

INSPECTION REPORT

WHITWORTH COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

Rochdale

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119753

Headteacher: Mr N Robinson

Lead inspector: Mr A Henderson

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 November 2003

Inspection number: 258852

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:	516
School address:	Hall Fold Whitworth Rochdale Lancashire
Postcode:	OL12 8TS
Telephone number:	01706 343218
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C J Meek
Date of previous inspection:	23 March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Whitworth Community High School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-16, situated in south-east Lancashire, and close to Rochdale. It is much smaller than average; at present there are 516 pupils on roll with similar numbers of boys and girls. Pupils are drawn mostly from the immediate locality, with about one third from the neighbouring Rochdale LEA. The school serves a diverse area which includes considerable social deprivation and well above average unemployment. Attainment on entry is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average, but includes 20 pupils with statements of need, mostly for specific learning or behavioural problems; at four per cent of the roll this is above average. Virtually all pupils are indigenous white with a very small number from mixed race. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is about average. Since the previous inspection the school's accommodation has been greatly improved with an extensive capital programme, and it is strongly involved with local community issues, including the local Sport and Recreation Trust. The school is also involved with the Healthy Schools initiative, and was awarded a Schools Achievement Award in 2000 in recognition of its positive progress.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2941	Mr A Henderson	Lead inspector	
13762	Mr N Shelley	Lay inspector	
32167	Mr M Sumner	Team inspector	Mathematics
15678	Mrs J Radford	Team inspector	English Drama Special educational needs English as an additional language
21866	Dr D Tracey	Team inspector	Science
11544	Mr B Leek	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31680	Mr P Redican	Team inspector	Art and design Citizenship
10340	Mr J N Lockett	Team inspector	Design and technology
23926	Mr D Howorth	Team inspector	Geography Health and social care
19452	Mr A Pearson	Team inspector	History Physical education Religious education
23709	Mrs A Powell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
20490	Mr P Wilson	Team inspector	Music

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a successful and increasingly effective school that is providing a good education for its pupils. It has a number of significant strengths, not least its success in providing a strongly supportive learning environment in which all pupils are valued as individuals, and are given good opportunities to reach their personal and academic potential. Standards, although below average, reflect good achievement by pupils particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, and come from good teaching and learning. **The school is well led, and provides satisfactory value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Results in national tests and GCSE are higher than those achieved by other schools whose pupils are from similar starting points.
- Provision in both science and health and social care is very good.
- The good quality of teaching overall ensures that pupils achieve well as they move through the school.
- Relationships in the school are very good; the good attitudes, behaviour and personal maturity of most pupils make a strong contribution to their learning.
- A very strong community identity and partnership benefits the learning of pupils throughout the school.

But...

- The quality of management in subject departments is inconsistent, particularly in relation to the effective monitoring of teaching and its impact on learning.
- Assessment and the use of available information about pupils' performance do not play a sufficient part in raising standards. Target setting is not well established in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards are too low in ICT and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.
- Provision in English is unsatisfactory.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards in Year 9 tests and GCSE have improved broadly in line with the national trend. The quality of teaching is notably better, with far less unsatisfactory teaching observed than during the last inspection. Many other issues have been successfully tackled, in particular, improving accommodation. More still needs to be done to improve management in some subjects.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Overall, the achievements of pupils in the school are good. Standards of work seen in both Year 9 and Year 11 are below average overall. In English and mathematics standards are below average, and are average in science. They are also average in both years in geography, design and technology, and citizenship. They are below average in all other subjects except in art, where standards improve to average by the end of Year 11, and modern foreign languages where they are well below average by the same stage. Test results for 2003 were below the national average in English, mathematics and science, but were well above average overall for schools with pupils from similar starting points. GCSE results for 2003 improved with 39 per cent of pupils gaining five or

more A*-C grades – again below the national average but above average compared with similar schools. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well overall through Years 7 to 11, and there are no significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls.

Pupils' personal qualities are good overall, fostered by well planned programmes for citizenship and personal, social and health education. **Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good overall.** Pupils' attitudes to school are positive, and relationships are very good. The behaviour of most pupils is good. The school takes a firm stance in relation to unacceptable behaviour; as a result, the incidence of short-term exclusion is higher than usual. The school works very hard to ensure pupils' good attendance, and this is in line with the national average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall though better in Years 7-9. Teaching is particularly strong in science, music, and health and social care. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching.

The curriculum is much improved and is now good. There is a good variety of academic and work-related courses matched well to pupils' aspirations and capabilities, together with a good range of extra-curricular opportunities to extend their learning. The school takes good care of its pupils, and they are valued and respected. The school values its partnership with parents and is seeking to involve them more in supporting their children's learning. The very strong relationship with the local community together with good links with other schools positively enhance the learning experiences of pupils across the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides good leadership and sets a clear, firm and positive direction for the school's continuing improvement. With strong support from the senior management team, there is a commitment and determination both to raise standards further and to provide appropriate opportunities for pupils' personal development. The school runs smoothly and effectively. Management is satisfactory overall – it is very good in science, but is unsatisfactory in English and religious education. Greater consistency is needed in the monitoring and evaluation of the work of teachers by subject heads, and in their use of assessment data to set targets and to check whether pupils are making as much progress as they should. In other respects, both leadership and management of subjects and pastoral care are good. Governors are committed and hardworking. They have good knowledge of the school, and monitor its work, and particularly its finances, well. However, the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is not fully met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Both parents and pupils are very supportive of the school. Parents are particularly pleased with the arrangements for helping their children to settle in, and the way the school encourages them to become mature and responsible. Parents feel teaching is good, that pupils are expected to work hard, and they recognise the good progress their children make. Pupils like the school, and they also feel they are taught well and expected to work hard. They appreciate the positive atmosphere and good relationships in the school. They feel safe, and are confident in the school's speedy and effective response when conflict occurs.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that the work of teachers, and the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning, are monitored and evaluated by all subject heads on a regular basis.
- Ensure a consistent quality of subject management in relation to the analysis and use of assessment information by teachers to improve the achievement of all groups of pupils.
- Ensure all subjects use data gathered about pupils' attainments to set targets for each pupil in Years 7-9, and monitor progress towards them.
- Raise standards in ICT and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.
- Improve provision in English.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that a daily act of collective worship is provided for all pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Given the standards on entry to the school in Year 7, pupils' achievements are good overall. Boys and girls of all abilities make good initial progress, reaching standards, which although below average, reflect good achievement in Years 7-9. Standards at the end of Year 11 are also below average, but represent satisfactory achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results and achievements in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations are higher than those of similar schools.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7-9 because they are well taught and keen to learn.
- GCSE results in drama, and health and social care were above average in 2003.
- Pupils are achieving very well in science, and health and social care.

But...

- Pupils are underachieving in ICT in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards in modern foreign languages are too low in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

1. When pupils join the school at the beginning of Year 7 their standards are well below average. Their results in National Curriculum tests taken at the end of their primary schools are well below average. The school administers further standardised tests in Year 7 which confirm that standards are much lower than average. The results of these tests provide a consistent picture for each year since the previous inspection, and confirm that although the school receives pupils from the full range, the proportion with above average capability is lower than usual. There are few higher ability pupils, and the proportion with below and well below average ability is much higher than is usually found.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.9 (32.1)	33.6 (33.3)
Mathematics	32.5 (34.3)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	33.1 (32.6)	33.5 (33.3)

There were 92 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. From this beginning pupils make good progress and achieve well because teaching is good and their attitudes to school are positive. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum test were below the national average, but compared with similar schools (ie. those with pupils who achieved similar results in their Year 6 tests) results for science were very high, were well above average for English, and for mathematics were above average. Taken together the overall results were well above those for similar schools. The trend in these national test results matches the national rate of improvement. In recent years, boys at the school have performed as well as girls, in contrast to the national picture.
3. Standards seen in lessons are closer to the national average in Years 7, 8 and 9 than the test results would indicate. This is a reflection of the improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, pupils are making good progress and are achieving well. For individual subjects standards are average in science, design and technology, geography, music and

citizenship. For all other subjects they are below. However, in relation to their prior attainment pupils are achieving very well in science in Years 7, 8 and 9; achievement is good in all other subjects except for English, drama, mathematics, ICT and religious education where it is satisfactory.

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	39.5 (37)	52.6 (51.6)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	89.5 (89)	88.6 (87.1)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98.1 (95)	94.6 (94.6)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	31.5 (31)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 104 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C was below the national average for both 2002 and 2003. However, there was a significant improvement in 2003. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes across the full range of A*-G grades was in line with the national average in both 2002 and 2003, whilst for those gaining one or more GCSE A*-G grade results were well above the national average in 2003. When all these results are compared with those of similar schools, pupils' performance is average for five or more A*-C grades and well above average for the A*-G results.
5. In 2003, GCSE results were above average in drama and health and social care, and were average in design and technology, geography and history. Pupils did significantly better in these than in their other GCSE subjects. Results were generally lower than average in all other subjects other than in German and physical education where they were well below average, and in French where they were low. In 2003 pupils performed significantly less well in French, and to a lesser extent in German than in their other examination subjects, outcomes that reflect the disruption in teaching and learning in modern foreign languages in recent years.
6. Girls do better overall at GCSE than boys, moving ahead from the situation at the end of Year 9, and the gap is slightly wider than the national difference. The school is aware of the need to raise achievement especially among the boys. Importantly, a broader curriculum has been developed in Years 10 and 11 giving a wider choice, and strategies such as mentoring of pupils have been successfully introduced. Regular tracking of pupils' progress identifies potential underachievers for this support. Pupils, especially boys, say that this individual help and wider choice is supporting them well and helping them do better. Overall the GCSE results represent satisfactory achievement and show improvement that matches the national trend. Considering the well below average standards when pupils join the school, it is a considerable achievement that so many leave the school with five or more GCSE grades A*-G and is testimony to the improving quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection.
7. Standards seen in lessons in Years 10 and 11 are similar to recent examination results, and are below average overall. In subjects, standards are above average in health and social care; they are average in science, design and technology, geography, art, drama, music and citizenship - pupils are achieving these standards because teaching is generally good, and sometimes very good. In most other subjects standards seen are approaching, although below, average and achievement is satisfactory. In information technology standards are below average because teaching is unsatisfactory, and pupils are not doing as well as they should because too little time is allocated for the course. In modern foreign languages standards are well below average because pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding arising from a lack of continuity in their earlier experiences. Despite the current improved teaching pupils are underachieving in Year 11.

