

INSPECTION REPORT

St Nicholas School

Merstham, Redhill

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125457

Headteacher: Ms Ann Homer

Lead inspector: Peter Johnson

Dates of inspection: 26th – 29th January 2004

Inspection number: 258999

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
Gender of pupils:	Boys
Number on roll:	44
School address:	Taynton Drive Merstham Redhill Surrey
Postcode:	RH1 3PU
Telephone number:	01737 215488
Fax number:	01737 646173
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. Barbara Smith
Date of previous inspection:	14 th January 2002

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Nicholas is a day and residential school for boys, aged between 11 and 16, who have severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. All pupils have moderate learning difficulties and three have autistic spectrum disorders. Of the 44 pupils on roll 27 are resident for 4 days per week. The boys come from mainly disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Pupils come mainly from Surrey, but a small number each year are admitted from neighbouring London Boroughs. Pupils attend the school after experiencing considerable disruption to their formal education. Most have spent considerable time out of school and many have been excluded from at least one school prior to admission to St Nicholas. The assessment of pupils' achievement on entry to the school indicates that they are well behind in English, mathematics and science. Pupils are admitted throughout the school year. All boys attending the school have statements of special educational need and are of white British heritage. Two pupils are from Traveller backgrounds. The school does not provide an outreach service.

The school has undergone a period of considerable turmoil since the last inspection, including a fatal accident in the swimming pool, a large budget reduction, and a large turnover of staff. These difficulties have impeded the development of the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2925	Peter Johnson	Lead inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, citizenship, Spanish, music
9173	Sarah McDermott	Lay inspector	
19171	David Robin Lee	Team inspector	Science, art, design and technology, physical education
20024	Paul Wright	Team inspector	English, geography, history, religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

The standard of education provided by the school is **unsatisfactory**. Although pupils of all ages achieve satisfactory standards in most subjects their achievement in science, geography and history is unsatisfactory. Residential provision is good. Despite the satisfactory leadership of the headteacher and a strong vision for development there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection and teaching, learning and pupils' behaviour are unsatisfactory. Governance of the school is also unsatisfactory. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money. In accordance with section 13(7) of the School Inspections Act 1996 I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement in art is very good and good in physical education, ICT as a subject and mathematics in years 10 and 11.
- Residential provision is good.
- Pupils' achievement in science, geography and history is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.
- The level of challenge set for pupils and the expectations for their achievement and behaviour are often too low.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory.
- Careers education is very good.
- The clarity of vision, sense of purpose and aspirations of the headteacher are very good.
- Pupils' difficult behaviour is not always managed consistently and effectively.
- Governors do not play a sufficiently active part in the life of the school and do not know its strengths and weaknesses sufficiently well.

The school's effectiveness has deteriorated since the last inspection. The school now teaches a modern foreign language and has begun to develop a more coherent programme of assessment and target setting. However, a number of weaknesses identified at that time remain, including the provision for science, geography and information and communications technology across the curriculum, the spiritual and cultural development of pupils and opportunities for homework. In addition, teaching and learning are worse than they were and pupils' attitudes and behaviour, judged to be good by the last inspection, are now unsatisfactory. Governance of the school has also declined and is now unsatisfactory.

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	Satisfactory
Year 11	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

The achievement of pupils is **satisfactory**. Achievement in art is very good and good in physical education, ICT and mathematics in years 10 and 11. Achievement is satisfactory in English, religious education, personal, social, health and citizenship education and design and technology, but is unsatisfactory in science, geography and history.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **unsatisfactory**. A substantial number of pupils and parents are concerned about the high levels of bullying in the school. The school policy about bullying does not have sufficient impact to prevent many boys from feeling vulnerable to bullying. Pupils' spiritual awareness, their appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions and their moral and social development are **unsatisfactory**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by school is **unsatisfactory**. Teaching and pupils' learning have been adversely affected by recent staff changes and are now **unsatisfactory**. Although in most lessons they apply themselves well to the work set and make satisfactory progress, in too many their disruptive behaviour interferes with their own and others' learning. At times the content of lessons is matched well to pupils' interests and abilities and their behaviour is managed effectively, but in too many lessons, teaching does not motivate pupils, the expectations set for them are too low and poor behaviour is not managed effectively. The curriculum and the assessment of pupils' learning are satisfactory. Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety and the support, advice and guidance they are given are satisfactory. Residential provision is good. Partnership with parents and the community is satisfactory and links with colleges are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school by the headteacher and senior staff is **satisfactory**. They have worked hard to establish a clear vision for the school, re-establish its sense of purpose and set high aspirations for the further improvement of the school. The management of the school, however, is unsatisfactory. Procedures to monitor the performance of the school have been introduced, but the information that is gained is not used effectively to inform future improvement and weaknesses that have been identified have not been addressed. The work of the governors is unsatisfactory; they do not have a sufficiently thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses to help secure the improvements that are needed. The Head and Deputy Head of Care provide good leadership to the residential staff. This has resulted in a successful inspection recently by the National Care Standards Commission.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have mixed reactions to how the school works with them to help their children develop. Most parents are very appreciative and relieved to have their son at a school that can address his needs. Others have serious concerns with many aspects of school life not least, the significant number of times the school is closed and the boys sent home. Many parents are unhappy with arrangements for homework and inspectors agree that homework is not set frequently enough. While boarders contribute actively to the residential provision, all pupils are not sufficiently involved in the development of the school and their satisfaction with it is low. Many pupils feel that the staff do not always value their ideas and pupils are not asked often enough about changes in the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise pupils' achievement particularly in science, geography and history.
- Improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching and learning.
- Raise the expectations set for pupils' achievement and behaviour.
- Improve the curriculum for, and teaching of pupils in geography, history and ICT.
- Improve procedures for finding out how well the school is doing and using the information to improve pupils' achievements and behaviour.
- Ensure that governors play an active part in the life of the school and that they receive good information so that they can contribute to the improvement of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement and the progress made by pupils of all abilities are **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in art is very good and good in physical education, ICT as a subject and mathematics in Years 10 and 11.
- Low expectations and challenge impede pupils' achievements.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in science, history and geography.

