

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **WHITSTONE SCHOOL**

Shepton Mallet

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123872

Headteacher: Mr. S. Chaudoir

Lead inspector: John Carnaghan

Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> January 2004

Inspection number: 258851

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	748
School address:	Charlton Road Shepton Mallet Somerset
Postcode:	BA4 5PF
Telephone number:	01749 345555
Fax number:	01749 345243
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P. J. Eavis
Date of previous inspection:	23 <sup>rd</sup> February 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Whitstone School is a small 11 to 16 secondary school, serving the town of Shepton Mallet and surrounding villages. It is a community school and a technology college. The school is growing in size and is over-subscribed. The area it serves has some deprivation but is, overall, average in background. The standards of attainment of pupils as they enter the school are average. The numbers of pupils who take free school meals are similar to the national average. Very few pupils are from ethnic minorities and very few speak English as an additional language. There are no travellers or refugees and a small number of looked-after children. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average but there are fewer than usual numbers of those with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The number of pupils who join or leave the school during the school year is average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages, citizenship, English as an additional language
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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>9</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>12</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>33</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

**Whitstone School provides a satisfactory standard of education.** Standards are similar to the national average and achievement is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. The leadership of the school is satisfactory, maintaining an emphasis on improving standards. School management is sound, but the way the school is monitored is inconsistent and unsatisfactory. Governance is generally satisfactory. The school is much more expensive per pupil than most other schools and, because pupils' standards are average, it gives unsatisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11, so pupils learn well, but too many lessons in Years 7 to 9 are lacklustre and fail to fully challenge pupils; in these lessons, learning is satisfactory.
- Over the last five years, despite fluctuations, pupils' standards have risen more quickly than the national improvements in Years 7 to 9 and have kept pace with them in Years 10 and 11.
- The way the school sets targets, monitors and evaluates its work is unsatisfactory and leads to inconsistencies in a number of areas, including teaching.
- Most pupils behave well and relationships are good, this is beneficial to their learning.
- Provision in information and communications technology (ICT) is very good; in English, science, music, religious education, design and technology, history, geography and physical education it is good. Provision in citizenship is unsatisfactory and standards are too low.
- Pupils achieve well in art and design, ICT, design and technology, geography, music, physical education, religious education and in Years 7 to 9 in English.
- The school does not regularly seek pupils' views in order to act on them.
- There are very good links with other schools and colleges and good links with parents and the local community which are beneficial to pupils' learning.
- The school does not meet requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
- Some corridors and stairways can be very over-crowded and are potentially hazardous.

The school was previously inspected in 1998. It has addressed most of the key issues. Attendance is now much better. The special educational needs department supports other subject areas well. ICT is very well managed and its provision has improved considerably. The promotion of pupils' spiritual awareness has improved and is now satisfactory. The school still does not meet the requirements for an act of collective worship. Pupils' standards in tests and examinations have risen. However, standards of teaching and leadership and management have fallen due to insufficient monitoring. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

**Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and their current standards are average.** Standards by the end of Year 9 are broadly average. Most pupils have average standards on entering the school, so their achievement is satisfactory. Current standards by the end of Year 11 are average and pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is also satisfactory. In 2003 GCSE results were above average when compared with these pupils' standards at the end of Year 9. Helped by good teaching, these pupils achieved well. Achievement is currently good in ICT, art and design, design and technology, geography, music, religious education and physical education and in English in Years 7 to 9. It is unsatisfactory in citizenship. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys

and girls or different ethnic groups. Good support enables pupils with special educational needs to achieve satisfactorily.

**Pupils' personal qualities and their social and cultural development are good. Development of spiritual and moral awareness is satisfactory.** Relationships, attitudes and behaviour are good. However, a small minority of pupils misbehave in lessons and corridors. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and good in Years 10 and 11.** Two thirds of lessons seen were good or better. Teaching is best in Years 10 and 11 where a quarter of lessons were very good or better. Too many lessons in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning are good in many subjects but are unsatisfactory in citizenship. Older pupils participate well in their learning and are receptive to teachers' expectations. Teachers' command of their subjects is good but expectations of behaviour can be too low, so that learning in some lessons in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory.

The school curriculum is satisfactory. There are good opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities. Care and guidance for pupils are satisfactory. Assessment is satisfactory; it provides the school with valuable information, but this is not consistently used to set improvement targets for pupils. Pupils are too little involved in the running of the school. A significant minority said they did not feel valued or involved in school life. The school has good links with parents and the local community and very good links with other schools and colleges.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are satisfactory.** The head teacher is a good leader and has a clear sense of purpose for the school. Management of the school is satisfactory but the quality of line management is inconsistent. Methods of self-evaluation are unsatisfactory so the school has imperfect knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body's understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is hampered because they do too little independent monitoring. However, governors support the school well and, at times, seek to challenge its priorities. While there are too few acts of collective worship, pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory so this non-compliance with statutory requirements does not adversely affect the judgement of satisfactory governance.

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

Parents are satisfied with the school. Almost all report that their children like school. There are few significant concerns, but a minority feel insufficiently informed about their children's progress. The inspection finds no evidence to support this view. Pupils are generally content with the school. Virtually all pupils who responded to the questionnaire thought it a good school. However, the majority of pupils reflected concerns about behaviour and bullying in their questionnaires. When interviewed, pupils said that such instances were not common and the school deals with them appropriately. Some pupils reported that they were not treated with respect and the inspection finds that the school could do more to listen to pupils' views. A minority of pupils were unhappy over homework. Inspection findings do not support this concern. Older pupils were critical of some teaching. While there are some weaknesses, teaching of older pupils is generally good.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Develop a rigorous strategy to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in Years 7 to 9 through comprehensive monitoring and the identification and sharing of good practice.
- Ensure that governors and senior managers monitor all their areas of responsibility and set challenging targets to address any weaknesses.
- Introduce a range of methods to seek out pupils' views and act on them.
- Ensure that movement of pupils on corridors and stairways is effectively managed and safe.
- Improve provision and raise standards in citizenship.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the school provides daily acts of collective worship.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

The standards pupils attain are broadly average and their achievement is generally satisfactory, as a result of satisfactory teaching. The achievement of boys and girls is similar.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in tests at the end of Year 9 have improved more rapidly than the national average.
- In ICT pupils' achievement and standards are good, and in some cases, very good.
- Pupils' achievement in Year 11 examinations in 2003 in comparison with their previous standards was good.
- Standards and achievement in citizenship are unsatisfactory.

