance carried forward to the next	88,508*

This figure includes a sum of around £85,000 that has already been allocated to spending, making the true carry forward around £2838.

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 **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are a relative strength throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Some of the teaching is of good quality and is helping to raise standards.
- Pupils, and boys especially, are underachieving in Years 10 and 11 because of the slow progress they have made in the past.
- A significant proportion of teachers' marking is unsatisfactory and does not provide pupils with the support they need to raise their standards.

Commentary

Examination results

55. In 2003, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were above average, but have been falling; GCSE results in English and English literature were average.

Standards and achievement

56. When pupils' earlier standards are taken into account, their achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory and by the end of Year 11 it is unsatisfactory. The reason for the underachievement is that by the time many pupils entered Year 11 they had made slower progress than might have been expected. However, at the time of the inspection pupils were making satisfactory progress in lessons, mainly brought about by improved approaches to teaching. Even so, this was not fully compensating for their earlier slow progress.
57. By Year 9 most pupils express themselves clearly in speech and higher attainers are frequently fluent and use a wide vocabulary. Many adapt what they say to the circumstances in which they are speaking. Pupils listen alertly and respectfully to the views of others. Written work mirrors attainment in speaking and listening. Most pupils structure their work well and communicate ideas and thought clearly. Standards of reading are generally good and middle and higher attaining pupils read aloud with good expression.

58. In Years 10 and 11, standards are average, rather than the above average level that would be expected given their standards when they were in Year 9. Standards in speaking and listening remain good and indeed, higher attaining pupils speak with confidence and conviction both in the one-to-one situation and when addressing an audience. Standards of reading comprehension also remain high, with a good proportion of pupils being interested in the issues raised in literature and being able to offer some evaluation of literary techniques. However, whilst higher attaining boys and girls produce some very high quality written work, for the majority of pupils writing is an area of relative weakness. Boys do worse than girls in Years 10 and 11, because many boys have developed some ingrained bad working habits by the time they reach Year 11. Their written work, for example, often contains basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar; presentation and handwriting are also often unsatisfactory. In general, pupils do not plan and redraft their work to improve its accuracy and quality, as might be expected.

Teaching and learning

59. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11; examples of good teaching were also seen. When teaching is most effective, the teacher possesses good subject knowledge and has a good understanding of what constitutes high standards. This means that the teacher probes pupils with skill, inviting them to look for deeper meanings and generally to use their imagination and initiative. This is all the more effective when the teacher introduces new levels of complexity, which results in pupils being suitably challenged and interested. Most teachers maintain a good pace in lessons and have good relationships with pupils, and their discipline is effective. This means that there is a secure environment in which learning can take place. Good resources are used to enliven lessons, such as videos being used effectively as a stimulus for creative writing and to deepen pupils' understanding of plays. The best of teachers' marking is thorough and clearly explains to pupils what they need to do to improve.
60. When teaching is less effective, teachers do not sufficiently take into account pupils' prior attainment, with the result that higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged and lower attainers do not receive the support they need to be able to make good progress. In such lessons, the teacher tends to rely upon telling pupils what they should do, rather than demonstrating to them how they should proceed. Whilst in the most effective lessons pupils are given the chance to be active in their learning, for example by undertaking research, in the less effective ones the teacher talks too much and pupils tend to be passive. Marking is unsatisfactory when it is not completed regularly; it does not support pupils' attempts to re-draft their work and it does not provide them with guidance on what they need to do to improve.
61. Little use is made of ICT. It is a particular disadvantage that pupils have such limited opportunities to redraft and improve their work using word-processing.

Leadership and management

62. The recently appointed head of department has a vision of how standards might be raised. However, since the previous inspection, progress has been unsatisfactory in that pupils are now underachieving. This has been the result of unsatisfactory management where there has been little checking on the quality of teaching and very little training for teachers in new methods and approaches. Test and examination results have not been analysed in sufficient detail in the period since the previous inspection. This academic

year, however, a considerable effort has gone into training teachers and the results are clear in the improved teaching that is now taking place in the classroom, although this has come too late to counteract the effects of pupils' earlier underachievement. The resources for using ICT are unsatisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

63. Standards are above average by Year 9 and are average by Year 11. In general, pupils communicate well in speaking and listening and have good skills in reading comprehension. However, their skills in writing in Year 10 and 11 are marred by errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, and there is limited awareness of how work might be improved through redrafting. The standard of literacy is lower amongst boys than it is amongst girls.
64. The school's strategy for teaching literacy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory because there is inconsistency from one subject to another. At best, there is excellent practice, as seen in the teaching of design and technology. Pupils learn and use the subject-specific vocabulary; they are taught how to write in a manner that is appropriate for their purpose, whether that is to write a report or to produce an evaluation; teachers insist upon attention to detail and accuracy. Teachers mark pupils' work promptly and thoroughly. Opportunities are provided for pupils to read in class and to conduct their own research. However, work of this quality is the exception. More generally, there is little systematic attempt to develop pupils' skills in reading and writing and marking is often superficial and unhelpful. Few of the strategies outlined in the National Strategy for Literacy have been adopted. This includes lower attaining pupils not following the 'progress units' that are part of the strategy, and provide a framework for them to 'catch up' on their basic skills.

