

INSPECTION REPORT

PRESTWOOD LODGE SCHOOL

Prestwood

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110577

Headteacher: Mr Michael MacCourt

Lead inspector: Mrs Sue Aldridge

Dates of inspection: 19th – 21st January 2004

Inspection number: 258976

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Male
Number on roll;	74
School address:	Nairdwood Lane Prestwood Great Missenden Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP16 0QQ
Telephone number:	01494 863514
Fax number:	01494 866154
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Penny Lilley
Date of previous inspection:	1 st December 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Prestwood Lodge is a maintained day and residential special secondary school for boys with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is approved for 60 pupils, but at the time of the inspection there were 74 pupils on the school's roll. Most pupils are white; there is a small number who are from ethnic minorities. There are no travellers, asylum seekers or refugees, and only two pupils in public care. Whilst nine pupils are from homes where English is not the first language, none is at an early stage of acquiring English. Pupils are admitted at various times during the school year, often from mainstream schools that have excluded them. Pupils are from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds but, overall, circumstances are unfavourable. The school links with mainstream schools for staff development, and returns a few pupils to mainstream each year. Its work has been recognised by several awarding bodies; it has awards for Investors in People, a School Achievement Award, the Swan Award for Exceptional Pupil Progress, an Employer of the Year Award and Sportsmark Gold. During the inspection week, there were four new staff being inducted, including two new teachers.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8810	Sue Aldridge	<i>Lead inspector</i>	English; Geography; Religious Education; Modern Foreign Language; Design and Technology; Special Educational Needs.
9092	Ron Elam	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
17855	Gordon Gentry	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; History; Physical Education; Art.
30243	Anne Heakin	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Information and Communication Technology; Personal, Social, Health Education; Citizenship; Music.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's overall effectiveness is **good**. Standards achieved are good. In recently published league tables, showing the value added between Years 9 and 11, the school was placed above all other secondary schools in Buckinghamshire, and was in the top five per cent nationally. Pupils like being at the school, despite some unhappy experiences in other schools. A few pupils are successfully returned to mainstream schools each year. Teaching is good; the belief that good teaching helps to improve pupils' behaviour is well founded. The school is well led and managed, and provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is successful in improving pupils' behaviour.
- Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is very good, but in religious education it is unsatisfactory.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership; he is very well supported by a skilled and committed senior management team.
- Staff create a very good climate for learning; there is a marked absence of oppression in the school.
- Pupils receive very good advice, support and guidance.
- Flexible use of the good residential provision contributes well to the school's effectiveness.
- The school manages its finances very well to support improvements.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not meet requirements; there are no teachers of music or resistant materials, and citizenship is not fully developed.
- Teachers do not keep suitable records in geography, history, religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE).
- Punctuality is unsatisfactory, as taxis often arrive late.
- The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory; it is cramped, and is unsuitable for secondary pupils following examination courses. Residential facilities do not meet National Care Standards.
- Pupils' annual progress reports do not meet requirements; they do not report on attendance or describe academic progress.

The school has increased its effectiveness **well** since the last inspection. Despite staffing difficulties, a change of headteacher, uncertainty about the school's future and an intake with increasing literacy difficulties, pupils continue to achieve well in external examinations. All the key issues identified at the last inspection have been acted upon, except that the school has been unable to recruit a music teacher. Recruitment of teaching staff is a barrier to further improvement, and this accounts for insufficient improvement in assessment since the last inspection. The accommodation has improved as much as funding allows, but the school has admitted more pupils than it is approved for.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	Satisfactory	Good
Year 11	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

In general, standards are below those reached by pupils of a similar age nationally, except in ICT and physical education. However, pupils achieve well. Achievement is best in Years 10 and 11, and this difference is associated with improved attitudes and behaviour as pupils mature. Achievement is good overall in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are all **good**. Arrangements to encourage pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **good** overall. Attendance is **satisfactory**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is good. Across the school, teaching is good. Learning is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, where pupils' behaviour occasionally gets in the way of learning. Pupils receive very good advice, support and guidance, and this supports their achievement and helps to improve behaviour. The school works constructively with parents and with other schools. Good links with the community enrich the curriculum and enable pupils to play their part as members of the local community. Although the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall, it is good in Years 10 and 11.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. In his interactions with pupils, and in his teaching, he leads most effectively by example. The senior management team lead very well in their areas of responsibility. There is a clear emphasis on developing consistently good teaching and learning, and teamwork in the school is strong. Governance is satisfactory, and although curriculum requirements are not met, the governors have done all they can to recruit the staff that are needed. Governors have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development, and they challenge and support the senior managers well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have positive views of the school, and so do pupils. Parents have particular confidence in the way the school is led and managed; they find the staff approachable, and feel that the induction arrangements for pupils are good. Pupils find that they are treated fairly, and that their views are taken into account. Although parents and pupils expressed some concerns about bullying, inspectors found that when this occurs it is dealt with swiftly and well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve assessment in geography, history, religious education and PSHE.
- Provide a broad, balanced and suitably resourced religious education curriculum across the school.
- Liaise with the local education authority (LEA) to:
 - * improve punctuality of school transport;
 - * improve the accommodation to address the weaknesses identified in the report;
 - * ensure that the school operates within its approval arrangements.

In order to meet statutory requirements the school should:

- Provide music, design and technology and citizenship in Years 7 to 9.
- Ensure that pupils' progress reports give information on attendance and academic progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Although the standards pupils reach are below those expected for pupils of a similar age nationally, their achievements are good. Those in Years 7 to 9 achieve satisfactorily; in Years 10 and 11 achievement is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils' achievements compare well with those of pupils in similar schools, and with secondary schools both locally and nationally.
- Achievement in ICT is very good; pupils achieve well in science, and in English and mathematics in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' achievements in religious education are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

1. Although a few pupils in Years 9 and 11 reach the levels expected, standards are below average. This is because many pupils have missed schooling, through exclusion or absence from previous placements. Exceptions are physical education and ICT, where pupils reach the standards expected at their age.
2. Although most enter the school in Year 7, pupils enter at any time in subsequent years. Many arrive having had unhappy experiences at previous schools, and an increasing number enter the school with considerable difficulties in literacy. In the current Year 7, for instance, almost half have a reading age that is between two and four years lower than their actual age. Behaviour difficulties are also marked when pupils enter the school. Although many find their way to the school following exclusion from mainstream schools, it is notable that Prestwood Lodge successfully returns small numbers of pupils to mainstream schools each year. Occasionally, pupils do not return to mainstream because their parents do not wish them to do so.
3. In the recently published value-added tables for secondary schools (DfES 2004), Prestwood Lodge was placed in the top five per cent of schools nationally, and was top of the table in Buckinghamshire. Pupils' progress accelerates quite significantly between Years 9 and 11, and this reflects their improved attitudes and behaviour. These in turn result from the school's intervention, as well as from the good quality teaching the pupils receive. Improved progress also accounts for the fact that achievement is better in English and mathematics in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 to 9.
4. The school has developed an effective strategy for supporting pupils with literacy difficulties, and this results in some quite dramatic increases in literacy levels in short periods of time. For example, in 2002-2003, eight pupils in Years 8 and 9 made gains in reading ages of two or three years in the space of an academic year. In turn, pupils' increased confidence and self-esteem lead to improvements in behaviour, so that learning and achievement across the curriculum both improve. By Year 9, a few pupils achieve levels expected for their age group when they take national tests. A small number achieved Levels 5, 6 and 7 in English, mathematics and science in the summer of 2003.
5. The school also sets challenging targets for raising pupils' achievement. Last summer the school met and exceeded the targets it set for raising achievement in English, maths and science in Year 9. The target was for 18 per cent to reach Level 4 and above in national tests; in fact, 39 per

cent achieved this. The target set in ICT was narrowly missed. In 2003, the target set for points score in mathematics in Year 11 was exceeded. Although the 'points score' targets for English, science and ICT in Year 11 were not met, the target for a percentage of pupils (56 per cent) to achieve five or more GCSE passes was met exactly.

