

INSPECTION REPORT

WANDLE VALLEY

Carshalton, Surrey

LEA area: London Borough of Sutton

Unique reference number: 103026

Headteacher: Mr. D. Bone

Lead inspector: Mrs. Patricia Potheary

Dates of inspection: 15th – 17th March 2004

Inspection number: 259040

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:	5 – 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	66
School address:	Welbeck Road Carshalton, Surrey
Postcode:	SM5 1LW
Telephone number:	02086 481365
Fax number:	02086 467840
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. Diana Stern
Date of previous inspection:	28 September 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Wandle Valley is a community special school for 80 boys and girls aged five to 16 years. There are currently 66 pupils on roll and only one is a girl who was absent during the inspection. The school currently has pupils aged eight to 16 years. There is one class in the primary department containing three pupils in Year 4 and three pupils in Year 6. There is one class for each of the secondary-aged groups but pupils in Years 8 and 9 are mixed within two classes. Pupils are all designated as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Forty-three of the 66 pupils are of White British origin, the rest are spread between six other, mainly White, Mixed or Black British Caribbean, ethnic groups with the origins of eight pupils undeclared. No pupils speak English at an early stage of acquisition. A high number of pupils are eligible for free school meals and attainment on entry is well below national averages.

The school provides an outreach service to mainstream schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21765	Mrs. Patricia Potheary	Lead inspector	Mathematics, French, religious education
9275	Mrs. Candy Kalms	Lay inspector	
17171	Mrs. Mary Last	Team inspector	Science, art, geography, history
2512	Mr. Brian Emery	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, design and technology, personal, social and health education, citizenship
23412	Mr. Alvin Jeffs	Team inspector	English, music, physical education, special educational needs

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	19
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2, 3 AND 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	29

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Wandle Valley is a good school where pupils, who have difficulties learning because of their behaviour, begin to achieve well and take their place in the world with a good sense of purpose and self-worth. The majority of teaching is good or very good and the school is very well led and well managed. The overall quality of education is good and value for money is satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils learn to work hard, show significantly improved achievement and successfully gain qualifications.
- The quality of teaching and learning are good or very good in three-quarters of lessons seen.
- The curriculum offers a good variety of relevant courses, which are highly valued by the pupils.
- Pupils are given good guidance about the next steps of their education and the world of work.
- Leadership is very good and the school is well managed, overcoming substantial barriers.
- Pupils regularly arrive late to lessons and few lessons have a clear beginning.
- Assessment and target-setting do not focus clearly enough on what is to be learned.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 11 have no literacy targets in their individual education plans to support their literacy development. Teachers do not systematically teach literacy in other subjects.
- Taught hours are short and this has a negative impact on a few pupils' attitudes to attendance.

School improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and all previous issues were addressed. Due to staff changes however, assessment, setting pupils' subject targets and punctuality need improving again. Nevertheless, the school has improved teaching in science and geography and school self-evaluation and performance management are now well embedded. The overall good quality of leadership, teaching and the qualifications pupils gain have been maintained, and the school comes second in the Local Education Authority for value added to pupils' achievements.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 6	Satisfactory	Good
Year 9	Good	Good
Year 11	Good	Good

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

Achievement is good overall. By the end of Year 6, pupils have achieved satisfactorily. Through good teaching and guidance, they show good achievement by the end of Year 9, and by the end of Year 11 they achieve good qualifications compared to similar schools. Achievement is good in English in all year groups for speaking and listening and reading and satisfactory, rather than good, in writing. Pupils also achieve well in science, information and communication technology and physical education. They achieve very well in mathematics, art, catering and design and technology. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with differing abilities or special educational needs make equally good progress.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils have good attitudes and behaviour. These are not good when pupils first enter the school but improve as they mature and benefit significantly from the support and guidance given by the school. The insight shown by pupils into why they need to calm their behaviour and fit into society is very good and they develop a keen sense of right and wrong while at the school.

Attendance is unsatisfactory, due largely to a core of pupils who rarely or never attend. More significantly, punctuality to lessons is unsatisfactory which interrupts learning for others and those involved.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good. It is satisfactory in English and good in science, information and communication technology (ICT), personal, social and health education, art and physical education, resulting in good and sometimes very good quality learning in these subjects. It is very good in mathematics, design and technology and catering, so that pupils learn very well. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 4 to 6 and good in Years 7 to 11. Teachers and learning support assistants are skilled in relating well to pupils and in developing their self-esteem and good attitudes to learning. There is an over-emphasis on behaviour rather than learning targets, though, and lessons rarely have a clear introduction. The curriculum is satisfactory. All pupils, whatever their special needs or abilities, are fully included. It offers a wide range of experiences to prepare pupils successfully for future work and education. There is, however, insufficient planning to improve pupils' literacy skills in all subjects. Staff recruitment difficulties have resulted in a short teaching week, an isolated primary curriculum and no music. The school provides good care and guidance for pupils, enabling them to make appropriate choices. Procedures for health and safety are not sufficiently formal to be secure. Links with parents are satisfactory and those with other schools and colleges are good. The outreach service is very good, making a very effective contribution to local schools and establishing good links to the benefit of Wandle Valley pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good and the leadership of the headteacher is very good. The school has recently come through a difficult period due to staff recruitment difficulties and yet has secured continued good achievement for pupils. A strong governing body has guided the school well during this period. It does not, however, ensure that music is taught which has been beyond its control. School self-evaluation is effective in identifying the key areas for improvement so that the good quality provision continues. The outreach provision is very well led and managed.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The great majority of parents are happy with the school. A minority of parents and pupils feel that there is insufficient homework and one or two that behaviour is sometimes difficult. Parents express views that 'support is amazing'. One or two parents said that they were not aware of what is being taught. The majority of pupils feel very positive about the school and most pupils think that their lessons are interesting, but that behaviour is sometimes difficult. The inspection findings support the views of parents and pupils.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve teaching and learning in all lessons by:
 - Ensuring pupils arrive at lessons on time and providing clearer lesson introductions.
 - Focusing more on what is to be learned when assessing pupils' work and setting targets.
- Improve literacy levels by:
 - Setting literacy targets for the majority of pupils in their individual education plans.
 - Teaching literacy skills in all subjects.
- Improve the amount of taught time and attitudes to attendance by:
 - Reinstating Wednesday afternoon lessons at the first possible opportunity.

and to meet statutory requirements ensure that:

- Music is taught to all pupils.
- Annual reporting requirements to parents are complete.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is good overall. Achievement is good in English, science, information and communication technology and physical education. It is very good in mathematics, art, catering and design and technology. Achievement is satisfactory rather than good for pupils in Years 4 to 6. There are no significant differences in achievement for pupils of different ethnic origin or for other groups within the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils make considerable gains in their skills and knowledge in examination subjects over time.
- Pupils leave with good qualifications, which support their transition to college and work.
- Work in mathematics, art, catering and design and technology shows particularly good gains on previous learning.
- Achievement is satisfactory rather than good in subjects or classes where there have been one or more changes of staff and the teaching has not been consistent.
- Achievement in reading and writing although good overall has several shortcomings and is not as good as achievement in mathematics or science.