#### Commentary

1. The school's results in tests at the end of Year 9 showed good improvements over the period 1999 to 2003, comparing favourably with schools across the country. Results in 2003 were broadly in line with the national average, both overall and in English, mathematics and science separately. The GCSE results have not improved at such a good rate, but generally mirror the improving national trend for the five years up to and including 2003. However, results in 2003 fell and the proportion of pupils with five or more A\* to C grades was below average. The average points gained per pupil were average in comparison with all schools nationally. The school was less successful in the proportion of pupils who gained more than five or more grades at A\*-G at GCSE where the results were well below average. The proportion of those who gained 1 or more A\*-G grades was average. GCSE results in 2003 were average in drama, geography, history, design and technology, physical education but well above average in ICT and above average in art and design and religious education. GCSE results were below average in English, mathematics and science.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.6 (34.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.9 (34.5)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.7 (33.4)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 140 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

#### **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	42 (47)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	77 (88)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	31.4 (34.7)	34.8 (34.7)

*There were 115 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. In terms of statutory targets for pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the school met its targets in English but fell short of meeting them in mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils who gained five GCSE A\*-C grades fell marginally short of the school's target, but the school met its target in terms of average points per pupil.
3. In work seen, by the end of Year 9 pupils' standards are average although they are above average in ICT and below average in citizenship. Pupils' standards as they start secondary education in Year 7 vary but, taken as a whole, are also broadly average. The maintenance of such standards indicates that pupils' overall achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Pupils achieve well in English, art and design, ICT, design and technology, geography, music, physical education and religious education. Elsewhere in Years 7 to 9 subjects, their achievement is satisfactory, except in citizenship where it is unsatisfactory due to unsatisfactory provision.
4. At the end of Year 11 pupils' current standards are also broadly in line with expectations. However, they are well above expectations in ICT and better than expected in art and design, design and technology and religious education. They are below expectations in citizenship. These variations partially reflect the better quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' achievement in subjects in Years 10 and 11 is generally satisfactory; it is good in art and design, ICT, design and technology, geography, music, physical education and religious education. It is unsatisfactory in citizenship.
5. Across the school the performance of boys and girls differs very little from the national pattern, although there are some minor variations in some subjects. No significant variations in the performance of pupils from ethnic minorities were noted. A similar judgement applies to the very few who speak English as an additional language.
6. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They make the same progress as other pupils because teachers understand their needs and plan to meet them. Where pupils are supported in classes by learning support assistants this usually raises their achievement. In some lessons in English and music, where suitable support is not provided, pupils with special educational needs do not learn well enough.

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

Pupils show good attitudes towards school and their work. They behave well, form good relationships and their personal development is satisfactory. Pupils' punctuality is good whilst attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils show good attitudes towards school and their work.
- Nearly all pupils form harmonious relationships and their behaviour is good.
- Pupils' social and cultural development is good.
- Pupils' punctuality is good.

### **Commentary**

7. Most pupils are proud of their school. Key reasons for this include the good opportunities to use computers, additional opportunities provided by clubs and the school's good reputation in the community. Pupils are positive about friendships with other pupils and most of their teachers. In lessons, pupils' attitudes to work are generally good. Their enthusiasm for practical activities is clearly evident in physical education, music, art, design and technology and ICT lessons. In contrast, pupils are less enthusiastic in lessons that are dominated by listening to the teacher and copying materials from the board. For example, pupils in Years 10 and 11 spoke negatively about science lessons, where they consider there is too much copying and insufficient practical work.

8. Harmonious relationships among nearly all pupils are a positive feature. Most teachers value pupils' work and effectively praise effort and good work. As a result, pupils mature satisfactorily in their time at school. In lessons, most pupils are comfortable expressing views and asking questions of their teachers. This assists their learning. Behaviour in classrooms, during lunchtime and playtimes is generally good. Nevertheless, especially in narrow corridors and stairs, there are isolated incidents of rudeness and disruptive behaviour, caused by a small minority of pupils. A generally relaxed, social atmosphere prevails in the dining hall, despite the cramped accommodation and crowded conditions. Parents and pupils confirm that there is some bullying, which is mostly verbal. Pupils have confidence in adults to resolve such incidents effectively.
9. The number of exclusions is typical of that found nationally. Many fixed term exclusions are for only one or two days and are effective in preventing further incidents. For example, discussions with a number of excluded pupils established that their exclusion was justified and they are committed to avoiding a recurrence.

#### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Any other white background
Asian or Asian British – Indian

#### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
741	36	2
4	0	0
3	0	0

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

10. Pupils' social development is good. Most pupils are polite and show respect and care for others. They hold doors open for adults in corridors and ask if they can provide directions for visitors. Most pupils exercise responsibility for themselves and others in a sensible way. For example, they routinely complete and return their homework. School councillors and the Year 11 prefects show enthusiasm and commitment in their roles. The level of responsibility and independence given to pupils varies significantly in subjects. A good level of pupil responsibility is a positive feature in many physical education, music, art and design and drama lessons. This contributes significantly to pupils' positive attitudes towards these subjects. Inspectors were impressed with the thoughtful, articulate contributions made by the pupils when they were interviewed. Nevertheless, in all year groups, there is a minority of pupils who do not work effectively when asked to discuss ideas in pairs and small groups. Pupils' cultural development, including their multi-cultural development, is good. Significant contributions to pupils' cultural development occur in modern foreign languages, history, geography, religious education, music, art and design, drama and design technology. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory overall, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Good contributions to spiritual development occur in history, religious education, art and drama. Pupils' moral development is satisfactory.
11. Attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Whilst illness is the primary reason for absence, holidays during term time is an important secondary factor.

#### ***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (91.7%)***

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.7	School data:	0.6
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year (2002/3).*

12. The school's measures to combat absence are good. Pupils' punctuality is good. Nearly all pupils routinely arrive on time and get promptly to their lessons, throughout the school day.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education that the school provides is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11; the curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. There are good links with parents and the local community and very good links with other schools and colleges.

### Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils respond to the quality of lessons and their learning is also satisfactorily.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11 and there is a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching.
- Too much teaching in Years 7 to 9 is uninteresting; when pupils become bored and misbehave, some teachers lack the appropriate strategies to enforce discipline and their learning suffers.
- Many well-planned lessons challenge and stimulate pupils' interest.
- Teaching is inconsistent so that pupils do not always know what to expect in lessons.
- The school gathers assessment information well but does not use it consistently to promote achievement.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 100 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	20 (20%)	44 (44%)	26 (26%)	6 (6%)	0	0

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

13. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. While in many subjects teaching is good, there are too many unsatisfactory lessons across the school as a whole. However, there are considerable variations in the quality of teaching. This is because the school does not monitor teaching well enough to enable it to identify the best teaching and use this good work to improve classroom practice. As a result, there is no consensus in the school about the qualities of good lessons. Teachers largely go their own way and, while many deliver successful learning experiences, too many lessons are unsatisfactory. Most unsatisfactory teaching is in Years 7 to 9 where nine percent of lessons that were seen were unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 this figure is two percent. Most very good and excellent teaching is also seen in Years 10 and 11. The main reason for the discrepancy in the quality of teaching and learning between younger and older pupils is that behaviour management is a weakness and in Years 7 to 9, pupils are more likely to challenge teachers with unacceptable attitudes and behaviour. The school does not have an effective behaviour strategy to support teachers when there are discipline problems. A number lack the range of strategies required to ensure an orderly classroom. This results in a wide variation in pupils' understanding of what is acceptable and what is not and means that, sometimes, pupils do not learn enough in some lessons.
14. Where teaching is good or better lessons are thoroughly planned, with careful attention given to ensuring that all pupils have the correct degree of challenge. These lessons emphasise

independent learning and seek to develop pupils' study skills. Where pupils have special educational needs, better teachers use the information in their individual education plans to ensure that the correct degree of support is available, so that these pupils can achieve as well as others. Pupils – particularly those in Years 10 and 11 – often receive strong encouragement from teachers. Teachers' expectations are higher for pupils taking GCSE and other examination courses and pupils respond well, working with an emphasis on meeting the requirements of the examinations.