6. The range of externally accredited courses has increased since the school was last inspected. In the summer of 2003, five out of nine pupils achieved six GCSE passes at grades A to G, and four achieved seven A to G grades. When these results are considered against those most recently available, they compare very favourably with GCSE results in similar schools nationally.

7. Very good achievement in ICT is linked to the pupils' positive attitudes to this subject, the high quality of teaching, and the good resources, which allow for independent learning. In religious education, achievement is unsatisfactory because the topics teachers follow in Years 7 to 9 are similar to those they use in Years 10 and 11. As a result, some aspects of the Agreed Syllabus are neglected.

8. There are no differences in the achievement of pupils of different abilities, racial origins or mother tongue, because the school caters well for pupils' individual needs. Since the last inspection, standards of achievement have been maintained, despite an increase in the number of pupils with literacy difficulties; improvement is therefore satisfactory.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Overall, pupils' attitudes to school and behaviour are good. Attendance is satisfactory, but punctuality is unsatisfactory. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils behave well most of the time, have positive attitudes to work, and enjoy being at school. This represents an improvement since the last inspection.
- The school's provision for social and moral development leads to very good relationships around the school.
- Many of the pupils coming from home arrive late.
- The school provides limited opportunities for pupils to become aware of life in multicultural British society.

Commentary

9. The table below shows the attendance figures for the school last year. However, the figure declined in the autumn term of the current year to around 80 per cent, which is similar to the most recent figures for similar schools around the country. Absence is often for medical reasons, but a significant proportion is due to other factors. In particular it includes 'respite' absences, where the parents agree with the school that the pupil should stay at home for up to five days. Whilst this is of benefit both to the pupil and to the school, this approach is not generally acceptable as being a suitable alternative to a short-term exclusion. In addition, such absence is not recorded in the registers. Many of the pupils who come from home on taxis in the mornings arrive late by up to 45 minutes. The school keeps no record of this lateness in the registers. The relevant regulations require registers to be taken at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. The school has attempted to take action to improve the service provided by the taxi companies, but to no avail.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year [%]

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	8.5	School data:	0.9

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

10. Pupils' social development is good. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to interact with classmates in, for example, paired discussions in the classroom and social activities outside lessons. Pupils' relationships with their peers and with adults have maintained the good level reported at the time of the last inspection, and contribute to the quality of work in lessons and to the progress they make. For example, it gives them the confidence to ask and to answer questions.

11. The pupils' personal development is good. The staff are good role models, and the overall positive approach of the school to encouraging pupils' moral development is evident in the way all adults show tolerance and patience when dealing with pupils with difficulties. Their good spiritual development is enhanced by the sense of community developed through the whole school assemblies at the end of the day. The weekly achievement assembly provides a lively opportunity to applaud the recognition of the good work of others (and for the staff to engage in some pleasant, well-received banter).

12. Overall, the provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Its strength lies in the fact that many subjects provide pupils with a fuller understanding of the world around them. The study of world faiths in religious education helps them to consider others' practices and beliefs. Art and English help to develop aesthetic awareness, and an appreciation of others' literary endeavours. Nevertheless, the school provides few opportunities for pupils to appreciate the multicultural nature of British society.

13. The pupils' attitudes towards learning are good. They are interested in what happens in school and, with the regular encouragement of staff, they generally follow instructions well and settle to the tasks given. They are prepared to contribute their ideas. These positive attitudes reflect the quality of teaching and are most apparent when there is a variety of interesting activities built into the lessons.

14. Overall, the behaviour of the pupils is good. Improvements in behaviour are clear as pupils mature. A particularly successful strategy is the introduction of a set of four key rules, which have been derived from the school's analysis of behaviour patterns. The rules are accepted well by pupils, and their adherence to these is reviewed by teachers and pupils themselves at the end of every lesson. Performance is linked to a system of rewards. Pupils understand and respect the rules; they also assess their performance honestly. The school's own performance indicators for behaviour show a reduction over time in several features, such as absconding from lessons, physical interventions, and zero points given at the ends of lessons.

15. Pupils respond well to the well-directed management strategies of the staff, and the great majority show good self-discipline, which results in an orderly school. They are polite to adults and welcoming to visitors. Instances of bullying or other aggressive behaviour do occasionally occur but any such behaviour is dealt with promptly and effectively by the staff. Last year, 19 pupils were excluded on a short-term basis, as shown in the table below.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White - British
White - Irish
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean
Mixed - White and Asian
Mixed - other
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Black or Black British - Caribbean
Information not obtained

No. of pupils on roll
50
1
5
1
1
1
1
1
1

No. of fixed period exclusions	No. of permanent exclusions
19	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good. In Years 7 to 9, the requirement to provide music and the full breadth of design and technology activities cannot be met because of recruitment difficulties, and so the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Good standards of care and welfare are provided, and pupils are supported very well; they are also listened to, and their views are valued and taken into account. Staff work well in partnership with parents.

Teaching and learning

Both teaching and learning are **good** overall; they are both good in Years 10 and 11; in Years 7 to 9, teaching is good, and learning is satisfactory. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Staff are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour; this results in a good climate for learning in lessons.
- Good monitoring and encouragement of pupils during lessons helps to ensure that all are engaged well in the interesting tasks they are set.
- Although behaviour is reviewed well at the end of each lesson, teachers do not also review academic achievement; the quality of marking varies widely.

Commentary

16. Although this can take some time, staff establish very good relationships with pupils; as a result, pupils are generally keen to do well. Teachers and support staff are consistent in their management of pupils' behaviour. Their strategies reflect the headteacher's approach, as well as the skills they have acquired in training, and this works well; pupils know what to expect, and what is expected of them. Lessons are respected as times when learning takes place, and most pupils comply with teachers' wishes. Where teachers are most confident in their relationships with pupils, they are able to share humour or sensitive subjects without pupils losing their focus. As pupils mature, lessons are less likely to be disrupted, so learning and achievement improve as pupils get older.

17. Teachers take good account of the school's policy for teaching and learning, and they meet each week to discuss both. This useful reflection forms part of a whole-school focus on improving teaching and learning. Lessons are observed regularly, and there is an openness about areas for improvement. Staff prepare their lessons well, with clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils at the start. They provide a variety of interesting activities, and these are well designed to help pupils achieve learning objectives. Individual needs are catered for well; there is good support for those who need it, and extension work for those who move on quickly. Teachers use a variety of resources and tasks to ensure that pupils are challenged. They also provide choice, so that pupils have a stake in their own learning.

18. The three-part lesson is well established in the school, though some staff find it difficult to provide relevant starters. In a geography lesson, a starter that had pupils spotting the difference in two pictures of a street scene became all consuming, and pupils were reluctant to move on to the main activity. Teachers maintain a good pace during lessons, and leave sufficient time to review pupils' behaviour against the school's four criteria. However, most teachers do not review learning in sufficient detail. As a result, pupils are not always aware of their personal achievements or what they need to do to improve further. In physical education, on the other hand, pupils are involved well in evaluating their performance in lessons, and in ICT their learning is reviewed well.