Commentary

1. Pupils make considerable gains on previous learning in several subjects and all of them leave school with good qualifications. Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs), GCSE and Entry Level Certificate of Achievement results for 2003 show that pupils achieve well compared to similar schools. More pupils reach the average levels for their age by Year 9 than in similar schools, but less reach the higher levels in English. The small numbers in each year group of six or seven pupils make comparisons unreliable. Predictions for 2004 indicate that all pupils in the current Year 10 will leave school with six GCSEs. This helps pupils to gain successful work or college placements when they leave school. Considering their low levels of achievement and lack of application to learning when pupils enter the school, this is a substantial achievement. Each year pupils are achieving more accredited qualifications than the previous year and the good standards appear to be steady.
2. The school sets targets in literacy, numeracy, science, GCSEs and behaviour. In 2003, results indicate that between 30 and 80 per cent of targets were achieved. This represents good achievement given the challenging and broad nature of the targets set and the early stages of this target-setting process.
3. The school does not analyse the performance of different groups of pupils, but does monitor individual progress in detail. The very small numbers, no more than four pupils in each group, make analysis of groups such as ethnic minorities unreliable. Achievement is equally good for those pupils with additional special educational needs, such as autistic spectrum disorders or those with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, and for those looked after by the local authority. For those few pupils with the specific learning difficulty of dyslexia, however, progress is satisfactory rather than good because the school does not use sufficient specialised approaches to help them fully.
4. Pupils achieve to a satisfactory level overall in the primary department. Recent staff changes and timetable shortcomings account for changes in the primary department since the last inspection when achievement was good.

5. The very good achievement in mathematics, catering and design and technology has been built upon staffing stability as well as very good teaching. In art the new teacher has been able to capitalise on the strong organisation of the subject. In English, science and physical education the good achievement results mainly from skilled and dedicated teaching. There are less higher ability pupils gaining the upper grades in SATs and GCSEs than in similar schools, particularly in English. The reasons are twofold. Where lessons lack specific subject targets for each pupil, teachers tend to teach to the middle ground. In addition the pupils are often fearful of entering for examinations that they feel they might fail and so opt for the lower level papers. This is particularly so in English written work and it is a problem the school is trying to address. The limitations to pupils' writing development are clearly linked to a lack of planned and consistent support from all subjects for promoting these basic skills.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and their personal development is good overall. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of pupils respond well to the high expectations of their behaviour and the older pupils particularly have good attitudes to learning. Behaviour in lessons is generally good.
- A minority of pupils arrive late to school and others regularly enter lessons after they have started, disrupting learning for others and themselves.
- The school deals very effectively with any bullying and promotes racial harmony very well.
- Pupils often miss lessons or leave in the course of a lesson due to unsettled behaviour.
- Pupils' moral understanding and development are very good and much better than their spiritual and cultural development, which is satisfactory.

Commentary

Attendance and punctuality

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	10.8%	School data	14.9%
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.

6. Attendance is below that for similar schools and unauthorised absences are very high; this is unsatisfactory. However, each pupil represents nearly two percentage points and there is a core of pupils who never or rarely come to school. For the majority of pupils, attendance is good compared to similar schools. The school works very closely with the Educational Welfare Officer, parents and pupils; attendance is regularly monitored; absences are followed up and pupils with particularly poor attendance identified. This good practice to increase attendance has improved the figures until recently when it has declined again. For a very few pupils the half day off school on Wednesday is a disincentive to return on Thursday.
7. Punctuality first thing in the morning has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. The breakfast club is a contributory factor to this as it encourages pupils to arrive early. A minority of pupils, however, still do not arrive at school on time for registration, which makes it difficult for staff to set the tone for the day or address issues from the previous day. This casual attitude to timekeeping is reflected in lessons. Few lessons start with all pupils present and the beginning of lessons are frequently interrupted, making it difficult to teach well when introducing the lesson. This has a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning

in those lessons and is unsatisfactory. There has been a recent increase in pupils missing lessons through unsettled behaviour. This can be attributed to the pupils' negative reaction to the high turnover of teachers in the last year and the appointment of temporary staff, newly qualified staff and those unfamiliar with the special emotional and behavioural needs of these pupils. However, the school is working tirelessly to address the issues so that the situation settles again.

Attitudes and behaviour

8. When lessons start on time with a full complement of pupils, attitudes and behaviour are often good, and sometimes very good. In their lessons, pupils listen well, show respect and do as they are asked by teachers. Most staff are skilled in keeping pupils on task and the lesson atmosphere positive. Teachers and learning support assistants work well together to maintain order and are skilled at pre-empting conflict among pupils. Most pupils appear to like the adults they work with and, although many have poorly developed social skills, outbursts of bad behaviour or disrespect are rarely meant to be personal towards staff. The generally good attitudes that pupils have to learning means they are usually willing to discuss their work with visitors and display a positive and pleasant nature. Many pupils, particularly the older ones, report that they like the school. They willingly discuss their previous difficulties with attitudes and behaviour and understand that their learning has improved because they are better behaved.
9. The school does very well in reducing incidents of bullying: nine separate incidents are recorded over the last nine months, with only two pupils repeating the offence, and there was little seen during the inspection. Staff are careful to follow up incidents and help pupils to understand the impact of their actions and why they must care about others. Because of this there is no evidence of racial abuse and the school in this respect is harmonious. Pupils generally relate well to each other and to staff, showing a caring attitude. The incidents of exclusion are very reasonable considering the nature of the pupils' difficulties and the school does well not to permanently exclude pupils, preferring to work with them in addressing their difficult behaviour.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
43	10 (2 pupils)	0
1	1	0
4	1	0
4	9 (2 pupils)	0
1	0	0