Commentary

1. Pupils' achievement has improved slightly since the last inspection when it was judged to be unsatisfactory overall. Achievements in reading and writing are better and their achievements in art, ICT, Spanish, physical education and religious education have improved. However, the weaknesses in science and the planning and evaluating aspects of design and technology remain and pupils' achievements in history and geography have declined.
2. Despite teaching which is overall unsatisfactory, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in the majority of subjects provided by the school. This is because teaching has been adversely affected by recent staff changes and the unsatisfactory teaching is evident to a greater or lesser extent in almost all subjects but, with the exception of science, the amount of unsatisfactory teaching is small enough not to impede pupils' achievement. The analysis of pupils' work indicates that they make satisfactory progress in most subjects.
3. In National Curriculum tests in 2003 no pupils attained the expected standard and around 30 per cent achieved level 3 in mathematics and science. Pupils in Year 11 in 2003 sat a range of external examinations and achieved well in literacy and numeracy tests, the Welsh Board science examination and the Youth Award Scheme. Pupils were not entered for the General Certificate of Secondary Education in 2003, but the school plans to offer this opportunity in science and other subjects. However, the range of externally accredited examinations currently on offer does not sufficiently challenge higher attaining pupils and the low expectations set by the unsatisfactory teaching observed further impedes pupils' achievements.
4. In English, pupils of all abilities make good progress in developing their reading skills. Pupils' progress in writing is satisfactory. The school has introduced the use of portable word processors as a way of trying to overcome pupils' reluctance to write in lessons. Overall pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their speaking and listening skills and this contributes to their satisfactory achievement in drama. In mathematics the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory; it is stronger in number than in the other aspects of mathematics. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement in mathematics is good. In science, although a GCSE course is available for pupils for the first time this year, the standards achieved by pupils across the school are too low.
5. Pupils' achievement in Spanish is satisfactory; they have learned a small vocabulary of words and simple phrases, which they use with growing confidence. In specialist ICT lessons, pupils show confidence in their use of a range of computer applications and software. In design and technology pupils learn satisfactory skills in working with resistant materials (for example working with wood, plastic and metal) but do not have sufficient opportunities to plan their designs or to evaluate the effectiveness of their completed models. In art pupils achieve very well and the quality of work produced by the pupils throughout the school is impressive. Pupils

benefit from teachers' good subject knowledge in religious education and make satisfactory progress.

6. Achievement is unsatisfactory in geography and history. Pupils are given insufficient opportunities and experiences in both subjects to ensure that they acquire a satisfactory level of knowledge and skills.
7. Pupils make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them at annual reviews. The majority of pupils having additional special needs make the same progress as their peers and their achievements are satisfactory. However, those that have speech and language difficulties do not receive sufficient specialist therapy support and this impedes their achievement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are **unsatisfactory**. There have been a high number of fixed term exclusions. The attendance of the pupils is **satisfactory** because it is in line with similar special schools. Punctuality is **unsatisfactory**. The school does not promote personal development sufficiently well to ensure the maturity of the pupils improves.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many lessons are interrupted by pupils' unsatisfactory behaviour because teachers are not firm enough in applying the school's behaviour management strategies.
- Pupils' bad language and unpleasant comments between pupils and to adults are not dealt with consistently.
- Residential pupils behave well and respond positively to the clear expectations and enjoyable activities.
- Pupils and parents report high levels of bullying.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility and learn how to live in a community in the school day.
- The school is not doing enough to extend the pupils' understanding of how other people live to ensure tolerance and prevent racist attitudes.

Commentary

8. The behaviour and attitude of many pupils are not good enough to ensure that they get the best out of their learning. The number of fixed term exclusions is high, but is a slight improvement from the time of the last inspection. Lessons are often disrupted by unacceptable behaviour and rudeness to adults. The headteacher is clear that the pupils should be treated with dignity and respect, but the boys are not given the right message when teachers and assistants allow rude and insolent behaviour to go unchallenged. The amount of bad language used by the pupils is unacceptable. Pupils are being ineffectively prepared for life outside school when they are not firmly and clearly taught how to behave while in school. The moral development of many pupils is unsatisfactory because they are not being given sufficiently consistent guidance about the consequences of their actions. Pupils behaved well in lessons where the relationships between the pupils and the teacher were positive, directions were clear and the teachers were confident in reminding pupils about the agreed rules. Overall the achievement of the pupils is being significantly impaired due to the disruption caused by bad behaviour and the failure to take consistently firm action. Behaviour has deteriorated since the last inspection. In part this is because the school is not sufficiently prepared for the increasing numbers of boys admitted with more serious behavioural problems than past intakes.

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	44	39	1

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

9. Pupils in the residential units are interested in the activities provided. They appreciate the order and comfort of the boarding provision and are clear about expectations of them. Reward systems are valued by the boarders and contribute positively to their good behaviour. Pupils are confident and speak willingly when a subject interests them, but too often their self-esteem is low. Many pupils successfully attempt a new activity, such as making fox skulls out of clay in an art lesson, but others easily give up or sulk if they are finding the learning difficult. Too often boys leave classrooms, rather than face up to a challenge or accept a firm direction from the teacher.
10. A substantial number of pupils and parents are concerned about the high levels of bullying in the school. The school has recently rewritten the anti-bullying policy, but although well researched it is having insufficient impact and does not address the essential question of what the boys perceive as bullying. Day-boys feel particularly vulnerable as they find it difficult to integrate and do not share in many of the extra curricular activities enjoyed by the boarders. The promotion of self-knowledge and spiritual awareness is unsatisfactory because pupils do not have sufficient organised opportunities to think deeply or show sensitivity to the views of others.
11. The social development of the pupils who board is good. The pupils are given a good range of jobs, including shopping for ingredients, preparing meals and using the washing machine to prepare them for independent life. Pupils are well involved in the unit meetings so they can air their views and make democratic decisions. In the school day the responsibilities of living in a community are less well developed and unsatisfactory. Pupils are not given sufficient chance to take on tasks around the school or in the classroom. The older boys would like the chance to show that they can be trusted and visit the local shops, but currently there is no school council where such suggestions can be debated in a democratic way. The pupils preparing to go to college or taking part in work experience are taking good advantage of these opportunities to show their maturity.
12. The school is not doing enough to extend the pupils' understanding of how other cultures and races live. All the pupils are white so it is particularly important that they learn how others live as a preparation for harmony in multi-cultural Great Britain. Opportunities arise in art, drama and Spanish and there are several displays of work and materials about cultures and religions in various parts of the school, but the limited provision in history and geography hampers the pupils' exposure to the lives and beliefs of other religions and cultures. Many boys tend to take a strongly stereotypical attitude to ways of life different from their own, so would benefit from many more chances to appreciate and value the wealth of other peoples' customs. This aspect was a key issue in the last inspection and still has not been properly addressed.
13. The attendance of the pupils is satisfactory. It has not changed significantly since the last inspection when it was judged to be unsatisfactory but is now in line with the average figure for similar schools for boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There has been a slight improvement in the autumn term, although there is still some way to go to reach the target set for the school by the local education authority of 85 per cent attendance. With the effective support of the education social worker and a more systematic approach to checking absences, the individual attendance of some boys is getting better. However many days have been lost not because the boys have chosen to avoid coming, but because the school has been closed for

staff shortages or repair work following gas leaks and this has contributed to the high authorised absence figures. Of more serious concern is the high number of boys who are authorised to be sent home because the school considers them to have “psychological illness” and they are causing severe disruption at school. Most parents are good at ensuring their boys come to school, but a few find it difficult to motivate their sons and organise their regular attendance especially when the boys are required to attend for half days only.

