

INSPECTION REPORT

THE SUTTON SCHOOL

Dudley, West Midlands

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103877

Headteacher: David Bishop Rowe

Lead inspector: Jacque Cook

Dates of inspection: 15–18 March 2004

Inspection number: 259041

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
Age range of pupils:	11–16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	114
School address:	Scotts Green Close Russells Hall Estate Dudley, West Midlands
Postcode:	DY1 2DU
Telephone number:	01384 818670
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Freda Sunter
Date of previous inspection:	28 September 1996

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Sutton is a secondary school for 120 pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Nine pupils have additional special educational needs, seven with autistic spectrum disorder, one is hearing impaired and one is visually impaired. At present, there are twice as many boys as girls on roll. Fourteen pupils are from ethnic minorities, the largest group being five of British-Pakistani origin. All of these speak English as their first language. There are four pupils from traveller families and thirteen pupils are 'looked after' by the local authority.

The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is low and pupils' needs, particularly in Years 7 and 8, are more complex than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils are largely from the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley but a few are from surrounding local education authorities. A very small number of pupils leave or join the school during the academic year. Although a range of socio-economic backgrounds are represented, there are a high number of pupils eligible for free school meals indicating a substantial number from low socio economic bands.

The school gained a Healthy Schools Award in 2003 and is a member of an Education Action Zone with a focus on improving parental involvement and raising the achievement of pupils. It is also part of the specialist school status of the adjacent high school working to enrich pupils' experience in mathematics and information and communication technology.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2351	Jacque Cook	Lead inspector	Mathematics Art and design Music Citizenship English as an additional language
9348	Mary LeMage	Lay inspector	
27409	Sue Hunt	Team inspector	English Geography History French Religious education
12549	Rene Jeavons	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school which is continuing to improve. The very strong leadership and vision of the headteacher and the senior staff have made significant improvements to the quality of education. Good management, good quality teaching and very good accommodation have contributed to pupils' good levels of achievement and progress. Value for money is good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The achievement of pupils in science, art and design, information and communication technology (ICT), personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is very good.
- Standards in English are lower than expected for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and less able pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 do not consistently meet their targets in mathematics.
- Pupils' attitudes and personal development are very good. They learn to become more independent and are encouraged effectively to be responsible members of society.
- Very effective strategies are used to improve pupils' behaviour which, as a result, is very good.
- Teachers plan lessons very well and include excellent use of ICT, which helps pupils learn well.
- The provision for pupils in Years 8 and 9 to study a modern foreign language is inadequate.

This school has made good improvement since the last inspection. Effective action has been taken on all the issues previously identified although there continues to be concerns about the literacy and numeracy targets not yet being used to their full effect for the older pupils. Very good leadership and management has resulted in pupils making better progress, their attitudes and behaviour have improved considerably and the quality of teaching and learning has improved. Pupils' achievement in ICT and the teaching and learning in this subject have improved significantly since the last inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' progress and achievement is good overall. All pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in science, ICT, art and design, PSHE and citizenship. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make very good progress in English. However, in Years 10 and 11, the progress and achievement of pupils is restricted because of a lack of permanent staff and is satisfactory. In mathematics, progress and achievement are very good for pupils in Years 7 and 8 and satisfactory for other pupils. In this subject, more able pupils do well to achieve General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades. There are a few less able pupils who make unsatisfactory progress at times because work is not at a suitable level for them to succeed.

Pupils' personal qualities are improved very well through the effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result their attitudes and behaviour are very good. **Attendance is satisfactory.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Overall, teaching and learning are good. In the subjects where pupils make consistently very good progress, this is because of the very high quality of the teaching. Lessons are planned very well so that resources and time are used effectively and as a result, all pupils learn well. It is made clear to pupils what they will be learning at the beginning of each lesson and checks made at the end of sessions ensure they know what they have achieved. The curriculum is good and is enriched through theatre and sporting links, residential visits and after school activities. Care and support are very good and the partnerships with other schools and the community are very effective, and have a significant impact on the work of the older pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is very good and the management is good. The senior staff promote continual improvement and currently a specialist school bid and Investors in People application are being made. Staff form a strong team and the consistent implementation of school policies is an important element in the successful development of its work. The governance is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. The governing body has more information on which to base their work. The statutory requirement to teach a modern foreign language to pupils in Years 8 and 9 is not met due to difficulties in recruiting staff.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are largely very positive about the work of the school. They report that high expectations are set for the pupils, the leadership and management of the school are good and they feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or problems. The inspection team agrees with these comments. Concerns were raised by a number of parents about behaviour and bullying. This was investigated and found to no longer be a concern as effective strategies have been established to improve behaviour and prevent bullying.