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

Personal development

10. Pupils' clear understanding of moral issues in discussion is particularly good. They know rules are needed and when they do not agree, such as about not being able to wear caps in school, they understand the need for some order to set a good learning environment. In personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons, pupils have good opportunities to discuss many different moral issues and they do this with common sense and maturity. Assemblies provide a daily period of reflection and teachers look for opportunities in lessons for pupils to

reflect on things which excite or captivate them. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, but good in the primary department where many opportunities are used to explore different cultures. All pupils have opportunities to explore cultural issues in art, drama, religious education, history and geography, and are clearly aware that they live in a multicultural society. Social development is good. Pupils arrive in the school with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and younger pupils particularly, although aware of boundaries, can become angry or disrespectful when they cannot have their own way. These problems are overcome well as they progress through the school and reduce considerably through the continuous, dedicated, quiet support and guidance given by all the staff.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good and the curriculum is satisfactory. The school provides good care and guidance to pupils, links with parents are good and with the community very good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good or very good in almost three-quarters of all lessons seen and so pupils are able to learn well.
- Very good classroom relationships and good planning for varied activities help to keep pupils well motivated to learn.
- The work of learning support assistants is very skilled and supports pupils' good progress.
- Teachers are effective in keeping pupils on task when their attention wanders.
- Too many lessons lack a clear introduction so that pupils do not always know exactly what is expected of them.
- Pupils' individual targets and assessment in lesson plans are usually focused on behaviour rather than what is to be learned.
- Lessons in most subjects lack planned teaching of essential literacy and ICT skills.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 35 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0 %)	8 (23 %)	17 (49 %)	9 (26 %)	1 (2 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)

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

11. Teaching and learning for pupils in Years 7 to 11 are good, but satisfactory rather than good for pupils in Years 4 to 6, due mainly to recent unavoidable staff changes. Teaching and learning in English are satisfactory. They are good in science, ICT, art, physical education and personal, social and health education. Teaching and learning are very good overall in mathematics, catering and design and technology. Teaching is equally good for pupils of different abilities and special educational needs, except for one or two pupils with specific reading difficulties (dyslexia) who lack specialist equipment and techniques to help them make good rather than satisfactory progress in some lessons. A positive approach to inclusion is apparent in the way that pupils with additional special educational needs are taught and supported. Every pupil is given a fair opportunity to participate and shine.

12. Teachers and learning support assistants have particularly good relationships with pupils, supporting them sensitively through difficulties and raising their self-esteem so that they feel able to learn effectively, often for the first time. Several pupils commented that this is the first school to help them to learn well. Learning support assistants know the pupils very well and in classes where teachers are new to the school their skilled teaching helps to keep pupils feeling confident enough to carry on working hard. Staff skills in keeping pupils focused on their work often when they are confused or angry, are particularly effective in ensuring that learning continues.
13. Teachers' planning is good and includes a broad range of experiences, which cater for the pupils' interests and aptitudes. This ensures pupils are motivated by practical lessons, which are meaningful to them. In a science lesson, for example, Years 10 and 11 pupils were fascinated by a newspaper report which suggested that more germs are found in the desks of people who eat their lunch there than on the average toilet seat. Pupils are encouraged well in good lessons to work together as well as to become independent learners.
14. The main weaknesses in teaching concern a lack of clarity about what is to be learned. Three main shortcomings contribute to this:
 - Many lessons do not start on time because some of the pupils arrive late, often being disruptive when they come in.
 - This means that teachers do not often give an introduction about the lesson, setting the tone for the whole group.
 - Pupils' individual targets and assessment in lessons focus on behaviour and attitudes, not what is to be learned.The result from this is that pupils do not achieve as much as they could if the learning objectives were clearer. Behaviour, rather than learning, remains the focus in weaker lessons.
15. Assessment is good for the examination subjects and the good lessons clearly relate what has been learned to what is taught next. However, in too many lessons, assessment, which takes place after the lesson, is connected to behaviour targets and this is what is reported to parents in some subjects. Older pupils particularly are involved well in developing their own targets, but less so in then reviewing their progress. This process is not undertaken systematically with the younger pupils who are not so clear about what they need to do to improve their work. There has been no noticeable improvement in assessment since the last inspection when the same strengths and weaknesses were noted.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. Opportunities for enrichment are good. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision is enriched well through sporting opportunities, after-school clubs, visits and the relevance of courses such as catering and design and technology.
- There is an insufficiently clear emphasis on improving pupils' literacy skills in all subjects.
- The curriculum is fully inclusive and relevant to the different educational, social and emotional needs and aptitudes of pupils.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education and the world of work.
- Attracting and retaining suitable teaching staff is an ongoing problem resulting in insufficient taught time during the week to offer a full and broad curriculum.
- The primary curriculum lacks sufficient involvement with the rest of the school to enhance its development.
- Music is not currently offered, but teachers do provide some musical experiences for pupils.

Commentary

16. All pupils regardless of gender, ability or significantly different needs receive an appropriate curriculum, which is identified in their individual education plans. A major focus is on improving pupils' social and behavioural skills. As a result their personal achievement and self-esteem are good by the time they leave school. There is a strong commitment to inclusion. For example, a special programme of individual tuition for pupils experiencing literacy difficulties is beginning to help them access their lessons better and make equally good progress as their peers.
17. Curriculum planning and lesson planning have improved well since the last inspection. There is insufficient planning, however, to ensure that all subjects address pupils' needs for the development of their basic literacy skills, which are often weak. This is especially significant for the one or two pupils with specific reading difficulty (dyslexia) where special techniques and equipment such as word processors are lacking. There is a good emphasis on key vocabulary in mathematics where pupils are encouraged to use mathematical terms when discussing their work.
18. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from a good range of learning opportunities with an increasing vocational flavour, preparing them well for the world of work or further education. Participation in the school's Bistro, for example, is very professional and challenges pupils to maintain high standards of food preparation and presentation. Work experience placements for all pupils are beneficial and enjoyable, enabling students to gain direct knowledge of businesses such as garages, shops and manufacturing. Pupils speak highly of the opportunities provided. The expanding provision for careers education is rapidly providing pupils with good guidance on their options on leaving school despite the lack of access to careers guidance from the Connexions service. The work of the new co-ordinator for careers education for pupils in Years 10 and 11 has already had a major impact on pupils' interest in further education, with the majority planning to attend local further education colleges to discuss options available.
19. Pupils in Years 4 and 6 are in one small primary class and are largely separate from the rest of the school. There is one teacher covering most of the primary National Curriculum with a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy. This arrangement lacks sufficient links with other staff, however, for the newly qualified teacher to be fully supported in developing a robust curriculum. The time set aside for pupils to choose activities, for example, is not sufficiently well constructed to support their learning effectively. In addition primary pupils are given little opportunity to be part of the main school. The result is a primary curriculum leading to satisfactory rather than good achievement.
20. Pupils of all ages are sent home on Wednesday afternoons. This is a response to earlier staff recruitment problems but means that the taught week is shorter than for similar schools and parents report that this is demotivating to pupils with attendance problems. This is recognised by the school which intends to reinstate Wednesday afternoon lessons shortly. Governors, senior management and other staff, working with the local authority, have been innovative in staffing almost full curriculum coverage, but this is an ongoing problem. As a direct result the school is not able to offer music, which is not satisfactory, although planning to improve musical experiences for the pupils is underway. In addition, the use of ICT and computers to enhance learning in all subjects is weak. Under the circumstances, achievement in all subjects has benefited from the continuity provided by well-established learning support assistants.
21. A strength of the curriculum is the good range of enrichment opportunities provided for the pupils. There is appropriate provision for personal, social and health education including sex and drugs education and citizenship. The school has also built up a good reputation for its sporting achievements, which are well supported by good role models within the staff, including the headteacher. For example, pupils use sporting amenities in several locations and participate in mountain biking, canoeing and orienteering. To support their vocational work they

have visited the London Restaurant Show in London, for example. There are also breakfast, lunchtime and after-school clubs, visiting artists, charity work and a Christmas production.

