

INSPECTION REPORT

RAMSDEN HALL

Billericay

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115449

Headteacher: Mr S Grant

Lead inspector: Ian Naylor

Dates of inspection: 10th - 12th February 2004

Inspection number: 258978

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 - 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Male
Number on roll:	50
School address:	Ramsden Heath Heath Road Billericay Essex
Postcode:	CM11 1HN
Telephone number:	01277 624580
Fax number:	01277631373
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Geoff Williams
Date of previous inspection:	27 th February 2002

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ramsden Hall is a boarding special school for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need relating to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are currently 28 five day a week boarders, in Years 7, 8 and 9. All pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds, and there are no refugees, travellers, or pupils whose first language is not English. Where practicable, pupils are helped to return to mainstream schooling. The school is very successful in re-integrating pupils into their home communities before they leave. Attainment on entry to the school is lower than the national average, and most pupils have very low achievement and self-esteem. Pupils have considerably more complex needs than was the case at the previous inspection. The school gained a DfES School Achievement Award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20906	Ian Naylor	<i>Lead inspector</i>	English; Art; Physical education.
19677	Marion Cumbers	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
10668	David Walker	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Design and technology; Religious education.
21713	Chris Lewis	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Information and communication technology; History; Geography, Special educational needs.
23300	Lily Evans	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign language; Personal, social and health education, and citizenship.

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school that has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection, especially to the quality of teaching and learning and to the curriculum. Good leadership and good teaching have meant that pupils achieve well, and pupils' behaviour is managed well. Residential care is a very effective feature. **The school gives good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good leadership of the headteacher and senior staff.
- Good quality teaching and learning.
- Good achievements by pupils, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Very good achievement in art.
- Good work by governors to support the pupils and staff.
- A good school ethos that encourages good behaviour and attitudes.
- A good curriculum that is enriched by the wide variety of opportunities for pupils.
- Residential care is very good.
- The use of literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped in most subjects other than English, mathematics and science.
- The school does not involve parents as much as they would like.
- Day pupils do not have the same opportunities as boarders for after-school provision.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The issues raised in the report have all been satisfactorily addressed. The quality of teaching has improved to the extent that there is more teaching that is very good or good, and less that is unsatisfactory. The achievement of pupils has been increased, particularly in English, mathematics and science. This is despite the fact that pupils now have more complex learning needs and challenging behaviour than used to be the case. Pupils are attaining grades in nationally recognised courses in Year 11, and are taking part in work experience programmes. Standards of care have risen and are now very good, especially in the residence. The curriculum for physical education has been enhanced significantly by the facility of the new sports hall.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is good in Years 7 - 9 and Years 9 - 11. Achievement is very good in art, and good in English, mathematics, science, ICT and physical education. Pupils make very good progress in their personal development. They quickly improve in their social skills, and this helps their behaviour and gives them a better chance of success in their academic work. Pupils make good progress and improve in most subjects by Year 11, with the result that many gain grades in GCSE and other accredited courses. Pupils with additional special educational needs (SEN) also make good progress. Most pupils achieve well in their work experience or on vocational courses.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Their moral social, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance is good and punctuality for lessons is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good overall, and often very good. There is little unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is very good in art and physical education. It is good in English, mathematics and science and ICT. Good attention has been given to improving teaching and learning, and learning support staff are used effectively. The school has made good

use of its reward system to manage behaviour. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' participation and co-operation, and they have established good relationships with pupils. Consequently, learning is good and pupils concentrate well and understand how their behaviour has an impact upon their achievement and progress. Assessment is used well in mathematics and science, but needs further development in English and the other subjects.

The curriculum is good and meets requirements, including the teaching of religious education. It is very good for art and physical education. The curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 16 years is good and offers suitable qualifications for all pupils. The curriculum overall is enhanced by a number of extra-curricular activities for all pupils, and a particularly wide range of pursuits in the evening for the residential pupils. However, day pupils do not have the opportunity to join in any of the activities after school.

Arrangements for the care and welfare of the pupils are good. Residential education is very good. There are good procedures to prevent bullying and harassment, and to deal with them promptly should they occur. Good attention is given to health and safety. Links with parents and the community are satisfactory, but not enough is done to involve parents in the life of the school. There are good links with other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management are both good. The leadership provided by the headteacher is good and makes a significant contribution to the good achievement of pupils. Other senior staff contribute well to the quality of leadership and management. The governors provide good support to staff and pupils and are fully involved in planning for the future direction of the school. The school has good plans for future development. Financial administration is good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils feel that the school is well led and managed. The majority of parents are highly satisfied with the school and the achievements of pupils, and believe that the school has significantly improved the behaviour of their own children. A small minority expressed the view that the school could do even more to involve them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Extend the use of literacy and ICT across the curriculum.
- Improve the involvement of parents in the work of the school.
- Give day pupils access to after-school clubs and activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is good in Years 7 - 9 and Years 9 - 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Achievement is very good in art.
- Achievement in English, mathematics, science, physical education and ICT is good.
- Pupils make very good progress in their personal development.