Modern foreign languages

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	French: average German: average	French: average German: average
Achievement	French: unsatisfactory German: unsatisfactory	French: unsatisfactory German: unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	French: satisfactory German: satisfactory	French: satisfactory German: satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are underachieving because of the poor teaching they have experienced in the past.
- Teachers use French and German well in the classroom which helps pupils to develop good pronunciation.
- Teachers explain clearly what pupils have to do and relationships are good.
- Pupils do not speak at enough length in class, because teachers tend to talk too much.

Commentary

Examination results

65. In French, examination results were average in 2003 and in German they were below average. Many more pupils were entered for both languages than would be expected nationally, especially for German; very few pupils in the school were not entered for the examination. Boys did worse in French than in other subjects they took in the school but in German there was no significant difference.

Standards and achievement

66. Pupils currently in Year 9 are working around the level that would be expected in both languages but their achievement is unsatisfactory because a significant proportion of pupils have had some poor teaching in the past and they have had several changes of teacher. This has particularly affected the performance of boys, although there are signs that this is now improving. Many pupils have gaps in their understanding because they have not been taught all that they should have in the past. All pupils find listening and reading easier than speaking and writing which is partly because they get more practice at listening and reading in class. In writing, lower attaining pupils can compose short paragraphs on a limited range of topics with some help from the teacher. Higher attaining pupils give their opinions and work in the present and past tenses, although there are fewer boys of average ability who do this than girls. When all pupils speak, pronunciation is mostly good but they do not often work at length. In German and French pronunciation is good because pupils hear the teacher use a lot of the language in class.

67. By Year 11, pupils' skills are average in French but are below average in German. The large proportion of pupils learning German means that there is a wider spread of ability than is normally seen. Achievement overall is unsatisfactory in both languages for the same reasons as in Year 9. This situation has improved recently and pupils are now making much better progress. Higher attaining pupils produce some good quality written work as part of their coursework. Boys of average attainment in particular, however, do not volunteer answers as often in class and their homework and coursework are less diligently completed and so boys do not succeed as well as the girls in examinations. Pupils develop satisfactory skills in reading texts but do not have access to a wide range of authentic materials. Speaking is being less well developed because opportunities are missed in class to practise.

Teaching and learning

68. Currently teaching and learning are satisfactory, although this has not been the case in the past. In both languages the teaching has strengths in common. For example, pupils are expected to listen carefully to the teachers who use a lot of French or German and so they are developing good listening skills. Teachers explain clearly what pupils have to do and relationships are good. Homework is regularly set and is linked well to work that has happened in the lesson, allowing pupils to follow up what they have learnt in class and to prepare their coursework thoroughly. Pupils are well prepared for the demands of the listening, reading and writing examination and are given plenty of practice with past papers. In good lessons, teachers allow pupils to take part in activities that use the language they had been taught in interesting ways. Pupils enjoyed, for example, singing a song about food and drink to the tune of a well-known pop song. The learning support

assistants are used well, helping pupils with special educational needs to understand how to complete a task.

69. In some areas speaking is being developed well; for example, pupils ask teachers for explanations in German and French and often use the language for everyday comments. They are not as good at speaking at length. There were several occasions, for example, when pupils did not get to practise language in class as much as they needed. Teachers tend to talk too much, asking all the important questions themselves and not allowing pupils to work in pairs or small groups which would enable them to get more practice. In a small minority of lessons, teaching was unsatisfactory because the teacher had unrealistic expectations or failed to manage the behaviour of the pupils. Pupils' work is also not always checked in lessons; teachers sometimes have a tendency to stand at the front instead of moving around the class to see who is having difficulty. This means that they do not always pick up the common misconceptions and do not notice that some of the boys in particular are not completing as much work as they could. ICT is not a regular part of the teaching as access to computers is difficult. This also means that pupils do not often get to read authentic materials from the Internet and most of their research has to be done at home.

Leadership and management

70. The department now provides a better quality of education than at the time of the previous inspection, results have risen and behaviour has improved. The frequent changes in staffing and difficulties with recruitment have meant that any new developments have not yet had a full impact although there is a much more positive team at present who are working well together. For example, they are aware of national initiatives and are beginning to use some of the ideas from these to improve their teaching, but this is not yet well established in the department. Information on how pupils are performing has only recently been made available and so results have only been analysed recently. There has therefore been insufficient time for the head of department to resolve the issues which she has identified, such as the underachievement of boys and the weakness in speaking skills. Parents, too, comment on the improvements made this year and the unsatisfactory achievement of pupils in the recent past.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan lessons clearly and have a good understanding of mathematics.

- The highest attaining pupils in Year 10 study GCSE statistics in addition to mathematics, but higher attainers in other classes do not benefit from such a level of challenge.
- ICT is not used enough.
- The monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work is raising standards.

Commentary

Examination results

71. Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average and have been improving rapidly. The GCSE results in 2003 were average but were lower than in recent years. This was due mainly to the disaffection of some pupils and underachievement in coursework. Steps have now been taken to address the coursework issue.

Standards and achievement

72. The well above average standards by Year 9 are as expected given pupils' well above average standards on entry to the school. Higher attaining pupils find the n^{th} term of a quadratic sequence and use trial and improvement methods well. The lower attaining pupils calculate, using the correct units, the areas and perimeters of rectangles and triangles. By Year 11, achievement is satisfactory, as these pupils' standards are at an appropriate level given those when they were in Year 9. In Year 11, the higher attaining pupils construct stem and leaf diagrams accurately to display data. The lower attaining pupils interpret tables of data and calculate the percentage reduction in the price of an item.