14. The punctuality of the pupils is unsatisfactory. Many pupils do not arrive in time for the start of the school day. Often this is down to traffic delays, such as the major road traffic accident on the first day of the inspection, or problems with the taxi service. However, many pupils also arrive late to lessons throughout the day. The lenient marking of poor punctuality results in inaccurate records to provide to the local education authority and taxi companies should concerns arise about the levels of service provided.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/3 -

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	17%	School data :	4%
National data:	12.2%	National data:	7.7%

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **unsatisfactory**. It does not ensure that the pupils make sufficient progress in all subjects or in the improvement of their behaviour.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning has deteriorated since the last inspection.
- Teaching is very good in careers education and mathematics in Years 10 and 11 and good in art, Spanish and physical education.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in science.
- In most lessons pupils concentrate well and are interested in their work.
- In too many lessons, teaching does not motivate pupils and the expectations set for them are too low.
- The difficult behaviour of pupils is not managed by staff in a consistent way.
- Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently in lessons.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 46 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
-	9 (20)	16 (35)	11 (24)	8 (17)	2 (4)	-

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.

15. There has been insufficient improvement in teaching since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has been adversely affected by recent staff changes. Teachers' expectations of their pupils' achievement and behaviour are not consistently high enough and the level of challenge set for pupils is too often low.
16. In art, Spanish, physical education, careers education and mathematics in Years 10 and 11 teaching is characterised by effective planning which helps provide appropriate activities to enthuse pupils. Activities and methods in art, for example, are ambitious and varied so that pupils interest is captured and sustained. The work set for pupils is matched well to their abilities, resources are used well and the partnership between teachers and other adults is effective. The pace of teaching and learning is brisk and the expectations set through challenging activities are realistically high. Encouragement is given to pupils to help them think and learn for themselves. There are good relationships with pupils and their behaviour is managed well by helping them to focus on their learning rather than on their behaviour and by consistent implementation of the school's behaviour policies. Any disruption is overcome by the teacher's tenacity and therefore the pupils participate in lessons. Pupils are productive and engaged in these lessons; they have high levels of motivation and concentration.
17. In the lessons where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory or poor the activities provided for pupils are not sufficiently well matched to their abilities and the expectations set for their achievement and behaviour are too low. The tasks set are undemanding and do not encourage the pupils to sustain concentration for any length of time. Pupils' disruptive behaviour goes unchecked on too many occasions and consequently they do not learn to recognise what is acceptable behaviour. In a few lessons teaching was unsatisfactory because the teacher had insufficient knowledge of the subject to make the lesson interesting, or lacked sufficient experience of managing very difficult behaviour and was consequently unable to restore order once it had been lost. These lessons were characterised by pupils' unsatisfactory concentration, low level of participation and poor relationships with the teacher and each other. Although each classroom is equipped with a computer, teachers do not use them sufficiently to help pupils to learn.
18. Procedures to check pupils' achievement are **satisfactory**. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection. However, they are unsatisfactory in science, art, geography and history. In English and mathematics assessment is used well to track pupils' progress against the levels of the National Curriculum and the requirements of accredited courses. Teachers use the information gained from assessment effectively to ensure that pupils make progress in their learning. Pupils' work is marked regularly but insufficient attention is paid to giving pupils clear information about how they can improve the standard of their work. In science, there is no assessment of pupils' knowledge when they start the school and the marking of pupils' work is at best inconsistent, and often absent.
19. The school's draft assessment policy provides an effective guide to good practice. The assessments, predictions and targets set in English, mathematics, science and personal, social, health and citizenship education indicate realistically high expectations for pupils. But the school has yet to develop a process by which these targets can be translated into the means by which they can be achieved and as a result the expectations set in many lessons are too low.
20. In most other subjects the results of assessment are sufficient to indicate to pupils broadly what they have achieved. The annual reviews of pupils' statements of special educational need are undertaken effectively and they meet requirements.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Local colleges are used well to support pupils' learning when they are in Years 10 and 11 and careers education and guidance are very good.
- The range of external accreditation is not challenging enough for the most able pupils.
- The residential provision gives good support to out of class learning.

Commentary

21. All pupils have equal access to a curriculum which provides them with appropriate learning opportunities in most subjects. At the time of the last inspection the curriculum was judged to be unsatisfactory. The school has maintained a few of the strengths identified then and successfully addressed the weaknesses. The overall curriculum is now satisfactory with a number of strengths. However, due to staffing difficulties, the school's provision for geography and history is unsatisfactory. Older pupils are able to take a variety of examinations, but opportunities for higher attaining pupils to access extended accreditation are restricted.
22. The school's personal, social, health and citizenship education programme provides a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to discuss and question a variety of personal issues. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well prepared for the next stage of their education or for entering the world of work. The school's plans for careers education are very good and pupils have the opportunity to extend their learning into the workplace through a good range of work experience placements. The school continues to maintain good links with the local college of further education.
23. Opportunities for pupils to learn outside the classroom are satisfactory. For residential pupils, these opportunities are good. The residential provision supports pupils' learning outside the classroom very well. However, due to difficulties with transport arrangements the number of day pupils involved in after school activities is low. They have access to a wide range of activities which extend their experiences. For example, day and residential pupils have experienced camping in the New Forest and trips to the theatre. The curriculum is also enriched by a wide range of visitors to the school, such as drama groups, who extend the opportunities provided for pupils.
24. There are sufficient teachers and support assistants and the school has deployed its staffing resources appropriately to meet the needs of the curriculum. There are enough suitable resources to support teaching and learning but they are unsatisfactory in history and geography. Teaching assistants are deployed well.
25. The school's accommodation is good. A completely refurbished library has been established and provides pupils with opportunities to work independently and to carry out research.
26. The school has a detailed special educational needs policy and a comprehensive list of pupils' special educational needs has also been compiled. A special educational needs coordinator has recently been appointed and it is too soon to judge her effectiveness. However, she does display enthusiasm and is currently undertaking training for the role.
27. Additional literacy support is provided by the teaching assistants. There is presently no structured programme for non-readers and the SENCO recognises that suitable reading schemes for low ability readers are not available in school. Many pupils have speech and language difficulties, but there is insufficient specialist help to address these.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety of the pupils are **satisfactory**. The provision of support, advice and guidance is **satisfactory**. The views of pupils are not sufficiently taken into account and they are not involved enough in the running of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has worked methodically and largely successfully to remedy previous health and safety concerns.
- The older pupils are prepared well for moving on to college and choosing careers.
- The management of behaviour is inconsistent and is not sufficiently effective across the school.
- Boarders are cared for well.
- The school listens well to pupils' individual pastoral concerns but pupils are not sufficiently involved in school life.
- The many improvement targets for pupils often conflict and are not sufficiently linked to accurate assessment systems.