22. The accommodation is satisfactory overall with good specialist rooms such as science, design and technology, art and a very big sports hall. Its sheer size makes upkeep problematic but the school does all it can to maintain a safe environment. Resources are satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils is good. The way the school seeks to involve pupils in its work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know pupils very well and are highly committed to their welfare, both emotional and physical, as well as guiding them well towards the right choices for the future.
- Care for pupils who are looked after by the local authority is very good.
- Pupils are kept safe but procedures for health and safety are not sufficiently formal to be secure.

Commentary

23. The school offers its pupils a caring atmosphere where high quality day-to-day support is apparent and pupils are valued as individuals. This is underpinned by good relationships and the commitment and vision of the headteacher, which provide pupils with the secure environment necessary to help them learn.
24. Despite the recent staff changes, staff know the pupils well and have a good understanding about their individual needs and personal circumstances. The overall monitoring and assessment of pupils whatever their special circumstances or needs are good. Prompt action is taken where concern is felt. Sensitive counselling is always available when needed. Assessment and individual education planning linked to annual reviews are used well to guide pupils towards the right choices as they progress through the school. Staff monitor pupils formally and informally and daily briefings ensure all staff share information and concerns. Very good practices for monitoring pupils who are looked after by the local authority ensure that their progress and development are carefully evaluated. The school enjoys a good working relationship with the education welfare service, which supports good attendance for the majority. Links with other services, however, particularly social services, mental health services and the Connexions careers service, are less effective due to factors beyond the school's control. This means that the wider needs of the most vulnerable pupils are often not met well, with the resulting impact of slowing their progress in school.
25. Appropriate arrangements ensure pupils have a smooth introduction into the school and settle into the routines. Good information is recently available to pupils about further education and wider career opportunities, and all pupils are able to secure placement in work or at college on leaving. Pupils are complimentary about the way they are supported and guided through the school and express their views regularly to visitors that this is a good school and the best they have attended.
26. All pupils have individual education plans with clear behavioural targets, which are monitored rigorously by staff. However, it is only in the primary department that literacy targets are set as part of the individual education plans. Pupils are less informed about what they need to do to improve their reading and writing in the secondary department. Pupils are, however, beginning to take a greater part in setting and reviewing their learning targets and this is a good development. Their involvement in the work of the school, although satisfactory, is more limited and there is no school council. However, pupils' views are discussed and acted upon, for example they have secured a room with a disc jockey deck for use before school and freely contribute to group discussions in assembly and during form tutor time.

27. Child protection arrangements are satisfactory. The headteacher as the designated officer understands child protection issues and ensures that all members of staff, including those new to the school, follow the school's procedures, which are in line with the locally agreed policy. An appropriate number of staff are qualified to administer first aid although day-to-day minor injuries are not recorded as required. In addition, where medication is administered, records are not regularly completed. Procedures to support pupils' welfare, health and safety are not well developed. The site manager checks the site daily but this is not formalised sufficiently. There are not enough fire exit signs around the school and current systems do not ensure that everyone on the premises including visitors is accounted for.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are satisfactory and with the community are very good. Links with other schools and colleges are good. The outreach service is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Day-to-day communication is good and parents are contacted regularly where necessary.
- The breakfast club and the Bistro contribute to the very good links with the community.
- Links with other schools are fostered well especially through the very good outreach service.
- Written reports do not give parents enough information about what their children are learning.
- There is a lack of regular information for parents about the work of the school and the school does not report all the information required annually to parents.

Commentary

28. The two parents who attended the meeting prior to the inspection and those parents who responded to the questionnaire are generally positive about what the school offers their children. A small number are, however, unhappy about the arrangements for homework, and concerned about behaviour and bullying and the progress of their children. The number who responded is low and therefore does not necessarily represent the views of all parents.
29. Parents are regularly informed of meetings and reviews. Well over half attend and their children benefit from this involvement. The school makes every effort to let parents know when there is a change in their child's needs and staff are always available for discussion, which parents appreciate.
30. The headteacher works effectively to build a trusting relationship with parents, although there are no arrangements to seek their views. Complaints are rare and the headteacher deals personally with any that may occur. Parents are regularly kept informed about issues and particular achievements by telephone. In the same way parents are encouraged to contact the school if they have any concerns. This day-to-day communication is complemented by a prospectus providing useful information about the school, two meetings offering parents the opportunity to meet individual subject teachers and a written report each year. These reports are satisfactory but are not sufficiently focused on pupils' achievements within subjects. They do not provide enough information about gains in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and the targets for improvement are too general to contribute to learning.
31. When necessary, parents receive letters with information about what is happening in school but there is no regular newsletter. Information on how to support learning at home is limited, particularly as parents do not receive any information outlining the work covered in lessons. The school provides homework on request for Years 7, 8 and 9 and it is given to Year 10, but this is not sufficient for some parents and pupils who would prefer a more formal system. The governors' annual report to parents and prospectus do not include all the required information which is unsatisfactory. Most parents still have limited impact on the work of the school and the

learning of pupils but they are interested in how their children are progressing and there is a good attendance for meetings.

32. Pupils' learning and their social and personal development are enhanced as a result of the very good links that have been established with the community. This applies to all pupils regardless of their ability or special educational needs. There are a number of visits many of which offer outdoor experiences, and Year 9 are due to visit the Globe Theatre to support their learning of Macbeth. Occasional visitors to the school, such as theatre groups, broaden experiences further. The school offers a breakfast club, which also provides a similar after-school service. Each Thursday the Bistro is available for bookings from the community. Pupils are very positive in their discussion about the links they have in the community. The school continues to be regularly used by a wide variety of community groups and outside organisations generating additional income for the school. Links with other schools have been developed well, particularly sporting links with a local High School.