15. Less effective teaching can be uninspiring, with too many routine activities and a slow pace. A number of such lessons are lacking in challenge for many pupils; activities are pitched at pupils of average abilities, so the achievement of those who are above or below this level suffers. Where pupils are not appropriately challenged they can become restless and their behaviour deteriorates. Some teachers lack strategies to quieten pupils and keep them in order, so that the pace of learning can also deteriorate rapidly, leading to unsatisfactory achievement. In some other less effective lessons, teachers lack the appropriate subject expertise. Teachers working outside their own subjects do not always receive enough support. This is detrimental to their confidence because it does not enable them to deliver stimulating or challenging lessons and, again, pupils' learning suffers.
16. Teaching is good for pupils with special educational needs because very good individual education plans make needs, targets and strategies clear. Teachers know and address pupils' needs particularly well in art and design and ICT. Where, as in mathematics, pupils are supported in classes by learning support assistants, well briefed by the teacher, this raises their achievement. Where pupils are taught in small classes, as in mathematics, science and geography they benefit from teachers who are skilled in both the subject and in catering for their special educational needs and this aids their learning and personal development. Where pupils are withdrawn from class to work in the special educational needs department they learn very well. A Year 8 pupil made very good progress, learning the scientific elements of combustion, testing his understanding by confident discussion with his learning support assistant whose good teaching extended his scientific vocabulary. Pupils greatly improve their reading, comprehension and mathematical skills using the 'successmaker' program of computer-based learning. ICT is now used well by pupils with special educational needs to improve their learning.
17. The way the school has implemented the Key Stage 3 strategy is inconsistent. While three-part lessons and focused assessment have been adopted by some subjects, in others they are widely ignored. These variations mean that the school is failing to use a very good opportunity to introduce greater consistency into its teaching.
18. The school has put considerable energy into developing systems of assessment. Pupils take nationally recognised tests on entry to the school and at the start of Year 10. The results of these tests are used to set targets for pupils to aim at when they take Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations. However, these goals are a long way away for pupils in Years 7 and 10 and so are of limited practical use. Teachers receive assessment information on pupils at the start of the academic year; this information is not always in a form that is easy to use.
19. The setting of targets for pupils is delegated to form tutors and subject teachers. The way in which these targets are set is largely up to individual teachers or departments and is not monitored by senior staff. As a result, some subjects set targets and others do not, depending on the responsible teacher. The pattern is similar when form tutors are involved. Pupils in all years report inconsistency in setting targets, saying that some subjects do this regularly while others do not. The quality of the targets set is variable. Some indicate what level or grade pupils should aim at, but fail to indicate what pupils need to do to make the required improvements. Generally, the process is more effective in Years 10 and 11 where examination requirements give a sharper focus to advice to pupils on how to improve. The marking of pupils' work is similarly inconsistent; it varies from informative and encouraging comments to occasional

illegible notes which do nothing to raise standards of pupils' work. This weakness is a significant reason why pupils' exercise books and folders are often scruffy and badly presented.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is broad and balanced and ensures progression for pupils throughout their time in school. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a good range of curricular opportunities. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities and provision for ICT are good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall but there are weaknesses in some subjects.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Opportunities for pupils to use ICT are very good.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, with a good level of pupil take-up.
- Older pupils can opt for a good range of courses to meet their individual needs and preferences.
- The school does not fulfil the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of provision in personal, social, health and careers education and provision in citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- The Key Stage 3 Strategy is not applied consistently throughout the school.
- There are deficiencies in accommodation in art, music, drama and special educational needs.

## **Commentary**

20. The curriculum is satisfactory for pupils throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good provision, and where they receive specialist support they have good opportunities and achieve well. However, learning support assistants allocated to support the small number of pupils with English as an additional language receive no specific training for this task. A strength of the curriculum is the very good ICT provision. Pupils value this highly, and the extensive ICT resources enable them to achieve well. The school's technology status has led to very good ICT provision in a number of individual subject areas. Teachers have been trained in the Key Stage 3 strategy as a means of raising standards and achievement. However, the impact has been limited, because the strategy is being applied inconsistently across different subject areas. For example, it is not being applied fully in mathematics and modern foreign languages.
21. Pupils from Year 10 benefit from a well planned curriculum which meets their needs by offering various subject routes, including both academic and vocational courses and opportunities for work related learning. The work related curriculum is popular with pupils and has strong links with the local community. The school leadership has coherent plans in place for a further extension of this provision. However, there are some inconsistencies in the way parts of the curriculum are taught. The personal, social and health education programme is taught by form tutors and the quality of this, and the careers programme, is inconsistent and not monitored sufficiently. The provision of citizenship is unsatisfactory because there is no scheme of work, insufficient time is allocated and leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
22. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are very appreciative of the opportunities provided in a range of sport, music and other activities. There is a good take-up of activities, particularly of the several sports offered.
23. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. There are acts of worship in some assemblies, and these were observed during the inspection, but these opportunities are not provided for all pupils on a daily basis. This has not improved from the previous inspection.

24. Some subjects benefit from good accommodation, for example, physical education makes effective use of the linked leisure centre to broaden the range of activities provided. Science has well equipped laboratories. However, there are deficiencies in other areas which, although not having a significant effect upon standards, do impact upon the quality of education. One of the two art rooms is not equipped for specialist use, the music rooms and drama studio are too small, and there is insufficient space for staff working alongside pupils with special needs. Resources allocated for pupils with special educational needs are now managed well and deployed efficiently. The school has been extensively adapted to enable disabled access to all areas.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school cares adequately for its pupils. It gives them satisfactory support, advice and guidance. However, the school does not take the views of its pupils sufficiently seriously.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Induction arrangements for new pupils are good.
- Some corridors and stairways become very over-crowded and are potentially unsafe, especially during change-over between lessons.
- The school makes insufficient use of the views of its pupils, as part of considering how to improve its practices.

### **Commentary**

25. The formal policies and practices relating to child protection and looked after children are well considered and properly carried out. Pupil induction and transfer arrangements are well established and effective. Most form tutors and other staff know pupils well and recognise their needs. Most act quickly if a pupil is unhappy or under pressure and are careful to make sure new arrivals are helped to settle. School makes adequate use of other professionals, such as the nurse, counsellor and educational social worker, to help pupils with any personal problems they may not want to discuss with teachers. Nevertheless, a minority of staff do not always treat pupils fairly or equally. This is reflected in the pupil survey, where nearly a third of pupils do not consider that pupils are treated fairly and with respect. Pupils speak of being judged too readily, based on previous events or even the reputation of older relatives. The practice of form tutors and heads of year moving through the school with pupils has many strengths, but such a system is more prone to this undesirable effect. Whilst health and safety arrangements are satisfactory overall, some corridors and stairways become very over-crowded and are potentially unsafe during the change-over between lessons.
26. Support for pupils' achievement is underpinned by satisfactory assessment procedures. Informed by interim and annual reports, pastoral and other staff act promptly to commend pupils who are achieving well and to ensure underachievers are aware that improvement is needed. Whilst pupils generally know their National Curriculum targets for the end of each key stage, there is no systematic target setting to support the progress of all pupils towards these targets.
27. Discussions at the school council give school management important insights into some issues that concern pupils, such as canteen arrangements, litter and access to drinking water in lessons. Older pupils carry out a range of monitoring duties responsibly. However, there is no practice of seeking pupils' views on a wider range of issues, such as bullying and what they like and find difficult in particular subjects and lessons. This is reflected in the pupil survey, with about a fifth of pupils stating that school is not interested in their views.