Teaching and learning

73. Teachers plan lessons clearly and have a good understanding of mathematics. However, only in the better lessons are pupils told what they will be expected to learn and how long they have for activities. Where this happens, pupils understand clearly the teacher's expectations and learn well. Teachers use good starter activities, to get pupils going, but the finishes do not recap what has been learnt well enough. In lessons, ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance the pupils' understanding of mathematics. In Year 10, the highest attainers study GCSE statistics in addition to mathematics, which really stretches them. However, higher attaining pupils in other classes do not benefit from such a level of challenge. Helpful marking is carried out, although this is better in some classes than others. Overall, pupils can say how well they are doing, but not how to achieve their target. However, in one Year 11 lesson assessment data was used well to support the pupils' revision. The teacher had analysed their performance in mock examinations, resulting in pupils targeting their areas of weakness. Homework is provided regularly and assists in the raising of pupil achievement.

Leadership and management

74. The head of department provides good leadership of a team which works hard to raise standards. She provides a good role model with a clear vision for improvement. Schemes of work are in place, but do not provide sufficient detail on the finishes to lessons or in the development of independent and collaborative learning, partly as a result of teachers not having the benefit of training on new initiatives until this academic year. Monitoring of both teaching and of pupils' work takes place and helps teachers to raise standards. Regular assessment of pupils' learning and evaluation of examination performance are carried out and inform both planning and target setting. Departmental

self-review is carried out and a development plan is in place. However, although this plan is reviewed, it does not detail sufficiently the main priorities for the department. A good range of extra activities are provided, including the UK Maths Challenge, extra support classes and a Year 11 revision day at Aston University.

Mathematics across the curriculum

75. The teaching of mathematics as a basic skill in all subjects is satisfactory. The mathematics department has delivered a training session and offered support to other subjects on the teaching and learning of numeracy. However, in some subjects, with the notable exception of design and technology, numeracy is not a well-embedded feature of the lessons. In science, for example, calculations are not set out well or practised and in geography the pupils' graphical skills are not high enough.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **poor**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Poor
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Poor

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' GCSE results are much worse than they should be.
- Lessons in Years 9, 10 and 11 are often slow and undemanding so pupils lose concentration and do not learn as much as they should.
- Teachers' marking is often cursory and fails to correct important mistakes.
- Teaching and learning are better in Years 7 and 8 where lesson planning has been updated and improved.

Commentary

Examination results

76. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were above the national average. Results in these tests had been falling but rose in 2003. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were below average and worse than the results for 2002.

Standards and achievement

77. The standards seen in pupils' work generally reflect those indicated by the 2003 test and examination results. However, standards are relatively higher in Years 7 and 8, than they are in Year 9, because the overall planning for lessons in those year groups is better. Parents are very unhappy with the standards in science and the quality of teaching that pupils receive.
78. In all year groups, some pupils gain standards that are above, and occasionally well above, average for their age. Some pupils in Year 9 have good understanding of the relative sizes of the various 'objects' to be found in space; others in Year 8 know, in detail, the functions of the various parts of a plant. However, in other groups, pupils' standards are often not as good as expected. For example, in Years 10 and 11, pupils' practical and investigative skills are weak. A 'top set' in Year 11 have practical skills that are only average for their age. Some lower attaining pupils in Year 10 do not appreciate the importance, in investigations, of only varying one factor at a time, a skill normally expected in Year 7.
79. By Year 9, pupils' standards are not as high as might be expected, given their test results when they entered the school. Middle attaining boys, in particular, underachieved in the tests last year. Pupils' books show that the work covered in Year 9 is often unchallenging and repetitive, particularly for middle and lower attainers. Pupils are losing interest in science at this stage, leading to lack of motivation and even more serious underachievement in Years 10 and 11. In GCSE examinations pupils do much worse than they should; they gained above average results at the end of Year 9 but their GCSE results are below average.

Teaching and learning

80. Teachers have secure knowledge of their subject and provide appropriate information and explanations for pupils. Some teaching is good and, occasionally, very good. For example, in a very good lesson for Year 8, a wide range of activities, including a memorable song about photosynthesis, answering questions from the textbook, using bio-viewers and drawing roots, all conspired to hold pupils' interest, to keep them thinking and to reinforce their learning about plants.
81. Nevertheless, there are significant weaknesses in the teaching and they are more prevalent in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. In particular, teachers often do not expect enough of pupils, and allow them to learn too slowly. This is a particular disadvantage for higher attainers. Topics from Year 7 are taught in Year 9, at exactly the same level of demand. In some lessons, teachers are not successful in managing pupils' behaviour so that the poor behaviour of a minority is allowed to disrupt the learning of the whole class. Teachers' marking of pupils' written work is unsatisfactory overall. Although some teachers give useful indications of how the work could be improved, much of the

marking is cursory, teachers fail to notice important mistakes and pupils' misunderstandings remain uncorrected.

82. Pupils share some responsibility for the slowness in their learning and eventual underachievement. They are often unwilling to listen to the teacher and need constant reminders. Even in higher sets, pupils are too relaxed in their attitudes to their work and their class work and homework are often incomplete. These bad habits have become ingrained because of the poor experiences pupils receive in Year 9, which turns them off science for the rest of their school careers. Pupils in Year 11 have complained, formally, to the headteacher about the poor teaching they experience and in particular the amount of copying they do.