8. Whilst the school has not yet formally identified its gifted and talented pupils, higher-attaining pupils generally achieve well. Extension activities to ensure that higher-attaining pupils are being fully stretched are developing in some subjects as, for example, in mathematics where a small group successfully completed GCSE statistics as an additional course in 2003. Pupils with special educational needs usually attain the standards that their teachers expect of them, and often do better than expected. In Year 9, their progress matches the good progress of other pupils, and in Year 11 they make better progress than other groups of pupils. This is because most teachers know how to meet their pupils' individual needs, and also because of the good support that pupils receive from teaching assistants and the learning support department.
9. Standards of literacy are average, and have improved since the previous inspection. Regular literacy lessons in Year 7 are helping this improvement, and most subjects are now planning systematically to support this in the work they undertake. Numeracy and the use of mathematics to support learning in other subjects, is satisfactory. The standards of mathematical skills in Years 7-9 are improving, are close to average, and are effectively enhancing learning in almost all subjects. Standards in the use of ICT through work in other subjects are also improving, particularly in Years 7-9. Almost all subjects are making appropriate use of ICT to enhance learning, and standards are average in Years 7-9. They are below average at present in Years 10 and 11 because the improvements in teaching and computer provision have not yet impacted sufficiently on the gaps in these pupils' skills and knowledge.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, conduct and personal development are good. Their attendance is satisfactory, although punctuality is a problem for some. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and the school are good.
- The behaviour of the large majority of pupils is good.
- Pupils make good progress in becoming mature and responsible.

But...

- Some pupils have difficulties with their behaviour, attendance and punctuality.
- Exclusions are higher than the average.

Commentary

10. Pupils enjoy school and unanimously agree that it is a very friendly place in which they feel valued and supported. They say that their teachers are helpful with both academic and personal matters. All but a few are pleased with the range of enrichment experiences that are available to them. The large majority of pupils are conscientious and co-operate with their teachers, participating well in activities. As a result, relationships in the school are very good.
11. Pupils behave well in lessons and about the school, relating very well to each other in a tolerant and supportive manner. Most pupils are sensible and responsible. Older pupils perform prefect duties very responsibly and are respected by the rest of the school. Anti-social incidents and bullying are rare and are always dealt with effectively. The number of exclusions is high and is justified by the serious nature of the offences. A small number of pupils account for a significant number of the exclusions. The school does its best to support these pupils but the specialist help that they need from relevant agencies is either inadequate or not soon enough.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
No ethnic group recorded

No of pupils on roll
498
2
2
1
2

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
74	4
0	0
0	0
2	0
0	0

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

12. Attendance is close to the average for secondary schools. The main reasons for absence are condonement by parents, family holidays and exclusions. The amount of perceived absence is higher because many pupils are left on roll for many weeks after they have left while the school waits for authority to remove them from the roll. Late arrival at school is a problem for some pupils, and has been recently compounded by very difficult long-term traffic conditions in the locality.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	8.1
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.3
National data	1.2

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

13. Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to their work, and this has a positive impact on their achievement. Pupils are fully integrated in classes, and generally behave very well.
14. Religious education provides very good opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils and encourages respect for the beliefs of others as well as understanding them. Opportunities are provided in some other subjects, for example, English and science, to enhance this aspect of pupils' personal development but the contribution is not as widespread as it is for their moral and social development. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, although assemblies do provide some opportunities for pupils to reflect on important issues such as human responsibility for the natural environment.
15. Pupils know what is expected of them in terms of behaviour both in lessons and around the school generally. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Their moral development is very well supported through most curriculum areas and the general life of the school.
16. The good provision made for personal, social and health education links effectively with citizenship to raise awareness and promote mature consideration of moral issues. Pupils' concern for the needs of others, both locally and further afield is reflected in the strong emphasis on charitable activity which is evident in the school, for example, the biennial sponsored walk for charity. These and other activities, for example, participation in the developing school council also encourage pupils' responsibility and co-operation, reflect good provision for their social development. Learning activities provided in most curriculum areas also support the development of pupils' capacity to work together successfully.

17. Since the previous inspection, the quality of the provision supporting pupils' awareness and appreciation of their own cultural heritage has improved and is now good. Although the provision for pupils' personal development is good, lack of co-ordination across the curriculum works against a planned approach ensuring that all subjects play their full part.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are good overall, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. The curriculum is good with strong enrichment opportunities. Pupils receive good care, support and guidance. The school has a very strong community identity, is developing an effective partnership with parents, and has good links with schools and colleges that support pupils' learning well.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall, and stronger in Years 7-9. Assessment is satisfactory overall, but varies between subjects; it is a strength in science and design and technology, but in need of improvement in modern foreign languages, ICT and the humanities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly, and is particularly good in Years 7-9.
- The school's involvement in training new teachers benefits both teaching and pupils' learning.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that the learning ethos is very positive.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and lesson planning promote effective learning.
- High expectations and levels of challenge characterise the most successful lessons.
- Marking is generally good.
- Years 10 and 11 have targets based on detailed consideration of prior attainment.

But...

- Some lessons are dominated by teacher-directed activities, and do not allow pupils to actively participate in their learning.
- Targets are not used as effectively as they could be to help pupils improve their attainment.
- Target setting is under-developed in Years 7-9, and pupils at this stage are largely unaware of how well they are doing in terms of National Curriculum levels.
- Insufficient opportunities are provided for the development of pupils' skills of independent learning and research.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 88 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	13 (15 %)	48 (55 %)	24 (27 %)	3 (3 %)	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.

18. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9 teaching was good or better in approaching three-quarters of lessons seen compared with less than two-thirds good or better in Years 10 and 11. Both parents and pupils acknowledge the quality of teaching throughout the school. Teaching in most subjects

is good. It is very good in science, music and also in health and social care. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in English, mathematics and religious education; although it is also satisfactory overall in ICT, teaching is less effective and unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

19. The quality of teaching and learning has improved substantially since the last inspection when one lesson in six was judged unsatisfactory. Much work has been done to generate this improvement; raising standards through more effective and consistent teaching has been, and continues to be the paramount priority within the school's development planning. The emphasis has been on improving classroom management, using the three-part lesson encouraged in the national Key Stage 3 Strategy and lesson planning. A variety of teaching and learning styles together with a closer match of work to pupils' capabilities has been implemented, supported strongly by the widespread use of grouping pupils of similar abilities together for teaching.
20. The very good school involvement in the Graduate Teacher Training Programme has generated critical review and the identification of effective teaching and learning. There has been an increase in the observation of teachers and more openness in sharing good practice in both teaching and how pupils learn effectively. As a result of this work, teaching and learning quality has improved; now the proportion of lessons judged to be at least satisfactory is 97 per cent compared with 84 per cent in 1998. An important contributory factor in this significant improvement is the formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in subjects by the headteacher and senior management team.
21. Characteristics of the good teaching in all subjects are the thorough planning and preparation of lessons together with teachers' good subject knowledge and the variety of activities that pupils experience in most subjects. As a result pupils make appropriate gains in their learning. Most pupils want to learn, and try hard in lessons to acquire new knowledge and skills, although they do not always retain this over longer periods. A strength of teaching is the encouragement and confidence teachers give to pupils, ensuring very positive relationships and good levels of response.
22. Most teachers successfully create purposeful and challenging learning environments, with high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Their skilful classroom management is a feature of much of the good teaching and ensures that poorly motivated pupils or reluctant learners are sensitively and, for the most part, well handled. It is the high expectations of what pupils can achieve that characterises the most effective teaching. A high level of challenge matched well to pupils' capabilities ensures their effective learning and progress. This is particularly true of teaching generally in science, and design and technology, and also in some lessons in geography, mathematics, English and modern foreign languages.
23. However, where learning is less effective, and sometimes unsatisfactory, it is often because the teacher dominates throughout and fails to give pupils the opportunity to explore ideas on their own, or to actively participate and take responsibility for their learning. As a result, pupils make less progress than they should, for example, in some lessons in English and information technology. The extent to which pupils become independent learners is constrained by two factors in the school – an uneven approach to the setting and use of homework between and, on occasion, within subjects, together with the lack of opportunity for pupils to use the new learning resource centre for research and personal study.
24. All teachers are aware of the need to promote the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and most are successful in this. There is a general level of consistency of approach across the school, except in English where programmes of study are not complete and, as a result, opportunities to develop basic skills are not clearly planned for. Good use is made of writing frames in many subjects to guide middle and lower-attaining pupils. There are fewer opportunities for extended writing, and the lack of access to literacy facilities restricts pupils' research and independent learning skills.

25. Pupils with special educational needs usually learn well. Pupils' individual learning plans give clear information on targets for improvement in work and behaviour and, because most teachers have a good awareness of the range of special needs, they are successful in matching their teaching styles and learning materials to pupils' requirements. Support staff give very good help to individual pupils, because they work closely with subject teachers to ensure that pupils know what they need to do to achieve well. Accommodation and resources have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. The school's investment in setting up the student support base as a pastoral and teaching resource is an impressive example of the effective way in which the school cares for the welfare of all its pupils.
26. Assessment is satisfactory. The school is working hard to establish a school policy centred on targets which are set after careful and detailed consideration of prior attainment and value added data. In Years 10-11 pupils are now aware of their targets and progress is reported against them. In these years procedures linked to the analysis of individual progress, and of discussion with pupils regarding their achievement are becoming established. However, targets are not yet set in Years 7-9 and pupils are often unaware of their progress in terms of National Curriculum levels. Marking is generally good throughout the school, so pupils know what they have to do to improve. Assessment is good in science, design and technology, and music and teachers incorporate the results of their assessments in the planning of lessons so that individual needs can be dealt with more effectively. Assessment in other subjects is satisfactory, but in need of improvement in modern foreign languages, ICT, and the humanities generally. The use of academic target setting requires further development, particularly in Years 7-9, both as a contribution to the school's self-evaluation and for ensuring that sufficiently challenging targets are set for all pupils.