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

There is a good partnership with parents. Links with the community are good. Links with other schools and colleges are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school fosters an effective partnership with parents.
- Good links with the community enrich learning opportunities.
- There are very good links with other schools and colleges.

### **Commentary**

28. The school's key contributions to the good partnership with parents include good quality information that helps support pupils' learning, good quality interim and annual reports, and regular parents' evenings which provide frequent and effective updates on how pupils are getting on. Good use of pupils' diaries means that parents and pupils have clear information about homework set. The diary is also an effective medium for messages between home and school.
29. The success of the partnership is reflected in the steadily rising school roll and high attendance at parents' evenings. Nevertheless, based on the parental survey, a significant minority have some concerns about information on pupils' progress and the behaviour of some pupils. Inspection findings do not support their concerns. Some parents' negative comments about the behaviour of a very small minority of pupils are justified.
30. Public services, such as the police and the community nurse, enrich the curriculum with contributions on personal safety and healthy living. Through 'Young Enterprise', each Year 10 form tutor has links with a local organisation or business. Staff from these organisations contribute to some personal, social and health education lessons. Together with work experience in Year 11, these links provide pupils with good links with the world of work. The school has access to the adjacent leisure centre facilities and is a base for a range of adult education classes and voluntary group events. Useful links with a number of major local employers, such as cider and food manufacturers, are well established.
31. Links between the school and its main partner primary schools are very well developed. There are very good links, including significant curriculum links in design and technology and in ICT, with the primary and two secondary schools in the technology college cluster. In turn, the two local secondary schools provide specialist mathematics and sports college links. There is a wide variety of links with Strode College, the destination of the majority of Year 11 pupils. For example, the college provides additional courses in mathematics, drama and music for the most able pupils. With additional funding provided by an educational charity, the school operates a joint placement with a pupil referral unit, aimed at reducing permanent exclusions. The school has links with seven Kent secondary schools as part of a Virtual Education Action Zone. As a result, pupils in Year 8 are doing some work on emotional intelligence, as part of their personal, social and health education curriculum. This link has also provided access to Leadership Incentive Grant funding, which, to date, has been used to develop the coaching skills of middle managers.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership, management and governance of the school are satisfactory overall. The head teacher provides good leadership. The senior leadership team has been recently reorganised to provide clearer leadership to the middle managers, but this has not yet resulted in consistently high enough standards of management of the curriculum. Statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship are not met.



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors and the head teacher have a clear and consistent sense of purpose for the direction of the school, but more could be done to transmit it clearly to all the staff.
- The school is an orderly, well organised institution, but management in some curriculum areas is not as good as it should be.
- Financial management of the school is good, and the principles of best value are consistently applied.

## Commentary

32. The head teacher has a clear vision for the development of the school, firmly rooted in a secure long term view of its development over the last few years and key priorities to move it forward. This vision is for an inclusive education, and rising standards of attainment, delivered by a staff team whose support is a high priority. One effect of the need for support is that, in some cases, monitoring and subsequent action fall short of what might be needed to ensure the highest possible standards of professional performance. The senior management team has been recently restructured to move the emphasis from management towards more active leadership, with greater responsibility being devolved to departmental managers. The school development plan is currently focussed on implementation plans for a variety of different initiatives that are current within the school, but is not a clear vehicle for transmitting a clear idea of the school's purposes and direction.
33. Most key staff share the head teacher's vision and work hard in their own areas of responsibility to achieve the school's targets. However, the system for line management from the leadership team to the other levels of management is not fully effective in achieving consistency in professional standards and practices across the school. For example, standards of planning based on a detailed analysis of data are very variable: there is good practice in English, music, design and technology, history and geography and very good practice in ICT and PE. Practice in modern foreign languages and mathematics is unsatisfactory and all other areas have weaknesses.
34. In general, heads of curriculum departments have been successful in motivating their staff and creating teams that work well together, with particularly good practice found in ICT and in physical education. However, the performance management process has had insufficient impact in improving standards of professional practices, with much of it lacking incisiveness in identifying and tackling weaknesses. Continuing professional development of the staff is generally good. Provision for the induction of staff is satisfactory. The school's support staff make a positive contribution to the standards of the school.
35. The management of special educational needs ensures good provision in lessons for these pupils. However, there are too few qualified teachers with the skills necessary to raise literacy and numeracy standards quickly in Year 7. Accommodation is too cramped to allow pupils access to learning support whilst providing an administrative and personnel base for the department; this restricts both the quality and quantity of learning which can be managed. Governors monitor special educational needs provision satisfactorily through visits and report findings through their annual report to parents. Funding for special educational needs is managed well. The co-ordinator's leadership results in good support across the school, delivered by a dedicated and able team of learning support assistants who are a strength of the school. All statutory requirements are fully met.
36. Financial management is good and there are effective systems to ensure that spending is clearly linked to the school's educational priorities. Appropriate policies for ensuring accountability are in place, with clear identification of roles and responsibilities. Governors are fully involved in financial planning and they are kept well informed of the budgetary position throughout the year. The arrangements to ensure that spending decisions are based on best value principles are good, with a clear policy followed.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,351,231
Total expenditure	2,241,832
Expenditure per pupil	3025

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	90,708
Balance carried forward to the next	109,399

37. The governing body has helped raise the profile of the school in the community and an innovative marketing committee continues to seek funding for significant developments. Governors are aware and have discussed the fact that the school does not fully meet the need for a regular collective act of worship. However, they have not monitored and evaluated the provision for themselves or insisted that assemblies meet requirements. Governors have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They effectively question the data and results they are given and are very supportive of the senior management team. They questioned the school's bid for technology status, but now support the outcome, while exploring ways of developing expressive arts in the school. Despite these strengths the governing body could do more to monitor independently.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

English and French were inspected in full. Nine English lessons and seven French lessons were observed. German was sampled and two lessons were seen.

38. Results in **German** were slightly above the national average by the end of Year 11 in 2003, with boys' results better than girls'. Boys did better in German than in the average for all their other subjects. Achievement has been good recently, particularly amongst boys. Links with a German town are beneficial and the exchange programme with a partner school provides a useful focus for improving the performance of those who participate. Teaching seen, assessment and management have similar strengths and weaknesses as in French.

#### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Good teaching results in good learning in all years.
- Pupils' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9.
- Good curriculum leadership is leading to improving standards.