Leadership and management

83. The head of department is keen to raise standards and open to suggestions about how he might do this. There are signs of improvement in standards in Years 7 and 8. The school has provided considerable support where an inexperienced teacher has had difficulties. Nevertheless, the department does not place enough emphasis on improving the quality of teaching, increasing achievement, providing more challenge for pupils and ensuring that they learn quickly and efficiently. There are weaknesses both in checking individual pupils' progress and in monitoring the work of the department as a whole.

84. Since the previous inspection, test results at the end of Year 9 have fallen from well above average to above average. GCSE results remain below average. Hence the department has made unsatisfactory progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **poor**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Very low
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Very poor
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Poor

Leadership	Poor
Management	Poor
Progress since previous inspection	Poor

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils underachieve very badly in Years 10 and 11 because teaching is poor and they are not taught the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- Pupils do not learn enough in lessons because teachers set their sights too low and tasks are mundane.
- Extra funding has been put into the subject but there are still not enough computers.
- Provision has not improved enough since the last inspection as a result of poor management.

Commentary

Examination results

85. ICT is not offered to examination level.

Standards and achievement

86. Pupils come to the school with a mixed experience of modern technology. By Year 9 their standards have deteriorated because they do not build on the skills they gained in Year 6. Higher attainers know how to produce a presentation manipulating both text and images. They effectively use *WordArt* and *ClipArt* in their coursework and show a reasonable understanding of navigating the Internet. They use drop-down menus well and can import information from one application to another. They have an unsatisfactory knowledge of the systems and control aspects of the syllabus and of using more complex formulae in spreadsheets. In one Year 9 lesson a girl produced a detailed graph of her spreadsheet calculations of minutes for a mobile phone topic. Unfortunately, because there is no access to a colour printer, the black and white results were meaningless and her disappointment evident. Lower attainers do not understand basic concepts like using keyboard shortcuts and the use of the right mouse button. They spend too much time working from unsuitable worksheets and as a result have very basic skills on the keyboard and not enough understanding of the software they use.

87. By Year 11 standards have dropped even lower. Pupils have not increased their skills or knowledge from Year 9. In fact, skills have deteriorated for the majority of pupils because of the lack of time given to the subject and the poor teaching they receive on the rare occasion they have a lesson. The combination of these two factors results in very poor achievement overall. Most pupils rely on teaching themselves on computers at home because there are not enough machines in school. Pupils can type in simple text but very few can use formulae in a spreadsheet. Not even the higher attainers can accurately set up a database. Lower attainers align text in a document by using the spacebar because they have not been taught any other way of doing it. Pupils with special educational needs achieve poorly because work is not demanding and they are not stretched. Higher attainers achieve very poorly because they learn hardly anything at all. Pupils' reading is limited to prepared worksheets. They do not read enough from the Internet and textbooks.

Teaching and learning

88. Pupils do not learn enough because the teaching is poor overall and most lessons are dull and mundane. Although lessons are adequately planned, teachers do not modify work so that all pupils can achieve as well as they should. They have very low expectations of what pupils can achieve. During the inspection pupils in Year 9 were given the same work as the lowest attaining pupils in Year 7. Lessons are planned adequately but the content does not stretch even the lowest attainers enough. The pace of learning is frequently too slow and as a result pupils underachieve very badly. Pupils enjoy using computers and are generally keen to learn but they find the low-level tasks they are faced with boring and repetitive. There has been considerable support put into the department to help teachers deliver more exciting lessons in line with the spirit of the national strategy. However, the impact of this was not seen during the inspection. Marking of work is inconsistent and rarely tells pupils what to do to improve. Assessment information is poor and is not used to ensure that achievements are recognised and evaluations accurate.

Leadership and management

89. ICT was a key issue of the previous inspection. It has not been tackled successfully and remains a major weakness. Although resources have improved, the quality of the overall ICT provision for pupils has got much worse. Documentation is satisfactory but much is in draft form and not yet in use. There is no effective agreement about Internet use so pupils are not fully aware of what they can or cannot do. The national strategy has been introduced but the same units are being used for each year group. The co-ordination of ICT across other subjects is very poor and is not monitored to ensure the requirements are met.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

90. The use of computers in other areas of the curriculum is generally poor. Hardly any subjects use computers well because there are not enough machines for the pupils to use. The computer room has 20 computers but access is restricted so most subjects do not use them. In design and technology pupils use computer-aided design and manufacture equipment well. The use of computers by the visually impaired pupils is good. However, in music there is only one computer with very basic software so pupils cannot create and manipulate sounds. In Years 10 and 11 because ICT lessons are few and far between, pupils rely on other subjects to provide enough use of computers to meet the statutory requirements but this is not the case. Many pupils have large gaps in their ICT knowledge and skills because they do not get enough opportunities to build on the limited skills they gained in Years 7 to 9. As a result of the poor provision, pupils' competency in ICT skills is very poor.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 7 to 9 are improving because of good teaching.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of good provision made for them in lessons.
- Unsatisfactory management has led to pupils underachieving.