The curriculum

Curricular provision has improved and is now good. A good programme of enrichment enhances the taught curriculum and contributes to pupils' good personal development. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate and enable the school to provide its intended curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The breadth of the curriculum is good.
- The provision of vocational and work-related courses is very effective.
- Many pupils take part in a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Curriculum planning has led to a good improvement in the provision.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The provision of PSHE is good.
- Careers education, including work experience, is very good.
- The school's accommodation has considerably improved as a result of new rooms and refurbishment.
- The ratio of computers to pupils in the school is above the national average.

But...

- There is no daily act of collective worship.
- The learning resource centre is underused.
- Sports facilities and playing fields are inadequate.

Commentary

27. The curriculum provides good opportunities for boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress as they move through the school. Statutory requirements are now met for art, ICT and music although the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils because of limited

accommodation. A good feature is that all pupils have a lesson of literacy in Year 7 to improve their communication skills. In Years 8 and 9, the breadth of the curriculum improves when drama is introduced as a separate subject.

28. In Years 10 and 11, new GCSE courses in ICT and in health and social care provide additional breadth and relevance to the curriculum. More able pupils can gain up to twelve and a half GCSEs, including statistics, a double award in ICT and half a full GCSE in religious education. A number of lower-attaining pupils benefit from the very good programme of work-related vocational courses provided at a local college. The curriculum, therefore, provides effectively for all pupils and enables them to achieve their full potential if they apply themselves sufficiently.
29. The curricular structure has improved considerably since the previous inspection. However, there are some relatively minor imperfections. In Years 7-9, most subjects have different time allocations in one year or another in order to maintain a balanced curriculum. Where they have one period a year as, for example, in Year 7 for geography, the time restriction can lead to too much learning being crammed into lessons. In Years 10 and 11, English and mathematics have considerably more time than is usually found. Design and technology, modern foreign languages and the two options have less time than normal. This limits practical work in design and technology and constrains teaching methods in history. These imbalances of time have been recognised by the school as an area for further improvement.
30. Opportunities for enrichment are good overall. There is good support for learning outside the school day, with lunchtime and after-school sessions in the majority of subjects, including design and technology, ICT, art and history. In mathematics in 2003, a small group of pupils took an extra GCSE examination in statistics, studying after school, and gained very creditable results. In citizenship, there is an exciting programme of activities, including mock trials, elections for school council representatives, and visits to courtrooms. There are also regular educational visits abroad; for example, in history, pupils visit Second World War battlefields in France. Pupils' participation in the arts is good. There are visits to art galleries and theatres, both locally and in London. The school choir and wind band rehearse regularly, and numbers of pupils taking part are growing. The school provides a satisfactory range of opportunities for both boys and girls to take part in sport. These include organised football teams, gymnastics, athletics and watersports activities.
31. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they have full access to the National Curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for through appropriate grouping arrangements across the subjects, good classroom support, and individual and small group work in literacy and study skills. However, although the quality and deployment of the support is very good, there are not enough support staff to meet the needs of the pupils. The school successfully promotes a practical off-site curriculum for older pupils.
32. The provision of PSHE is good. The course is well planned and teaching is good. Pupils have many opportunities to investigate and discuss controversial issues, such as teenage pregnancy, or the dangers of drug abuse. Consequently they make good progress in their personal development. Careers education is very good and highly successful. The school keeps a track of all leavers and in 2003 all but one pupil is either in full time education, training or employment. Work experience is very well organised and extremely effective.
33. Resources are adequate for all pupils enabling them to achieve at least satisfactorily. The provision of ICT resources across the curriculum has much improved and this is helping pupils to learn more independently. In mathematics the availability of interactive white boards is contributing to improving teaching and learning. Staff are sufficient to teach the curriculum and are sensibly deployed. Where support staff are allocated to specific departments this is proving to be an effective way of improving lower-attaining pupils' achievement. Although the number of specialist graduate teachers has improved, more are needed in some areas of the curriculum, for example, mathematics, ICT and religious education.

34. The standard of accommodation has improved notably since the previous inspection when it was unsatisfactory. The buildings are now clean and well maintained especially on the inside. The standard of display around rooms and corridors makes a significant contribution to improving the learning environment. A programme of new building has provided classrooms, administration offices, a learning resource centre, drama studio and dining hall. The exterior of the building is much improved as the result of refurbishment. However, sports facilities are inadequate; for example, in wet weather the school playing fields can seldom be used due to poor drainage. The learning resource centre does not have a librarian and, as a result, is not used before or after school.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, health and safety is good. Pupils receive good academic and personal support, advice and guidance. The arrangements for seeking and acting upon pupils' views are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of pastoral care is a strong feature of the school.
- Health and safety procedures are good.
- Academic support and general advice and guidance are good.

But...

- A process for periodically surveying the views of all pupils is not yet in place.

Commentary

35. Relationships between teachers and pupils are caring, constructive, mutually trusting and respectful. Pupils feel valued, safe and supported by the way they are treated. The sense of community that prevails demonstrates well the ethos of the school. The procedures for checking safety and carrying out risk assessments are appropriate and effectively undertaken. First aid cover is adequate and is in course of being substantially increased. Child protection procedures and the school's policy for race equality are in place, understood and adhered to. Specialist health and education agencies provide services to the school, although these vary in effectiveness. The attendance service provides good quality support within a very limited time allocation. The agency for pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties does not respond quickly enough to meet the immediate needs of the school and relevant pupils.
36. The arrangements for preparing and transferring pupils from primary schools and for their induction upon arrival are good and pupils settle quickly and happily. They receive considerable help with their work, particularly if they are having difficulty or need to catch up, although academic targeting for improvement is not yet in place in all subjects. Arrangements for guidance and support are better in Years 10 and 11; pupils are aware of their predicted grades and those who are underachieving are identified and supported effectively. The system of assessing pupils' effort and highlighting concerns is good, but is used mainly to prioritise the identification of underachievers.
37. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education or career through a combination of very good careers education, advice and work-related experiences. Advice and guidance are also good regarding subject options, and very good regarding post-16 choices and opportunities. The school does not have in place a system for periodically seeking the views of all pupils. However, their views and representations are respected and acted upon when appropriate. The school council, which includes representatives from each year group in the school, is a positive initiative which is welcomed by the pupils.

38. The school gives good guidance and support to pupils with special educational needs. The systems for identifying and monitoring pupils in need of extra help are very good and individual learning plans give clear information on particular needs, support arrangements and productive learning activities.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents express confidence in the school. The partnership between the school and parents is satisfactory. Involvement with the community is very good and links with other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are pleased with the work of the school and pupils' achievements.
- Relationships with most parents are good and communications are good.
- The community is used very well to enrich pupils' learning experiences.
- The school works closely with primary schools and other institutions.

But...

- Parents could be more involved in learning and the life of the school.

Commentary

39. Parents are right to be pleased with the quality of education and care that is provided. They are justified in their confidence that their children are well served by the school and that they achieve well. Some parents feel they are not well enough informed about their children's progress. Inspectors judge that they are partly justified because annual school reports for pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not describe pupils' attainment in relation to national standards or expectations for age. However, good opportunities are provided for consultation about progress that a significant minority of parents choose not to attend. Communications with parents, particularly when pupils are underachieving, are good. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs are well involved in reviewing their needs.
40. Those parents who express concerns about pupils' conduct are right to do so but the school manages behaviour well and the standard of behaviour overall is good. The few parents who query the amount extra-curricular activities are partially right because sporting opportunities are restricted owing to limited facilities but a wide range of other enrichment experiences is available. Although parents are correct that the school had not previously sought their views on a regular basis, a comprehensive survey was recently undertaken but consequent actions have not yet been taken.
41. Parents have very little involvement in learning and the daily life of the school. Guidance about how to more effectively support their own children with work at home is provided at the consultation meetings but there is no provision for adult education or direct support except for parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents support some events well, especially the annual carol concert and the record of achievement presentations. The parents and teachers association provides modest support to the school.
42. The school uses the wider community very well to provide a considerable range of experiences for the pupils. They include several trips abroad, and numerous visits to enhance learning in subjects such as geography and history. Many local and national organisations are involved with the school providing speakers, training, citizenship and work experiences. Links with colleges of further education contribute very well to vocational development. Close association with partner primary schools facilitates smooth transition of pupils and educational developments. The school benefits very much from the contribution made by teachers in training in the school as a result of its arrangements with relevant institutions.

43. The school has a good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs and with local primary schools. Parents are encouraged to contribute to their children's education plans and to discuss the progress made. Transitional arrangements from the primary phase have been identified as an area for improvement, and arrangements have been made for a conference on the issue.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management of the school are good. Good leadership by the headteacher along with strong support from governors and the senior management team are ensuring good progress. The governing body is very supportive of the school. Management is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The clear vision of the headteacher, governors and senior management team gives a positive direction for the school's continuing improvement.
- The headteacher sustains a good team spirit and sense of stability, and this is effectively supporting improved teaching and learning.
- Systems for pupils' personal development are well led and managed.
- Professional development and very good induction for teachers are helping to raise standards.
- Leadership and management are strong in science, design and technology, art and geography, and for pupils with special educational needs.

But...

- Aims and developments have been curbed by financial constraints.
- The quality of subject management is not consistently good.
- Systems for the monitoring of teaching and learning, and for analysing pupils' performance are not used well enough by all subjects.
- Subject management is unsatisfactory in English and religious education.