Commentary

1. Pupils arrive in school with low levels of achievement. Many have been out of education for some time or have been excluded from their previous schools. Most have very complex learning, social or emotional needs and challenging behaviour, which frequently act as barrier to their learning. Pupils are able to grow in self-esteem and confidence and to experience success as a result of the school's good provision and good teaching. They make rapid progress in their social skills and significantly adjust their behaviour, and this enables them to make gains in their academic work. Pupils make good progress and improve in most subjects, with the result that achievement is good by Year 9, and is sustained into Year 11, with several pupils making very good progress. This represents an improvement since the last inspection.
2. Achievement is good in English, especially in the study of English literature. Speaking and listening skills show very good improvement and enable pupils to achieve well in other subjects. Pupil's reading ability makes significant progress by Year 9. Writing is satisfactory overall. In mathematics, science, physical education and ICT, achievement is good by Year 11.
3. In the GCSE results for 2003, one pupil achieved 5 GCSE Grades at A* - G, and three pupils gained grades in three subjects, including English literature, science, mathematics and art. This represents a significant achievement and very good progress over time, given their low levels of attainment on entry. Exceptionally, a Year 12 pupil gained an E Grade in Art at AS Level. Lower attaining pupils are achieving well in the accredited ASDAN¹ courses, with three pupils receiving Bronze Awards in 2003. These standards are broadly in line with those in other similar schools.
4. Pupils' achievement in art is very good, although this is not always recognised in grades at GCSE because weaker literacy skills are a barrier for some when they attempt the theoretical aspects of the subject. Nevertheless, their progress in painting, drawing and three-dimensional modelling is often exceptional.
5. In physical education pupils make very good progress, and their achievement is satisfactory by Year 9 and good by Year 11. This is because they have learned to manage their behaviour well and know how to co-operate with other pupils in team games and during adventurous activities.
6. Pupils who are lower attaining or who have additional SEN make good progress, particularly in their literacy and numeracy skills.
7. Pupils show good achievement and progress in their social skills and personal development as a result of the school's good teaching in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and

¹ ASDAN - Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network.

citizenship. A number of pupils in Year 11 attend work experience and achieve good end of placement reports.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school promotes good attendance.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good.
- Relationships are good.
- Punctuality for lessons is very good.
- Social and moral development is good.
- There are limited opportunities for multicultural and spiritual development.

Commentary

8. Attendance of day pupils is good, compared to the national average for similar schools. That of boarders is also good. Most pupils enjoy school and want to attend. The school promotes good attendance and very good punctuality to lessons by the consistent application of its behaviour reward system. Parents are encouraged to send their children to school regularly.

9. Pupils' attitude to their lessons is positive, and behaviour is predominantly good. They concentrate well in most lessons, show interest and are usually keen to join in. They participate seriously in the school council, for which they are elected democratically. They also take on responsibility for tasks around their residential areas. Pupils often show an awareness of the feelings of others, and in particular are sensitive to the different opportunities of day pupils. Boarders feel that all pupils should be included in whatever happens at school.

10. Parents confirm that the school has high expectations of behaviour and that this improves rapidly after pupils join. They feel that the school encourages the growth of confidence and self-esteem as well as the development of vital social skills. Pupils do not consider bullying a particular problem. They accept that it does occur but know that the school is doing its best to counter it. They say that the school deals well with any form of harassment. Pupils' relationships with each other are good, and little conflict was observed during the inspection. Their relationships with care and teaching staff are generally warm and mutually respectful. The staff are good role models.

11. Pupils' social and moral welfare is promoted well, for example by the routines in the residence, by the lessons in PSHE and physical education, and in the ASDAN course. Cultural development is satisfactory and is supported by visits to art galleries and museums. However, the school does not give sufficient attention to preparing the pupils for life in a multicultural community. There is limited provision for spiritual development.

12. A strong feature of the school is the consistent approach to behaviour management in the residential provision, and the very positive effect this has on pupils' development. Staff make very good use of praise and encouragement to help pupils succeed, and all make consistent use of the reward system.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.0
National data	12.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.0
National data	7.7

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	52	33	3

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good because of good subject knowledge on the part of teachers, and their effective management of behaviour.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 42 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (5%)	9 (21 %)	16 (38%)	13 (31%)	2 (5%)	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.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teachers know pupils' needs and abilities, and plan well to meet them.
- Teaching is very good in English literature, art and physical education.
- Good use is made of the school's behaviour reward system to manage behaviour.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' participation and co-operation.
- Learning support staff are used to good effect.
- Assessment is used effectively in mathematics and science, and it is satisfactory in English and the other subjects.
- Not enough use is made of ICT.