Pupils' responses to the questionnaires are all very favourable. Their requests are listened to and they feel the staff are there to help them. The inspection team agrees with these comments.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve pupils' achievements in English in Years 10 and 11.
- Improve the teaching and learning of mathematics for less able pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that pupils in Years 8 and 9 are taught a modern foreign language.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils make good progress and achieve well overall which is good improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in science, art and design, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship.
- Pupils make good progress towards gaining awards and passing examinations.
- In English, pupils' progress is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11.
- Although 10 pupils gained GCSE grades in mathematics last year, at times, the less able pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 do not make as much progress as others in their class.
- Opportunities are not provided for pupils to make adequate progress in learning a modern foreign language.

Commentary

1. Last year the following awards were obtained by pupils in Year 11.

General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)				
	Number entered	Grade F	Grade G	
Mathematics	11	2	8	
Certificate of Educational Achievement (Entry Level)				
	Number entered	Pass	Merit	Distinction
English	20	5	13	1
Mathematics	20	9	7	0
Science	20	4	8	7
Art	9	0	0	8
Childcare	18	13	5	0
Design and technology	20	8	10	0
ICT	20	0	4	16
Physical education	20	10	6	1
Award Scheme and Development Network (ASDAN)				
Bronze award	5	5		
Expressive arts	11	11 at level 1		

Additionally, pupils in Years 7 to 9 studied for the Dudley Young Persons Charter as part of their PSHE and citizenship course and gained the following awards:

	Level	Pass	Merit	Distinction
Year 7	Bronze	4	10	8
Year 8	Silver	10	13	2
Year 9	Gold	5	11	1

2. It is difficult to compare pupils' achievements from one year to the next because year groups are not always similar. The target for 41 per cent of pupils in Year 11 to gain one or more GCSE grades was exceeded last year. This year, the target has been set at a lower level of 36.4 per cent to take into account the ability of the pupils; however, the average point score is at a slightly higher level as there are also fewer pupils. There are indications that this target will be met as the school plans to enter pupils for art and design, which in previous years has had a high level of success, as well as mathematics. There are more opportunities for pupils to gain entry level awards this year as humanities and religious education are included for the first time. Pupils are making very good progress towards meeting personal targets, for example to help them improve their behaviour. Their targets are met well in most subject areas. The exception is in mathematics where a few low ability pupils are not doing as well as they should.
3. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve very well and make very good progress in English because they are well taught. Lessons are planned very effectively to ensure work is at a suitable level. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to make very good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. However, partly due to changes in temporary staff over the last 18 months, their progress and achievement in reading and writing is only satisfactory and a few less able pupils do not make the progress they should in improving their literacy skills.
4. In mathematics, very good progress and achievement is made in Years 7 and 8 because staff take care to ensure pupils have a good understanding of their work, reviewing and practising skills such as in shape recognition. In Years 9 to 11 progress slows to satisfactory overall. Although the more able make good, and at times very good, progress towards their GCSE examination, a few of the less able make unsatisfactory progress because the work they are set is too difficult and they fail to meet many of their targets.
5. The progress and achievement of all pupils in science is very good. Their lessons are interesting and work is organised at appropriately challenging levels. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons, particularly the practical elements. They improve their knowledge and understanding well, for example, establishing whether they are applying a 'fair test' or discovering how gastric juices work.
6. Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in art and design, ICT and PSHE and citizenship. Additionally, in the lessons seen in music and expressive arts pupils make very good progress. This is largely because of the expertise of the staff and the very well planned and organised lessons. A modern language is only studied by pupils in Year 7 so pupils in Years 8 and 9 fail to make progress in the subject.
7. There are no measurable differences between the achievement of boys and girls or pupils from different ethnic groups. Close watch is maintained on the progress of pupils who are 'looked after' which ensures that their achievements are in line with others in their classes. Staff are very well informed about how best to provide for pupils with additional special educational needs, such as sensory impairment. A range of strategies are used as a matter of course to help

these pupils succeed. Staff are also very aware of the individual needs of the pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and there is often a good level of additional support focussed on these pupils in lessons. The additional provision of the learning support unit in the school is very helpful in ensuring that pupils continue to make progress. It offers a facility for pupils to work away from the class if necessary, which is helpful. As a result, pupils with autistic spectrum disorder make similar progress to other pupils in their classes. The staff in the learning support unit are skilled in helping pupils whose behaviour is preventing them from learning effectively. These pupils may work in the unit or be supported by the staff in lessons. This helps to maintain their progress effectively.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The personal development of pupils, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good throughout the school. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are also very good. The attendance of pupils is satisfactory and their punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' are very well managed in a consistent way which enables them to develop very good attitudes to school.
- Very good relationships contribute to very positive attitudes and very good behaviour.
- Pupils respond very well to the very good opportunities for their personal development.