Commentary

44. The headteacher has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and a clear vision of what is needed to raise standards. He is highly committed to the school and has provided good motivation and a sense of security over a period of some change and difficulty. Despite considerable financial constraints, he has largely achieved his main aim to substantially improve the learning environment. The recent and successful bid for approval for the new sports facilities will facilitate moving the school to a true community school status. Whilst the school uses the wider community very well to support learning, its reciprocal use as a resource by the community is not yet established. Through his consistent and determined leadership, the headteacher has driven the school forwards since the last inspection. He has successfully improved the quality of teaching and management, for example, by the appointment and development of young and aspiring new teachers. He has the committed support of both governors and senior staff and his vision is widely shared. The headteacher is well supported by the senior staff. They work closely together in providing consistent leadership, expectation and support for the school. The leadership team is hardworking and their complementary skills and expertise are used effectively.
45. Leadership of subject departments varies. Religious education has not moved forward enough because of frequent changes in leadership. Some departments are led in a traditional manner. Several departments, such as science, art, geography, and design and technology are more enterprising, with significant impact on achievement. Leadership overall serves to motivate staff and pupils and brings about good improvement in most aspects of the school's operations. Planning in the short term is well-focused, but in the long term is more concerned with improvement to the learning environment than with strategies to directly raise academic standards.

46. Governors work closely and well with the headteacher and senior staff. They play a very supportive role in planning for the school's improvement. Governors are conscientious and committed to the school's well-being and its key role in the local community. Through their clear committee structures and regular programme of meetings, governors are well informed and understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors check regularly on the educational standards achieved and the quality of education provided, including setting challenging targets for GCSE examination results. Most statutory duties are fulfilled well, and the governors' action plan in response to the previous inspection has been successful. However, requirements in respect of collective worship are not fully met. Overall, governance is satisfactory.
47. Management of the school is satisfactory. Priorities in the school development plan, although short term, relate to raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. These priorities are not always reflected in subject improvement plans, whilst some are well-constructed, not all represent a common and well-focused drive for improvement.
48. The management by subject leaders is variable; it is very good in science and music, good in design and technology, geography, art, drama, citizenship, and health and social care, but is unsatisfactory in English and religious education. Most subjects have well planned schemes of work from which teachers can plan worthwhile, progressive lessons. Some subject leaders analyse pupils' performance well and identify where pupils need support. However, most subject leaders make insufficient use of the analysis of assessment information and data provided by senior staff in identifying areas of weakness and in tracking the academic progress of all pupils. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet a consistent feature of subject management throughout the school, despite the strong lead provided by the good subject review process carried out by the headteacher and senior management team. Not all subjects systematically focus on evaluating what works and what is less effective. As a result, there is insufficient debate about the effectiveness of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. For self-evaluation to be effective, all subject leaders should be systematically involved in monitoring the work of their teams, in spreading best practice, and in taking action to tackle weaknesses.
49. A well-managed system of pastoral care ensures a positive ethos in the school where pupils know they are well looked after and encouraged to do their best. Their personal development is well supported, for example, through the good introduction of citizenship and the arrangements for the good programme of personal, social and health education.
50. The successful implementation of performance management is helping to raise standards, with positive impact, for example, in improving the use of ICT across subjects. The professional development of teachers is good. A very good programme of induction helps new and newly-qualified teachers to settle quickly into school and develop good, professional approaches. The school's strong involvement in the Graduate Teacher Training Programme is a very good feature which is providing tangible benefits both to the school, and to the quality of teaching and learning.
51. Leadership and management of special educational needs is very good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and much has been accomplished in a short time. The key issues from the previous inspection report have been successfully tackled. The department now uses ICT effectively to monitor performance data and record information on pupils' progress. Statutory requirements in relation to pupils with statements of special educational need are met, and the specific grant is well used for its designated purposes.
52. Finances are managed effectively, and this is endorsed by the latest auditor's report. The headteacher, governors and senior managers keep the budget under regular and close review, and the school is successfully dealing with its long-standing deficit in conjunction with the LEA. Financial management is well thought through, and has enabled major

improvements, for example, in accommodation despite this constraint. The principles of best value are central to management, and the school is constantly reviewing its performance compared with others, and seeking the most competitive pricing for its spending. Financial administration is good. The school matches its spending well to its educational priorities and specific grants, for example, for special educational needs, are used properly.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,658,572
Total expenditure	1,657,695
Expenditure per pupil	3,212

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-53,125
Balance carried forward to the next	877

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

In this curriculum area, the focus was on English, English literature and French. The school offers both French and German as a free choice for pupils from Year 7. German was inspected also – four lessons were seen and work samples analysed. Standards were below average, but pupils were achieving well particularly in Years 7-10 in response to good and improved teaching and learning. The most recent GCSE examination results in German showed improvement also, but were well below average.

English

Provision in English is **unsatisfactory**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Unsatisfactory	
Improvement since the last inspection	Unsatisfactory	

Strengths

- Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive good support.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching and learning are inconsistent in quality, although satisfactory overall.
- Management is unsatisfactory because not enough progress has been made in tackling issues identified as concerns at the previous inspection.
- The quality of marking and assessment is too variable.

Commentary

53. In both the 2002 and 2003 Year 9 national tests results were below the national average. For schools with pupils from similar levels of prior attainment, they were well above average in 2003, having been below in 2002. Although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards was similar to that found nationally, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was lower than average. Pupils did not do as well at the higher levels in English as they did in mathematics and science. Overall, boys did better than expected, but girls did not do as well as girls nationally.
54. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, English results at Grades A*-C were well below average and average at grades A*-G. Results in English literature were also below average for the higher grades, but were higher than in English, and pupils did better in English literature than in

their other subjects. Girls did well in English, but boys did better in English literature. Results in 2003 confirm an improving trend in both subjects.

55. In work seen during the inspection, attainment in Year 9 is below average, and represents satisfactory achievement, because when pupils joined the school their overall standards were well below average. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are close to average. Most pupils speak confidently, if not always coherently, in discussions. However, there are a considerable number of pupils who are reluctant to contribute to class discussions. Standards of reading have improved since the last inspection and, overall, they are close to average. However, a significant number of pupils are still below average in reading fluency. The introduction of literacy lessons in Year 7 has had a positive impact on pupils' acquisition of reading skills, and pupils also benefit from regular visits to the local public library. Standards in writing are below average. Although there are examples of good quality factual and imaginative writing, many pupils still have difficulty with sentence structure and spelling accuracy. Pupils with special educational needs generally achieve well because they have good support, and often benefit from the use of writing frames to record information.
56. Attainment in Year 11 is below average. There is a wide variation in standards. Lower-attaining pupils with a basic level of reading competence can select appropriate words and phrases to build up accurate descriptions of fictional characters. Higher-attaining pupils have good deductive skills. The best writing is cogent and analytical, with a very confident command of structure and style. The writing of pupils of average and below average attainment tends to be descriptive rather analytical, but the final versions of the GCSE coursework assignments show that pupils are achieving in a satisfactory way, given their standards at the beginning of the course. Where pupils have benefited from teachers' detailed comments on content and presentation, they write at reasonable length, with an adequate range of vocabulary, and structure their work effectively. Spelling is generally accurate and handwriting is legible. ICT is often used to present work attractively.
57. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The principal strengths of the teaching are good subject knowledge, good classroom relationships, and the promotion of equality of opportunity that is shown in teachers' concern for the personal development of all their pupils. Pupils generally respond well and have positive attitudes to the subject. The main weakness is that not all teachers use a range of teaching methods to make learning enjoyable and rewarding, so there is an unevenness in pupils' rate of progress across the year. The most effective lessons are characterised by a combination of the teachers' specialist knowledge and high aspirations, their purposeful lesson planning and good classroom management, and pupils' very positive response. Team teaching and well-focused support also make a strong contribution to pupils' learning, particularly in the lower-attaining groups, and for pupils with special educational needs. In these challenging lessons the outcomes are good, and sometimes very good, because pupils, both boys and girls, work confidently and quickly. However, in lessons where the outcomes are less than good, and on occasion unsatisfactory, it is because planning is not sufficiently rigorous. As a result, time is not used efficiently, there is a lack of pace and challenge, and pupils make limited progress because they do not have enough opportunities to take an active part in the lesson. The quality of marking also varies, and a considerable amount of marking is unhelpful, especially to younger pupils, because it is not graded according to National Curriculum levels, and comments are too brief and general. Accommodation and resources have improved since the last inspection, and the cheerful and well-equipped classrooms have a positive impact on pupils' learning.
58. The quality of leadership in the department is satisfactory. There is a strong commitment to independent learning, and to the personal development of pupils through reading, discussion and original writing. However, the management of the subject is unsatisfactory. This is because not enough progress has been made in rectifying the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection. The updating of the schemes of work to bring them into line with current requirements, although under way, is still not complete, and thus there are still shortcomings in lesson planning and assessment. Professional development and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching have been carried out, but have not yet been successful in eradicating the wide variation in the quality of teaching and learning observed.

There is still not enough systematic sharing of expertise between teachers in the department in order to raise standards. However, some progress has been made in providing flexibility within the curriculum and in setting some of the teaching groups, as a result of monitoring performance data and reviewing patterns of progress. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Standards of literacy are average. They have improved since the last inspection when they were below average. There were issues in reading and presentation of written work, and insufficient provision for literacy across the curriculum. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy into Years 7 to 9, and the regular literacy lessons in Year 7 have had a direct impact on the raising of standards. Most subjects now plan systematically for the development of literacy. However, the programmes of study in English are not yet fully in place.
60. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are generally a strength, because in most subjects there is a clear focus on the development of pupils' oral skills, through opportunities for whole-class and small group discussions, and also for individual responses such as the recall of previous work. Pupils' ability to listen carefully results in accurate recall of the main points in an explanation, and in carrying out instructions correctly. In subjects such as science, modern foreign languages and geography, the strong emphasis on pupils' acquisition of subject specific vocabulary enables pupils to use the correct words with reasonable accuracy.
61. Standards of reading have improved since the last inspection. The literacy lessons in Year 7 give pupils plenty of practice in reading aloud and good opportunities to develop their comprehension skills. Most pupils read with reasonable fluency, if not always with good expression. Older pupils can extract relevant information with considerable success from a range of sources. Writing skills are average. Work is generally well presented and most subjects now provide good opportunities for writing in a variety of styles. Pupils' writing is improved through the emphasis on accuracy in spelling, as in modern foreign languages, and the use of writing frames to strengthen sentence construction. In geography, pupils benefit from short structured tasks and guidelines on how to write at length, and their work includes letters, diaries and reports.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Good	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good	
Management	Satisfactory	
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory	

Strengths

- Leadership is good, and the department is improving rapidly.
- Standards are rising quickly in Years 7 to 10; pupils are achieving well because their attitudes are positive in response to good, improved teaching.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results are much lower than they should be, and pupils are underachieving.
- Pupils' speaking skills are weak in Year 11.
- Not enough use is made of assessment information for setting targets and tracking pupils' progress.