#### **Commentary**

39. In work seen, standards in English are average. Despite slight fluctuations pupils' attainment in national tests at the end of Year 9 are in line with national averages. Standards at the end of Year 11 in GCSE English and English literature are average, although results in English for 2003 were below average. Overall achievement is satisfactory. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. Recent measures to improve the achievement of higher attaining pupils are beginning to take effect. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported, so achieve as well as other pupils. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. There are no marked differences between the achievement of boys and girls.
40. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Learning objectives are made very clear. Lessons are well planned and very well structured. Teachers engage pupils' attention from the beginning by using lively starter activities that involve everybody, and which lead to the main focus of the lesson. Teachers use an effective range of activities to stimulate interest. Resources are well prepared and stimulating and pupils are given very good models to develop their own writing. For example, in Year 7, pupils greatly enjoyed imitating stylistic devices by writing a parody about cruelty to children at school. In the most effective lessons pupils' individual needs are well met. Higher attaining pupils are challenged and extended. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs are well supported, for example, by the provision of writing frames, and through individual or small group support by the teacher or teaching assistant. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not vary their strategies to ensure that more pupils respond in whole class discussion. Even pupils of higher attainment can be reluctant to give extended explanations.
41. Curriculum leadership is good. The department of mainly well-qualified teachers works well as a team. The marking and assessment of pupils' progress and the use of targets for improvement are consistently good. The head of department monitors pupils' achievement and

teaching and learning in the subject very well. There is a clear improvement plan based on identified need. Opportunities to use ICT have increased. There are good examples of computer programs being used to support reading and spelling.

42. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory in that standards have been maintained. However, there is evidence that recently introduced systems and strategies are leading to faster improvements in standards.

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

43. Standards of speaking and listening, reading and writing across all subjects are average. The school has a clear literacy policy and all teachers have received training in developing pupils' language and literacy. However, the application of the policy is inconsistent. Although some subjects introduce and insist on the use of the key language and vocabulary of their subject, this is by no means universal. Nor is the correction of misspellings and grammar. There are too few opportunities to develop pupils' discussion skills, extended and precise explanations or oral presentations.

### **French**

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The head of department sustains good teamwork, despite many changes of staff.
- The department promotes positive attitudes towards people from other cultures.
- Classes are well disciplined, but pupils are reluctant to speak French in lessons.
- The department does not analyse data to see where improvements can be made.
- Teachers give pupils too little information about how well they are doing and how they can improve.

### **Commentary**

44. Standards are in line with national averages. The percentage of all pupils reaching the average level in Year 9 assessments rose in 2003, but the proportion reaching the highest levels fell slightly, especially amongst girls. GCSE results were average and pupils entered for French achieved similar results as they did in all their other subjects. Pupils' achievement across the school is satisfactory and that of boys is currently a little better than girls'. Teaching assistants and teachers provide good support for pupils with special needs who achieve as well as all others, as do higher attaining pupils. Boys achieve well because discipline in lessons is good and they see the subject as relevant.
45. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some examples of good practice. Relationships between teachers and pupils are a strength, based on clear expectations and good discipline. Teachers make sure that pupils develop positive attitudes towards other cultural groups and that pupils have work which meets their various needs. They make encouraging comments, with helpful guidance, on written work, but do not refer to National Curriculum levels, so pupils do not know how well they are doing in relation to expectations. Where targets for pupils are set they are imprecise and have little positive influence on their achievement. Pupils learn to express their own ideas in writing, but rarely do so when speaking in class. They sometimes use computers in lessons and teachers make effective use of the interactive whiteboard, but other teaching aids were not seen. The lack of video and flashcards, as in games and competitive activities, means that an element of fun is missing from lessons.
46. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory. Despite several changes of staff recently, the head of department has maintained effective teamwork and the department's performance compares

well with that of others. The management of the department has some weaknesses. A review took place last autumn, but monitoring of teaching is still infrequent. The department does not analyse performance data and is therefore not sufficiently aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Teachers organise visits to France, providing an opportunity for some pupils to make additional progress, leading to good cultural development and positive attitudes towards Europe.

47. Standards in French have fallen and pupils are still reluctant to speak the language. However, there was no unsatisfactory teaching during this inspection and teachers use less English in lessons. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Mathematics was inspected in full and nine lessons were observed.

### **Mathematics**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good relationships with the pupils enable the teachers to create a good learning atmosphere in most lessons.
- The stable and experienced staff team explain processes clearly, but do not focus enough on key underlying principles.
- The achievement of most of the pupils is satisfactory, although the higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough.

### **Commentary**

48. In work seen, standards in mathematics are average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11, although in all years those of higher attaining pupils are slightly below expectations. In national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were average. Over the past 4 years, results have steadily improved. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 6 or above was below the national average. In GCSE examinations in 2003, the proportion of pupils gaining grade A\*-C was below the national average and overall results were below average, but this was an improvement on the previous year.
49. The achievement of most pupils in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. However, some higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should, because work is not challenging enough. Lower attaining pupils' achievement is often limited by poor numeracy and difficulty recalling key knowledge and facts. Achievement is supported by pupils' sensible attitudes, which help to create a good learning atmosphere. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers due to smaller classes and additional personal support from teachers and learning support assistants.
50. Teaching is satisfactory, overall. The amount the pupils learn in lessons is closely related to this. In nearly half of the lessons, teaching is good or better, and most of the rest are satisfactory. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. All the teachers are competent mathematicians, with considerable experience teaching in this school. However, teachers have been slow to introduce the techniques and principles in the Key Stage 3 strategy. In most lessons presentation of the content is precise and accurate so that the pupils have a clear model to follow. However, in too many lessons mathematics is taught as an exercise in answering textbook questions, and rarely as a problem solving activity. In some lessons, presentations are well supplemented using the interactive whiteboard, but this is not universal. In most lessons the teachers maintain a good learning atmosphere, so that the pupils use the time well, particularly in consolidating skills and knowledge. In general there are

insufficient strategies for the teacher to check that all the pupils understand the explanations of the work and so, in some lessons, pupils' misconceptions are not corrected quickly enough.

51. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory. Organisation is good, but effective monitoring and focussed support to ensure departmental policies are adhered to are inadequate. Additional work on an independent learning programme in the department computer suite provides variety and a different learning approach that suits a significant group of pupils. There is, however, insufficient development of numeracy in mathematics lessons. The department's analysis of performance data is insufficient and cannot inform plans for departmental improvement.
52. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained, with some improvements in the last few years. However, the quality of teaching has not kept pace with national expectations. There have been some useful developments in the provision, for example the bridging project with feeder primary schools and the introduction of GCSE statistics, but schemes of work and the use of ICT to support teaching and learning are underdeveloped.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

53. Standards of numeracy are in line with the standards in mathematics. However, there is insufficient focus on improving numeracy in mathematics lessons. The school has yet to establish a clear policy for teaching numeracy across the curriculum, and although a start has been made raising awareness in departments, this has had no impact on standards. In general, applications of mathematics are kept to a minimum in most subjects, although some good practice was found in several departments. In music, pupils were able to construct chords in any tonality. In ICT, use of data handling and of formulae is good enough to support the topics being studied.

## **SCIENCE**

Science was inspected in full and thirteen lessons were observed.