Commentary

28. The health and safety of the pupils is a high priority in the school. The headteacher has put much successful effort into putting previous problems right. Governors are knowledgeable and up to date on assessing risks around the premises. The poor condition of the changing rooms and the lack of privacy afforded by them highlighted by the last inspection have not yet been rectified and the behaviour of pupils contributes to safety concerns in the science laboratory. The open grounds pose problems with absconding pupils, although the staff are as vigilant as they can be. First aid and welfare systems are effective and medication is administered properly. Child protection procedures are well established. Welfare and safety remains as good as at the last inspection.
29. Serious behaviour incidents are recorded carefully in bound books kept centrally by the headteacher. However, monitoring of the frequency and type of incident to ensure that the management of behaviour is working properly and that pupils are not at danger from each other is not sufficiently established. The school does not fulfil the general legal duty of monitoring racial incidents and does not put sufficient emphasis on stamping out racist comments.
30. Pupils who board are looked after well. The National Care Standards Commission regularly monitors the school and the recent report gave the residential department a clean bill of health. The residential staff provide stability for the boys, many of whom have difficult home circumstances, and they make sure they have access to activities and experiences they would otherwise not have to develop their independence and social skills.
31. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are given good advice and guidance in preparing for college and the world of work. Careers lessons are pitched at the right level to make them interesting and relevant. The school works well with East Surrey College to give the pupils a taster of different jobs and to match the right course to the individual pupil. The school has a satisfactory range of work experience placements available, with particularly successful link with McDonalds.
32. The provision of advice and support is satisfactory. The school is good at supporting boys with pastoral, domestic and personal problems, as noted in the last inspection. However, as also reported in the last inspection, the accurate assessment of academic needs across the curriculum is not as effective as it should be. Targets for pupils' improvement are clearly evident around the school, but there are too many which are unconnected or even contradictory. To ensure that all pupils receive a concerted and consistent level of support the targets in the individual education plans, cross-curricular plans, care plans, annual reviews and reports need to be carefully rationalised for the effective achievement of each individual pupil.

33. There are many adults to whom pupils can turn if they have a personal worry and nearly all boys questioned feel well supported. The most important link is the key worker and all boys mention them as their first point of contact. Pupils also have good access to an “independent ear” or person unconnected with the daily running of the school to whom they can talk in confidence. However there are not enough opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities and contribute to school life. The school does not consult pupils on a regular basis and currently there is no school council. Many pupils feel that the staff do not always value their ideas and pupils are not asked often enough about changes in the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **satisfactory** links with parents and with the local community. Links with the college of further education are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff keep up good, regular contact with parents to keep them informed about their sons’ well being.
- The lack of homework detracts from the parents’ ability to help their children progress.
- The views of parents are not gauged regularly enough.
- Arrangements for the transfer of pupils to college are good.
- Pupils benefit from good links with other schools for sport.

Commentary

34. The school keeps up good lines of communication with home for each pupil’s benefit. The allocation of a key worker to each pupil ensures there is always a named person to whom parents can talk. Key workers make a point of ringing home at least once a fortnight to report on the pupils’ well being. In addition the school has the useful services of the Partnership Social Workers who ensure that the pupils are visited at home before they start and are settled into school effectively. The annual report gives a thorough overview of how each pupil is progressing, although sometimes the targets set in class do not accurately reflect what is reported to parents.
35. Parents have mixed reactions to how the school works with them to help their children develop. Most parents are very appreciative and relieved to have their son at a school that can address his needs. Others have serious concerns with many aspects of school life not least, the significant number of times the school is closed and the boys sent home. The regular survey of parents is not yet an established feature of the school, so concerns about management issues are not always sufficiently quickly picked up. As the vast majority of parents visit the school rarely and events and meetings are not well attended, it is particularly important that the school goes out of its way to seek the parents’ views and act on them accordingly.
36. Many parents are unhappy with arrangements for homework. The inspectors agree that homework is not set frequently enough or linked appropriately to the individual needs of the pupil. Currently only mathematics from a scheme unrelated to class work is sent home on a Friday evening. No homework is set in the week for boys to complete either at home or in the boarding units so that they can further their learning independently. Parents receive a satisfactory amount of information about the curriculum, but miss out on sharing in their sons’ progress via homework. This was an issue in the last inspection, as was the reminder from a previous report to include parents more in raising their sons’ academic standards.
37. The school has established good links with local colleges to ensure the pupils transfer smoothly on to further education. A strong rapport with East Surrey College benefits the pupils well. The co-ordinator for careers and work experience has made useful contacts with a range of local

businesses so that the pupils can have a taster of different jobs and make informed choices. Good links with other special schools particularly benefit sport. The pupils regularly participate in football matches and schools come to St Nicholas to compete in cross-country races. The boarders go out into the local area frequently for good extra-curricular trips, but, other than for youth awards, there is insufficient regular and planned use of local sites to enrich the curriculum in the school day. The school is starting to build up a productive association with its primary feeder school, but there is still work to be done in establishing a shared approach to behaviour management, so that the new boys arrive with as little disruption as possible.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher provides **satisfactory** leadership. The management of the school is **unsatisfactory** and does not provide sufficient rigour in either its strategic planning or leadership of the curriculum. The work of the governors is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher, since taking on the role, has provided clarity of vision and purpose for the school.
- The school does not use information provided by monitoring to raise standards.
- The handling of poor behaviour by senior staff is inconsistent.
- The Head of Care and Deputy Head of Care provide strong leadership to the residential staff.
- The governors strongly support the headteacher and staff, but do not provide sufficient challenge to help shape the direction of the school and to improve teaching and learning.
- The financial management of the school is good.