Commentary

62. In 2002, GCSE results in French were well below average at A*-C but above average at A*-G. In 2003, results showed a sharp decline. Boys and girls did significantly less well in French than in other subjects in both 2002 and 2003. Results reflect the considerable discontinuity in modern foreign languages staffing in the recent past and the adverse effect this has had on pupils' learning.
63. Results in the most recent National Curriculum assessments were below average. In work seen, standards in Year 9 are just below average. This represents good achievement because pupils enter the school in Year 7 with well below average attainment overall. Pupils make steady progress and gradually build up their knowledge of basic language structures over time. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 speak quite confidently with good pronunciation and they write accounts using different tenses. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection because of careful planning and good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons where they receive support from classroom assistants. Standards in Year 11 are well below average overall, but are improving in French. Best progress is in writing because much time is devoted to this skill. In coursework, higher-attaining pupils produce lengthy accounts, using a good range of tenses and vocabulary. However, speaking skills are weak and pupils are struggling to make up lost ground from earlier years. Because they lack confidence, responses are often hesitant and brief and pronunciation tends to be rather anglicised. Given the previous disruption in their learning, achievement is unsatisfactory.
64. Teaching and learning are good in Year 9 and satisfactory in Year 11. The past two years has seen a complete change in staffing. The new team of teachers is working very hard to raise standards and to change pupils' attitudes to language learning. They generally manage classes well and employ a good range of strategies, resources and activities to make learning enjoyable, while at the same time ensuring pupils continue to progress. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and behaviour is good, though there is some lingering resistance in Year 11 which sometimes affects the style of teaching. While teachers normally conduct their lessons in the foreign language, there is overuse of English in Year 11. In addition, imbalance in the time allocated to the development of each skill means that pupils are not getting enough regular opportunities to practise speaking, for example, in pairs. Consequently they are not achieving well enough in this skill. Marking is of good quality and teachers show good understanding of National Curriculum levels and GCSE criteria but assessment is not yet used to full advantage to set targets and track individual progress in order to raise achievement further.
65. This is a rapidly improving department. Good leadership and effective teamwork have already led to significant improvements, most notably in standards and in the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, opportunities to use ICT have recently been introduced into the curriculum, and the department's first residential visit to France for many years has

taken place earlier this term. However, examination results have not improved since the previous inspection, and more needs to be done in order to raise standards further by sharing existing good practice, and ensuring a consistent quality of teaching and learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory	

Strengths

- ICT is used well to enhance teaching and learning.
- Relationships are good in mathematics.
- Some Year 10 and 11 pupils have taken GCSE statistics in their own time and achieved very good results.
- Facilities and accommodation are good and support learning well.

Areas for Improvement

- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are inadequate and teachers do not all work to the same standards.
- Homework is not sufficiently challenging, particularly for the higher ability pupils.

Commentary

66. In 2003, results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were broadly average, but well above those of schools who take pupils with a similar prior attainment. The 2003 GCSE results were below average for grades A*-C, but average for pupils of similar prior attainment. For grades A*-G results were above the national average. The department also entered six Year 10 and three Year 11 pupils for GCSE statistics, a course which was completed outside of timetabled lessons. The pupils achieved very good results which were well above average.
67. Current standards of work in Year 11 are generally in line with those suggested by the 2003 results. This represents satisfactory achievement by pupils, including those pupils who have special educational needs. All pupils study similar topics at levels which are matched to individual needs. Interactive whiteboards and other aspects of ICT are used to enrich and focus learning. For example, a group of average to above average pupils were seen to make rapid progress in the revision of Pythagoras, whilst appreciating the historical nature of the topic through a carefully prepared interactive presentation. Standards of work in Year 9 are also in line with as those of the 2003 national tests and achievement here is also satisfactory. For example, a mid to lower ability Year 9 group was seen making good progress in the construction of triangles.
68. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all years. There is, however, a considerable variation in this quality, from very good to unsatisfactory. For example, a Year 8 group were seen making very good progress with fractions whilst a Year 7 group made

inadequate progress in studying polygons. Where teaching and learning are good or better, teachers work at a lively pace and know how to keep their pupils stretched and interested. They have good pupil management skills, and plan and prepare for their lessons thoroughly, reflecting their subject expertise and the positive impact of the national numeracy strategy. Accurate use is made of the correct technical vocabulary. Marking is thorough and helps pupils understand how to improve. Less successful teaching is characterised by low expectations and a lack of challenge, both in lessons and homework; poor marking which is not thorough or helpful to pupils; and a lack of understanding of how pupils learn mathematics. Learning in such lessons is, therefore, slower than it needs to be, especially for the higher attainers in the group. Although recent national strategies are incorporated into the department's scheme of work, they are not used in practice in weaker lessons. There are generally good classroom relationships in mathematics, and this gives all pupils the opportunity to concentrate on their lessons.

69. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Many issues, such as the use of ICT, the development of mental skills and oral reasoning, whole-school numeracy and effective action planning have been tackled successfully since the previous inspection. The department has also gained greatly from its involvement in the graduate training programme. The facilities and resources of the department are well organised to create a good learning atmosphere. However, teaching and learning are not yet monitored rigorously enough and this has resulted in a lack of consistency in practice. Policies in the departmental handbook are thorough but not always adhered to by all teachers. The department's scheme of work needs further development by the mathematics team if it is to become a more effective working document.

Mathematics across the curriculum

70. Pupils' competence in mathematics in mathematics satisfactorily supports learning in all subjects. There are no instances of weaknesses in mathematics impeding progress in other areas. In citizenship, use of mathematics is good with graphs, surveys and subsequent data handling employed regularly. Use of mathematics is also good in music, where a lesson was seen which stressed the relationship between rhythm and fractions. In other subjects such as science, ICT, art, history, geography, modern foreign languages and design and technology, mathematics was seen to be used effectively.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good	

Strengths

- GCSE results are well above average compared with schools whose pupils have similar levels of prior attainment.
- Pupils achieve very well because teaching is very good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to science and this supports their learning well.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good, and teachers work very effectively together as a team.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning in science is very effective and significantly contributes to improving standards.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities to use ICT are missed in science.
- Marking of books in Years 7 to 9 could be more effective.

Commentary

71. National Curriculum tests in Year 9 in 2003 were broadly average compared to the country as a whole, but well above average for pupils with similar levels of prior attainment. Results over the past four years have been on an improving trend. In 2003, pupils' results in GCSE science were average for grades A*-C. Over the last three years GCSE results in science have been consistently well above average for pupils with similar levels of attainment in their Year 9 national tests. Results in national tests and examinations indicate pupils of all ages achieve very well.
72. Current standards in Year 9 are average. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is well below average for their age and in particular, literacy and mathematical competencies are weak. However, as the result of very good teaching, they make very good progress in their lessons and their achievement is very good. Standards of work in Year 11 are also average for their age. The achievement of these older pupils is also very good because they continue to progress at a much faster rate than would be expected from their starting points. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of biology, chemistry and physics. In particular, their enquiry science skills are strong due to a regular and concerted focus in their science lessons; this makes a good contribution to their overall achievement. Pupils with special educational needs also make very good progress and achieve very well due to the very good support from teachers and dedicated teaching assistants in lessons. As a consequence, all achieve at least a grade G in their examinations and most do better.
73. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Lessons are very well planned with a very good emphasis on learning objectives and outcomes. Teachers have a secure command of their subject areas and their clear explanations of scientific theories and concepts helps improve pupils' learning significantly. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and, as a result, pupils have very positive attitudes to their work in science. Interest and motivation are high and time spent in lessons is very productive. Teachers challenge higher-attaining pupils well through the use of more difficult additional work. Behaviour is always good, and often better, because of the effective learning strategies employed by science teachers. Pupils' work is regularly and thoroughly marked. However, pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 would be further improved if, in their day-to-day written work, they were given an indication of the National Curriculum level they are working at and what they need to do to improve. Pupils gain some experience of ICT in their science lessons, but the quality of work would be further improved by incorporating ICT into lessons more frequently. For example, in a lesson on balanced and unbalanced forces the focus would have been sharper if multi-media facilities had been used to show these effects.

74. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has built a very effective team of teachers and support staff with a main focus on raising pupils' achievement. The science curriculum has improved. For example, new schemes of work are a very effective tool for delivering the science curriculum and raising achievement. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is highly effective and, as a result, teaching is better and this has raised standards. Since the previous inspection, improvement is very good. In particular teaching has dramatically improved. Key outputs such as GCSE results are improving. The department is in a very good position to move forward.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Strengths

- Committed teachers provide extensive opportunities for learning outside timetabled lessons.
- Increasing use of the Internet to extend and enhance learning.
- Pupils have very good attitudes.
- New schemes of work, together with improved accommodation and resources are helping to strengthen provision.

Areas for improvement

- Work set and time allocated is not always well matched to pupils' abilities and aspirations.
- Pupils' work is not always accurately assessed or their progress effectively monitored.