Commentary

13. Teaching has improved since the last inspection, when most of it was satisfactory. The majority is now good, and a significant amount is very good. This improvement is because a great deal of attention has been given to raising the quality of teaching. It has been achieved through regular monitoring by senior staff, the development of a teaching and learning policy, the appointment of an advanced skills teacher (AST) who sets a good example to others, and a better system of behaviour management.

14. Teaching is at its most successful in the lessons for pupils in Years 10 and 11, and in particular in English literature, art and physical education. It is good in mathematics, science and ICT. This is mainly because pupils are helped to build on skills developed in the previous years and have more confidence in their own abilities. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subjects. They and the learning support staff are effective in their teaching and in their relationships with pupils because they know pupils' academic abilities, aptitudes and SEN very well. In their planning they give careful attention to devising a range of interesting and motivating activities. Lesson plans set out what pupils will learn, and in the best examples the teachers explain these fully to pupils at the

beginning of lessons. At the end, they reprise what pupils have learned, often by using good questioning skills.

15. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' participation and co-operation, and use the behaviour reward system consistently well to support their management of behaviour. There is good use of praise and encouragement, as well as humour, to recognise pupils' successes, and this builds pupils' self esteem and confidence. It also frequently helps to diffuse tension between pupils. In particular, the successful teaching harnesses the skills of learning support assistants, who play a key role in supporting pupils' learning by helping to redirect their behaviour into more acceptable patterns. Learning is therefore good, because pupils are able to concentrate better on the tasks they are given. They understand the required routines in lessons and also begin to understand how their behaviour has an impact upon their achievement and progress. Good support is given to low attaining pupils and those with additional SEN such as dyslexia.

16. In the few lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is because planning has not been sufficiently detailed to engage pupils' interest, or because of inexperience in managing effectively the often very challenging behaviour of pupils. Senior managers are aware of this and give good support. Teachers do not always make enough use of ICT to support learning.

17. Assessment is being developed well in the subject action plans, and it is now good in mathematics and science and satisfactory in English. More effective use is being made of teachers' knowledge of pupils' needs and abilities by the more formal assessment of attainment and the targeting of specific areas of achievement by pupils in each subject. Most subjects have begun this process and already there is some use of self-assessment by pupils, for example in art and physical education. Regular homework is provided in English, mathematics and science each week and there is a homework club at lunchtimes for day pupils who want it. This makes a good contribution to pupils' progress. Marking of work is effective and supports pupils' learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE CURRICULUM MEET THE PUPILS' NEEDS

Overall, the curriculum is good. It meets all statutory requirements, including the teaching of religious education. It is very good for art and physical education.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school provides a good variety of relevant learning opportunities.
- The provision for art is good.
- The provision for residential pupils is very good.
- The schools' participation in sport and the arts is very good.
- The accommodation for physical education is very good, but accommodation for design and technology and music is unsatisfactory, and some classrooms are too small.

Commentary

18. The curriculum is enhanced by a number of extra-curricular activities that are planned well for all pupils. There is a good number of educational outings, such as visits to art galleries, local churches and museums. There are also many sporting fixtures, and residential and adventurous experiences that promote social skills and independence. In particular there is wide range of very well organised social, leisure and sporting activities for resident pupils in the evenings, which make up the 24-hour curriculum. Effective use is made of the very good outdoor facilities. Good use is also made of the local and community amenities for activities such as swimming, orienteering and walking.

19. Day pupils do not have the opportunity to join in any of the activities after school, as transport arrangements are inflexible. In every other way, staff work hard to ensure that each pupil has access to all the activities on offer.

20. The curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 16 years is good and now offers suitable qualifications for all. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. For certain pupils, outside agencies offer a number of options of a vocational nature, including work experience. These are put to imaginative use and successfully support their entry into adult life and the world of work. Accreditation for lower attaining pupils is offered in the ASDAN courses.

21. The school places a strong emphasis upon promoting pupils' PSHE and citizenship. This happens throughout the day in most lessons as well as at break and lunchtimes. Opportunities for careers education are good. Pupils from Year 9 onwards receive suitable guidance on careers and there is appropriate emphasis upon preparing pupils for life after school.

22. Learning resources are good. The school has a good number of teachers, learning support assistants and care staff. The accommodation is satisfactory. Facilities for physical education are very good but those for design and technology and music are unsatisfactory, and some classrooms inhibit pupils' opportunities for learning because they are too small.