19. A particular strength of teaching is the continuous monitoring carried out by teachers during lessons. There are often two teachers present, who work extremely hard, so pupils are well catered

for. Staff circulate all the time, supporting, challenging and encouraging pupils. As a result, pupils' motivation is sustained throughout lessons, and they remain productive. For example, during an English lesson, the teacher quietly challenged an individual to 'find me one more adjective'; another was given direct support, then peers were asked to give some help, which they did willingly. There is constant verbal feedback and well earned praise, as well as corrections. For example, 'Can you stop whistling? I know you are not aware of doing it'. Later, this was followed by, 'Well done, I know you found that difficult'.

20. On the rare occasions when pupils leave a class of their own accord, staff on 'walkabout' are ready to escort them to a room where they can get on with the work that has been set. On one occasion, a pupil returned to the classroom to collect the next piece of work, which was completed elsewhere. Pupils do not generally abuse this facility; they use it when they feel they cannot stay in the class and maintain good behaviour.

21. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. This was a modern foreign language lesson in which the teacher used far too much English and provided a task that offered little challenge. As a result, pupils did not learn enough in the time allocated.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 33 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	9 (27%)	15 (46%)	8 (24%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	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.

22. Teachers know pupils and their abilities well. The school records a wealth of information about pupils' improvement in behaviour and attitudes, and also keeps track of reading and spelling ages. Teachers have a sound grasp of National Curriculum Levels, and this enables them to assess pupils accurately. They use this, and their thorough knowledge of the pupils, to set work that offers a suitable challenge. However, there is little evidence to support their assessment in years other than 9 and 11, where attainment is externally verified. There is no system of retaining annotated samples of work, and in many cases the pupils' workbooks are not dated or marked well enough to provide secure evidence of attainment. Few teachers maintain mark books or similar records. Although weaknesses in assessment do not have an impact on pupils' achievements, they make it very difficult to monitor learning, and jeopardise continuity in the event of different teachers taking over. The lack of information about pupils' attainments is reflected in annual progress reports, which have very little to say about achievement.

THE CURRICULUM

23. The provision is **unsatisfactory**. Statutory requirements are not met to provide music, resistant materials as part of design and technology, and citizenship for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. There are, on the other hand, good opportunities for pupils to improve their personal and social development throughout the school day and very good preparation for employment or further education. Curriculum enrichment is good. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, as it is not suitable for secondary aged pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The impact of ICT is a strength of the curriculum, motivating pupils throughout the school.
- The curriculum is enriched well with a range of appealing activities.
- Weaknesses in staffing and the accommodation restrict the curriculum.
- Pupils benefit from the flexible approach to preparation for employment.
- Pupils' individual needs are met well.
- Not all pupils have the same opportunities to learn; those who use the daily transport arrangements miss parts of lessons.

Commentary

24. The school provides a good curriculum for Years 10 and 11, with highly appropriate provision for work experience and preparation for adult life. The programme for PSHE is good and is enhanced by the caring ethos in which all pupils are respected and their self-esteem improved, so that by the end of their time at the school they are ready to make their way to further education. The impact of recent staff changes means that Years 7, 8 and 9 do not have access to the full range of experiences in design and technology. The room normally used for resistant materials is out of use because there is nobody qualified to teach with the range of equipment it contains. Until the staff recruitment issue is resolved, pupils are compensated with extra opportunities for food technology. Despite continued efforts, the school has also been unable to recruit a music specialist. It has, however, employed a part-time music therapist who works successfully with a small number of younger pupils, giving them confidence and good opportunities for self-expression. The time spent by senior teaching staff in inducting new staff and supporting teachers within the classrooms means that curriculum development has not moved forward sufficiently. The programme for citizenship is still at the planning stage, and this results in non-compliance with statutory requirements.

25. Since the last inspection the school has made some good improvements, altering the length of lessons, introducing modern foreign languages and upgrading the accommodation for design and technology. Careers and preparation for employment, along with support from the care staff, remain strengths of the provision. However, despite these improvements and the commitment of staff, the curriculum for younger pupils is unsatisfactory because of the breaches of statutory requirements.

26. Pupils who have learning difficulties are quickly identified and given additional support in literacy and numeracy. The extra support, combined with the good relationships within the school, boosts pupils' self-esteem and encourages them to play a full part in school life. In addition, the school has taken advantage of a relaxation of requirements in Years 10 and 11 to enable it to provide an 'alternative curriculum' for a small number of disaffected older pupils. They attend vocational training provision nearby. Older pupils also have access to motor vehicle studies via a local training centre.

27. Despite limitations in the curriculum, the school tries to make the best use of its resources, identifying a small number of pupils with emotional difficulties to benefit from art and music therapy sessions. At the end of the school day, pupils return to their tutor groups for planned tutorials. Though residential pupils benefit, the early arrival of some taxis means that some day pupils miss out. This is unsatisfactory, though it is not the fault of the school.

28. There is a good range of activities that enrich the curriculum. In the residential setting, there is always a variety of activities to choose from. Day pupils are able to join in these if they wish, and transport is arranged specially. On one evening, pupils could choose between badminton, football, using computers and an 'X Box', or going into High Wycombe to an Internet café. Pupils are pleased with the range of interesting activities, and go-karting is a particular favourite. A good range of sporting opportunities includes competitive and friendly matches with other schools, and visits to local leisure centres. There are also visits to museums, theme parks and cinemas. Lunchtime clubs are also organised.

29. The school prepares pupils well for later stages of education and employment through its emphasis on well organised and beneficial work experience. Pupils are entered for a range of GCSE exams, some leaving with up to seven accredited subjects.

30. Curriculum development is satisfactory. A considerable amount of management time is necessarily given to supporting teachers in the classroom, and this restricts the amount of time available for innovation. However, the school is fully aware of the need to develop citizenship and

religious education and has suitable written action plans for this purpose. The national strategy for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 has been embraced and is used well to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The school is actively looking to make links with other schools to improve the provision for design and technology and for German.

31. Care staffing is good, and staff are mostly long-serving and experienced. Recruitment and retention of teaching staff is a problem that presents a barrier to improvement. At the time of inspection, three new teachers were being inducted; the new science teacher was to start the following week but the school is without a music teacher and a design and technology teacher. Senior members of the teaching staff provide very good quality support, acting as role models within the classrooms and using good behaviour management strategies. The signs are that this use of valuable management time will pay dividends and that the newly recruited staff will form an effective team, though the time allocated to achieving this means that senior staff are unable to extend and develop the curriculum. Care staff are clearly visible during the school day, offering encouragement and support to the pupils so they are able to learn to manage their behaviour and benefit from their lessons.

32. Despite the school's best efforts, the accommodation is unsatisfactory. The interlinking nature of different parts of the building makes supervision of pupils a highly labour intensive task. Work has been done to improve facilities for science and for design and technology by adapting existing rooms. A few classrooms are small and inappropriately equipped, particularly for science and art. The library is pleasant, with books well displayed, but it still remains a corridor used throughout the school day; it is not suitable for library sessions or the relaxed enjoyment of books. Despite these challenges, teachers work very hard to make classrooms inviting and interesting places for learning, and cleaning staff do a sterling job keeping the building clean. Use is made of leisure centres for sport, as the hall, which doubles as a gym, is unsuitable for pupils of this age; it is also a thoroughfare. Similarly, the residential accommodation has been partially upgraded, but further work is required to offer all pupils their entitlement to privacy and adequate washing facilities. Resources to support teaching and learning are generally good. The exception is religious education, where resources are unsatisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

There are **good** arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. **Very good** support, advice and guidance are provided. Pupils' views are sought and acted upon; their involvement in school decision making is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pastoral care arrangements are very good: there are good arrangements for child protection and the general welfare of the pupils.
- There are good arrangements for the induction of new pupils.
- Staff always treat pupils with respect, value their opinions, and take these into account in planning both for individuals and for the school community.
- The quality of residential care is high. It strongly supports learning and the social and personal development of the pupils.