Commentary

Examination results

91. There were too few pupils studying for GCSE to make valid comparisons with national statistics.

Standards and achievement

92. By Year 9 pupils have a range of geographical skills but standards are lower than they should be, given pupils' standards on joining the school, because many pupils lack clarity and accuracy when working with maps, pictures and graphs. Pupils know the technical terms and use them in context, but do not develop their written answers sufficiently. Higher attaining pupils research topics well and produce detailed accounts of events. Improving standards are evident in recent work on the impact of flooding in the River Severn valley and in Mozambique. Standards of work of the lower attainers are lower than they should be because of grammatical weakness and underdeveloped knowledge of places. This level of underachievement is a result of staffing difficulties in the past, resulting in pupils not being taught all they should have been.
93. The below average standards in Year 11 reflect satisfactory achievement for this group of pupils, whose standards were below average when they started the course. By Year 11 pupils have an average knowledge of the topics they study. They recall terms and physical processes, and their knowledge of places improves because there is more use of 'case studies'. However, pupils do not take enough care with graphs and illustrations. A continuing weakness is pupils' inability to explain themselves fully when answering questions in writing.

Teaching and learning

94. In Years 7 to 9 lessons have clear aims and a good structure. Pupils are encouraged to be self-reliant through carrying out their own investigations, with increasing emphasis on researching topics using ICT. Marking is mostly good. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is now making up for the deficiencies of the past and standards are improving as a result. In Years 10 and 11 pupils benefit from experienced, specialist teaching. Good use is made of resources, particularly video film that gives relevance to learning and improves knowledge of places. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from individual guidance and make good progress. However, there are lessons where not enough is expected of pupils; the pace is too slow so pupils do not learn enough.

Leadership and management

95. The newly appointed head of subject is providing satisfactory leadership and is bringing stability to the department. A good start has been made in developing procedures to assess attainment but monitoring progress is not yet well established. Changes in staffing in recent years have meant that pupils have had their education interrupted; morale has fallen and has led to pupils underachieving. The weaknesses in management resulted in poor guidance to staff about how to teach or what to do to improve; standards have fallen since the previous inspection. Schemes of work are currently being written and planning for the improvement of the department has begun.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and leadership are leading to improved standards.
- Standards of coursework are above average, because of the good guidance pupils receive.
- Unsatisfactory management of the subject has led to pupils underachieving in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

Examination results

96. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were very low and show a declining trend over recent years. Girls performed better than boys did but, overall, pupils performed poorly.

Standards and achievement

97. By Year 9 pupils have good skills in using sources of evidence to interpret the past, but do not explain answers enough because of limited experience in evaluating evidence in their previous years. They know about the major periods of history and place key events sequentially, but lack confidence in independently researching topics because they have had insufficient practice. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of recently studied topics are good because they now organise their work better and their descriptions are clearer. Most express themselves well in written work, but the standards of lower attaining pupils are reduced by grammatical weaknesses. Overall, these pupils are not doing as well as expected, given their standards on joining the school, because they have not learnt enough in the past.

98. By Year 11 pupils have made good progress in developing research and organisational skills in coursework. They show understanding about bias in evidence and are aware of moral issues. Re-drafted work is well organised and presented. The standard of other work, however, is below average because pupils' answers are insufficiently detailed, their expression is weak and some work is incomplete. These pupils are doing as well as expected given their average standards at the start of the course.

Teaching and learning

99. In all years, enthusiastic, specialist teachers teach pupils and as a result learning is good. Lessons are carefully planned and managed well so pupils know what is expected of them and respond positively to the challenges provided. As a result learning is brisk, time is used well and much is achieved in lessons. End of unit assessments are marked well, but insufficient attention is given to the day-to-day marking of longer pieces of writing. Lessons incorporate a variety of activities that interest the pupils and lead to them applying themselves well to tasks. Occasionally learning is not good enough because insufficient is expected of the pupils.

Leadership and management

100. The newly appointed head of department is providing good leadership and raising the confidence of pupils in the subject. Standards are rising as a result. Issues for future development have been identified, although it is not clear how these would be addressed. Staffing changes have led to instability over recent years and resulted in pupils underachieving in the subject. The monitoring of the department has been unsatisfactory, so temporary teachers have received insufficient guidance about course expectations and pupils' learning needs. This is improving with the writing of schemes of work and clearer procedures for monitoring and evaluation. Since the previous inspection GCSE results remain too low and pupils are now underachieving in Years 7 to 9. Parents point out the great improvements in the subject this year and now rate history as one of the best subjects in the school.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **poor**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Poor	Poor
Teaching and learning	Poor	Poor

Leadership	Poor
Management	Poor
Progress since previous inspection	Poor

Main strengths and weaknesses

- For the vast majority of pupils teaching is poor and fails to interest or inspire.
- Behaviour is poor and disrupts teaching and learning.
- There is inadequate time given to the subject in Year 11.
- The teacher has good knowledge and interests the high attaining pupils who have chosen to do GCSE.

Commentary

Examination results

101. Results of the GCSE examinations were above average in 2003 and pupils did better than in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

102. By Year 9 pupils have a basic knowledge of some aspects of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism but there is little understanding of the ideals or beliefs of holders of these faiths. The single, most significant, factor affecting standards is the poor, often insolent, behaviour of a large proportion of the pupils in middle and lower attaining groups. This hinders the achievement and learning of all pupils. The majority make little effort and much of the written work is unfinished.
103. By Year 11 standards in GCSE classes are average. Pupils study the topics in good depth and show initiative. They have a good knowledge of the specialist vocabulary and use this effectively. For the remainder of pupils in Year 11 standards are very low. This is largely because they get only six hours of lessons each year instead of the recommended 40 hours, but also because not enough is demanded of them in the lessons that they do receive. The topics are covered with regard to moral and social aspects but this does not meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. In Year 10 all pupils are doing either the full or short course in GCSE. High attaining pupils are doing well in Year 10, so standards in Year 10 are relatively higher than in Year 11.