Care, guidance and support

The care and welfare arrangements for the pupils are good. Induction procedures work well and pupils settle quickly. The school is successful in its aims to increase pupils' confidence and self-control, as well as their social skills.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Staff know pupils' needs well and provide good levels of support.
- Residential education is very good.
- There are good procedures to combat bullying and harassment.
- Good attention is paid to health and safety.

Commentary

23. Pupils feel valued and their opinions are sought in the school council. The behaviour policy relies on the good system of rewards, which motivates many to do their best and work towards their target points. Behaviour is managed well and there is a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, especially in the residence.

24. Procedures for Child Protection are good and are well known by staff. The school receives good support from the Essex Police Child Protection Unit, who give advice when necessary. Any medication is carefully supervised and administered. The recording of incidents and of the use of restraint procedures is good.

25. Residential provision is very good. The residential routines enable boarding pupils to benefit from an integrated 24-hour curriculum. All staff are consistent in their approach to pupils and act as very good role models. Supervision is very good and activities are well organised. Key workers and form tutors know the needs of the pupils well and establish good relationships with them. They are involved in pupils' annual reviews, and undertake home visits as and when necessary. Pupils are encouraged to talk to whichever member of staff they feel happy with, whenever they have a need. The school is working assiduously to address the recommendations of the National Care Standards Inspection that was conducted in October 2003.

26. The school has good policies and procedures to meet the social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils. Teaching and support staff give pupils support and time out from lessons when necessary, to calm them down, which they do in a caring manner. Professional advice is sought for pupils with learning difficulties or dyslexia. Relevant specialists contribute to the pupils' annual

reviews when necessary to ensure that a full view of the pupils' needs is achieved. Attendance at clinics by many pupils adversely affects school attendance. The school is rightly seeking to encourage medical authorities to hold their clinics in school. This would lessen the disruption to pupils' education and probably help to increase parental involvement in school.

27. The school is a safe and comfortable place and there are no graffiti or vandalism. There are healthy meals and a tuck shop which stocks fruit and other healthy options. It uses an electronic credit system and this removes the need for pupils to bring cash to school.

28. Staff work hard and successfully to encourage regular attendance, and they follow up absence quickly. The annual reports to parents give helpful advice to pupils on how they can improve. Individual development plans contain focused targets which ensure that all pupils, whatever their needs, are supported to make progress in each subject as well as with their personal development. Pupils are also involved in setting their own targets.

29. The school pays close attention to preventing bullying and harassment, and has good procedures to combat them. A confidential survey is used to support pupils, and this has been successful in identifying the worst offenders, who have been encouraged to change their behaviour. The school uses exclusion as a last resort and the rate of permanent exclusion is low.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and the community are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- There are good links with other schools.
- The school's liaison officer and key workers provide good contact with parents.
- Not enough is done to involve parents in the life of the school.

Commentary

30. Information provided for parents is satisfactory. However, items such as the annual governors' report could give much wider information, for example about the role of governors and the activities available in the residence. Key workers maintain good weekly telephone contact with parents.

31. Parents are not involved in activities at the school. There is no parent association to represent the views of parents or seek their support. Parents are invited to the school only for the annual open day and the annual review. There are two parent governors, but no parents help at the school. Although the prospectus suggests that parents can help, they are not told how they can do this. Parents at the meeting with inspectors and in responses to the questionnaire felt more could be done to involve them.

32. In general, however, parents are very appreciative of what the school is doing for their child. They feel the school does a good job. Many express the view that their child is achieving success in school for the first time. A few parents have concerns about bullying, but they state that the school appears to handle any incidences of bullying well and is doing all it can to minimise it.

33. There are some good links with other schools, and pupils take part in sports tournaments, visits and trips to places of interest. There are also enterprising residential trips that give the pupils experience of the wider community.

34. Professional links with other agencies are satisfactory and the school constantly works to create more. The pupil liaison officer and key workers work closely with parents at points of transition to ensure that arrangements work smoothly. The school tries its best to involve parents in the planning of work experience and college placements, which are arranged individually to try to address individual need. The liaison officer, the key worker, form tutor and a representative from

Connections are also involved in the annual review, and this is held at home if attendance in school is difficult for parents. These procedures are of a high quality.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership is good. Management is good. The governors provide good support to staff and pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The leadership of the headteacher is good.
- There is an effective senior management team.
- Governors are fully involved in planning for the future direction of the school.
- Financial management and strategic planning are good.

Commentary

35. The headteacher is an effective leader who has steered the school successfully through difficult times. He has a good grasp of the priorities for the school at the present time and a clear view of how the school should develop in the future. He has made his current position, as head of the two partnership schools, work well, and his involvement with the partner school in no way compromises his role at Ramsden Hall. Quite the reverse. In order to achieve the partnership he has reorganised the senior management and delegated duties efficiently, so that there is now a stronger leadership and management team for both education and care, whose members share his view of the direction of the school. Good direction is given to curriculum management and to care and welfare in the residence. There are effective staff teams which are fully committed to ensuring that each pupil has the fullest possible opportunities for success in his educational and social achievements. Evidence of the impact of these factors is that parents and pupils feel that the school is well led and managed.