Commentary

75. In Year 9 pupils are following a recently introduced scheme of work leading to a dual award GCSE. Overall standards are below average although pupils are achieving satisfactorily as they started this work from a well below average base. In earlier years a shortage of equipment and a less challenging curriculum restricted their learning. Pupils have a satisfactory grasp of the basic skills of ICT but lack the understanding to use them in a variety of contexts. In Year 7 another recently introduced course is having a positive impact on raising standards. Pupils of all abilities gain much confidence in using their newly-acquired skills in meaningful situations, such as making a power-point presentation about themselves to the whole class. These pupils are achieving well and standards are average.
76. All Year 11 pupils are following a basic skills course which does not lead to external accreditation. This course does not challenge the middle or high attaining pupils and consequently they could do better. They can use the basic ICT skills in a limited range of prescribed contexts but there are significant omissions in their work. For example, pupils have little opportunity to design and evaluate information systems or to discuss the impact of ICT on society. Although lower-attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily, overall achievement is unsatisfactory and standards are below average.

77. In Year 10 pupils have just started the GCSE dual award course which has also been introduced in Year 9. However, many pupils, particularly the lower-attaining, are finding that they do not have the necessary skills to cope with the greater challenge needed. This is exacerbated by the limited time of one hour per week allocated to this course. This shortage of time is mitigated by the exceptional commitment of the ICT teachers who make available two computer rooms and provide support for pupils at lunchtimes and after-school on every working day bar one. Whereas standards at this very early stage in the course are below average, there is evidence to show that the standards of middle and high attaining pupils are improving. In all years the standards achieved by boys and girls are similar.
78. The introduction of a scheme of work based on national guidance in Year 7 has helped teachers with their planning including the matching of work set to the pupils' earlier learning. As this scheme carries forward into later years the potential for further improvement is good. All the lessons observed were satisfactory or better with half being good. However, examples of pupils' earlier work indicated that not all were learning as effectively as they could, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The teaching in these years is unsatisfactory. Pupils were not given enough responsibility for their own learning; the work covered was too narrow and was not always pitched at the correct level. In Years 7-9, the teaching is better and is satisfactory overall. Pupils are consolidating earlier learning and gaining new skills such as using the Internet to research information. Occasionally opportunities to develop literacy are missed. Pupils' attitudes are a significant positive factor in their learning. They behave well, are eager to participate in lessons, particularly to work on computers, and help each other over difficulties.
79. Currently the ICT department is in a state of transition. New schemes of work have been introduced recently which have the potential to raise standards significantly and there has been considerable investment in upgrading the accommodation and increasing the number of computers. However, there are gaps in the curriculum planning for future years. The dual award GCSE course is not meeting the needs of the lower-attaining pupils and on the current time allocation of one hour per week is unlikely to offer many of them an external accreditation. In addition, this GCSE course currently starts in Year 9 which is the year the course recently started in Year 7 would normally finish. The new GCSE course has also increased the need for more accurate assessment of pupils' work and a more refined system of monitoring pupils' progress. The school is aware of these potential difficulties and is working towards a solution.
80. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection. However, as almost all these improvements have taken place over the last 18 months, they have not been fully reflected in standards, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Improvements include: standards and the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9; schemes of work that meet National Curriculum requirements; better accommodation and many more computers; pupils' attitudes to learning. Overall, the present management and leadership of ICT are satisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

81. ICT is now used much more extensively across the curriculum than was the case at the time of the previous inspection report. Almost all departments use the Internet to promote learning; Special educational needs pupils benefit from appropriate learning programmes; science makes good use of data logging devices and a digital microscope; mathematics and geography regularly use interactive whiteboards to enhance their teaching. Other departments, besides using the Internet, have identified development opportunities and are awaiting additional resources/training.

HUMANITIES

In this curriculum area, the focus was on geography, history and religious education.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Strengths

- Results and standards have improved.
- Lessons are very well planned to ensure a good pace of learning.
- Teaching methods and resources are carefully matched to pupils' needs and, as a result, all pupils achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- The use of fieldwork and ICT to enrich learning in Years 7-9 is not fully developed.
- Data on pupils' attainment and progress is not yet effectively used to raise standards further.

Commentary

82. GCSE results in 2003 were average. Girls did much better than the boys to a greater extent than the national difference. The results have been at least average for the last three years with significant numbers gaining the highest A* and A grades.
83. The most recent teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 suggest that standards are above average, although this is not confirmed by inspection evidence. This indicates that standards in Years 7-9 are average. Higher-attaining pupils reach above average standards. They successfully apply their knowledge and understanding of settlements when comparing and contrasting urban and rural environments in Japan. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs describe lifestyles in countries with different levels of economic development and are beginning to understand the concept of economic interdependence. Although their work is below average, it represents good achievement in relation to their attainment in geography when they entered the school. In Years 7-9 pupils would benefit from greater use of ICT to enrich their learning and more opportunities to develop fieldwork skills.
84. These fieldwork skills are used very well in GCSE coursework to compare land use and shopping patterns in a small town with those in a large retail out-of-town centre. Higher-attainers produce studies of high quality. Other pupils' work is average because they use fewer techniques to present data and their explanations are less detailed. The work of lower-attaining pupils on coastal landforms is below average. They identify these features on maps accurately but do not fully explain their formation.

85. Teaching is very well planned and lessons are taught at a good pace so that pupils are interested and involved in their learning. As a result, pupils throughout the school are achieving well in geography. Work is carefully matched to pupils' different needs but is always challenging. For example, the excellent use of homework to increase pupils' understanding of wind farms promotes independent learning, encourages the use of ICT for research and develops their writing skills. Marking is regular and informs pupils how to improve their work. Very good relationships, enthusiastic teaching and the good use of a support assistant engaged all lower-attaining pupils in their learning about Japan. One lesson each week in Year 7 and Year 9 restrains the coverage of work. In order to teach topics to the required depth there is sometimes a tendency to cram too much learning into one lesson. The result is that not all pupils complete the work. However, even in these lessons teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well.
86. Leadership and management ensure good teaching and learning. Since the previous inspection the quality of teaching and learning has improved and, as a result, all pupils achieve well. The planning of courses to meet the different needs of pupils is now very good. Data on pupils' attainment and progress is not yet effectively used to raise standards further and National Curriculum levels are underused in Years 7-9.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory	

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9, because teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils behave very well and involve themselves well in their learning activities.
- A very good programme of educational visits enhances the provision.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 are not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels, particularly for the highest attaining pupils.
- Pupils do not make enough use of ICT to support their learning in history, a weakness also in the previous inspection.
- In Years 10 and 11, pupils' notes are not well organised and presented.

Commentary

87. GCSE results in 2003 were below average but improved in comparison with 2002. Girls' performance was better than that of boys, which is similar to the national picture. Pupils' achievement was satisfactory in relation to their starting points, determined by their performance in national tests at the beginning of the course.

88. The most recent teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 suggest that standards are above average. This is not confirmed by the inspection evidence which indicates that current standards are below average in Year 9. Higher-attainers reach above average standards in some aspects of their work, for example, they use their knowledge and understanding well to write with empathy about child labour in the 19th Century. However, they do not analyse sources of evidence in enough detail. Nevertheless, taking into account their well below average starting points on entry to the school, the majority of pupils achieve well. Pupils who have special educational needs make similarly good progress because the learning is well adapted to their needs.
89. Pupils who choose to take history as an examination subject make satisfactory progress towards their target grades. Standards in relation to course expectations are below average but reflect satisfactory achievement by the pupils concerned. Only the higher-attainers use their previous knowledge and understanding of events well to support their conclusions when analysing sources of information such as eye witness accounts of the Dunkirk evacuation. The quality of organisation and presentation of the work in pupils' notebooks varies widely so that their usefulness as revision aids for some pupils is limited. This apart, pupils throughout the school have positive attitudes to learning and behave very well.
90. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject; their good rapport with their pupils successfully encourages their full involvement in learning. Subject knowledge is used well in explanations and to question pupils. In most lessons, learning is usefully evaluated in a concluding question and answer session. However, learning activities and assessment tasks do not stretch the highest attainers well enough in the analysis of evidence and historical changes. Pupils' work is marked regularly using the department's own procedures which the pupils understand well, but this not sufficiently linked to the levels of the National Curriculum for history. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Less time is provided to teach the examination course than found in most schools, and there is less active pupil involvement in learning activities than is the case in Years 7 to 9. New marking procedures have been introduced which provide pupils with a clear indication of what they need to do meet appropriate examination criteria, together with optional elements of examination courses which are more suited to pupils' interests. Neither have been in place long enough to have a significant effect on pupils' achievement.
91. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection is also satisfactory. Results are broadly similar. Development planning and subject monitoring procedures have improved. A very good programme of educational visits enhances the provision. However, ICT is still not used enough to support pupils' learning in history.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Unsatisfactory	
Improvement since the last inspection	Unsatisfactory	

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons seen is good.
- Pupils are well behaved and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Recent examination results were above average for grades A*-G.

Areas for improvement

- The subject lacks a coherent development plan.
- Schemes of work and assessment procedures Years 7 to 9 are under developed.
- There are insufficient books and other learning resources.