### **Science**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The new head of department provides good leadership in tackling deficiencies caused by staffing problems in recent years.
- Teachers work as an effective team and teaching is good. The appointment of new staff has improved standards in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' work is assessed regularly but marking is inconsistent and does not always give pupils enough guidance on how to improve.
- Most pupils have good attitudes and respond well to good teaching, although some still have negative views resulting from past staffing difficulties.

### **Commentary**

54. Results in the 2003 tests for pupils in Year 9 were average although they were below those of pupils in similar schools. The standards of work seen during the inspection for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Improvement in standards over the last three years has been better than the national upward trend. GCSE results in 2003 were average in chemistry and biology but well below average in the physics and double award science examinations. The overall results gained in science were not as good as in the pupils' other subjects, although they were in line with expectations, based on the pupils' previous test

results. Inspection evidence shows that current standards in Years 10 and 11 are average and have improved over this year, so that achievement is satisfactory. The latest test results have shown a big increase in the number of A grades gained. Support for pupils with special educational needs is effective and they make appropriate progress, achieving as well as other pupils.

55. Teaching and learning are good, with very good teaching in some lessons. A small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Year 7. Lessons usually have clear objectives and are well planned to match pupils' needs. Teachers focus well on the real-life applications of science so that pupils can see the relevance of the subject. Practical work is well managed and the pupils work safely and conscientiously when carrying out experiments. This good teaching, together with the pupils' good attitudes to their work, ensures that most pupils learn and achieve well. Practical work is improving, with a good focus on coursework in Years 10 and 11 that has helped to raise standards. In less successful lessons, the work does not fully engage the pupils' interest, leading to a slow pace while minor indiscipline and lack of attention are dealt with, so that pupils do not learn as well as they might. Most pupils know that they have been set targets for learning and their progress is assessed regularly but inconsistent standards of marking mean that the pupils are not always clear about how they can improve their work.
56. The new head of science has shown good leadership in tackling considerable problems arising from staffing difficulties in the past. As a result, standards are now rising due to good teamwork and a clear focus on improvement. Action plans are good and the department is well managed, with good support for learning from a team of well-qualified technicians. The Key Stage 3 strategy is being implemented and is beginning to have a positive effect on lesson planning and organisation. Problems with staffing in the past led to a decline in the quality and quantity of practical work undertaken by the pupils. As a result, some pupils still have negative views of the subject that affect their motivation. However, evidence seen on the inspection shows that provision for practical work is now improving.
57. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with a better rate of improvement since the appointment of new staff from the beginning of this year.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

ICT was inspected in full and six lessons were observed.

### **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

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

- Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well.
- Results in the recent GCSE exams are well above average.
- The subject is very well led.
- Aspects of teaching and the curriculum sometimes inhibit pupils' achievement, particularly of those with weaker literacy skills.

#### **Commentary**

58. Standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 are well above average. In work seen, they are above average. There are no significant differences between boys and girls. Achievement is good, since pupils enter the school with average knowledge and understanding in ICT. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations and standards in work seen in Year 11 are well above average, and in the small short course GCSE group they are very high compared with the national average. This year, all

pupils are entered for either a double award 'applied' GCSE or a short course GCSE. Standards on both these courses are well above average. At present, achievement is good on these courses: achievement is constrained by timetable and accommodation, though not by the interest and enthusiasm of the pupils.

59. Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and organised. Teachers have a very good command of the subject and high expectations, so that they set challenging tasks and deadlines. The school employs very good on-line teaching resources that enable most pupils to work independently. The development of the pupils' understanding and use of databases, for example, is particularly thorough. However, in the less successful lessons, these resources are not always adapted well to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those with weaker reading and writing skills. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' capacities to work independently and collaboratively are developed well. Teachers use assessment effectively to show pupils where they need to improve. The teachers' skills in the use of a data projector are developing rapidly; teachers can, for instance, quickly switch any of the pupils' computer screens to the projector for comment or demonstration to the whole class. Pupils with exceptional ability in ICT have opportunities to move on rapidly with more challenging projects. Timetabling constraints mean that the different GCSE groups are sometimes taught concurrently. The Key Stage 3 strategy is not employed consistently by all teachers. In one lesson, this meant that the pace was slow; pupils had to be repeatedly reminded of the objectives, and their achievement, compared with other groups, was not as good.
60. Leadership and management are very good. The innovative and knowledgeable co-ordinator inspires teachers, both within the department and in other subject areas. The monitoring and improvement of teaching strategies are not as rigorous as other aspects of the department's development. However, the overall management of change through the evaluation of needs is very effective. The good accommodation and very good resources encourage teachers and pupils to make use of their ICT skills in all curriculum areas. The continual improvement to the schemes of work, the development of the curriculum and resources, and the switch to new examinations courses are aimed squarely at raising achievement. The school provides good training and support for specialist and non-specialist staff and this has resulted in very good improvements to cross-curricular provision. Pupils are proud of the school's success in this area and point to developments in design technology, music and physical education where they see ICT being used effectively.
61. The school has made an excellent improvement since the last inspection, with standards and provision rising rapidly.

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

62. Pupils' competence in ICT is above average overall, and they achieve above average standards by the end of Year 9, and well above average standards by the end of Year 11. Pupils develop a good range of competencies as well as a very useful knowledge of 'real world' applications. Most pupils learn to conduct surveys, create databases and extract information, such as statistics, to help their studies in a range of subjects such as geography or design and technology. In nearly all subject areas, pupils produce multi-media presentations, which make use of their Internet researches, creative writing or graphs and tables. However, in some lessons, it is clear that these skills are not always sufficiently consolidated or practised; teachers sometimes over-estimate what pupils know and understand.

## **HUMANITIES**

All three subjects in this area were inspected. Five lessons were seen in history, nine in geography and five in religious education.

### **Geography**



Provision for geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers are experienced and knowledgeable.
- Well-planned curriculum materials raise achievement.
- Assessment ensures that pupils understand how well they are learning.
- Planning of pupils' work does not take sufficient account of the different needs of higher and lower attaining pupils.
- Learning is very teacher-centred, so that pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to be independent in their learning.

### **Commentary**

63. Standards in GCSE examinations are broadly average but there are fewer higher grades than is the picture nationally. Results have declined in recent years. There is less difference between the attainment of boys and girls than at the previous inspection. Both do better in geography than in their other subjects.
64. Standards are average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. On entry to the school pupils have lower than expected standards in geography. Good strategies to promote geographical understanding, skills and knowledge ensure that most pupils reach nationally expected levels by the end of Year 7. By Year 9 they show good understanding and answer questions well, using geographical vocabulary accurately. In Years 10 and 11 pupils work hard with care and effort and achieve a good basis for GCSE examination. Fieldwork in all years is a good feature. Coursework is of a high standard.
65. Teaching and learning are good overall. One lesson was unsatisfactory because higher attaining pupils did not learn enough. Prescriptive work booklets for each topic ensure pupils know what is expected of them and this raises standards. Teaching is strongly focused on examination criteria, and this greatly improves attainment. Marking is sound and assessment is very good. Teachers understand the special educational needs of some pupils and give them good support. However, tasks and resources do not always take sufficient account of the different learning needs of higher and lower attaining pupils. Learning is very teacher-centred, which means that pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning or engage in interactive activities like discussion, role-play, simulation and research. Learning is best where strategies are varied, use is made of modern technologies and learning is active rather than passive.
66. Leadership and management are good. There have been good improvements since the last inspection in resources but there are too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT. Literacy and numeracy development is now well integrated in all topics. Good teaching, learning and achievement have been maintained. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

### **History**

Overall provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge.
- The curriculum is thoroughly planned.