36. The governors are fully supportive of the headteacher and of the partnership arrangements. They are working closely with the headteacher and the local authority, both to secure improvements in the school and to take the school forward in its development. There is a good system of committees, which meet regularly. The governing body has a strong core of experienced governors who have particularly good expertise in their role. They give good support to achieve the main priorities of ensuring successful leadership and management in the school. They provide good challenge and advice to senior staff, are very knowledgeable about procedures and give expert support on the school's financial management. Together with the headteacher, governors have made good staffing appointments. They have satisfactory arrangements for making themselves aware of the school's main strengths and weaknesses, and take positive action to address weaker areas. They receive good oral and written information from the headteacher, senior staff and subject co-ordinators. Governors could do more to make direct evaluations of what happens in classrooms and the residence, and to link with specific subject areas such as literacy. However, for a governing body with only a small number of members, they all work well to secure the best possible provision.

37. The school development plan and action plans give a good focus to the priorities for action. Many issues for the curriculum are being successfully addressed through subject audits and action planning. Senior staff monitor results and trends in pupils' achievements well, and evaluate the best way forward for teaching, learning and the curriculum. The arrangements for performance management or appraisal of staff are well established, and are effective in securing improvement in standards of teaching and care. Staff training and development are good, and are helping to promote higher standards. Financial controls and management are good and there is an efficient school office. Good support is obtained from the local authority financial services.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,136,636.00
Total expenditure	1,153,097.00
Expenditure per pupil	23,061.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	29,929.00
Balance carried forward to the next	13,468.00

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching is good, especially of literature.
- Pupils are gaining grades in GCSE.
- Pupils in Years 7 - 9 make significant progress in reading ages.
- The curriculum for low attaining pupils needs further development.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used consistently or extensively enough.

Commentary

38. Achievement is satisfactory overall. It is best in Years 10 to 11, where higher attaining pupils make good progress in both the language and literature GCSE courses, and three pupils gained grades. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Lower attaining pupils make less progress and their literacy skills remain relatively low, although they are making gains in accreditation through the ASDAN courses. There has been an emphasis on improving reading. As a result, most pupils in Years 7 to 9 have increased their reading ages significantly since the last inspection. The school is establishing a better reading environment for day pupils as well as in the residence for boarders. Many pupils make satisfactory progress in their speaking and listening skills by Year 9, and by Year 11 most pupils are making good progress. This is because the school creates many opportunities, for example the school council, tutor groups, and assemblies, for pupils to listen and to join in discussion. Writing skills are generally low and for most pupils this is the hardest area of their work to improve. There are some good examples of extended and evaluative writing in Years 10 and 11, and pupils tackle well the written answers in the literature course. There is some use by pupils of word processing, but this is still an area that needs further development.

39. Teaching is good. This is because teachers have good skills in the management of behaviour. They know pupils' abilities and aptitudes well and make good use of the school's behaviour reward system to encourage and motivate pupils. Teachers form very good relationships with the pupils and use humour well to establish a good rapport. Teaching of literature is very good. For example, particularly good use is made of questioning to elicit pupils' recall and understanding of the texts of the plays and poems they have read for the GCSE course work. Learning is also good, and pupils improve significantly in their capacity to concentrate on the tasks they are set. They understand what they have to do to improve, and their response in most lessons is good. In Years 7 and 8, some pupils have difficulty in adjusting their behaviour to different circumstances or to different members of staff, and this has a negative impact upon their learning. Pupils' use of ICT is better than at the previous inspection and it is now satisfactory; for example, pupils make good use of the program Success Maker.

40. The new subject co-ordinator has made a satisfactory start in leading the subject and has good ideas for future development. She is adapting the curriculum well to meet the more complex needs of the lower attaining pupils who are now being admitted in Year 7 and 8. Resources are satisfactory and include a well-stocked library. Some classrooms are too small and this acts as a barrier to learning, because they are too cramped and cannot be easily adjusted for group work, drama or the use of ICT.