Commentary

38. The headteacher has high aspirations for the school and has invested a great amount of time establishing a new management structure, meeting the training needs of the staff, and reviewing the school's documentation. She has a carefully considered policy of shared leadership and wider responsibility and her tenacity and determination to succeed are clearly evident.
39. The senior management team and the leadership teams within the school are newly established. They have developed procedures to monitor the performance of the school, but the information that is produced is not used effectively to inform future improvement. There is much evidence that weaknesses that have been identified have not been addressed. Priorities for improvement, for example, suggested by the teachers during a training day in September 2002 have not been acted upon and curriculum plans have been used to determine the training needs of staff, but have not been used to create an action plan for development. There has been a focus on generating documentation at the expense of tackling more important issues, such as the classroom performance of teachers and the attitude and behaviour of the pupils. For example, on several occasions, the inspectors noted senior staff ignoring unacceptable language and behaviour in the corridors between lessons. Performance management has been undertaken, but again, this has not been effective in raising the standard of teaching within the classroom.
40. Residential provision benefits from good leadership. Teamwork is effective and policies and procedures are implemented consistently. This has resulted in a successful inspection recently by the National Care Standards Commission. The needs of those pupils who board during the week are carefully assessed and provided for.
41. The governing body maintains a strong interest in the work of the school. Although attracting and keeping governors has been a constant difficulty, there is little doubt of the care and commitment of those who have taken on this responsibility. They have, however, largely taken on an administrative role, thereby fulfilling their statutory duties, but paying too little attention to

the daily running of the school and the teaching and learning within the classroom. A new system where governors have specific areas of curriculum responsibility has been developed, but few have observed their subjects being taught. They are aware of the lack of academic accreditation within the school, but have failed to challenge the teaching staff on this. The governing body does not have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has been too ready to accept the assurances of the professional staff that educational improvement is being maintained.

42. The financial management of the school is good. A substantial reduction in the budget last year meant that some difficult decisions had to be made by the governors and senior management team. These have been successfully implemented and, although hard pressed, there is a financial stability to the school. The bursar monitors expenditure very closely and is careful to ensure that her senior colleagues are kept fully informed of all budgetary matters. All spending is linked to the school's development plan. While attention is given to adhering to the principles of 'best-value' in all spending decisions, insufficient consideration was given to the impact on support for teaching and learning of the decision to maintain the high level of administrative support.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1225871
Total expenditure	1236605
Expenditure per pupil	26311

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-18195
Balance carried forward to the next	-10734

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Nine English lessons and two drama lessons were seen, all year groups were observed. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in all year groups and held discussions with pupils about their work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of teaching across the department are inconsistent.
- Pupils' unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour adversely affect learning.
- Pupils are making good progress in developing their reading skills. Older pupils are given the opportunity to study a wide range of literature.
- Pupils speaking and listening skills are used well in drama lessons and school productions.
- The leadership of the subject is good.
- The refurbished library is a good resource and provides opportunities for pupils to develop their interest in literature.
- In other subjects there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills so that achievement can be improved.

Commentary

43. Achievement is satisfactory in all year groups. However, pupils do not make consistent progress because of the variable standards of teaching across the department. Where teaching is good, teachers have good subject knowledge and their lessons are well matched to the learning needs of the pupils and they make satisfactory progress in the lesson. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons seen, materials were poorly matched to the ability levels of the groups and lessons lacked pace, leading to unsatisfactory learning and behaviour. The three part lesson, recommended by the National Literacy Strategy, has been implemented but teachers do not always remember to share the learning objectives for the lesson with pupils or to identify and share key vocabulary with them. This means that opportunities to reinforce learning are sometimes missed.
44. Pupils are making good progress in reading. Records indicate that pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress over time. Pupils in Year 10 who were studying "Of Mice and Men" showed a wide range of reading ability, but with good targeted support from the LSA and teacher, all were able to follow the text successfully. Pupils have the opportunity to study a variety of authors from Shakespeare to Benjamin Zephaniah. However, the range of externally accredited examinations currently on offer does not sufficiently challenge higher attaining pupils.
45. Pupils' progress in writing is satisfactory. Pupils are reluctant to write in lessons because their spelling skills are weak and their handwriting is immature. However, the school is addressing this by encouraging them to record their work using portable word processors. However, there is often an over-reliance on worksheets requiring one or two word answers and this limits progress. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are learning how to draft and redraft their writing and to write for different audiences.
46. Overall pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. Higher attaining pupils answer questions with confidence and are able to adjust their speaking to different

situations. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are improved by the good quality drama lessons and by performing in whole school productions such as that for "The Lord of The Flies". In less effective lessons teachers do not promote opportunities for discussion because the pupils are unable to participate in a sensible manner. There are too many occasions when pupils do not listen and talk or shout over the teacher.

47. Leadership of the subject is good, as the subject manager, who has been in post for a year, has a clear vision of the improvements needed. He has started to compile annotated portfolios of pupils' work and plans are in place to extend this good practice throughout the department. He has carried out some monitoring of English and literacy sessions but staff shortages have made this difficult in recent months. The school has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection; for example the library has been completely reorganised and is now an attractive learning area with a good range of reading and reference books. Resources are now sufficient and are well used to support the subject.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. The development of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. A useful policy clearly outlines methods of supporting pupils' progress. Staff have benefited from training in this area but there is no improvement plan to ensure coherent development of literacy across the school. Pupils are encouraged to read out loud in many subjects and contribute to discussions in lessons. Older pupils use their skills in discussion and in reading for information to help them to achieve parts of their ASDAN awards. However, there are not enough planned opportunities within subjects for pupils to practise their literacy skills so that achievement can be improved.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Two lessons in Spanish were seen in Years 7 and 8. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in all year groups.

Spanish

Provision for Spanish is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher has a good knowledge of the subject and understands how it should be taught.
- The teacher's emphasis on learning as a way of managing pupils' difficult behaviour is good.
- Pupils' difficult behaviour sometimes impedes their learning.

Commentary

49. A modern foreign language was not taught at the time of the last inspection because of the lack of a teacher for the subject. The school has made good progress in the provision for Spanish, which is now taught to all pupils in Years 7 to 9.
50. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory because, although teaching is good, their sometimes erratic behaviour restricts the amount of time they spend learning the subject. They have learned a small vocabulary of words and simple phrases, which they use with growing confidence. The majority have mastered the numbers 1 to 10 and know the names of colours. Higher attaining pupils can combine adjectives and nouns to describe familiar objects and are beginning to write simple phrases.
51. Learning is satisfactory because the teacher is successfully persistent in her efforts to overcome pupils' sometimes disruptive behaviour. Teaching is characterised by a good command of the language which is used to challenge and motivate pupils. The expectations set

for the pupils are realistically high and they respond to them by concentrating well and trying hard to complete the tasks that they are given to do. Even though the teacher constantly reminds pupils that they should concentrate on their work and is generally successful in this, pupils' behaviour can at times be erratic and this interferes with the progress they make.