## Commentary

67. Standards in GCSE examinations are broadly average and current work in Year 11 is of a similar standard. Teacher assessments of standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show that these are in line with national expectations. Standards of work seen, show that pupils enter the school with a below average standards in Year 7 but that standards of pupils by the end of Year 9 are average.
68. Achievement by pupils is satisfactory by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11, and it is good for the lower attaining pupils and those pupils with special educational needs. The main reasons for this are the good management of pupils by staff, a good curriculum and the perseverance of pupils in their studies.
69. Teaching is good throughout the school and it supports good learning. Teachers plan lessons well, particularly by setting and providing resources for enquiry questions. These enable pupils to develop opinions about historical issues. Learning is at its best when pupils are given challenging but appropriate tasks, as seen in a Year 8 lesson on witchcraft trials and a Year 10 lesson which showed pupils how to use their knowledge of the history of medicine to answer an examination question. Marking is regular and helpful.
70. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed head of department gives clear direction to staff regarding the development of the curriculum and the need to clearly relate this to assessment practice. Management of staff with other responsibilities is good and monitoring of their work is satisfactory. The subject makes a good overall contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision for pupils.
71. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. There is now a wider range of learning tasks and good development in the use of ICT.

## Religious education

The overall provision for religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11, and GCSE examination results have improved. Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods to interest and motivate pupils.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development, with pupils demonstrating a mature and sensitive awareness of other people's beliefs and life styles.
- Assessment provides too little useful information.
- There is a shortage of learning materials for lower attaining pupils.

## Commentary

72. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and, by the end of Year 9, pupils have a sound understanding of the main beliefs and practices of all the major religions that are found in our society. The achievement of most pupils is good, but for lower attainers and those with special educational needs it is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils follow the GCSE short course. Recent examination results have shown a steady improvement with pupils achieving well, obtaining grades that are above the national average. In particular the achievement of lower attaining pupils has improved considerably. Pupils continue to play an active part in class discussions irrespective of whether or not they are taking the examination. They are able to express their own views in a thoughtful and mature manner.
73. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and a wide range of teaching methods to interest and motivate pupils. ICT is used to add interest and variety to

lessons. As a result, pupils play a very active role in discussions, enthusiastically responding to challenging tasks. Suitable homework assignments are set and well marked but assessment procedures are not carefully structured and pupils are not always aware of the progress they are making. In most lessons, relationships are managed in a very positive and encouraging way. Particularly noteworthy is the way in which pupils' responses are accepted and valued. In a small minority of lessons this was not the case, with a more confrontational style of classroom management hindering relationships.

74. Curriculum leadership is good. The head of department has a very clear commitment to the subject and gives good support to non-specialist teachers. A well-designed curriculum ensures that pupils are made fully aware of the multicultural nature of our society and makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development. Assessment procedures lack clear structure and have yet to be used well to inform teaching. There is a need for learning materials to be better adapted to meet the needs of lower attainers and those with special educational needs. Targets set for pupils are too imprecise to be of practical value. The involvement of the department in providing extra lessons for pupils who wish to take the full GCSE and in establishing links with children in Bethlehem is commendable.
75. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. More time has been allocated to the subject and the fall in the examination results has been rectified.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Design and technology was inspected in full and eight lessons were observed. No other subjects in this area are offered by the school.

### **Design and technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well in all years because of the good teaching.
- Schemes of work include innovative projects which develop pupils' knowledge, skills and creativity.
- Practice in lesson planning, assessment, target setting and marking is inconsistent.
- The widespread use of ICT to improve standards of pupils' work is good.
- Constructive relationships set high expectations and foster a good climate for learning.
- The implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy, especially the development of literacy, is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

76. Standards are average, overall. In 2003 standards in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 were broadly average. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Current standards are above average. Teachers' assessment indicates that standards were also average at the end of Year 9 in 2003.
77. Achievement is good. Pupils' standards in design and technology on entry to the school are below expectations and pupils achieve well in both Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Pupils develop good knowledge and understanding of the subject and their practical skills are well developed. Pupils with special educational needs achieve at the same rate as others.
78. Teaching and learning are good. However, lessons vary from satisfactory to very good. Teachers have very good knowledge and skills in their subject and understand how to promote learning in design and technology. Schemes of work include projects and approaches that are

varied and stimulating, keeping the pupils engaged and enthusiastic, and they are supported by good pupil and teacher relationships that enhance learning. The department makes good use of ICT to improve the presentation of work, design and manufacture. The implementation of literacy within design and technology has been slow and this is reflected both in teaching and in pupils' work. Systems have been introduced to assess pupils' work and monitor their progress.

79. The head of department demonstrates good leadership and management and has a clear vision for continuous improvement. High standards are set for teaching, achievement and behaviour. There is a system for monitoring the quality of teaching but assessment is not consistently used.
80. Improvements since the last inspection have been maintained and are satisfactory. The department has developed the use of ICT across all areas and all years. There have been physical improvements in the teaching area so that pupils can be easily seen wherever they are working. Teachers have developed pupils' graphicacy so that most pupils are sketching and designing with confidence.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

Art and design and music were inspected in full. Five art and design lessons were seen and six in music. Drama was sampled and two lessons were observed.

81. There has been some fluctuation in GCSE **drama** results but in 2003 they were close to the national average. Two lessons were sampled. In these, the pupils' achievement was unsatisfactory. In the Year 9 lesson, the pupils found the tasks set too difficult. In Year 11, where pupils were being formally assessed for a scripted performance, a number of pupils had not prepared sufficiently. In the lessons seen strengths included the provision of imaginative opportunities to explore texts using a range of drama techniques. Teaching was very encouraging. Pupils were given very clear feedback on their performance, and guidance on how they can improve. However, lesson planning did not allow time for a gradual, staged approach to ensure that all pupils were able to meet the planned objectives. The teacher's expectations were not communicated firmly.
82. The subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good enrichment opportunities are provided through work with visiting theatre groups and regular school productions. However some older pupils regretted not having more opportunities to visit the theatre. Although resources such as lighting are good, accommodation is unsatisfactory. The drama studio is too small for large groups and the hall is inappropriate because of poor acoustics and staff and pupils passing through lessons.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed, although other aspects of the curriculum are less strong.
- Accommodation and resources have not kept pace with the rise in pupil numbers.

### **Commentary**

83. In 2003, teachers assessed standards to be below average. Current standards at the end of Year 9 are average. Pupils enter the school with below average knowledge and skills in art so that their achievement is good. Teachers take care to develop the pupils' drawing and observational skills so that by Year 9, most pupils are able to combine a range of ideas by

evaluating and improving their work. Standards in the GCSE examination are above average. Current standards in Year 11 are above average. Achievement is good; pupils are prepared thoroughly for the examination, although they often rely on standardised methods of working. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 produce expressive images based on in-depth study and creative experimentation.

84. Teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons effectively and their good knowledge of the subject enables them to stimulate and sometimes inspire the pupils with the rich spiritual traditions and beliefs of other cultures. Teachers have high expectations of pupils on the examination course. They engage and encourage older pupils well, using assessment effectively to show pupils where they need to improve. Assessment is less effectively used in Years 7 to 9. The implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy has not been developed sufficiently; higher attainers are always not stretched enough or encouraged to be more independent.
85. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory. The co-ordinator manages a good team of non-specialists, who work effectively in sometimes unsatisfactory conditions. The monitoring and development of the work of the department have been slow to take effect. For instance, the impact of technology college status and other initiatives are not evident in either the curriculum or the accommodation and resources. The department has recently added a new room. However, the room is small and poorly equipped, and this limits opportunities. In both rooms, the pupils' work is confined to mainly graphic materials and simple three-dimensional construction.
86. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection: standards have been maintained and pupils now use sketchbooks well.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Assessment is very good, regularly and clearly identifying for pupils their standards of work and what they need to improve.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Music helps pupils to acquire understanding of moral issues and different world cultures, and to develop good social skills.

### **Commentary**

87. By the end of Year 9, standards are average. The number of pupils entered for GCSE is too small to compare with national figures, but in summer 2003 all pupils achieved grade B or higher. In work seen, by the end of Year 11 pupils' standards are broadly average. Standards of singing are low; staff know this and have plans for improvement, but these have not yet had time to take effect. Pupils' achievement is good through Years 7 to 9 and through Years 10 and 11. Pupils make particularly good progress in composing.
88. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good, sometimes excellent, for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well planned, with progressively more challenging content which helps pupils to acquire new skills. Teachers insist that pupils behave well, enabling them to acquire good study habits and to work independently. Effective use of composing software with GCSE groups helps pupils achieve high standards. However, teachers do not give enough attention to planning for the needs of the highest and lowest attaining musicians in Years 7 to 9 because, although these students are given appropriate help in class, their learning is limited when only a single task is set for the whole form to tackle. Cramped accommodation is unsatisfactory because it constrains teachers from using the widest possible range of learning activities. Music lessons make a good contribution to the personal development of pupils, by reinforcing

the school's code of conduct, helping pupils learn to work together, and introducing them to a breadth of world music which also helps them understand citizenship issues such as civil rights.

89. Subject leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision, strongly focussed on raising pupils' achievement. The curriculum is regularly reviewed to ensure pupils' learning is well stimulated. The department's development needs have been accurately identified. However, monitoring of teaching is too informal to help raise standards further. Assessment information is very well used to help individual pupils, but not yet to identify trends in the progress of different groups of pupils.
90. Since the last inspection the department has improved in a number of ways, particularly improved is provision of extra-curricular groups, such as the new steel band. These help pupils develop performing skills, and pupils enjoy them. Improvement has been good.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Eight lessons were observed in physical education, which is reported in full.

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well and learn well in response to good teaching.
- There is very good leadership and good management of an improving department.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards physical education, and this contributes to rising standards.
- Assessment is very good; it is used effectively to support pupil progress.

### **Commentary**

91. Teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2003 showed that standards overall were below average, with girls' standards below average and few pupils attaining higher levels. GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national average and improved on the 2002 results. In work seen, standards by the end of Year 9 and in Year 11, where all pupils follow a core course and some also take a GCSE option, are average for both boys and girls. Since most pupils join the school with below average standards in physical education, those of all levels of attainment, including more able pupils and those with special educational needs, achieve well throughout their time in school. The rise in girls' achievement is particularly good, and reflects the sustained effort made in recent months to improve pupil motivation and to revitalise and broaden the physical education curriculum.
92. Teaching and learning are good, with many very good features, and this is the principal reason why pupils are very well motivated and enjoy both physical education lessons and the good range of clubs and team activities outside lessons. These activities are well supported. Knowledgeable teachers have appropriately challenging expectations of pupils. There are two particular strengths in the teaching. One is the emphasis put upon pupils extending their skill and understanding through opportunities to develop initiative, for example in leading parts of lessons and evaluating their performance. The other strength is the effective way in which teachers assess pupils, showing them how they can adapt and improve, for example in practices to promote better ball skills.
93. The leadership of the head of department is very good. The curriculum has been broadened to include more activities to motivate pupils, especially girls. There is extensive evaluation of

existing practice and a clear vision of how the department can progress further, for example by continuing to develop better assessment systems and the use of ICT. Good facilities, particularly those at the linked leisure centre, also contribute to rising standards and achievement.

94. Since 1998 pupils' achievement and attitudes, leadership, teaching, and the curriculum have all improved. Overall, there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

No courses in this area were inspected.

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

Citizenship was the only subject inspected in this area and two lessons were seen. Careers education and the Asdan course (for pupils with learning difficulties) were sampled; one lesson was seen in each.

95. The lessons seen in **careers** related activities had significant variations; one was very good and the other unsatisfactory. Weaknesses in the management of pupils led to unsatisfactory learning in the Year 9 lesson. The lesson for Year 11 pupils to prepare this lower attaining and potentially disaffected group for work experience and the wider world of work was very effective with support staff very well deployed to assist individuals. Provision from the careers programme is inconsistent and not monitored sufficiently.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is no scheme of work.
- There is no member of staff to lead the subject.
- Many staff teach the course, but receive little training or feedback on their teaching.
- The school has developed some well-planned course materials for pupils to use.
- There is no assessment to enable pupils to know how well they are doing.

### **Commentary**

96. Pupils' written work indicates that standards are below the levels expected by the end of Year 9. The work of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is extremely limited, only partially completed and standards are well below average. The curriculum time allowed specifically for citizenship is very low and the school does not have an audit of opportunities in other lessons. Evidence from written work, conversations with pupils and the lessons observed indicate that achievement in the subject in all year groups is unsatisfactory.
97. Teaching is unsatisfactory. Its quality depends largely on form tutors' relationships with their classes. Where these are good, teaching is adequate, but the weaknesses outweigh this strength. Teachers do not keep records of pupils' performance or respond to written work, with the result that pupils receive too little feedback. Many teachers have received too little training. Whilst the intention is to engage pupils in discussion, most lessons rely too heavily on worksheets. Assessment is very poor. Teachers have no procedures for judging standards and pupils do not know how to improve. When reporting to parents, teachers link their evaluation of standards too firmly to their judgement of effort.

98. Leadership and management are both unsatisfactory. Responsibilities are spread across too many members of staff and there is a lack of clarity about roles and accountability. No-one has a job description that includes leading the development of citizenship. The school has no scheme of work. Nevertheless, there are some strengths. An overarching curriculum plan and a series of teaching units, accompanied by materials for form tutors to use, have the potential to stimulate worthwhile classroom discussion and learning. Good use is made of outside speakers. Heads of year monitor teaching by visiting lessons regularly, but do not keep written records or give teachers feedback. Teachers discuss the development of citizenship and are starting to develop good ideas and plans.
99. The subject was not on the curriculum at the time of the last inspection so improvement cannot be reported.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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