41. **French** was sampled during the inspection. Two lessons were observed in which the achievement and progress of pupils were good and their attitudes and enjoyment were positive. The curriculum and the resources to match are at an early stage of development and have not been moved forward quickly enough. For example, the audit of planning as carried out in other subjects has not yet been completed, and this is unsatisfactory. Too much emphasis is placed on learning grammar and not enough on basic vocabulary. Resources are unsatisfactory. The subject leader is exploring avenues of further support for the school from the local authority advisers.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

42. Pupils successfully develop their speaking and listening skills in all subjects by Year 11. However, most subjects still have difficulty with the low levels of attainment in pupils' reading and writing skills, and this is a barrier to learning. A good illustration of this is in art, where pupils' high achievement when creating paintings and drawings for their GCSE course work is let down in their overall grading by the lower literacy skills displayed in their theory work. Greater collaboration between the subject co-ordinators and the English co-ordinator and teachers is required, for example to establish a key word or vocabulary list for each subject.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching and learning are good overall and pupils achieve well by the end of Year 11.
- Teachers carefully assess and record pupils' progress and use this information to plan lessons that build on what they have already learned.
- The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and his leadership and management are good.
- Pupils' learning is not reinforced sufficiently at the end of all lessons.

Commentary

43. Overall, progress and achievement are good. This is because teaching is good and pupils have good attitudes to learning. There has been sound improvement since the last inspection.

44. Teaching and learning in mathematics are always at least good. The impetus provided by the National Numeracy Strategy has given a boost to the subject and pupils find the work stimulating and interesting. The oral work at the beginning of the lesson engages their attention and prepares them for the main part of the lesson. Teachers set work that matches well the capabilities of the pupils, so that they can successfully attempt a progressively demanding series of questions. This motivates the pupils, and they respond by working hard and showing a high level of pride in their achievements.

45. Teachers and learning support assistants know the pupils very well, and this enables them to manage pupils' behaviour well. Relationships are very good and help to maintain the quality of learning in mathematics. All teachers and assistants are skilled in the use of different strategies to support numeracy. They take every opportunity to praise and encourage success. Pupils respond positively and are very keen to participate and show what they know, understand and can do, so that by the end of Year 11 most pupils are able to gain a nationally accredited award. Homework exercises help the pupils to consolidate their understanding and promote independent learning. Staff discuss the behaviour points that pupils have accrued in each lesson, but they do not spend sufficient time checking what pupils have learned. The regular assessment of progress is very good and supports the target setting for future achievement. It also provides clear information both to pupils and to teachers about progress. Teachers make satisfactory use of ICT in lessons.

46. The subject is well led and managed and there has been sound improvement since the last inspection. A whole school audit of mathematics has been carried out and an effective plan of action developed, much of which is completed.

NUMERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

47. There are sound opportunities for pupils to extend their numeracy skills in other subjects, though these are not always included in the planning. In science, pupils use graphical representations, measure weight and volume and make calculations. In history, pupils are aware of elapsed time when learning about the concentration camps in Germany during the last century. The populations, demography and life expectation of different countries are compared through the use of tables and graphs, while grid references are used in map work in geography. Graphs and tables are used to display pupils' achievement in behaviour 'points', which are discussed during tutor periods.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Achievement is good, with above national average results at Year 9 and in GCSE.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The curriculum and assessment of progress are good.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Commentary

48. Pupils' progress and their good achievement are due to the good teaching across a relevant range of scientific topics. Pupils' written work is generally of a high standard. Some work is produced by word processing. Skilful teaching successfully overcomes pupils' initial reluctance to learn. The teacher is able to motivate and interest pupils to carry out investigations, predict results, record findings and develop an awareness of fair testing. Lessons are carefully planned and prepared, with resources to hand, and a skilled learning support assistant helps those pupils with specific needs. The lesson plans show clearly what pupils will learn and how the work is differentiated for particular pupils.

49. Learning is good. Pupils know the routines of the science room and what they have to do to successfully complete their work. They generally concentrate well. For example, in one particularly dramatic experiment, pupils simulate the effect of volcanic activity within the earth's core. Older, more able pupils understand aspects of the periodic table and the arrangement of atoms in elements. Pupils use scientific vocabulary well. They carry out their own practical investigations and understand the need for safety. Relationships are good.

50. The subject co-ordinator monitors pupils' progress carefully and sets precise targets. All work is marked with appropriate comments. The subject audit reveals a need for more lessons involving investigation, to underpin understanding and further motivate pupils. It also identifies accurately the need for better equipment to support the teaching of biological and physical aspects of the science curriculum. Good links with a neighbouring college result in the loan of additional scientific equipment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership of the subject is good.
- An update on computers and peripheral equipment is required.
- Not enough use is made of ICT in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.

Commentary

51. Achievement is variable, given the range of learning abilities of pupils. However, most pupils show clear signs of improvement in their ICT skills by Year 11. Where appropriate, pupils are now being entered for GCSE in the subject. In the small number of lessons observed, achievement was good. More able pupils are reaching National Curriculum Level 5 by Year 9, and records show good progress. Pupils by Year 9 are able to select graphics to design a poster for a fairground ride, with safety warnings. By Year 11 pupils understand complicated instructions, download information from the Internet, control events and use physical data from ICT systems. Pupils are confident users of ICT, logging on independently and selecting the right software for an activity. More able, older pupils also create and use Powerpoint to demonstrate to an audience.