Teaching and learning

104. Teaching is poor largely because of a failure to control the poor behaviour of a significant number of pupils in the middle and lower attaining classes. Planning is particularly poor; the same lessons are taught to all pupils in the year groups and these are often too academic for the majority. The way lessons are presented is dull and the resources used, such as worksheets, are often drab. There are frequent opportunities for reflection and discussion but they are mostly abused and this ends up hindering learning even further. Teaching of the top groups in Years 10 and 11 is much better; pupils have chosen to study the subject in Year 11 and want to do well. Pupils value the extensive range of prepared notes given by the teacher. These pupils are mature and serious and are prepared to do a significant amount of independent learning.

Leadership and management

105. There has been a significant change in staffing in the recent past, with a new head of department in place. Leadership is poor. There are no clear strategies to improve the behaviour in lessons or to improve standards in Years 7 to 9. Management is poor. Assessment is inadequate, so pupils do not know their standards and what has to be done to improve; nothing has been done to ensure all pupils receive their statutory entitlement to religious education. Parents complain bitterly about the quality of teaching and the level of achievement in the subject. Teaching and learning, standards and progress, attitudes, behaviour and personal development have all deteriorated since the school was last inspected.

TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of attainment	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good

Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
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Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching results in pupils achieving very well.
- Very good leadership has forged a strong team of specialists.
- A lack of ICT facilities limits achievement in design.
- Higher attaining pupils underachieve in graphics because teachers do not challenge them enough.

Commentary

Examination results

106. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average and continue a rising trend. Pupils did much better in design and technology than they did in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

107. Pupils enter the school with below average skills in making and designing. By the end of Year 9, pupils have an above average knowledge of manufacturing techniques. They use a range of tools accurately and confidently. Pupils use computer-aided design (CAD) well, although there are insufficient ICT resources to enable pupils to produce high quality designs using CAD. They are good at analysing situations and data, and apply their findings well to new products and situations.

108. By the end of Year 11, standards of practical work are well above average. In resistant materials, products are finished to a very high standard. Pupils have a well above average knowledge of environmental issues. Graphical skills are above average; design work is well structured although this occasionally inhibits pupils' imagination and also limits the achievement of the very highest attainers in graphics. Pupils' folders illustrate very good development of key skills in all material areas and this is fundamental to the department's success at GCSE.

Teaching and learning

109. Teachers' very good command of the subject enables them to focus pupils on how to gain maximum marks and score well in examination work. Very good management of pupils enables positive relationships to be established between pupils and teachers; this is evident in the way that pupils are confident enough to ask questions and discuss their work not only with the teacher but also with one another. Marking is very good, being informative and helping pupils to improve their work. The department's implementation of the National Literacy Strategy is very good; there is a strong emphasis on improving pupils' writing and reading techniques although the lack of ICT facilities limits the pupils' ability to draft and redraft coursework. One weakness in the teaching is that, in Years 10 and 11, teachers do not set demanding enough work for the very highest attaining pupils in graphics.

Leadership and management

110. The head of department provides a very good role model for the rest of the staff, through the quality of his teaching and his infectious enthusiasm for continual improvement. Very good systems for assessment and monitoring enable the department to attain such high standards; teachers know how each pupil is performing and what his or her targets are. These very good procedures enable teachers to plan their work very well and to customise tasks to meet the needs of pupils. Standards, achievement and teaching have all improved and there is now more very good and excellent teaching.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is brisk and lively and captures pupils' interest
- There is good three-dimensional work and still life drawing in Years 7 and 8.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory, so pupils do not know how to improve.
- There is inadequate use of ICT in the development of pupils' work.

Commentary

Examination results

111. There were too few pupils studying for GCSE in 2003 to make valid comparisons with national statistics.

Standards and achievement

112. Pupils have average skills on entry to the school. By the end of Year 9 pupils have average skills in drawing and design; painting skills are below average. In Years 7 and 8 pupils have better skills in drawing than are seen in the work of Year 9, because pupils in Year 9 have had their education disrupted by changes in staffing. Pottery in Year 9 is done well but there is not enough scope for imaginative and creative design, which limits the higher attaining pupils. Drawing from still life is good, especially in the use of shading to achieve tone and texture.

113. By the end of Year 11 standards in GCSE are average. Most of the skills associated with the subject, such as drawing, painting and sketching, are average. However, the way that pupils present their work does not do it justice; it is not always clear what ideas pupils are exploring and ideas are not always linked. Printing is weak; pupils have poor understanding of the use and power of line.

Teaching and learning

114. Teaching is satisfactory overall and there is some good teaching, especially in three-dimensional work in Years 7 and 8 and in the formal skills of drawing. The teachers have very good skills in class management and create a lively climate for learning. Teaching is brisk and lively and captures pupils' interest. Assessment, however, is unsatisfactory; praise is often too lavish and pupils do not know what has to be done to improve standards. Resources for painting are poor and affect the standards of work. There are

not enough computers to allow the use of ICT in lessons, although this has improved in the last few weeks.