The Outreach Service

33. There is a very successful outreach service provided by the school to other local schools who value it highly. This offers a wide range of different services for pupils in other schools who experience social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. These include assessment, individual, group and in-class support, shared placements and programmes for anger management and social skills. The service also helps schools develop skills in target-setting for behaviour. There is also a rapid response team and eight experienced, well-trained learning support assistants who go into schools. It is self-financing and has a strong inclusive agenda. Pupils at Wandle Valley benefit well from the strong links this creates and the expertise that is being developed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. Governance and day-to-day management are good. The governors do not comply with statutory requirements to provide music and miss some of the required elements in reporting to parents.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides the school with strong and imaginative leadership that has helped it come through a period of staffing difficulties well.
- He is well supported by a new, but able, senior management team.
- The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Learning support assistants work as a cohesive and enthusiastic team providing security for pupils and continuity for staff.
- Senior staff use self-evaluation very well to identify areas for development.
- There is a very good programme of professional development linked to identified staff and school needs.
- Not enough attention is paid to pupils' achievement in the monitoring of teaching.
- Money is spent wisely to the benefit of pupils' achievement and the budget is balanced.

Commentary

34. The school has experienced a period of difficulty with regard to teacher recruitment and this has had a negative impact on the provision the school makes. Throughout this period, the headteacher has continued to lead the school and support new staff with a very strong vision, commitment and sheer hard work. This has resulted in the continuing good quality of education and pupil achievement that was commended in the last report. Staff, governors, parents and pupils attest to his very good leadership which is welcoming and supportive. His vision is one

that enthuses staff and values pupils. It makes a major contribution to the success that pupils experience.

35. He is well supported by an able governing body, which provides strong moral support and a very good range of appropriate skills to guide the work of the school well. Governors clearly understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide suitable challenge to the senior management team when necessary. The governors have been unable to employ a music teacher to ensure that music is taught which they are seeking to address. In addition, some reporting requirements to parents are not fulfilled which is a weakness.
36. The headteacher is well supported by two new deputies who have already made strong contributions to developments within the school and are quickly becoming involved in monitoring teaching and implementing the performance management programme. They share the head's strong vision of an inclusive and caring environment and are beginning to contribute well to curriculum development. They also help develop classroom management techniques and provide good role models for new teachers. Thus, the school has a strong senior management team. Learning support assistants also work as an extremely committed, effective and enthusiastic team, with very strong links to co-ordinators. They specialise in some subjects such as English, mathematics, ICT and PE and this contributes significantly to the progress pupils are able to make in these subjects. The headteacher and senior staff make very good use of self-evaluation to accurately identify areas for development.
37. Performance management is embedded, but due to so many staff changes has been focused on the resulting inconsistencies to learning and behaviour throughout the school. New staff receive good induction to the school. There is a strong, and appropriate, emphasis on behavioural strategies, but not enough support is provided on setting learning objectives related to the subjects. Similarly, there has been limited analysis and use of the large amount of data that the school has collected. This means that the process for identifying where planning is weak or schemes of work are inappropriate based upon pupil progress is more limited.
38. The school now provides a very strong programme of professional development, which is a good improvement since the last inspection when it was a key issue. This means that teachers and learning support assistants have had, and will continue to have, very good opportunities for training in key areas, such as special educational needs, behaviour management and subject development. Learning support assistants, for example, report very successful experiences where they have undertaken work in areas such as reading, mathematics and emotional literacy.
39. Financial support for developments is good. The administration officer is a member of the governing body's finance committee and communication for spending wisely and considering best value principles is good. Good processes are in place to ensure regular reporting and access to the most up-to-date information. Expenditure per pupil is high as the school is funded for maximum places, but almost 20 pupils are due to join the school shortly.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,149,126	Balance from previous year	167,012
Total expenditure	1,246,429	Balance carried forward to the next	69,709
Expenditure per pupil	17,312		

40. The most significant barrier to improvement is the fact that several teachers are new to this type of school, a few are temporary and a significant number are new to teaching. This means

that many of them require support in adapting to the needs of the pupils and developing appropriate classroom techniques. Pupils do not respond easily to so many changes and have become unsettled. This requires a lot of staff time and energy to be spent dealing with pupils whose behaviour suffers as a result. This has a negative impact on the time devoted to school development and improvement, which is subsequently slowed.

41. Difficulties in accessing mental health services, social services and the Connexions careers service also have an adverse effect on pupil development, particularly for those pupils with the most complex educational needs.
42. However, the vision and tireless commitment of all staff to include and help every pupil to learn and achieve their best is a very strong basis upon which to move forward. In addition, the willingness of new staff to learn through techniques such as co-teaching is also an aid to further improvement and gives cause for optimism. The continuity provided by learning support assistants is a third aid to improvement which has already contributed to success in an unsettled period.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2, 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Lessons in English were seen in each year group. Two French lessons were seen: one in Year 6 and one in Year 9. Pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions were held with staff and pupils in both subjects.

English

Provision in English is **good**, with pupils achieving well compared to others in similar settings.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well during their time at the school. The oldest pupils gain good qualifications in English and achieve better than pupils in similar schools.
- Teaching provides pupils with well-chosen texts and tasks that focus attention.
- The work of learning support assistants in English lessons is of a very high quality.
- Standards in writing are not as high as they could be in either content or presentation.
- Not enough importance is placed on individual literacy targets across the school and English skills are not regularly reinforced in other subjects of the curriculum.
- There is a new and effective programme of individual tuition for those pupils with literacy and reading difficulties. However, there are not enough special techniques or equipment to support their access to all the subjects.

Commentary

43. The previous report highlighted the good achievement in speaking and listening throughout the school. This continues to be the case. Pupils joining the school have experienced disrupted schooling and, despite their behaviour difficulties and low self-esteem, develop well in their ability to express themselves clearly and venture opinions with facts to back these up. This was evident in lessons dealing with legal rights, Macbeth and rhyme and rhythm in poetry. Pupils of all ages were willing to discuss their work and used increasingly sophisticated sentence structures and vocabulary to do so. Results in the 2003 national assessment tests at 14 indicated higher levels of success than most similar schools nationally. However, no pupils gained Level 5, which represents a standard that some pupils are capable of. All seven pupils were successful, either in speaking and listening skills at GCSE and in the English Certificate of Achievement.
44. Although reading presents difficulties for many pupils, most achieve well. This results from the careful attention given by teachers and learning support assistants in working alongside pupils experiencing problems. By the age of 16, pupils are confident in reading difficult texts, newspapers and official forms, such as driving licence and passport applications. As they move through the school they become more willing to read aloud and set great store by their ability to complete worksheets unaided. In one-to-one settings, there is strong support for individuals with literacy and reading difficulties using the pupils' interest in fiction; this is showing good success.
45. Although pupils make sound and sometimes good progress in their writing, standards are not as high as they are for reading and speaking and listening. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop longer pieces of writing. Sensitivity to pupils' confidence makes correction and redrafting of work a difficult matter and this reduces pupils' achievement in aspects such

as punctuation and spelling. Opportunities for using computers to help pupils become more confident in drafting and rewriting work, as well as checking spellings, are not adequate in English.