52. Teaching and learning are good. Planning meets individual needs and skilled learning support assistants are well deployed. Learning and behaviour are reviewed at the end of each lesson and pupils discuss how they can improve their work. Relationships with pupils are very good. Leadership of the subject is good, and there has been a recent audit of progress and priorities. There is a new curriculum plan and a new assessment procedure. Records of progress are kept well and pupils' work marked regularly. The new co-ordinator is exploring other accredited courses to validate the work of lower attaining pupils at the end of Year 11. Resources have improved a little since the last inspection but there is a need to update further programs and equipment.

53. All pupils use ICT successfully on a daily basis to record data about their behaviour in the school's computerised pupil reward system. However, there is too little use made of ICT in the other subjects and this lessens the quality of the provision for ICT overall.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

54. This aspect of work is unsatisfactory. Some improvements have been secured in the use of ICT in English, with the use of the Internet to acquire data for projects and of digital cameras to record GCSE work. In mathematics and science, ICT is used for data handling, and in art and design and technology for word processing and digital pictures for display. However, computers are not used as frequently as they might be across the curriculum to encourage independent learning. The residential pupils have a clear advantage in the use of computers after school hours as compared to day pupils. The ICT co-ordinator is planning an in-service training programme for some staff to ensure maximum use of ICT equipment.

HUMANITIES

55. In **history and geography**, one lesson of each subject was seen in Key Stage 3. The subjects are not studied at Key Stage 4. Pupils' work, reports to parents, and the subject audit document for humanities were scrutinised. Improvements have been made since the last inspection. Curriculum plans have been rewritten to create a greater focus on meeting pupils' levels of interest and ability. Reports to parents are satisfactory, with pupils' progress and achievement highlighted. In history, pupils' achievement and learning are satisfactory, and there are some good

features, for example the successful engagement of pupils in understanding the reasons for the Holocaust in the Second World War. In geography, the teacher successfully made use of data to draw comparisons between life expectancy and wealth in different countries across the world. There are sound plans, outlined in the subject audit, to vary teaching styles and to broaden resources in the teaching of history and geography. There is not enough use of ICT, visits and artefacts to enhance the teaching of history. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used in geography but this could be extended further. Homework is not set regularly in these subjects, and opportunities to raise achievement further are therefore missed.

56. **Music** has recently been re-introduced to the curriculum at Key Stage 3. Two lessons were seen and the curriculum plan for teaching music scrutinised. The teacher brings great skill and enthusiasm to the subject and is beginning to provide a background of musical experience to pupils in Years 7 to 9, who are very self conscious when performing. Achievement and progress are good. During the lessons pupils took part in percussion activity with a growing ability to sustain a beat and a rhythm. Pupils perform in assemblies and to governors in a formal concert. A curriculum plan has been drawn up from which short-term lesson plans are to be developed, together with appropriate assessment and record keeping. The teacher has attended relevant courses recently and is well supported in her work by an experienced learning support assistant and by members of the senior management team. Resources for music and the room for teaching music are unsatisfactory.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good use is made of resources, artefacts and visits to bring the subject alive.
- There is a sound emphasis upon learning about the world's major faiths.
- Pupils show respect and appreciation for the beliefs and values of others.
- There are good opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills, but limited opportunities for extended writing.
- There is not enough recording of what pupils learn.
- Assessment is undeveloped and the current accreditation does not sufficiently challenge higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

57. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Teaching makes good use of visits, artefacts and of visual resources in many lessons, which pupils enjoy. They gain an understanding of world faiths and learn to respect the views and opinions of others. Much of the work covered in religious education lessons centres upon discussion; as a consequence, there is limited written work. Higher attaining pupils are not given enough opportunities to extend their ideas in written form. Nevertheless, evidence from talking to pupils about their work and from scrutinizing teachers' planning indicates that the quality of teaching and learning is sound. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills and their personal and social skills.

58. In a lesson with a Year 8 class, good questioning by the teacher and learning support assistants helped pupils to recall what they had learned during a visit to a Mosque the week before, and to build upon this in the lesson, using a number of digitally recorded images. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 develop their understanding of the moral principles underpinning religious guidance when they are discussing abortion and similar issues.

59. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. The curriculum meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus, and resources are sound. Assessment procedures are not yet in place. A weakness is the lack of ICT in lessons, and the need to remedy this is recognised in the subject action plan. Religious education makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC AND PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

Art

Provision in Art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Achievement is very good.
- Teaching is very good.
- Pupils respond well and enjoy the subject.
- Not enough use is made of ICT.
- Weak literacy skills prevent better grades at GCSE.