Leadership and management

115. The head of department demonstrates a clear vision of how to improve the department. Schemes of work are good, but assessment is not being used well enough to raise standards. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection when there were serious weaknesses in the work. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by looking at these aspects in Aboriginal, Egyptian, African and Native American art forms.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because teachers have very good subject knowledge and prepare pupils well for examinations but teachers do not always match the work to the needs of all pupils in lessons.
- Pupils benefit from the very good instrumental lessons provided by the visiting teachers.
- Pupils do not use computers enough in lessons and as a result miss out on an important part of the course.
- The selection process for pupils studying GCSE music is a barrier to some pupils' achievement.

Commentary

Examination results

116. There were too few pupils studying for GCSE to make valid comparisons with national statistics.

Standards and achievement

117. By the end of Year 9 pupils have well-developed performance skills. They are confident composers and create well-structured short pieces that display a good understanding of musical styles. They are given a very traditional diet with a strong emphasis on musical notation and the Classical tradition. Overall they achieve well. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs do not do as well as middle and higher attainers because tasks are generally too hard for them. By the end of Year 11 pupils can perform and compose well. Theory and appraising work is less developed but still shows an adequate understanding of the examination requirements. The more musically talented are very good performers and get lots of opportunities to take part in ensembles throughout the

school. Their standards on entry to the course are higher than normally found because pupils are well supported by the very effective visiting music teachers, and the department has been selective about the pupils accepted onto the GCSE course.

Teaching and learning

118. It was not possible to see all subject staff teach during the inspection. A great deal of work was analysed in order to gain the fullest picture. Pupils learn and achieve well because the teaching is good. Lessons are planned thoroughly and teachers have very secure knowledge of the subject and the examination requirements. Teachers use their own musical talents well to demonstrate regularly to the pupils; this helps the pupils understand more complex points very well. Resources are used well but there is a lack of up-to-date computers with suitable music software so pupils miss out on manipulating and refining their pieces. Work is not always well matched to the needs of the pupils. For example, in one Year 9 lesson the task was much too hard for the majority of the pupils. The pupils with special educational needs struggled to understand the purpose of the exercise and did not achieve as well as they should because the topic was not explained and they could not see the relevance of learning the Phrygian and Lydian modes. They were very well supported by a support assistant who worked tirelessly to ensure they remained on task. Within the same group a musically talented girl was not stretched by the work because the work was far too easy for her. She was already an accomplished performer on two instruments but this was not taken into account during the lesson. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work very hard in lessons because they have very positive attitudes and are talented musicians who have a real passion for the subject. They respond well to the examination-focused work and are good independent learners. In some lessons teachers spoonfeed the pupils too much information instead of letting them work it out for themselves.

Leadership and management

119. Leadership and management are characterised by a clear vision for driving the subject forward. Day-to-day management is underpinned by very effective systems and procedures geared to ensure success at examinations. Assessment procedures are effective in Years 10 and 11 but are not accurate in Year 9 so pupils' standards have been underestimated. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection but some issues have not been dealt with effectively. There is still a major problem with the lack of ICT. The policy for pupils entering the GCSE course has not been as inclusive as it should be and some pupils have been refused entry to the course because they do not take part in school music groups even if they are particularly musically talented. This lack of equality of access was an issue in the last inspection and is now being reviewed by the new headteacher who believes all pupils should be given the opportunity to study music. A good range of extra-curricular activities and biannual musical productions enhances pupils' musical experiences.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, so pupils learn well in lessons in all years.
- Accommodation and facilities are poor and this restricts curriculum breadth and produces a negative impact upon achievement.
- Limited time allocated in Year 11 for core physical education constrains pupils' achievement.
- There is a very good extra-curricular programme, allowing all pupils to develop and extend their skills.

Commentary

Examination results

120. There were too few pupils studying for GCSE to make valid comparisons with national statistics. In 2003 almost half of the Year 10 pupils successfully passed the Junior Sports Leader Award.

Standards and achievement

121. Pupils arrive at school with below average standards in physical education and by Year 9 standards are average, which represents good achievement. Pupils demonstrate competence in cricket, rounders and athletics and they successfully learn the basic skills required for taking part in these activities. In cricket, rounders and athletics most pupils know the basic rules and the basic fundamentals of hitting, catching, fielding, running and jumping. Many Year 9 pupils successfully apply their techniques skilfully in mini games of cricket and rounders. However, restricted time in the Year 11 core physical education programme and poor facilities inhibit Year 10 and 11 pupils, so their achievement is only satisfactory in spite of the good teaching they receive. Half of the Year 10 pupils gain certification in the Junior Sports Leader Award, allowing them to assist a teacher or sports coach. A small group of pupils follow a GCSE short course in physical education. They are well motivated in the practical aspects of the subject and build successfully on their core physical education programme. However, the 2003 GCSE results show standards were reduced by the pupils' theory paper and there is some evidence of this in the present Year 11 pupils' files. Standards of the small group of Year 11 pupils taking GCSE in 2004 are just below average although they are achieving satisfactorily.