Commentary

33. Pupils are happy in the school. They willingly make this plain, and parents confirm it. Boarding is popular and a number of day boys take advantage of the extra support and activities enjoyed in the residential provision. Shared values and a shared vision underpin the very caring school community. Every pupil is treated with great respect, and all that takes place is aimed at meeting the needs of the individual. This respect is reciprocated, and pupils show the highest regard for those who care for them. All staff are well aware of the needs of each pupil. They familiarise themselves with individual education plans and know the targets specific to each pupil. The school

is in the process of devising separate individual care plans. A very effective mentoring system is based on tutor groups, and additionally on dormitory groups for boarders. Many day boys also turn to residential care staff for high quality guidance and support. Catering staff and office personnel also show a caring and respectful attitude towards pupils. Child protection concerns are well embedded in the staff's thinking and are in line with locally agreed arrangements. Minor weaknesses, identified in a recent full inspection of residential provision, have been rectified or are in the process of being remedied. All pupils are given a pamphlet explaining mentoring, advocacy and what to do about bullying. The pamphlet also includes telephone numbers of the NSPCC Helpline and the Buckinghamshire County Council complaints line.

34. The arrangements for maintaining a safe school are good. The administration manager has attended suitable training courses and has a good understanding of health and safety procedures, including risk assessments. Good records are kept of any potential hazards to ensure they are dealt with quickly. The headteacher discusses health and safety at staff meetings to ensure that staff understand their role. During lessons such as food technology, science and physical education, the teachers make sure that pupils follow safe practice. The LEA monitors what is happening in the school by means of an annual audit. Nevertheless, not all co-ordinators have yet produced written risk assessments for their subject areas. First aid arrangements are good, with all staff having had emergency training, and some are further qualified with four-day training.

35. Pupils' welfare is well catered for and the designated mentors co-ordinate this very well. Pupil records are thorough and it is easy to pick up an individual pupil folder and identify targets and progress. The records include personal, behavioural and academic objectives. The annual review process provides good support. Pupils are involved well in reviewing their progress and identifying priorities for the coming year. Pupils' targets are sometimes discussed in lessons and even more so with mentors. The pupils openly acknowledge their individual objectives, and a list of key targets for each individual is posted in a communal area. The pupils acknowledge one another's needs and there are good examples of mutual support and encouragement. They show enthusiasm to reach their targets, and any success or achievement is celebrated in school assemblies.

36. The mutual respect shared by staff and pupils is critical to the success of the school. Pupils feel valued, and are able to express their views not only to individual staff but also in a large group setting such as an assembly. Staff openly discuss issues with pupils and act upon them as appropriate. The former school council was considered hierarchical and has been replaced by the current system, which works well.

37. Pupils find the school a welcoming environment and, in discussion, they express the view that their introduction to the school was a happy experience. Induction for new pupils is good. It includes a thorough familiarisation programme, and parents and carers must visit the school before a pupil can be admitted. The headteacher takes personal responsibility for induction and, with his frequent presence around the school, this is effective. The school forms a good initial profile of the core needs of each entrant and regularly reviews this in the early days.

38. When pupils reach the age of 13 they begin to receive good quality careers guidance, and this continues until they leave the school. The careers teacher, assisted by a Connexions representative, offers an effective service to the pupils. There are very good links with local colleges and employers. Many pupils move from school to college, and their choice of further education is greatly helped by a good work experience programme. Pupils taking part in work experience at the time of the inspection spoke very highly of this opportunity and were most appreciative of the support they receive from the school. In general, there are few opportunities in the school for pupils to use their own initiative and grow towards independence. Some staff fear that the school cannot take the risks that accompany the growth towards independence and greater freedom.

39. Residential care is of a high quality in spite of some poor physical provision in terms of privacy and standards of bathrooms and toilets. The food is excellent, and enjoyed by staff and pupils alike. The residential care enhances boarders' education in all aspects of school life. There are frequent opportunities for personal and social development within the residential setting. The

care staff are highly committed to their work, which is based on the welfare of the individual pupil. All these members of staff are undergoing further training, which is financed by the local authority. The flexibility of residential staff enables the school to make very good use of the residential facility to support pupils in a variety of ways. For example, one pupil had time out of the classroom in the residential accommodation, as a cooling-off period, because parents were unable to take time off work to supervise him at home.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are **good** overall. Links with the local community are **good**, and those with schools and colleges are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Parents hold the school in high regard.
- The parents' support at home and in school makes a good contribution to pupils' achievement.
- There are mutually beneficial links between the school and its local community.
- The school provides unsatisfactory written information about the pupils' progress.

Commentary

40. In their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and at the meeting, parents showed that they are generally pleased with what the school provides. Their children like school, the staff expect their children to work hard, and pupils make good progress. Some parents expressed concern about behaviour in the school. The inspectors conclude that the behaviour overall is good. Some pupils do misbehave on occasion and there is some bullying, but the school closely monitors what goes on and takes suitable action quickly and effectively.

41. The school sends home newsletters each term. These are easy to read, informative about general matters, and celebrate the work of pupils and staff. The staff telephone home when necessary, and they are very willing to talk to parents who ring the school; they welcome any who want to visit. The parents see teachers at formal meetings twice a year. Annual reviews are very well attended by parents, when both the pupils' needs and annual progress reports are discussed; broad targets are set for the forthcoming year. Only about half the families come to the open house meeting in the spring term, where there is a more limited opportunity for discussion. Pupils' annual progress reports are poor, with a few lines on each subject together with a National Curriculum Level. The paragraphs make almost no reference to what the pupil knows and can do, concentrating on his attitudes to work and behaviour. No attendance figures are provided. Moreover, the school does not provide a home-school communication book for boarders when they go home at the weekend, thus missing an opportunity to tell parents what the pupil has done during the weekend and for the school to comment on the pupil's week.

42. Parents make a good contribution to the school's work and to the achievement of the pupils, by working closely with the staff. They like what the school is offering and they work with the staff in deciding on the best approach to helping their child. They respond when necessary to the school's suggestions to contact outside agencies, such as the health services. They also respond to school questionnaires, and this has resulted in improvements to aspects such as telephone contacts. Parents are active on the governing body.

43. Staff and pupils work hard to maintain good relationships with their immediate neighbours, with whom the school works closely over health and safety, such as maintenance of trees, speeding cars and fireworks. Boys help when they can in the local community. For example, they erect staging and put out chairs for a theatre group, and several older boys have visited a local first school to help in the classroom as a form of community service. Through the business enterprise

partnership, local firms are willing to take the older pupils on work experience for two weeks, giving them a good introduction to the world of work. Business and other groups such as Rotary and the Variety Club provide support, including funding. Members of the local community use the school's grounds and hall, and even a garage for storage.

44. The school works constructively with mainstream schools. It provides several with advice and training on behaviour management, and it receives additional training and guidance for its own subject co-ordinators. There are constructive relationships with mainstream schools, and these make it possible to successfully return a few pupils to mainstream education each year.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are both good. Governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The headteacher provides very good leadership; leadership by example is a particular strength.
- Members of the senior management team fulfil their roles very well.
- Governors challenge and support senior managers well, and they have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The school's finances are very well managed, and support improvements well.