52. Leadership of the subject is good. An effective assessment system has been developed to complement the curriculum and the subject leader has clear plans for further improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Six lessons in mathematics were seen in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in all year groups and held discussions with pupils about their work.

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils aged 14 to 16 achieve well because teaching is very good.
- Teachers' lack of subject knowledge results in more attention being paid to number than the other aspects of the subject.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

53. The subject leader for mathematics has been absent from the school for a considerable time due to a long-term illness. Despite this, provision for mathematics has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection.
54. Achievement overall is satisfactory; in Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is good. By Year 11, the majority of pupils add and subtract numbers containing up to two decimal points, they can work out fractions of given numbers and can calculate averages. Higher attaining pupils can add and subtract fractions and numbers with up to three decimal points, they can collect and organise data and have good mental arithmetic skills. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory; achievement is stronger in number than in the other aspects of mathematics. By Year 9 the majority of pupils are able to add and subtract numbers up to 3 digits correctly and they have a sound understanding of multiplication and division; they understand simple algebra and can use decimal notation when solving money problems. The work of higher attaining pupils indicates that they understand symmetry and the relationship between fractions and decimals.
55. Mathematics is taught by 4 teachers none of whom are specialists in the subject. Teachers' lack of knowledge of the subject, especially in Years 7 to 9 means that lessons focus more on number than on the other aspects of mathematics and this restricts pupils' achievement. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are satisfactory; teachers plan their lessons effectively and make good use of mental arithmetic to get lessons off to a purposeful start. The transition from the starter to the main part of the lesson is managed effectively so that pupils can maintain their concentration. Occasionally pupils misbehave during lessons and this is not always dealt with as effectively as it could be because the misbehaviour is not challenged with sufficient rigour.
56. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are brisk and purposeful; they are planned well and contain activities that are relevant to the abilities and interests of pupils. As a result pupils concentrate well and pay close attention to the tasks they are set and on the rare occasions when their behaviour deteriorates it is challenged firmly and successfully so that they return to work with the minimum of fuss. Across the year groups, pupils' work is marked regularly and assessment is used effectively to guide the next steps of teaching and learning.

57. The arrangements for the leadership and management of mathematics are unsatisfactory. Senior and middle managers do not have a sufficiently clear view of who should be doing what to ensure the development of mathematics. Consequently there is too much variation between the quality of teaching and the curriculum. The curriculum is good for Years 10 and 11 because it is based on the syllabus for an external examination, but in Years 7 to 9, the absence of clear leadership has resulted in too much emphasis being given to number at the expense of the other aspects of mathematics. Teaching of mathematics is not monitored systematically to establish and build on the strengths evident in the school and the use of ICT to assist pupils' learning in mathematics has not received sufficient attention.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers of other subjects offer sound opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills. For example, in ICT pupils use their knowledge of bar charts and pie charts to represent the findings of a survey. In science pupils are encouraged to calculate and work out measurements and lengths when carrying out investigations and in design and technology pupils are taught to measure accurately.

SCIENCE

Five lessons in science were seen in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in all year groups and held discussions with pupils about their work.

Provision for science is **unsatisfactory**.

- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.
 - The standards achieved by pupils are too low and have not improved since the last inspection.
 - Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in science lessons are poor.
 - Marking is inconsistent and does not help pupils improve their work.
59. Although a GCSE course is available for pupils for the first time this year, the standards achieved by pupils across the school are too low. This is confirmed by the quality of pupils' work and the unsatisfactory and sometimes poor teaching observed during the inspection. The lack of strategies to manage the poor behaviour of the pupils, the low expectations of performance, and the lack of pace of teaching all contribute to a minimal level of learning in lessons. An analysis of the files of pupils who have recently joined the school shows that there has been a decline in both the content and presentation of their work over time.
60. Most lessons are characterised by a constant level of disruption. Lessons repeatedly have to be stopped while the teacher attempts to gain some control. This adversely affects the flow of the teaching. On many occasions pupils have to be removed by senior staff or simply walk out of the classroom. Pupils challenge their teachers, frequently talking over them, and repeatedly ignore instructions. There are continual arguments and high level of conflict between pupils. There is little adherence to the school's behaviour management policies and the points allocated for performance at the end of the lesson seldom reflect the poor behaviour that has gone on. The pupils' personal targets are stuck to the front of their books, but no reference is made to them during the course of lessons. The teaching assistants receive little direction in how they can help the teacher either in the delivery of the lesson or in managing the pupils' behaviour.
61. Pupils come to the school with a lack of scientific knowledge. They are introduced to some of the most important equipment and ideas in Year 7. These pupils can recognise a Bunsen burner and know that controlling the airflow can vary the temperature of the flame. They are also able to use a thermometer to measure temperature and to plot their results on a graph. In Year 8, pupils appreciate that heat is conducted at different rates by different materials and some are better suited to act as insulators. Despite the introduction of an exam course, the pupils in Years 10 and 11 have not progressed as much as they should have done. A few pupils have a

hesitant understanding of how genes influence inherited characteristics, but most continue to struggle with even the most basic concepts.

62. The co-ordination of science is unsatisfactory. The Key Stage 3 strategy has been adopted throughout the school, but the pupils' behaviour means that it can seldom be implemented. On occasions the introductory activity bore no resemblance to the rest of the lesson and did not appear on the teacher's lesson plan. There is no assessment of new pupils and the marking of pupils' work is at best inconsistent and often absent. Pupils need to see that their work is valued and the information that marking gives should be used to inform the planning of future lessons. The headteacher and senior officers from the local education authority have observed the teaching of science. However, the actions taken to remedy the weaknesses in performance have not secured the improvement needed. There is an over-reliance on commercially prepared worksheets, which often demand a degree of literacy that the pupils do not possess. Too little use is made of ICT to either add interest to the lessons or for the pupils to achieve a better standard of presentation.
63. The science laboratory presents a significant health and safety risk. The lack of restraint of the pupils means that activities involving the use of either naked flame or chemicals constitute a serious hazard to the well being of others within the room.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Four lessons involving the use of information and communications technology were seen in Years 7, 9 and 10. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and held discussions with pupils about it.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well.
- In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are good.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' poor behaviour is sometimes not challenged with sufficient rigour.
- Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory.