Commentary

92. Although GCSE results in 2003 were below average for A*-C grades, creditably, all pupils successfully gained a grade in the A*-G range. Numbers are too small to allow for reliable comparisons to be made between the performance of boys and girls. Most other pupils successfully completed another nationally accredited course. In 2002, no pupils had chosen to follow the full GCSE course. Results in the short GCSE course were above average and all passed in the A*-G range.
93. In Year 9, the inspection evidence from lessons, work samples and discussion with pupils indicates that standards are below average in relation to the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Pupils' knowledge of key features of belief and worship in Christianity and other major world faiths is fragmented, and they do not have a cohesive understanding of what it means to be a member of a faith community in modern Britain. Nevertheless, in relation to their starting points on entry to the school, their achievement is satisfactory. The most recent progress has been good because effective teaching has stretched them. For example, higher-attainers can evaluate religious viewpoints on relevant issues such as censorship of the media; most pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of karma to Hindus. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress because their teachers and learning assistants work well together to ensure the learning meets their needs.
94. No pupils are currently taking the full GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. Those following the short GCSE course reach average standards and achieve well in relation to their starting points at the beginning of Year 10. The achievement of the remaining pupils, who are taking a nationally accredited but less demanding course, is satisfactory. Their work generally meets the course expectations but some higher-attainers could be stretched more.
95. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection is good. Knowledgeable, enthusiastic teaching using interesting and demanding learning activities has quickly captured pupils' interest resulting, for the most part, in effective learning experiences in which the pupils themselves are fully involved. This has been particularly effective in challenging pupils to evaluate the implications of membership of a faith community for life in the world today. Learning activities are also carefully adapted to meet the learning needs of different groups within the class. Non-specialist teachers have appropriate experience in teaching religious education and have been instrumental in ensuring the continuity of learning experiences for pupils in examination classes, thus contributing well to their good achievement. However, variations in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection have limited pupils' achievement to satisfactory. Despite the current good quality of teaching, in recent years, the majority of pupils have not had a consistent classroom experience because of high turnover of staff.
96. Rapid turnover of subject leaders in recent years has meant that some key elements of the management and leadership role in religious education have not been consistently pursued.

Leadership has improved and is now satisfactory, following recent staff appointments. Good progress has been made in developing schemes of work, assessment procedures and an action plan for the subject, although there has been insufficient time to make a significant impact on standards. Whilst signs are promising, improvement since the previous inspection has been insufficient; resources for learning are still unsatisfactory and standards have declined. However, good links with local places of worship have been maintained which enhances the curriculum, and there is no longer any unsatisfactory teaching.

TECHNOLOGY

In this curriculum area the focus was on design and technology, and included courses on resistant materials, graphics and food technology.

Design and technology

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

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Strengths

- The quality of leadership is good and provides a clear focus on raising standards.
- Teaching has improved and is now good overall.
- Pupils achieve very well in the GCSE resistant materials course because of good teaching.
- The new assessment scheme enables teachers to predict pupils' future levels of attainment, set targets, and identify underachievement or a special talent.
- The new schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 cover the whole of the National Curriculum and form a good basis for GCSE work.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning.
- Homework is not always linked to the school timetable. It varies in amount and does not always stretch the pupils.
- There is insufficient time allowed on the timetable to cover the GCSE syllabus especially at the higher levels. The one-hour lessons inhibit the scope of practical tasks in food technology.

Commentary

97. Current standards in Year 9 are average overall, and slightly better than the most recent teacher assessments which were lower than average. In 2003, the proportion reaching the expected Level 5 was average, but was below average for Level 6. This improving situation reflects better teaching together with stronger assessment procedures. From well below average standards on entry pupils make good progress through Years 7-9, and most are achieving well. By the end of Year 9 pupils graphical skills are average; they use drawing projection techniques well to illustrate their designs. They use the ICT facilities well in their folders. Their technical language is average but their spelling is poor. Pupils with special

educational needs are integrated well into groups, and make good progress overall, especially when support is provided. Practical skills are average and few pupils are able to bring together all the skills learnt in Years 7 to 9 into their projects designs for GCSE.

98. GCSE results in 2002 were below average, with pupils often doing less well in design and technology than in their other subjects. This was not the case in 2003 where overall results improved to in line with the national average, with pupils doing at least as well, and sometimes better than in their other subjects. GCSE results in 2003 were above average in resistant materials, and average in the other specialisms. Girls' results were much better than boys' overall. Current standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 reflect the most recent results, and are average overall. Given their starting points, pupils are achieving well. By the end of Year 11 pupils' practical skills are better developed especially in food technology and resistant materials. Most pupils show confidence in their folder work and some good examples of research were seen. In the last two years there has been a significant reduction in the percentage of pupils failing or getting the lowest grades at GCSE.
99. Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 7 to 9 pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers who are well informed about both individual pupils and the requirements of the courses they teach. Lessons are well structured, and a good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of all pupils. Homework is not used well to motivate pupils or to reinforce teaching. In the best lessons there is an enthusiasm for the work and the expectation of teachers is high. In some lessons the slowest pupils dictated the pace and interest waned. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from the extra lessons after school, which are needed to complete their GCSE projects. Teaching is restricted in food technology because the room is poorly designed. The preparation area is overcrowded and, as a result, the one-hour lessons inhibit the variety of practical tasks which can be tackled properly.
100. Pupil's attitudes to the subject are very good. The pace of learning is usually brisk but sometimes the learning objectives are not fully met. Marking and assessment are now good using the new scheme, but pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not know which level of the National Curriculum they are working at. A strong feature is the way in which pupils show an interest in the activities, work cooperatively and concentrate fully on their tasks. Teachers plan well and ensure that the needs of different groups of pupils are met. Literacy and numeracy problems are tackled with word walls in most rooms and measuring and weighing tasks are done well. There was good use of the ICT facilities for improving the presentation of folder work, but insufficient use has been made of the ICT facilities for CAD/CAM, control technology, electronics and electrical circuitry.
101. The leadership of the subject is much improved, and now is good. The department is managed well with improved assessment procedures that are helping to raise standards. The good monitoring of teaching within the department is also contributing effectively to this improvement. Good progress has been made since the last inspection with particularly effective opportunities for extending the curriculum through technology days, and participation in competitions such as the PEPSIMAX Challenge. Standards are higher and the quality of teaching is much improved, although more technical support is needed.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

In this curriculum area, the focus was on art and design, drama and music.

Art and design

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

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, and pupils achieve well.
- Leadership and management are good, and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Results at GCSE have shown a steady improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils lack confidence in observation work.
- ICT is not used widely enough to fully support and extend pupils' work.

Commentary

102. Results in the GCSE examinations in both 2003 and 2002 were average. There were not enough boys or girls taking the examination to reliably compare their results with those gained by boys and girls nationally. GCSE results have shown a steady improvement since the previous inspection.
103. The most recent teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 suggest that standards are much lower than average. This is not entirely confirmed by inspection findings which indicate that standards in Year 9 are below average. However, pupils' achievement is good, because their standards on entry to the school in Year 7 were well below average. They make good progress in gaining skills, knowledge and understanding in this subject. They use colour well, producing vibrant collages using tissue paper and glue. They make lively compositions based on abstract shapes, and sensitive prints based on the study of seashells. They also work effectively in three dimensions, making small sculptures from wire and plaster, which are richly decorated with metallic paint. They use ICT for research and to manipulate images, but its use is not widespread enough to fully extend and support their own work. In addition, pupils lack confidence when working from observation and their drawing is rather hesitant as a result.
104. Standards in Year 11 are average, and pupils continue to achieve well. They build on their skills in composition, and produce work that is increasingly complex in its use of colour, line and shape. Sketchbooks are lively, and higher-attaining pupils use materials such as tissue paper and small pieces of bark to produce sensitive studies based on the seashore. They also choose themes such as 'death' or 'war' as starting points for paintings and drawings, exploring moral and social issues. As a result, the subject makes a good contribution to their personal development.

105. Teaching and learning are good. In the majority of lessons, there is a good level of challenge in the tasks set, and teachers give good individual advice to pupils as they work. For example, in a Year 10 lesson pupils had to draw the shapes seen in between an arrangement of classroom furniture. They found this challenging, and had to try very hard to succeed. The teacher gave good individual advice, helping each pupil to draw carefully and accurately, and use pencil and coloured pencil effectively. As a result, pupils were successful, and made good gains in their skills in drawing. Occasionally, however, tasks set are not as interesting, and pupils work rather mechanically, without showing higher levels of excitement and engagement. This limits learning to a satisfactory level in those lessons.
106. Leadership and management are good. The shortcomings identified in the previous inspection, for example, in the quality of teaching and learning and in the curriculum provided, have been tackled successfully. As a result, pupils' achievement has improved, and GCSE results have also shown a steady improvement. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Strengths

- GCSE results in 2002 were below average, but results in 2003 showed a significant improvement, and were above average.
- The new drama studio has improved the ethos for learning, and pupils enjoy the subject because of good teaching.
- The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of audibility and performance require improvement in Year 9.

Commentary

107. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were below average, but they reflected the wide range of ability within the group. Results for 2003 showed a significant improvement, moving to above average, with pupils doing better in drama than in some of their other subjects.
108. Pupils start their drama lessons in Year 8, and by Year 9 they have generally made satisfactory progress, from a very low baseline, in learning how to improvise dialogue and portray different emotions, and how to speak with clarity and assurance. Overall standards are below average, but there is a wide range of attainment. There are a significant number of pupils who are confident and audible in performance. They can improvise successfully and they demonstrate their understanding of the concept of dynamics very effectively in practical

work. Nevertheless, there are many who find difficulty in projecting their voices and are only just beginning to gain confidence in performing individually and in group work. Given pupils' well below average attainment on entry to the school, this represents satisfactory achievement.

109. In Years 10 and 11, pupils who choose to take the subject at GCSE achieve well, as they build on the skills acquired in previous years. Overall standards are average. Pupils have benefited from a well-planned programme of study in Years 8 and 9. Most pupils work together constructively in group productions. They know how to create tension through the contrast of sound and silence, and they show good control in group gesture and movement. However, there are several examples of lower than average standards in audibility and organisation of group presentations.

110. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is better in Years 10 and 11 because of teaching that is characterised by very good subject knowledge, firm classroom management, and good relationships with pupils. Praise is used effectively to create a positive learning environment and to encourage pupils to gain confidence in their own capabilities. Pupils respond well. They conform to the drama studio routines in a responsible way, work together successfully, and evaluate their performances realistically. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good it is sometimes because instructions are not always clear, so pupils are not sure of what they have to do. However, lessons are generally well planned, and the review session at the end helps pupils to consolidate their learning.