Commentary

45. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. Since taking over three years ago, he has introduced a 'gentle' culture to the school, one in which pupils are openly valued, irrespective of their behaviour. In his teaching and everyday interactions with pupils he demonstrates his approach, which is assertive without being authoritarian, and involves respect, fairness, trust, negotiation and recognition of achievements. All staff subscribe to this approach, which is successful in creating a very positive climate for learning and very good relationships between staff and pupils. There is a family atmosphere in the school and no hint of oppression. Parents are valued and consulted, and encouraged to work with the school to improve pupils' behaviour. Not only do most pupils like the school, but the great majority feel they are trusted, listened to and treated fairly.

46. The school sees the key to good behaviour as good teaching and care, and goes to great effort to secure these. Improving teaching and learning is the main focus for the school's improvement plan. There is a clear statement that describes 'the good lesson', and staff plan according to this. The headteacher has recently taken over a considerable teaching commitment, as there is no English co-ordinator in post, so a member of the senior management team has taken on the role of monitoring teaching, and her work is moderated by the school's adviser. This work has achieved a shared understanding of what constitutes good teaching, and has helped to identify where intervention, including training, is most needed. Staff feel well supported in this respect, and are able to identify ways in which their practice has improved.

47. The head of care and the deputy headteacher also lead very well in their areas of responsibility. In both instances, their work and approaches faithfully reflect the headteacher's preferred style. They are key contributors to supporting pupils during the day in school and in the residential setting. Leadership by subject co-ordinators varies, but is never less than satisfactory.

48. Governors have a suitable committee structure. They meet with sufficient frequency and have a range of pertinent skills, which are used well in supporting the headteacher and senior management team. For example, the chair is an experienced director of human resources in a large multi-national company, and her expertise has proved most useful in personnel matters, as well as in dealings with the officers of the LEA when the future of the school was under discussion. Governors are well briefed by the headteacher, who shares both positive developments and any

difficulties being encountered. In addition, governors have given consideration both to the recent National Care Standards Council (NCSC) inspection and to an earlier combined education and social services inspection report on the school. As a result, governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They play a full part in decision making, and ask probing questions in the course of this process, particularly in relation to staffing and accommodation.

49. Although governors do not meet their obligation to provide the statutory curriculum, they have done all they can to recruit suitable staff. An employment agency has been used, and advertisements have been placed regularly and frequently in a range of suitable publications, as far afield as Northern Ireland. At present, a teacher with music expertise is employed on a part-time basis and teaches small groups of younger pupils in a therapeutic setting. An extension of this arrangement is to be considered in the light of its evaluation.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,106,245.00	Balance from previous year	97,088.00
Total expenditure	1,113,151.00	Balance carried forward to the next	52,182.00
Expenditure per pupil	18,248.00		

50. The school's finances are managed very well. The school's improvement plan is costed, and long-term plans reflect the school's needs well. For example, improvements to the accommodation are budgeted for carefully. The competent administration support team in the school provide very good support for staff and for the headteacher, who at present is very busy with teaching. In the summer of 2003, an external audit evaluated the financial systems as excellent. The headteacher works well in partnership with the administrative support team and the governors' finance committee to monitor expenditure and set the budget for the following year. A sensible contingency is maintained.

51. The principles of best value are applied well. The school compares its performance with that of similar schools locally and nationally, seeks the views of parents and pupils, and acts on these to improve provision. When setting targets, it ensures that these are challenging, and when ordering goods and purchasing services it is careful to seek the best value for money. There has been good improvement in leadership and management since the school was last inspected.

52. There are several barriers to further improvement. At present, the school does not have sufficient teachers to ensure that the curriculum meets requirements. The lack of an English co-ordinator means that the headteacher needs to teach, and this takes up much time that might otherwise be spent on management or development. The accommodation, which has been improved since the last inspection, cannot improve much further without considerable capital investment, and the school does not have the financial resources for this.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Only one German lesson was seen, and this was unsatisfactory. The subject was not a particular focus in the inspection.

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good; in Years 7 to 9, achievement is satisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 9, 10 and 11; in Years 8 and 9, teaching is good, but behaviour occasionally gets in the way of learning, which is satisfactory overall.
- Pupils enjoy reading, and this promotes achievement well.
- There is an effective strategy for supporting pupils with literacy difficulties.
- Assessment is satisfactory, but records of pupils' progress are not adequate.
- Resources are very good, but the library accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- There is no designated co-ordinator for English, and this is a barrier to further improvement.

Commentary

53. Pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 are better behaved in class than those in Years 7 and 8. Better behaviour is linked to better learning and achievement. In whole-class English lessons, teaching is never less than good. Lessons start with a period of quiet reading; pupils enter class to find their trays, containing their work and chosen texts, ready on their tables. They quickly settle and read their books with interest and concentration. Very good relationships between the teacher and pupils mean that behaviour is managed well, and this promotes learning and achievement.

54. Attitudes to reading are good in all years, and achievement is good. Pupils are pleased to read aloud, and the most skilled do so with accuracy, expression and confidence. Texts are carefully matched to pupils' abilities and interests. The version of 'Macbeth' used in a Year 9 lesson was abridged and in comic format, and this gave an overview of the plot in a short time. Pupils explore a suitable range of texts, including poetry, fiction and plays. They learn to appreciate features such as use of language. In a Year 9 lesson, for instance, pupils were exploring slang. The teacher's excellent knowledge of English enabled him to draw on pupils' contributions and build up a most effective rapport with them. Ideas flew, so pupils learned from one another. A pupil with limited knowledge of the topic was skilfully drawn in, and warmly congratulated for his efforts; two of his peers helped him, a very good example of the inclusion which is encouraged. By Years 10 and 11, pupils comment thoughtfully on texts, describing characters and their own response to writing. For example, one found that *Dulce et decorum est* evoked 'shock and pity' in him; he appreciated the 'great verbs' used, such as 'plunges, guttering, choking and drowning'.

55. Achievement in speaking and listening, and in writing, is satisfactory. As they mature, the boys become better at listening to one another. Their ability to explain and discuss improves, and by the time they reach Years 10 and 11 most are articulate and confident communicators. All become competent in using computers to write. They also write creatively, and for other purposes, such as sending post-cards and electronic mail. The importance of note-taking is emphasised, and the skill is practised during English lessons. Pupils use ICT effectively to present their work. For example, they wrote horror stories on a dark background containing a graphic of a skull, and red titles dripped 'blood' on to the text below.

56. Teaching promotes personal development well. For example, whilst reading *Of Mice and Men*, pupils examine prejudice. Stereotyping and racism are explored through *Macbeth* and *Oliver Twist*. The cultural origins of slang are teased out.

57. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils in language that is easy for them to understand, and activities are presented in quick succession; this holds pupils' interest throughout lessons. Continuous monitoring and intervention is a strong feature, and pupils are well supported, challenged and encouraged. There is extension work for pupils that are more able, and prompt sheets for those who try but need help to enable them to continue to work independently. However, whilst behaviour is reviewed well at the end of every lesson, differences in learning and achievement are not. Marking varies, but recent work is generally marked well, with helpful comments. Pupils rarely date work, though, and this makes it difficult to monitor progress.

58. Assessment on entry to school enables staff to identify which pupils are in need of additional literacy support. Structured programmes, which pupils enjoy, are implemented well during individual sessions and, on re-testing, most pupils are found to have made significant gains in their reading ages. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem increases as their skills improve, and staff notice improvements in their behaviour too. Teachers assess pupils accurately, using National Curriculum Levels, and in Years 9 and 11 national tests and external accreditation confirm these assessments. However, in Years 7, 8 and 10 there is no means of confirming teachers' assessment, such as annotated pieces of work or external moderation, and this is an area for development. Such evidence would be helpful in the event of staffing changes.