Teaching and learning

122. Overall, teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 11. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers. This helps them to develop a depth of understanding in the subject. Lesson planning is good; there is a clear emphasis on developing the skills of all pupils. Most lessons demand a lot from pupils in terms of both effort and performance. Pupils are encouraged to make good use of technical words. For example, Year 10 pupils on the Junior Sports Leaders Award course use and understand physiological words related to body warm-up techniques. Teachers are aware of pupils with special needs and adapt methods to ensure that they achieve as their peers. A strong feature of

lessons was the good attitudes, behaviour and teacher/pupil relationships which underpin pupils' learning.

Leadership and management

123. The head of department shows a clear understanding of the direction of development needs. However, there has been insufficient attention given to the department's development plan and the monitoring of teaching. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection; standards and the quality of teaching have been maintained with improved extra-curricular activities that allow all pupils the opportunity to excel. Accommodation and facilities remain a big problem. The lack of indoor space inhibits the activities that can be taught, while the frequently waterlogged pitches mean that pupils are often taught in corridors when the hall is in use for other purposes.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school offers no courses in this area.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is taught as a discrete subject within the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, together with a contribution from humanities.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A small team of teachers teaches citizenship, which leads to consistency in teaching and learning.
- Whole-school activities like voting and supporting the school council and charity work enhance active citizenship.
- Assessment and marking are unsatisfactory, so pupils are unaware of the progress they are making.
- Many subjects do not contribute sufficiently to the citizenship programme.

Commentary

Examination results

124. Pupils do not follow an examination course in citizenship.

Standards and achievement

125. Pupils join the school with a very wide range of experiences in citizenship. By the end of Years 9 and 11, pupils have average skills of enquiry and knowledge about becoming informed citizens. They all achieve satisfactorily. By the end of Year 9, pupils have an understanding of the debating process, although many find it difficult to work to these conventions. In some citizenship lessons there is limited discussion and involvement is restricted. All pupils from Years 7 to 11 experience the process for the election of the school council. By the end of Year 11, pupils have an average understanding of such topics as racial discrimination, prejudice, the consequences of breaking the law, immigration and budgeting.

Teaching and learning

126. A small team of teachers teaches citizenship, which helps to ensure consistency. These teachers are knowledgeable and apply their range of knowledge well to extend pupils' horizons. Overall, pupils show good attitudes to citizenship and enjoy the discussion and participation. The school council provides a useful forum for pupils to become actively involved in the democratic process. Some elements of citizenship are taught explicitly through the humanities, for example, the role of women in the 19th century. Insufficient use is made of other subjects for citizenship work. Good use is made of visitors; for example, the visiting police constable helps discussion on anti-social behaviour, bringing a touch of reality to the subject. However, marking is unsatisfactory, which means that pupils are not aware of the progress they make in the three different strands of citizenship.

Leadership and management

127. The deputy head co-ordinates the citizenship programme. She helps to give status to the subject and provides satisfactory leadership and management. At present, monitoring and assessment are not consistent enough to check pupils' progress. Citizenship was not a curriculum subject at the time of the previous inspection.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

PSHE is delivered through separate lessons, with elements also delivered through other subjects such as science

Provision in PSHE is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work experience is well structured and organised to build pupils' personal experience of the world of work.
- Assessment of pupils' achievements in PSHE is unsatisfactory.
- Time allocated for PSHE lessons, together with inconsistencies in teaching aspects planned to be covered in other subjects, limits pupils' achievements.

Commentary

128. Work seen for pupils in Years 7 to 11, together with the limited number of lessons seen, indicates satisfactory teaching, average standards and satisfactory achievement. The Year 7 programme makes a good contribution to pupils' welfare by helping them settle in

when they first join the school. Pupils make satisfactory gains in understanding concepts of anti-social behaviour and in recognising the impact on themselves and others of alcohol or other drugs. In Year 8 a formal start is made to careers education, and this continues in Year 9 with preparation for options choices, to which interviews with the Connexions advisor contributes. The school nurse assists with delivery of the sex education programme in Year 9; the relationships aspect of this programme is delivered separately. This important aspect is relatively less developed; a lesson seen had weaknesses largely due to immature attitudes and disruptive behaviour by at least one third of the pupils present.

129. In Years 10 and 11, satisfactory attention continues to be given to health and drugs education. Well-organised work experience makes a good contribution to careers education. All pupils follow one week's work experience in Year 10, and another at a different workplace in Year 11. While efforts are made to match placements to pupils' career aspirations, there is also a good emphasis on adding breadth to their experience. Good liaison with the Connexions advisor contributes to the good success rate in helping pupils identify their post-16 routes; virtually all the present Year 11 pupils have places organised in further education or continuing training.
130. However, as the school recognises, the current Year 11 careers programme leaves room for improvement. For instance, since their PSHE is delivered on a carousel with other activities, careers lessons are less useful for some Year 11 classes because they come too late in the year.
131. Leadership and management, understanding and a will to improve are present, but the deputy headteacher leading PSHE is short of time for the role because of other duties. It is hard to see how the work experience component could be delivered without the very hardworking and capable member of the administrative staff who takes responsibility for organising this.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	6
How inclusive the school is	5
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	6
Value for money provided by the school	6
Overall standards achieved	6
Pupils' achievement	6
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	5
Attendance	4
Attitudes	5
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	5
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	5
The quality of education provided by the school	6
The quality of teaching	6
How well pupils learn	6
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	6
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	6
The governance of the school	6
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	6
The effectiveness of management	6

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