111. The subject is well led and managed, and there is a clear vision for the raising of standards, and the future development of the subject. Since the last inspection good progress has been made in improving the accommodation and resources, and in establishing stability in teaching. The recent introduction of a different examination course at GCSE with an emphasis on practical activities rather than coursework, gives pupils of all levels of attainment the opportunity to succeed. A strength of the provision is the very good contribution which the subject makes to pupils' personal development in the variety of opportunities offered for working together, and in the enlargement of pupils' cultural horizons through plays studied, performed and seen.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory	

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning ensure that pupils achieve well.
- Strong leadership has led to new curriculum developments and initiatives including a strong emphasis on literacy.
- Good planning ensures that work is well matched to pupils' needs.

Areas for improvement

- Computer resources for music are unsatisfactory, as in the previous inspection.
- Limited accommodation impacts on instrumental teaching.

Commentary

112. There have been recent staff changes in music. After a year without a permanent music teacher a new head of department has been appointed. This has already begun to have an impact on raising standards in music.
113. In 2002 GCSE results were above average, although the number of candidates was very small. There were no GCSE candidates for music in 2003. Music is increasing in popularity as an option in Years 10 and 11, but numbers are still modest.
114. The standards of pupils' work in Year 9 are average, and their progress is good in relation to their well below average attainment on entry. Achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs and special talents, is good because they receive very good teaching. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have few opportunities to use ICT for music, a weakness mentioned in the previous inspection. In Year 9 all pupils are able to use electronic keyboards with competence for performance and for composition. Listening and appraising skills are below average; the department places a suitable emphasis on literacy and pupils develop a musical vocabulary with which to describe the music they hear from a very low base. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls.
115. In Years 10 and 11 standards are average. Pupils are fluent in the use of music technology and sometimes reach above average standards in composition and performance. Compositions reveal good use of ICT. Pupils' musical and general literacy are less good and this has a negative effect on attainment in those areas requiring written, rather than practical, skills. However, given their well below average starting points, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well.
116. Teaching and learning are very good. In Years 7 to 9 pupils benefit from well-organised and committed teaching. Care is taken to relate tasks to previous learning; lessons often have a range of tasks and energetic pace. This helps to consolidate pupil learning and maintain interest. Regular emphasis is given to key words and concepts and this helps to improve levels of musical and general literacy. Teaching embodies very detailed preparation, a good range of teaching styles, interesting work, and very good organisation. As a result, pupils make very good gains in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and fully involved in all activities. There is some work especially designed for pupils with special educational needs and those with higher attainment, and work in a range of levels is in development. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are also very good, and ensures that work is suitably challenging. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on 'musicals', the teaching built on what pupils already knew and developed their knowledge and thinking. Very good teaching and exemplary planning enables most pupils to make good progress in Years 10 to 11.
117. Leadership and management are very good. Much has been achieved in a short space of time. Administration is a strength of the department. Some aspects, for example, using assessment for planning, target setting and differentiated work are at an early stage but there are strong indications that these are well in hand. The department promotes literacy by giving pupils key terms in each lesson, and promotes numeracy in relation to rhythmic work. This is beginning to have a significant impact on pupil attainment. The long-term monitoring, assessing and recording of pupils' work are good, with due emphasis on high standards. As yet there are not sufficient computers with midi keyboards to use ICT in Years 7 to 9, but improvements are planned.

118. The provision for instrumental teaching is not extensive, and the number of pupils taking lessons in school is below average in relation to the size of the school. About 30 pupils have instrumental lessons each week. The visiting instrumental teachers make a strong if limited contribution to the curriculum and their work is carefully managed and integrated into the work of the department. Space outside the music room for visiting teachers and practice is insufficient. Extra-curricular activity is improving. The performing and composing work of pupils is appropriately celebrated in musical events. There are opportunities for pupils to perform for parents. Such opportunities have a strong impact on the cultural and social development of pupils; they also contribute strongly to the ethos of the school.
119. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last report. Two issues from the previous report, concerning the use of ICT for music in Years 7-9, and the inadequate accommodation outside the music room, remain unresolved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT

Physical education

During the inspection, one of the school's two specialist teachers was absent due to long term injury. In consultation with the school, work in physical education was not inspected in depth. The most recent GCSE examination results in physical education were well below average, although pupils did as well as expected. Three lessons were sampled during the inspection and a representative sample of GCSE work was analysed. Standards are below average in Years 7-9, but pupils' achievements are satisfactory given their starting points. Similarly, current GCSE standards in Years 10-11 are below average, but represent satisfactory achievement for the pupils concerned. Some pupils have difficulty with the theoretical demands of the course. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and both behaviour and response are good for the majority of pupils. Facilities for physical education are inadequate at present although welcome improvements are in the pipeline. Provision for extra-curricular sport is satisfactory despite this constraint.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

In this curriculum area the focus was on health and social care and work-related college link courses. It was not possible to see a business studies lesson and there is only one class in Year 11; this subject is no longer an option. In 2002, the GCSE results in business studies were well below average.

Work-related courses

120. The provision of work-related courses is very good. The school works in close co-operation with a local college to provide a few lower-attaining pupils with taster courses in a number of vocational areas. Pupils can select from a wide range of eleven courses. These take place on one day each week and the school's timetable is constructed effectively to minimise the impact on pupils' learning in their other subjects. In Year 10, pupils choose five courses, each of six weeks in length. In Year 11, they usually take one of these for the whole year, though they could take a new course in response to their changing needs. The courses lead to the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) of employability skills in Year 10. They link with Foundation level National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) in Year 11. Many pupils make further progress in these vocational areas in full-time further education or on day-release programmes from their employment.
121. The organisation, leadership and management of these arrangements are very good. From the outset pupils and their parents are fully involved in a detailed induction process. High expectations of standards of work, attendance and behaviour are made clear through the signing of contracts. Monitoring of attendance is effective. The communication of progress and standards between all parties are of good quality.

122. During the inspection lessons were seen in engineering, catering and sport. Teaching and learning were very good overall because of teachers' expertise, planning and, except in sport, the use of first-rate resources and accommodation. Pupils are treated as adults, respond accordingly and make rapid progress not only in learning new skills but also in terms of their personal development.

Health and social care

Provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Aspect	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	N/a

Strengths

- Results in 2003 were above average and represent very good achievement.
- Overall teaching and learning are very good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes, which support their independent learning skills.
- Marking is supportive and effective at improving standards.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient textbooks to enable pupils to have their own copies.
- Work-related learning in either simulations or work placements is limited.

Commentary

123. In 2003, the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) results were well above average. All thirteen candidates passed the examination; one gained a distinction, five achieved merits and seven passed. These qualifications are the equivalent of two GCSEs at grade C or above. These results represent very good achievement.

124. The GNVQ part 1 course has now been replaced with an applied GCSE course. It is increasingly popular, particularly with girls. The course operates across both options and is timetabled for a two-hour session to provide pupils with the opportunity to make use of the local community for work-related learning. However, during the inspection there was little evidence that this essential learning was taking place.

125. There is no restriction on selection; however, the attainment of pupils who begin the course is below average overall. Current standards are above average in Year 11 and are average in Year 10 at this early stage in the course. In relation to attainment at the start of the course these standards demonstrate very good achievement. This is a result of very good teaching overall and the motivation of pupils whose positive attitudes enable them to develop their independent learning skills very well. In the two lessons seen teaching was good. In Year 10, pupils made good gains in their knowledge and understanding of communication skills. As a result of their learning they were able to demonstrate these skills effectively in challenging role-play situations. There are insufficient textbooks to enable pupils to have a copy each and this limits homework. Pupils' portfolios on the first unit of work are above average and

accurately assessed. Marking informs them how to improve their work to reach higher standards. In Year 11, whole-class teaching increased pupils' learning well on the impact of social, economic and emotional factors on different family groups. Although teaching was good, opportunities to develop pupils' self-confidence in making presentations to the class were missed.

126. The new teacher has adapted very quickly and effectively to teaching. The planning is very good but requires more work-related learning in either simulations or work placements. Leadership and management are good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	N/a	

Strengths

- Leadership and management are good, and the introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been well planned.
- There is a good range of planned opportunities for active citizenship.
- Teaching and learning are good, and pupils achieve well as a result.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by the subject leader.
- The school council is in the early stages of development, and is not yet fully effective.

Commentary

127. Standards in Year 9 are average. Pupils' achievement is good, and they make good gains in the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to develop into responsible citizens. They study topics such as crime and punishment, and show a sound understanding of issues such as the effects of imprisonment on those who are imprisoned, and their families. They investigate and discuss controversial topics such as teenage pregnancy and the effects of drug abuse. They learn about the democratic processes of government, and hold elections for their own representatives on the school council. The council is a recent development, and pupils have not yet had the time to achieve changes through its workings. As a result, it is not yet fully effective.

128. Standards in Year 11 are average. Pupils' achievement continues to be good. They improve their skills of enquiry, and undertake impressive personal research projects. They choose ambitious areas to investigate, such as, the effects of peer pressure on pupils' achievement. These are thoroughly researched, and the findings often summarised with the use of accurate graphs and charts. There is a wide range of planned opportunities for active citizenship and

pupils of all ages respond well, taking part with enthusiasm. For example, they write mature letters to public bodies, such as the NSPCC or the local police force, asking for information or expressing concerns about facilities in their local community. They also raise money for many charities and are active in community issues, for example, a successful campaign to keep the local swimming pool open.

129. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, methods are active, teachers are enthusiastic, and they take care to stress the relevance of the lesson to pupils' own lives. In addition, homework is used well to stimulate discussions. For example, in a lesson investigating the needs of communities, pupils were asked to interview a range of people at home, then bring their findings in to class and discuss them in groups. This produced lively discussions, a high level of interest, and good learning was the result. In a small number of lessons, however, methods are not as active, and pupils are more hesitant in putting their own views forward. This restricts learning to a satisfactory level in these lessons.
130. Leadership and management are good. The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been well planned, and enthusiastically promoted. The curriculum has many exciting features, such as mock trials, crime prevention days, and visits to courtrooms. These produce good levels of interest in pupils who try hard to succeed. However, there is not enough monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by the subject leader to ensure that all lessons are of a high quality.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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