46. English teaching is satisfactory overall with some good aspects. These include the adaptation and presentation of texts that both support and challenge most pupils and motivate them to pay attention. Pupils arrive late to some lessons, which makes the introductions unclear for those who arrive on time. As pupils do have behaviour problems, it is also a strength of teaching that a strong emphasis is placed on pupils completing work, providing good preparation for examinations. The work of learning support assistants in English lessons is of a very high quality indeed. It is characterised by a very good relationship with pupils, a willingness to discuss any subject in an informed and supportive way and a very strong feeling of 'being there' for the pupils.
47. Targets are set in English and form the basis of discussion between staff and pupils. However, individual education plans for Years 7 to 11 do not contain literacy targets. English skills, therefore, are not developed in all lessons alongside behaviour targets.
48. The school is developing programmes for those pupils who experience the most extreme difficulties with reading, writing and spelling with a resource base, individual tuition and a powerful computer programme. However, there is no specialised equipment such as word processors or recognised techniques for teachers to help these pupils work more effectively in all subjects.
49. The English co-ordinator is new to the school, but is already beginning to identify ways to move the subject forward. These include the greater use of ICT and an increased emphasis on written presentation. At present the continuity between primary and secondary phases is not strong and, as a result, early action is not always a high enough priority. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory with a good quality of achievement in qualifications being maintained.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. There is no clear policy as to how staff can develop and reinforce English literacy skills within their own subjects and this has a negative impact on the importance attached to literacy by pupils. In a few subjects, such as mathematics, key words are practised and learned, but this is the exception rather than the rule.
51. Only two lessons were seen in **French**, one in the Year 6 class and one in a Year 8 and 9 class. For this reason there is no overall judgement of quality of provision. There is evidence in pupils' books of a wide coverage of French topics using the familiar scheme 'OK'. Pupils learn typical greetings, begin to understand the days of the week, colours and numbers in the younger groups, and older pupils learn the names of clothes and French food, for example. Pupils generally speak with a good French accent and show evidence of earlier learning by calling out which day it is in French. However, teaching relies far too heavily on written work and there is insufficient spoken activity to ensure that pupils really grasp the language and make suitable progress. The fact that some pupils arrive late to lessons means that lessons lack a clear introduction. This in turn leaves some pupils unclear as to what they are to learn. School management is providing strong support and guidance to the temporary subject leader.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement for pupils aged 11 to 16 years is very good, but satisfactory for pupils aged 8 to 11 years in the primary class.
- The quality of mathematics teaching is very good overall, but satisfactory for the small group aged eight to 11 years.
- The leadership of mathematics is good.

Commentary

52. Pupils achieve very well in mathematics by the time they leave school. Pupils of all abilities achieve much better than they do in other similar schools in their Statutory Assessment Tests and in their GCSE and Certificate of Achievement examinations. They achieve equally well in number work and calculation, solving problems, handling data and in measuring. For primary pupils in Years 4 and 6 achievement is satisfactory and there is evidence of sound progress in basic number skills, fractions, telling the time, weighing and measuring. There are no significant differences in mathematical achievement for pupils from different groups, those with additional special educational needs such as attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, or for those looked after by the local authority.
53. Teaching is satisfactory in the primary department. The class is well controlled and the teaching assistant knows the pupils well and helps extend their number concepts very effectively. The very good relationships between pupils and staff and the calm approach in one lesson meant that pupils were keen to do their work and improve their weighing and measuring. However, for the most able pupils in the primary department, teaching is not sufficiently challenging and, although they do make progress, their work is often too easy. This is largely because assessment measures pupils' behaviour rather than learning and lesson planning is not based sufficiently well on what has been learned before.
54. For pupils in the secondary department, teaching is of a very high quality. Lessons are well ordered, work is challenging and highly motivating and pupils have a keen sense of direction. Work is clearly based upon earlier learning for individuals and pupils want to work hard and do well. These lessons are fun and the classes show a good sense of humour.
55. Leadership of the subject is good and very good in the secondary department. The school uses a well-established scheme which enables pupils to overcome previous difficulties and low achievement and to experience success. The one weakness lies in the lack of support and guidance provided for the new teacher in the primary class, where techniques from the numeracy strategy and good assessment are not well established. ICT is used well in mathematics and key vocabulary is carefully taught. Mathematics has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection by maintaining a good overall level of provision.

Mathematics across the curriculum

56. Cross-curricular mathematics is satisfactory. Subject leaders refer to the mathematics department for guidance and emphasise the mathematics in their subjects. This is not planned systematically, however, to maximise these cross-curricular opportunities. Subject leaders are not aware of pupils' individual numeracy targets where this might be appropriate and so cannot help them if the opportunity arises.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**. It enables pupils to take an interest in the world around them and to gain creditable results at the end of Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in science GCSE.
- The teacher plans a good range of practical activities which are successful in motivating the pupils.
- Teaching is consistently good and fosters pupils' interests in scientific matters.
- Lessons sometimes start late and some pupils withdraw from the lesson without due reason.
- Opportunities to reinforce and extend pupils' literacy skills are sometimes missed.

Commentary

57. Pupils of all ages and abilities and those with additional special educational needs achieve well in science because they increase their knowledge, skills and understanding despite the difficulties they experience with taking control of their own behaviour. Although their concentration spans can be low, they work well on practical investigation, taking care with equipment such as thermometers, iron filings and Bunsen burners. By Year 11 pupils gain good results at GCSE. A significant factor in promoting the pupils' performance and their self-confidence is the very thorough examination preparation provided by the science teacher using past papers.
58. Teaching is good because the staff enjoy good relationships with the pupils and often use humour to diffuse difficult situations. The teacher makes good use of the whiteboard and shares lesson objectives with the pupils. Learning support assistants give good support and help the pupils improve their work and maintain their concentration. Nevertheless, pupils are frequently late to lessons or sometimes leave without permission, which then slows their learning. The science teacher pays good attention to key vocabulary in some lessons. For example, he emphasises the use of terms such as 'oxygen', 'respiration' and 'carbon dioxide' which the pupils read and understand well. Pupils' work books show a wide range of variation in presentation, completion of work and accuracy. Older and higher attaining pupils produce carefully presented and mainly accurate work including results of experiments and investigations. Lower attaining pupils undertake the experiments well, despite their evident difficulties with reading and writing.
59. The quality of leadership in science is good and the subject is well managed. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection when science was unsatisfactory in the secondary department. However, there is limited oversight of the primary department, which works separately. This was suitable when there were more primary classes, but now there is a need for more support and guidance for the new primary class teacher. Resources and accommodation for science are satisfactory although the laboratory is rather old and in need of renovation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in a range of ICT applications.
- Pupils have good opportunities to develop ICT skills.
- The subject has a high profile with pupils due to the enthusiasm and skills of the subject leader.