Commentary

64. Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection and the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is now good. In specialist lessons, pupils show confidence in their use of a range of computer applications and software. They use word processing skills effectively and can move work from different applications to produce pages for a web-site. They have, for example, used PowerPoint and Clip-Art to produce animated pages for their web-site and can insert hyperlinks to help a visitor to move easily between the different pages of their site. Spreadsheets are used effectively to produce graphs and charts and older pupils have used desk top publishing software to produce good quality business cards.
65. Teaching of ICT in specialist lessons is good; it is planned well to take account of pupils' abilities and consequently the pace of pupils' learning is usually brisk. Although not a specialist in the subject, the teacher has acquired knowledge and understanding of ICT quickly so that pupils are able to make good progress in the subject. The ICT technician provides good support during lessons and has developed an effective partnership with the teacher that helps pupils to overcome difficulties as quickly as possible. Pupils' behaviour is usually managed effectively by challenging them to learn and to concentrate on the tasks that have been set and pupils usually respond well to this. In one lesson, however, pupils' poor behaviour was not challenged at all and their behaviour and the language they chose to use deteriorated; in this lesson teaching and learning were unsatisfactory.

66. Leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory. The subject leader has improved ICT by planning the curriculum effectively and introducing a good system to assess pupils' progress. The subject leader has a good understanding of how the subject needs to be improved and has begun the introduction of the control element of the subject. The school has good resources for ICT; there is a dedicated ICT suite with sufficient computers for the number of pupils in each class and most other classrooms are equipped with computers and printers.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

67. Opportunities are too often missed in lessons in other subjects, including mathematics, to use computers. While there are plans to use computers to support pupils' work in other subjects, such as art, these plans have had little impact on the use of ICT other than in specialist lessons. Pupils' work contains little evidence of the use of ICT in other subjects.

HUMANITIES

History and Geography

Two lessons were seen in history for Years 7 and 9 and one in geography (Year 7). Inspectors looked at available samples of pupils' work in all year groups and held discussions with pupils about their work.

Provision for history and geography are **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' progress is unsatisfactory in geography and history
- There is no planning in place for geography or history.

Commentary

68. There is very little work from pupils for analysis in either history or geography. Files rarely contain more than one page of work and most are unfinished. Consequently, achievement in geography and history is unsatisfactory.
69. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the satisfactory history lessons, the teacher displayed good subject knowledge and enthusiasm but did not use resources effectively to reinforce learning. Opportunities were missed to develop points that had been raised during question and answer sessions. The pace was slow and there was insufficient challenge in the lessons, as pupils relied on too much support when doing written work. The unsatisfactory behaviour management limited progress. In the good geography lesson, the teacher used a video effectively to engage the pupils' interest. Consequently, behaviour was good and the pupils remained on task throughout the lesson.
70. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The current co-ordinator has only been in post since the start of this term and although very enthusiastic has not had sufficient time to make any impact on promoting the subjects. There is no planning in place and resources for the subjects are unsatisfactory.

Religious Education

One lesson was seen in religious education in Year 7. Inspectors looked at available samples of pupils' work in all year groups and held discussions with pupils about their work.

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for pupils to be involved in discussions and they are managed well.
- Teachers plan topics that are appropriate to the ages and abilities of the pupils.
- The teacher has good levels of subject knowledge and expertise.

Commentary

71. Pupils follow the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The planning is satisfactory overall and the co-ordinator has identified appropriate cross curricular links with art and drama. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teacher has good subject knowledge and expertise, which is used well to motivate and interest pupils and has created a relaxed atmosphere in the class and manages difficult behaviour well. Although very unsettled for parts of the lesson pupils were able to recall the names and purposes of a variety of objects important to the Sikh religion. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 have completed work on "suffering" and have extended their study of this topic in art and drama lessons.
72. Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 study RE as part of an accredited course. They study sacred places and buildings, festivals and celebrations and moral codes. There is a good balance in the work planned for pupils to learn about different world faiths. Pupils throughout the school are encouraged to learn about religions in an atmosphere of respect for the traditions of others. Resources are generally adequate. However, little evidence was seen of the use of ICT to support pupils' learning. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.

TECHNOLOGY

Three lessons were seen. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in all year groups and held discussions with pupils about their work.

Design and technology

The provision for design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of design and technology is good.
- Pupils are interested in the activities provided in the workshop and behave well.
- The standards of achievement in practical work are good, but are unsatisfactory in the planning and evaluation of projects.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 achieve satisfactorily in textiles.

Commentary

73. The pupils develop good practical skills in a traditional workshop teaching environment. There is an emphasis on the completion of a succession of projects, typically models, from a theme chosen by the teacher. The youngest pupils are familiar with the basic tools of the workshop, such as saws, surform planer and glasspaper. They can drill a hole to fit a mast and pin 'shields'

to the side of their ship accurately. In Year 8, the pupils research different styles of castles on the Internet and construct accurate representations. By Year 9, the pupils are able to create accurate and detailed models of Second World War aeroplanes and tanks in wood. They are also able to build a vehicle around a battery-powered motor and two axles. They talk confidently about the advantages of using different materials and recognise that there needs to be an appropriate power to weight ratio. Pupils demonstrate more individual creativity as they enter Years 10 and 11. They explore areas of design and technology that interest them and practise skills such as wood-turning and furniture making. They have also established a 'production line', for the multiple construction of bird boxes.

74. Pupils have little opportunity to record the planning or evaluation of their work, although the use of ICT to find additional detail is a strength of the subject. There is still no opportunity for Year 11 pupils to obtain any formal accreditation in design and technology. Many of the pupils have the ability to achieve a good grade at GCSE in Resistant Materials.
75. Teaching is planned well and the teacher has a good knowledge of the subject so that he is able to provide strong support when pupils experience difficulties. Pupils know exactly what is expected of them and they respond well to the challenges set for their achievement and behaviour. Pupils' behaviour is managed gently but firmly. Consequently pupils enjoy their lessons in the workshop and respect all the health and safety requirements that are necessary. The lessons have pace and purpose. The pupils are calm and settled, usually engrossed in their work. There is an appropriate emphasis on using the right terminology and employing tools for their correct purpose.
76. The planning for the subject is now in place. There are detailed assessments of those skills that the pupils possess and those that require more practice. The evaluation of the work the pupils produce is a weakness that still requires further development.
77. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have one lesson a week of textiles. No lessons were observed during the inspection, but the pupils' portfolios were seen. These demonstrate that they have explored weaving with a variety of materials and have experimented with making marbled papers. The work that has been produced demonstrates that even the least able have made sound progress and have achieved some good results.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Music

78. There is insufficient evidence to judge provision in music. Music is taught to Years 7 to 9 as part of a programme provided by an external organisation bought in by the school. One lesson, the first of a series, was observed during the inspection. Pupils responded well to the opportunity to learn 'scratching' on record turntables; they listened attentively and behaved well. Pupils learned how to produce different notes by varying the speed of 'scratching' and they contributed willingly to discussions about the technique.

Art and design

Four lessons were seen. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in all year groups and held discussions with pupils about their work.