59. The library is in a corridor, running from the entrance to the hall, so it is a busy thoroughfare, and this makes it unsuitable for quiet reading or study. It has a good stock of books, many of which have been selected from bookshops by the pupils themselves. There is a suitably appealing variety of texts, ranging from magazines about Play Stations and motorcycles to classical novels, and the books are in good condition. There are books to suit all abilities. Boys borrow books regularly and frequently. However, there is no cataloguing system for books, so pupils are not able to familiarise themselves with systems that they might encounter in a public library. In the past, staff have made up for this by taking pupils to a nearby public library, but staffing does not allow for this at present.

60. In the absence of a designated co-ordinator, the headteacher has taken on a significant teaching commitment. Understandably, he has little time to develop the subject. A second English teacher has stepped in to carry out this role, particularly by auditing resources and improving their storage and accessibility. He has also taken on responsibility for developing the Entry Level accreditation. Despite the lack of a co-ordinator, leadership of the subject is good, and there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. This is satisfactory overall. There are good opportunities for pupils to speak and listen in all classes, and staff ensure that pupils become familiar with the vocabulary associated with their subjects. Not all teachers encourage extended answers to questions, though. Pupils frequently read for information. The good stock of suitable books in subject rooms encourages this skill. Similarly, pupils write in all subjects. However, the extensive use of worksheets, which pupils enjoy using, occasionally restricts opportunities for the most skilled pupils to write at length. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities for pupils to practise note-taking skills; pupils will copy text from the Internet rather than summarise the main points, for example.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 leads to success in GCSE.
- Teaching and learning are enhanced by the very good support from the senior manager who co-ordinates the teaching of mathematics.
- Plenary sessions are not used consistently to reassure pupils about their new learning.

Commentary

62. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is good. This is linked to the quality of teaching and learning, and to behaviour management strategies. Pupils in a Year 11 lesson achieved well as a result of consistent praise, encouragement and expectation of good behaviour. They made good progress in understanding scatter diagrams, appreciating positive and negative correlation, and gaining confidence to explain their interpretation of statistical data. The very good relationship between teacher and pupils resulted in Year 10 pupils carrying out probability tasks and learning to predict results, despite being reluctant learners. In classes for younger pupils, behaviour sometimes interferes with learning. However, teamwork between the mathematics teacher and the senior manager successfully keeps this to a minimum. The best lessons featured very good subject knowledge on the part of the teacher, and appropriate management of the three-part lesson. Pupils made good progress where the starter activities and the main part of the lesson consisted of activities that they fully understood and were within their capability. In Year 7, the use of ICT, though unplanned, helped to raise pupils' interest in equivalent fractions, and improved their achievements in the lesson. In all the lessons seen, teachers used very good questioning techniques to extend pupils' thinking and to encourage more confidence in their mathematical skills. However, not enough use is made of questioning as a means both of assessment and of planning lessons to fit pupils' individual needs. When the lesson is well managed and sufficient time is given to the plenary session at the end, pupils understand they have gained new mathematical knowledge. In the majority of lessons seen, pupils did not have the opportunity to appreciate the progress they had made.

63. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is dual management, with the senior teacher retaining an overview but in the process of handing over to another member of staff. The National Strategy has been introduced and lessons are planned according to the framework. External accreditation is provided through GCSE and Certificate of Achievement. The school is rightly proud of the successes over recent years. As a result of knowledgeable and challenging teaching, leavers last year all gained GCSE grades, and distinctions in the externally assessed certificate course. The present manager has a very good overview of the subject, recognising strengths and areas for improvement.

64. There has been good analysis of pupils' test results to identify those who will benefit from individual tuition. A recently appointed teacher has started to work successfully with those individual pupils, using well-structured lessons to raise their levels of attainment. Since the last inspection, the standards in teaching and learning have been maintained, resources are good, and improvement is satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. Overall, pupils' mathematical skills are used satisfactorily in other subjects. In geography, a module of work is based on measurement, and graphical interpretation is used at the start of Year 7, so that pupils can apply their mathematical skills in that subject. This is good practice.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Relationships between staff and pupils and between peers are very good, and so is behaviour management.
- Pupils willingly take part in discussions and are continually gaining in confidence.
- Lessons are introduced well, and end with good evaluation and self-evaluation.
- Teachers plan well for pupils of different abilities.
- There are good opportunities for external accreditation.
- Pupils' work is poorly marked, and shows little evidence of the use of ICT as a learning tool.

Commentary

66. At the time of the inspection, there was no science co-ordinator in post. The specialist science teacher had left the previous term and was shortly to be replaced. Several key documents could not be found in the school. However, there was a large amount of pupils' work to look at. Another teacher taught three science lessons during the inspection, as part of an induction timetable running specially to allow for the newness of three teachers. All three lessons were observed, but because older pupils were out on work experience, it was only possible to see lessons for pupils up to the end of Year 9.

67. Standards of work seen are below those expected of pupils of the same age. However, pupils achieve well in science throughout the school and progress is good. In Year 7, pupils begin to learn scientific words and phrases. They perform simple practical experiments, learn the importance of making accurate observations, and build on their existing understanding of scientific concepts. At this early stage, they develop the practice of working in pairs and groups. They work very well together. Their confidence begins to increase and they are willing to make simple predictions. Speaking and listening skills are encouraged well. In Years 8 and 9, pupils' knowledge, understanding and scientific skills develop well. They work very hard and produce an impressive amount of recorded evidence. Scrutiny of pupils' notebooks and files indicates that they do not carry out a great deal of investigative work at this stage. When they do, they record findings neatly and can represent some results on graphs. They develop an understanding of what constitutes a fair test.

68. By the end of Year 11, pupils have made great strides. It was possible to judge this only by scrutiny of their notebooks and their achievement in external accreditation. They manage to reach standards that compare favourably with those obtained in similar schools nationally. They have studied a wide number of topics and there is a good balance of investigative work, chemistry, physics and biology. There is an improvement in the amount of well-documented investigative work. Pupils of all abilities achieve equally well. Pupils make good progress in their ability to discover through investigation. A weakness in the pupils' books and folders is the lack of marking of their work, especially where very good work receives no praise and where marking does not give pointers for improvement.

69. In the lessons seen, teaching and learning were very good. Particular strengths are good behaviour management by staff and the close relationships shared by staff and pupils. Teachers have a first rate command of the subject and they transfer this to skilled lesson planning. All lesson plans have an ingredient enabling both the less able and more able pupils to make their best possible progress. Lessons have a most helpful opening session which clearly explains objectives and also establishes what the pupils have remembered from earlier work. Evaluation and self-evaluation take place throughout the lesson and in a successful final group session. Teachers make good use of praise. Pupils grow in confidence and willingly speak up in discussions, and they clearly enjoy the

work. Of particular note is the way in which pupils help one another. They are co-operative and keen to reach personal targets.

70. Pupils' achievements suggest that the subject has been at least satisfactorily led and managed. Whilst awaiting the arrival of the new co-ordinator, the subject has been overseen by the school's curriculum co-ordinator. Detailed planning and assessment records were not available for scrutiny.

71. Resources for science are good. The science room has been refurbished and is a pleasant area in which to work. It still lacks full school laboratory provision and this inhibits practical work, especially for pupils preparing for external accreditation. There is no gas supply or fume cupboard, for instance, so this means that certain activities cannot be safely carried out. The LEA is due to assess the suitability of storage of chemicals. There is little evidence of the use of ICT, the local environment or visits to enrich scientific learning.