Commentary

60. Achievement is very good, with result that by Year 11 many pupils achieve grades at GCSE. In 2003, an exceptional student in Year 12 attained an AS grade E. Pupils make excellent progress in the subject after joining the school, when their level of attainment and confidence in the subject is very low. By the end of Year 9 pupils have grown in self-confidence and start to produce very good finished work. They make line drawings of the cartoon characters 'The Simpsons' and show good use of paint or coloured pens. They make three-dimensional models in ceramic of faces which show contrasting halves, for example Spider-Man and Halloween masks. In Years 10 and 11, pupils work very well to consolidate their portfolios for their examination course work. There is very good project work on flowers, with pupils painting in the style of Constable and Turner and using watercolour and poster colours to good effect. Pupils create three-dimensional models of old St Paul's Cathedral and Tower Bridge, using a jigsaw to work in hardboard and softwood. For some pupils their weak literacy skills are an obstacle to the theoretical areas of GCSE courses, and this reduces their chances of gaining higher grades.

61. Teaching is very good because it creates opportunities for pupils to succeed by allowing them to follow their own interests. It establishes confidence, generates interest and promotes skills. The teacher creates a welcoming environment in the art room, so that pupils feel relaxed because their efforts and talents are recognised and rewarded. The learning support assistant is deployed effectively and uses her own expertise in the subject very well to support pupils' progress. Pupils clearly enjoy their art lessons and they are well motivated and generally very well behaved. They co-operate well with one another and recognise the value of co-operating with adults to get the best advice and support. Great value is placed on pupils' finished work, which is displayed in the art room and also in the school dining room. The latter resembles something like an art gallery, so effectively is the work exhibited as an example to all pupils.

62. The subject is well led and resources are good. Assessment is being further developed through the subject action plan. Although some pupils do use digital photography, the internet and word processing to enhance their GCSE course work, too little use is made in the curriculum generally of ICT as a medium for creating art.

63. Only two lessons were observed in **design and technology**. Pupils are keen, hardworking and obviously enjoy the subject. Their attitudes and behaviour are good. They achieve well. This is especially true of pupils in Years 10 and 11, who work with commitment in order to complete

successful work for the externally accredited course. One Year 11 pupil had made a cabinet of high quality and a Year 9 pupil was working with enthusiasm and sense of accomplishment on a tiled-top coffee table. Leadership of the subject is effective in promoting high standards and developing skills in a structured way, while not neglecting the design and evaluative aspects of the subjects. The present accommodation is used very well, but it is small and cramped. However, planning indicates that this deficiency is recognised and improvements are shortly to be put in train.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**, and a strong feature of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching is very good and raises pupils' achievements and self-esteem significantly.
- The school offers a wide variety of sports and activities.
- The facilities are very good.
- The subject is well managed.
- Assessment is being developed but needs further work.

Commentary

64. The achievement of pupils is satisfactory by Year 9 and good by Year 11. Pupils make very good progress overall in their physical education skills. Teachers have very secure knowledge of the subject and a detailed awareness of the pupils' needs, and they have high expectation of the pupils' participation and self-control.

65. The curriculum offers a wide range of activities and sports during lessons and as after-school activities. These range from swimming to gymnastics, together with sport and team games such as rugby and hockey. Out-of-school activities embrace adventurous pursuits such as camping, canoeing and rock climbing. Fixtures are arranged with other schools for soccer, basketball, touch rugby and cross-country. The new sports hall enhances the curriculum considerably and has been a major influence on pupils' motivation and involvement in physical education. Resources are good.

66. The subject is well led by an experienced and very well qualified teacher. A detailed audit had been made of the subject. Analysis of the resulting data has led to priorities for action in the subject plan. For example, there has been improvement in assessment through self-evaluation exercises by pupils. However, it is recognised that further work is necessary to make assessment better inform teaching, and this is being planned.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in PSHE is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils have opportunities to take responsibility and develop their initiative within a well-structured and secure learning environment.
- The PSHE and citizenship programme is relevant and broad but not yet fully developed to link with subjects across the whole curriculum.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of citizenship.

Commentary

67. Staff work hard to develop trusting relationships so that pupils feel able to discuss their thoughts and ideas, which they do with frankness and honesty. Form periods and the school council provide good forums for pupils to take responsibility, discuss awards they can earn, and understand how their contribution can make a difference to the life of the community. Achievement is good. There is a relevant programme of PSHE and citizenship. The school has planned an audit of citizenship to see how far it is represented in other subjects, with a view to extending accreditation opportunities. Drugs awareness has a high profile and has been effective in guiding pupils to make the right choices. Pupils in Year 9 are encouraged to devise a reasoned alternative policy for dealing with drugs offenders in school.

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	3
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
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	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
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).