Provision for art and design is **very good** and a key strength of the school. The strengths identified by the last inspection have been maintained and there has been satisfactory improvement.

- Pupils develop skills in a wide range of activities and make significant progress.
- The teacher is a specialist and uses his very good subject knowledge effectively to encourage pupils in their learning.

- The good strategies used to manage challenging behaviour produce a settled and productive learning environment.
 - Assessment of pupils' work is unsatisfactory.
79. Pupils' achievements are very good. The quality of work produced by the pupils throughout the school is impressive. There is a clear progression of skill from the youngest pupils in Year 7 to the school leavers in Year 11. Pupils in Year 7 are introduced to basic techniques. They work with clay slabs and learn how to join them to make a simple box with a lid. In subsequent years, pupils return to this theme, but develop more complex skills. In Year 10 for example, the pupils sketch the front of local buildings and then transfer their drawings onto tiles of clay. They can see and appreciate the different styles of architecture. They add relief to their work by adding bricks of clay to make a porch, chimney or a gable end. Finally they paint their tiles carefully to create an effective representation of the original building. In Year 11, pupils have used the slab technique to create models of training shoes, which are lively, colourful and fun.
80. The teaching of art is good. The expectations of good behaviour are explicit and pupils respond well to their teacher's quiet, but firm manner. The tasks presented to them catch their imagination and even the most reluctant are quickly drawn into constructive activity. Pupils can achieve at their own level and all are delighted with their completed projects. As a result pupils enjoy being in the art room. They come in and settle quickly to their work.
81. Planning for the subject is good. The art specialist has established a detailed file that outlines topics that have proved effective. It is complemented with his own drawings and numerous photographs of work that has previously been produced by pupils. A huge variety of topics encompass a wide range of media, as well as introducing the work of prominent contemporary artists. Leadership of the subject is good.
82. Although all pupils derive considerable enjoyment and insight from their participation in art classes, there is no opportunity for them to obtain a more formal award at the end of their school career. Many pupils undoubtedly have the ability to achieve a grade at GCSE, which would be a proper recognition of their ability and achievement.
83. The assessment of pupils' work has been a weakness. The art specialist, in consultation with the Local Education Authority's art adviser, is presently introducing a means of tracking progress more accurately. It is still too recent for its effectiveness to be judged.
84. The art room is suitable only for small groups and there is no separate area for clay and pottery work. As a result dust from the clay can be a nuisance for pupils trying to work on paper with paint or crayon. There also continues to be a lack of storage space for work in progress.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

One PE lesson was observed, the teacher's planning and subject documentation and the photographic evidence around the school were analysed and pupils' work in the subject was discussed with them.

Provision for PE is **good**. There has been a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

- Pupils make good progress in their PE skills.
 - The subject coordination of PE is good.
 - The under-use of local resources, identified in the previous inspection report, is now a strength of the subject.
85. Evidence from teachers' files and their assessments of pupils demonstrate that pupils steadily improve their ability and skills in a wide variety of sporting activities as they progress through the school. All pupils take a series of tests when they join the school, which are regularly reviewed to

demonstrate achievement. There is presently no accreditation available for Year 11 pupils, but this is being addressed with the introduction of an Entry Level Award in 'Practical Activities' for those entering their final two years of education.

86. Teaching is good. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are introduced to a range of team sports. A key feature of the teaching staff's approach to the subject is encouraging an ability to work cooperatively with others and to demonstrate elements of fairness and sportsmanship. They enjoy a programme that includes football, rugby, Kwik cricket, athletics, football, swimming and softball. The Year 7 group, observed practising their football skills, were lively and distractible. Their teachers showed good management strategies by maintaining high expectations of behaviour and constantly focusing the pupils on themselves. They provided a sequence of short exercises which ensured that the pupils' interest and enthusiasm was maintained. The pupils responded by participating well and working constructively in pairs. Older pupils have plenty of opportunity to use local facilities. Golf, fitness training, tennis, squash and canoeing are all available at nearby venues. During the inspection, Year 10 pupils were eagerly anticipating a trampolining session, where they are learning a series of basic jumps.
87. Leadership and management of PE are good. The long-term planning, identified as a weakness by the last inspection, has now been improved. Similarly, the identification and use of local resources has enhanced the provision for Year 10 and 11 pupils and introduces them to activities that they might otherwise not have the opportunity to experience. Pupils' skills are rigorously monitored and assessed and the results are used in the preparation of future lessons. The school takes part in regular fixtures against other schools, which the pupils clearly value and enjoy. The PE department has created a wealth of certification to recognise achievement in a range of sports. The frequent use of digital photography not only provides a good record of participation, but also enhances the use of ICT through the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Seven lessons were seen in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in all year groups and held discussions with pupils about their work.

Provision in personal, social, health and citizenship education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Careers education is very good.
- Planning for the subject is satisfactory.
- Pupils' behaviour is not managed consistently and this impedes their achievement.

Commentary

88. Learning opportunities in personal, social and health education lessons, including drugs and sex education are satisfactory overall. The programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) incorporates careers education, pupils' personal development (PSD) and citizenship and aspects from the Youth Awards Scheme. It ensures that the topics studied are relevant to pupils' lives and experiences. Through these topics pupils are helped to build meaningful relationships with adults and with each other and to take responsibility for their own behaviour. However, teaching, though satisfactory overall, is weaker with younger pupils, and this impedes their achievement. Provision for the subject has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection.
89. Pupils achieve very well in careers education. In a well planned and imaginative lesson in Year 9, pupils were fully engaged in the activity of planning a town and making decisions about where they would live in it. They discussed sensibly a range of alternative locations making good choices based on the availability of employment. They participated well in a role play exercise

with an estate agent, played by the learning support assistant, to select the type of house they wished to purchase. In a Year 11 lesson pupils' achievement was similarly very good as they learned how to use cheques in a topic about personal finance. Teaching and learning in careers education are very good. Older pupils are prepared effectively work on the next stage of education. There are good links with the 'Connexions' service to support Year 11 pupils in their preparation for leaving school.

90. In an effective Year 10 PSD lesson, pupils discussed alcohol awareness sensibly. The good relationships between pupils and the teacher ensured that pupils participated fully in the lesson, knowing that their contributions would be valued, even if not always correct. Other lessons in Years 7 and 8 however, were disrupted by pupils' poor behaviour and the ineffectiveness of its management or by a lack of challenge in the teaching. Pupils gained little from these lessons.
91. The curriculum is planned effectively and leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Assessment is satisfactory but the relationship between the various targets set for pupils and their work in PSHCE is not sufficiently clear. Pupils' experiences are enriched by visitors to the school, who contribute effectively to the PSHCE programme.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