72. The subject received a good report at the time of the previous inspection. There is some improvement in accommodation, but it is still not suitable for GCSE practical work. Facilities for storage have improved. Standards have been maintained, despite a changing intake of pupils, and improvement is at least satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The school is well resourced, with a designated computer suite and a good number of computers in the different classrooms.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Commentary

73. Achievement in ICT is very good and the subject is a strength of the school. Despite the problems pupils have in managing their behaviour, they are enthusiastic about the subject, and have positive attitudes. The result is that they reach appropriate levels. Pupils in Year 7 understand the advantages and disadvantages of electronic mail. In one lesson observed, they listened carefully to explanations and followed the very clear instructions, so they were able to create, send and open electronic mail messages. In the same lesson, they learned how to use the address book. The lesson was purposeful and enjoyable, with pupils achieving very well. Year 9 pupils have more advanced skills and, after watching a demonstration, were able to follow the instructions and use appropriate software to produce an eight page brochure advertising a pantomime. Pupils were sufficiently mature to appreciate the type of audience they would have to attract to the pantomime, selecting suitable background and graphics colours, as well as designing page layout. Pupils confidently downloaded images from the Internet to make their brochures more interesting. Noticeably in this lesson, pupils were self critical and keen to improve their work. Older pupils continue to achieve very well. They follow an accredited course and are able use a range of software to create a home page, make Power Point presentations, design cards and set up a database.

74. Teaching is very good. The combination of a well-equipped computer room and very firm management skills by the specialist teacher results in productive lessons and very good achievement. Lessons are well planned, with appropriate prompt sheets when necessary. The strong focus on key vocabulary ensures that pupils learn correct terminology. The teacher is able to control all the computers and to override pupils' work with his demonstration screen. Pupils do not

have to move around, so disruption is minimised. The lessons are challenging and the teacher expects pupils to learn, so poor behaviour is not an option. A further strength of the teaching is the regular review during lessons, and identification of exactly what pupils have learned at the end. Pupils leave the room knowing very well what they have achieved, and this boosts their self-esteem and makes them more positive in their attitudes generally. The subject contributes well to pupils' personal development; they understand the regulations in the use of computers within the school, and appreciate the opportunities for Internet research.

75. Leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator is responsible for all the teaching and has worked very hard to develop the course in line with the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Links with the local authority are beneficial, helping to identify resources and areas for further improvement. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching and learning have improved, computer resources have been upgraded, and pupils continue to have positive attitudes to the subject.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. This aspect has improved since the last inspection, and is good. The network of classroom computers means that pupils can save their coursework from science or English and access it wherever they might be working. They make good use of the Internet for research. Teachers throughout the school have a good range of software to support learning in other subjects.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**. The subject is taught across the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced well in geography lessons.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory.
- Resources for learning are good, but the accommodation is not suitable for larger groups.

Commentary

77. Achievement in geography is satisfactory. Although no pupils obtained GCSE passes last summer this was because coursework was not presented in sufficient depth; the teacher was inexperienced in teaching to GCSE Level. Suitable action has now been taken to ensure that this will not happen again, and a subject adviser has provided guidance and support.

78. Teaching and learning are satisfactory across the school. A good set of plans has been developed, which is helpful in preparing lessons. Teachers provide interesting and relevant activities, and these keep pupils well motivated. In Year 7, pupils begin by learning the importance of mathematical skills in geographical studies. They learn to distinguish between physical and human geography, and to draw and interpret line and bar graphs. For instance, they used a bar chart to find out which was the busiest month in a holiday camp. Pupils' work is often well presented, particularly geographical diagrams, which are usually carefully coloured and labelled. An example of this was seen in Year 9 work, where good diagrams of volcanoes were included. Teaching, and marking in particular, encourages the development of literacy skills well. For example, pupils are encouraged to use geographical terms, include capital letters for place names, and define terms, such as 'population density'. They are also encouraged to write full answers, 'so that you can revise properly'. Good planning ensures that pupils cover a suitable range of topics and build on their knowledge, skills and understanding. By Year 11, pupils are competent in using Ordnance Survey maps, and they also have a sound understanding of development issues, such as the environmental

effects of tourism and industrial settlement. The most skilful understand relationships between factors such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and life expectancy.

79. Assessment in geography is unsatisfactory. Although the teacher knows pupils well, and can allocate levels, in Year 9, for example, there is no written information showing progress. There is no regular testing, or information kept on levels that pupils reach, and there are no records to inform the writing of reports.

80. There is a good stock of books for pupils to use in the humanities room, as well as other learning resources. The accommodation is too small for larger classes. Pupils are too close to one another, and some find this difficult; in one lesson it led to allegations of copying, and one pupil chose to leave the room.

81. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has shown satisfactory leadership by developing his professional skills and knowledge, and he has been well supported by senior managers and an adviser.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**. Currently it is taught only up to Year 9.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- History lessons are enabling pupils to develop research skills.
- Pupils record their work well. Presentation is good and marking is thorough and informative.
- Good use is made of relevant outside trips and visits.
- Overuse of worksheets leads to missed opportunities to develop writing skills.
- Although resources are satisfactory, there are few artefacts.

Commentary

82. The standards of work seen for all pupils at the end of Year 9 are below the national average. However, scrutiny of pupils' books and folders suggests that the higher attaining pupils could reach GCSE Level if they continued with history after Year 9. Others could enter for less demanding external accreditation. The achievement of pupils up to the end of Year 9 is at least satisfactory. At times, pupils produce good work. Their progress is sound. From Year 7, pupils learn to carry out simple historical research and are able to apply this to topics which they are studying. The curriculum is broad and covers a good range of historical eras. It gives opportunities for some good extended topic work, which are well recorded. An example is an interesting study of the industrial revolution, including its effects on farming, transport, urbanisation and health.

83. It was possible to observe only two lessons during the inspection. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. However, there is some good teaching, which leads to better outcomes in pupils' knowledge and understanding. In one lesson about the Great Plague and its affect on the City of London, teaching and learning were good. Pupils gained a good grasp of different diseases, the relative numbers of people dying from them, and how fleas and rats spread the germs. In this lesson, strengths included the good relationships between staff and pupils, which resulted in pupils behaving well throughout. Tasks were challenging and held pupils' interest, and as a result the lesson proceeded at a good pace. The frequent use of questioning and discussion enabled the teacher to assess pupils' understanding, and pupils to learn from one another. However, the use of worksheets for all pupils meant that those who were capable of extended writing were not given this opportunity. Numeracy skills were reinforced well when pupils used calculators to assess the number of deaths in the plague. The teacher continually monitored pupils and guided them towards discovering answers for themselves. Support from the classroom assistant was good.

84. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Good subject plans and a recent subject audit constitute an improvement since the last inspection. History is not as well developed as geography, which is taught to GCSE Level. The subject is taught in a classroom

which becomes cramped when larger groups are present. A small office and store makes accommodation just satisfactory, and the same is true of learning resources. There are few artefacts, but good use is made of outings and visits which relate to the work the pupils are engaged in. This helps to bring the subject to life.

85. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. There is a better breadth and balance in the curriculum since the introduction of the new subject plans. The programmes of study now satisfy statutory requirements. Lesson planning has improved, and the subject is generally better managed. Whilst marking of pupils' work is very good and of an unusually high quality, overall assessment needs to be further improved. There is no evidence to back up teacher assessment, and no records to refer to when writing reports. In the event of handover to a different teacher, there would be too little information on what pupils know, understand and do in the subject.