- Teaching in ICT lessons is good.
- Resources are good.
- Insufficient opportunities are used in other subjects to use ICT.

Commentary

60. The subject motivates pupils: they find the work they undertake in ICT lessons interesting and relevant and this has an impact on their achievement, which is good. In a lesson with Year 6 pupils, good teaching enabled them to construct a spreadsheet properly, containing a range of information; they entered names and numbers in columns and rows accurately and quickly. In a Year 9 class, pupils' good skills enabled them to create a word processing document on the code of conduct for the ICT room. They were able to design text, style and use clip art to enhance the document. Their high level of skill, along with very good teaching and support from a learning support assistant, resulted in a finished product of high quality. Older pupils are skilled in a wide range of ICT uses and applications. Year 10 and 11 pupils created a letter to correct forms, edit and format and use mail merge. Work in this lesson was significant in the way that the pupils were able to log on and start, check and complete their work with very little input from the teacher. The small number of pupils arriving late makes it difficult for the teacher to make any whole-class points at the beginning and so set the lesson objective clearly. Scrutiny of pupils' work over time shows that they are familiar with PowerPoint, desk top publishing and Intranet, can construct spreadsheets, model data and use various editing processes. Their word processing skills develop very well over time.
61. The pupils' good achievements in the subject are clearly the result of their own enthusiasm and the good, sometimes very good, teaching by the subject leader who leads the subject very well, has very good subject knowledge and understanding. Despite her status as a newly qualified teacher, she has developed good relationships with the pupils who are impressed by her range of skills and knowledge. Resources for ICT are good. The ICT suite is fully equipped and is an attractive work environment. There are currently no opportunities for pupils to take external examinations and this is a weakness which has not been addressed since the last inspection. Overall improvement in teaching and learning is satisfactory since then. Staff changes however, continue to affect the department negatively, especially in securing accreditation and in establishing the use of using ICT in other subjects.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

62. Although most other subject bases have ICT resources available, few lessons, with the exception of mathematics, were observed where good use was being made of the technology to reinforce or promote learning in other subjects.

HUMANITIES

63. Work was sampled in **history** and **geography** with only two history lessons seen during the inspection; it is therefore not possible to form an overall judgement about provision. There are indications that pupils' work is of a satisfactory standard and geography in the secondary department has improved since the last inspection, when it was poor. Pupils are helped to achieve a good understanding of the wider world and the differences between cultures past and present. For example, pupils in Years 8 and 9, studying the Holocaust watched with great concern an excerpt from the film 'Schindler's List'. They were genuinely moved by the plight of the Jewish people and discussed thoughtfully how oppressed people might feel.
64. The teaching of history during the inspection was good enabling pupils to work together as a group in discussion, listening to each other's ideas and being keen and confident to answer questions. The use of video and practical activities captures the pupils' interest and imagination so that they want to work hard. Pupils' work shows that an appropriate range of topics are taught. For example in Year 10 pupils have studied the causes of the First and

Second World Wars where they show a sound understanding of Hitler's rise to power. Work is well planned to include geography, history and religious education into the lessons, with a particular subject focus each term. This term it is history. Geography is included through the use of maps, for example, which pupils have used to identify the countries in the wars. The improvement since the last inspection includes new accredited courses for this year's Year 10 pupils. The curriculum is currently under review by a new, well-informed, co-ordinator. Although there is little use of ICT in pupils' books, there is evidence of information obtained from the Internet.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Religious education is well provided for in the primary department.
- The subject is taught to all age groups and meets statutory requirements.
- It was not taught during the inspection week in the secondary department due to staffing issues.

Commentary

65. There were no lessons of religious education seen during the inspection. The temporary co-ordinator left his post unexpectedly as the inspection approached and the subject has been taken on by the new humanities co-ordinator at short notice. It is therefore not possible to make a judgement on the quality of teaching or pupils' learning. The school has responded in the short term by incorporating elements of religious education into history and geography lessons in the secondary department. In the primary department there is evidence of a good range of learning about different religions such as Hinduism and Islam in the weekly lesson. In the secondary department pupils' books show evidence of suitable subject coverage. For example, within their current topic of the Holocaust, pupils evidently understand the symbols of Judaism and can compare them with those of Christianity. Artefacts such as prayer mats and photographs are well used to make the subject come alive. The planning is in line with the locally agreed syllabus as required. During the last inspection progress was good in the primary department but unsatisfactory in the secondary department. Improvement is satisfactory because provision is now satisfactory overall.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very high and motivates pupils very well.
- Pupils achieve very well and much of their work is finished to a very high standard.
- More than half of the pupils achieve very well in their GCSE.
- There is a high quality of subject leadership.

Commentary

66. Pupils' achievements and the progress they make in design and technology are very good as a result of high quality teaching, their enthusiasm for the subject and the good resources available to them. No teaching was seen in the primary class and no judgements are made about primary provision.

67. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 are working on individually-chosen projects, carefully guided by the teacher to ensure that they take on work they are capable of completing to a high standard. They turn wood with a lathe, use a range of hand tools properly and accurately and have good understanding of techniques such as gluing and finishing. As a result they produce work they are proud of and willing to show and take home. Older pupils, working towards GCSE accreditation, maintain portfolios of design and theory projects and produce major items or work which, because of the very good teaching, is of particularly a high standard, for example pieces of furniture, games and clocks of various designs. Despite the pupils' behaviour difficulties, in design and technology lessons they show enthusiasm and make real efforts to achieve the high standards the subject leader insists upon; many pupils visit the workshop in their own time to work on their projects.
68. Food technology is of a high quality and is reported under 'Business Courses' below.
69. The subject is extremely well led by the co-ordinator who is very experienced, has high standards and has very positive relationships with pupils. This, along with the good resources and the pupils' enthusiasm, means that the subject is a strength of the school. Design and technology has improved well since the last inspection when it was good overall.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good quality work leads to excellent success in GCSEs in Year 11 for all pupils.
- The emphasis on practical activities using a range of media leads to high achievement.
- The teacher's high expectations are effective in helping pupils to work independently.
- The difficult behaviour of Year 7 pupils prevents them learning at times.