Religious education

Provision is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Classroom teaching is satisfactory, but pupils do not learn a sufficiently wide range of topics, so achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Resources are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

86. The teacher responsible for this subject is not a religious education specialist, and there are no suitable plans for him to use when preparing lessons in Years 7 to 9. As a result, he teaches what he feels most confident in teaching, namely about religions of the world, at the expense of other parts of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils then repeat much of this when they move into Years 10 and 11. There is little liaison between the teacher of Years 7 to 9 and the teacher of Years 10 and 11, because there has not been time for this. Pupils in all years learn about the main world faiths, but do not consider moral and ethical matters in enough depth. The subject's potential to contribute to pupils' personal development remains unexploited as a result.

87. Because there are few artefacts or visits to places of worship, it is difficult to bring the subject to life, and pupils find it hard to see the relevance of what they are learning. As a result, their attitudes to religious education are not as good as they are in history or geography. This shows in their work, which is generally not well presented. Nonetheless, there are several strengths in the teaching, which encourage pupils to answer fully. These include helpful marking and an emphasis on key words so that pupils learn and understand relevant vocabulary. Good relationships with pupils help teachers to manage behaviour well.

88. Assessment is unsatisfactory. There is no written information showing how well pupils are learning, which makes monitoring very difficult. The co-ordinator, new to the school since the last inspection, has a suitable action plan showing how the subject will be improved in future, and this covers all areas identified in this inspection. However, standards and provision have slipped since the last inspection, and improvement is unsatisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

89. No subjects in this area were a particular focus for the inspection. One Year 9 food technology lesson was observed, and teaching, learning and achievement were very good. The lesson was very well organised, health and safety were given suitable emphasis, and well motivated pupils used equipment competently to make butterfly cakes.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

No subjects were a particular focus for this inspection . One Year 10 and 11 art lesson was seen, where teaching, learning and achievement were all good. Pupils used ICT competently to work on a biography of an artist as part of their GCSE coursework.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school has recently gained the Sportsmark Gold Award.
- External accreditation is available to all Year 11 pupils, and GCSE results are good.
- The use of evaluation and self-evaluation in lessons is very good.
- The subject plays a major role in improving pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- Subject staff have built up a useful range of contacts outside the school, which contribute to the very good curriculum.
- Assessment is in need of improvement.

Commentary

90. Standards in physical education at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are in line with national expectations. Pupils achieve well throughout the school and make good progress. In some areas, for instance rock climbing, achievement and progress are very good. In Year 7, pupils begin to learn skills in a range of physical activities, including several indoor and outdoor sports. These include elements which take the pupils to outside facilities such as the local swimming pool and leisure centre. They make use of the 12 mountain cycles owned by the physical education department. Pupils begin to evaluate their performance at an early stage. Discussions about progress and achievement of targets form an integral part of all lessons. Self-evaluation is encouraged. Pupils progress well in this discipline. Working in teams and in pairs forms an important part of their development and this becomes a strength in the subject. Of particular note is the way in which physical education enables young pupils to start gaining in confidence from this early stage. The achievement seen at Year 7 develops well as pupils progress through the school, and there is a steady development of knowledge, understanding and skills. By the end of Year 9, pupils are already beginning to prepare themselves for the work on the external accreditation undertaken in Years 10 and 11.

91. In Year 10, pupils intensify the amount of theory covered in their physical education lessons and they begin to compile impressive folders. A number of pupils achieve creditable GCSE results and the less able pupils gain other external accreditation. Scrutiny of the pupils' written work shows a good standard of presentation in a range of physical education topics. Last year, a pupil successfully included a rock-climbing module in his examination. The quality of marking in the folders could be improved, by making it more informative. Pupils continue to take part in sports against other schools and are able to improve their social development through these contacts.

92. Teaching and learning are very good. Both greatly benefit from good quality relationships between staff and pupils and from skilled behaviour management on the part of the staff. Pupils are co-operative and hardworking. Lessons are typified by very good opening discussions, in which pupils make telling contributions. There are also frequent pauses for ongoing evaluation, and a final plenary session where the lesson is assessed. Health and safety issues are thoroughly covered and the pupils are able to explain the reasoning behind them. Physical education teachers have a very wide knowledge of the subject. All pupils enjoy considerable satisfaction from their gains, and lesson plans ensure that each one is fully integrated, whatever his physical ability. The gains in

confidence and self-esteem help some pupils to cope with personal problems which they may be facing.

93. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The two physical education teachers work extremely well together and make good use of the skills of other staff, including care staff. The co-ordinator has worked very hard to advance the subject and has achieved the prestigious Sportsmark Gold award for the school. This is no mean achievement. He is keen to develop physical education even further and is looking towards outdoor pursuits away from the school. He has also started to address assessment, which is a relative weakness in the subject. He has established a database, and plans to have individual long-term and short-term assessment on this in the near future. The school management sees physical education as a very important part of the overall therapeutic process, and it is allocated a generous amount of time. Observation indicates that this is well justified. The residential programme of activities has a strong physical education element and supports the daytime physical education. Arrangements are made for dayboys to take part if they wish. Physical education resources are very good and are well deployed. The physical education staff take advantage of continuous professional development and are active in sporting and professional organisations. Their extensive contacts ultimately benefit the pupils.

94. The subject has continued to develop well since the last inspection. Notable are the greater involvement of all pupils, whatever their physical capability, and the skill of the staff in planning to bring this about. At the time of the previous inspection there were no dayboys, and it is a credit to the staff that dayboys can be fully involved in all activities, even outside the school day. Another improvement is in the pupils' ability to evaluate their own performance, something which needed development at the time of the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in PSHE is **good**. Provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Not enough progress has been made in developing and implementing the citizenship course, with the result that the school does not comply with statutory requirements.
- The PSHE course is enhanced by the whole school approach to personal development, including the part played by adult role models.
- The school's provision for careers education and industrial awareness is very good preparation for life after school.

Commentary

95. Pupils achieve well in PSHE. This is because the principles of the taught course are reinforced throughout the week by teachers and by care staff. Assemblies are used to support teaching by focusing on issues as they arise. One homework tutorial each week is also used to reinforce the topics covered in lessons. Pupils learn about relationships, and aspects of sex education are covered through the science syllabus. A strength of the provision is the way in which adults model respect and courtesy towards each other and the pupils. Part of the PSHE course includes very good provision for careers education and industrial awareness, featuring links with the Connexions Partnership and a flexible approach to work experience that is relevant and allows pupils to achieve well.

96. Teaching is good. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is a course that relies on the rapport between adults and pupils, and there is a number of very new staff who are in the process of establishing those positive relationships. Pupils are given good opportunities to discuss feelings and preferences and, because of the practical approach of using card games to stimulate discussion, they learn to overcome their difficulties in expressing themselves. The focus during the inspection week was upon drug awareness and particularly the issue of smoking. Effective teaching throughout the week reinforced pupils' understanding of the effects of alcohol and smoking. Pupils

were able to make good use of their computer skills to copy relevant text from the Internet. Good links were made with the physical education GCSE course as Year 11 pupils discussed and researched the impact of performance-enhancing drugs, particularly relevant because of a recent topical news item. The good teaching gave sufficient focus for the pupils to stay on task, but also allowed copious opportunities for discussion. Pupils readily took turns and listened to one another. Despite an occasional tendency to be unco-operative, pupils have positive attitudes to the subject because they see the relevance to their own lives. The overall provision makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development because of the emphasis on positive relationships, code of behaviour and sense of community. This reflects the caring ethos of the school.

97. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is in the process of auditing the course in preparation for the introduction of the citizenship element that has not so far been introduced. The previous inspection did not report on the subject, so no judgement can be made on improvement since the last inspection.

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	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
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	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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