Commentary

70. It was not possible to see art taught to pupils in the primary class but work in books and displays in the classroom show that pupils are gradually improving their use of drawing and sketching to illustrate their work. For example, the details and quality of the pupils' work varies according to their ability from carefully crafted sketches clearly showing character to basic outlines which nevertheless represents good achievement for these pupils.
71. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve well in lessons because teaching is good and the newly arrived teacher uses his expertise and enthusiasm to motivate the pupils. Pupils are encouraged effectively to take a pride in their work and to tackle tasks carefully and systematically. Almost all pupils behave well in lessons, but in Year 7 a few pupils do not get the best from teaching or achieve sufficiently well when they become distracted, disruptive or leave the room. Last year, however, GCSE grades for pupils in Year 11 included almost 50% A grades, one an A*. This demonstrates the way pupils are helped very well to become mature, value themselves and behave so that they enjoy the subject and achieve very well over time.
72. Teaching by the teacher and teaching assistant is consistently good and various practical techniques are skilfully taught to produce high quality work such as three-dimensional pieces and printing. Pupils preparing for GCSE were completing beautiful prints, mirrors and lampshades, inspired by Charles Rennie Mackintosh for example. Pupils are not afraid to experiment, and sometimes dubious results such as blotchy silk-screen prints help them to see how important technique is. This year, six pupils are predicted to gain passes at GCSE in grades F and above.

73. The specialist art teacher, only appointed in January, has already forged strong relationships with the pupils so that they respect his advice. Because he expects them to work independently, they are becoming used to asking for advice and evaluation help when they need it. At the end of the lesson, however, best use is not made of the plenary sessions for each pupil to identify the skills and knowledge they have acquired. Although record-keeping and assessment are accurate and thorough, pupils are not yet involved in self-assessment. There was no evidence of ICT used as a tool in art during the inspection.
74. Subject leadership is good and the curriculum broad and highly appropriate to the pupils' needs. The need for improved involvement of pupils in their learning and increased use of ICT is clearly understood. The subject has continued to be a strength of the school since the last inspection with even more pupils achieving high GCSE grades and this represents good improvement.
75. **Music** is not taught as the result of recruitment difficulties. This is **unsatisfactory** and the school is seeking to provide music as a matter of some urgency. However, the school does provide various musical experiences for the pupils. These include a disc jockey mixing desk, which is very well used each morning before school, a wide range of music to introduce the daily assemblies, and very recently some music sessions using guitars and other instruments conducted by staff who have a particular interest in music. The amount of musical experiences provided for the pupils is set to increase.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education (PE) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well, especially with regard to positive attitudes and application.
- Leadership of the subject is very good.
- Teaching is good and often very good.
- The emphasis on choice means that some pupils do not have appropriate targets for PE lessons.
- The PE curriculum is enriched by a wide range of opportunities for all pupils.
- The subject assists the full inclusion of pupils in a very positive way.
- There is currently no external accreditation.

Commentary

76. PE is a subject that is enjoyed by all pupils and of which pupils speak very highly. It contributes very well to pupils' self-confidence and their ability to co-operate and learn from each other. The significant improvement seen in pupils' perseverance in areas such as trampolining and swimming is impressive.
77. Pupils in all age groups achieve well largely as the result of the good, and often very good, teaching they receive. It is teaching that is well informed and very supportive of individual pupils, whatever their level of attainment. Staff are skilled in the sports they teach and seek every opportunity to gain additional coaching in aspects such as karate. A swimming and a trampolining lesson summed up the strengths. Each pupil was set an appropriate challenge and progress, however small, was celebrated. As a result the higher attaining pupils pushed themselves to more advanced levels while those with less aptitude or confidence felt able to move on to the next step. In this, teachers were well supported by learning support assistants who also possessed good PE skills and a strong commitment to pupils.

78. Pupils are given a significant amount of choice with regard to preferred activities. This is good, but sometimes means that individual pupils play football or table tennis without any real challenge.
79. The high standards are very largely as a result of very good subject leadership. Every effort has been taken to provide a wide range of activities, from weight-training to swimming and football to adventurous activities in the Black Mountains. Pupils are encouraged to participate in swimming galas, local football leagues and tournaments. Not only does this represent a very positive step into the local community, but it also ensures further celebration of individual skills. The good level of teaching and the resultant high achievement pupils make suggest that many pupils could gain externally-accredited qualifications. This is not the case at present, but PE staff are actively seeking to develop this. The subject has improved very well since the last inspection when provision was satisfactory.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

80. Only one **catering** session was observed during the inspection and the teacher was interviewed. This was sufficient to demonstrate that pupils achieve very well in this course. The pupils manage a weekly business enterprise preparing hot snacks at break times. This very well managed project provides pupils with very good practical experience in food technology. Products on sale are very well prepared, attractive and of good quality. The food technology and business enterprise teacher teaches very well, enjoys very good relationships with the pupils and insists on high standards of preparation, presentation and hygiene. The business venture is profitable and provides high quality experience of business development, production, promotion and selling. Particularly impressive and important to these pupils are their customer relation skills. During the session visited, they provided a table and water and asked after the customer's every need. This is carefully taught and successful in helping pupils with previous behaviour difficulties to think of others first and understand how important this is to the success of the business. The pupils manage the finances well and take a trip to France each year with part of the proceeds.
81. The pupils also run an impressive weekly Bistro where visitors and pupils can order and eat a hot meal prepared by them. This is highly acclaimed by visitors and has featured in the local press. All of these activities are leading successfully towards a future vocational qualification for the pupils involved.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in understanding and responding positively to some challenging and sensitive topics.
- Teaching is good and appropriate in helping pupils understand important personal issues and their place in the wider community.
- Pupils develop a mature interest in the many different and often demanding aspects of the subject.

Commentary

82. Pupils make good progress in their understanding of important areas of learning. They achieve well in discussions and study of challenging and diverse topics such as relationships, health, crime, sex and drugs. Pupils demonstrate mature insights into some issues and the good teaching uses these to promote discussion and enhance learning. Older pupils are

studying the subject at entry level and are compiling an impressive file of their work covering a wide range of topics. Work in these files is of good quality and indicates both the good teaching they receive and their own mature attitudes to the topics covered.

83. Because the teaching is good, sensitive and informed, the pupils show interest and behave maturely when discussing issues of, for example, sex or drugs. The teacher is confident and enjoys positive but respectful relationships with the pupils most of the time. On occasion, when pupils attempt to take advantage of the subject or topic under discussion, she deals with them in a firm, but sensitive and effective, manner.
84. The subject is well led by a relatively new teacher. The effective PSHE curriculum contributes substantially to the main work of the school, in helping pupils with behaviour difficulties to become more mature, and be able to learn and understand more fully their rights and responsibilities in the wider world. Citizenship is incorporated satisfactorily into the PSHE curriculum, but pupils do lack sufficient practical opportunities to contribute as citizens to their school and local communities. All teachers support the subject when appropriate during the school day and this contributes to its effectiveness. The subject has improved well since the last inspection and has a much higher profile on the school curriculum.

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

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

*In a special school such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not national standards.*