Commentary

8. There has been good improvement since the last inspection because the school provides a supportive, happy environment and there are interesting things for pupils to do. This results in pupils wanting to attend. One pupil said he would like to come to school every day as it is never boring. Underlying this enthusiasm is the very high quality of personal relationships that pupils form with the staff. This leads to pupils developing very positive attitudes to their learning. In lessons, they try hard and concentrate well. For example, Year 11 pupils use a control device in ICT and are very focussed and determined to select the "shortest route to get to the party".
9. All staff know the pupils' needs very well and help them to learn acceptable patterns of behaviour. As a rule, clear strategies are followed consistently at all times and across all areas of the school. In the very rare instance where pupils do not behave well it is because temporary staff do not have the usual level of support in a lesson to carry out planned activities. Pupils clearly understand the behaviour code and are very well motivated by the rewards they can earn for behaving well. They also understand, and respect the sanctions which are applied for unacceptable behaviour. The code is built on pupils learning to make the right choice for themselves and consequently it makes a significant contribution to their personal development. For those few pupils whose behaviour is challenging, the clear strategies employed encourage them to work well. A number of parents expressed concerns about bullying in their responses to the questionnaire. Investigation, including talking with pupils, showed that incidents are now rare and are dealt with very effectively and quickly by staff.

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	100	40	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	2	0

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

10. There were no permanent exclusions last year and although the number of fixed term exclusions appears high, there are only 11 pupils involved. Since the work on improving behaviour, the number of exclusions has dropped dramatically and there were none last term.
11. Pupils' social development is a high priority and, as a result, they develop a clear awareness of what is acceptable and try their best to conform to high standards set by all staff. It is founded on pupils becoming independent, self-disciplined and able to make choices in their lives. The pupils achieve this very well. They take responsibilities seriously. A number of pupils in Year 10, act as mentors to pupils in Year 8, supporting them to achieve their 'learning challenge', which is to come to school with all the equipment they need for that day, or with their homework completed. Members of the School Council represent the views of their classes well. Pupils take turns to carry out classroom duties such as to carry the box of planners and the crate of water bottles to each lesson.
12. Pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong. There is explicit teaching considering rights and responsibilities in different situations, and the legal system is considered in citizenship lessons. Pupils are also given opportunities to consider historical moral issues, such as the development of the Commonwealth from the Empire.
13. Pupils are encouraged to take a very broad view of their learning. They show wonder at their discoveries in science lessons and respond to the beauty of the landscape on visits out of school. Spiritual development is also encouraged through religious education lessons, where a number of different faiths and cultures are studied. Staff in the school are from a number of different faiths and they share personal experiences with the pupils giving real meaning and relevance to spirituality. High quality art lessons further contribute by helping pupils to reflect on their work and that of great artists and craftsmen and women. Assemblies are held every day and include prayers and hymns.
14. Music and art have a high profile in the school and contribute significantly to cultural development. The whole school worked towards Commonwealth Day, with different groups of pupils representing different countries of the commonwealth. The project encompassed art, culture, including diversity within countries, history and music. The multi-cultural nature of Britain today is very well demonstrated by the display in school about British sporting heroes where pictures of sportsmen and women representing a wide range of ethnic backgrounds are on show.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.83	School data	3.11

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

15. Although two non attending pupils and two travellers who are currently travelling reduce figures, overall attendance is satisfactory. Most parents play their part in ensuring their children attend. Punctuality across the school is good. A significant number of the older pupils travel to school independently, using public transport or bicycles and respond to this responsibility very well, being determined to prove they deserve the trust shown in them. Their punctuality is particularly good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good overall. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are good and there are clear strengths in the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils and the links with other schools and the community.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment of pupils' progress is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lesson planning is very good and resources used very well.
- Excellent use is made of strategies to ensure that pupils know what they are expected to learn.
- There are high expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons.
- Praise and encouragement are used very effectively to help pupils to learn.
- Homework is regularly set and marked and supports what pupils learn in school.
- On occasion, work is not pitched at the right level for less able pupils.

Commentary

16. Although overall, teaching and learning are good, there are a significant number of lessons where they are very good and occasionally they are excellent. This is a good improvement since the last inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 49 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (4 %)	20 (41 %)	19 (39 %)	7 (14 %)	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.

17. Teaching and learning are very good in science, art and design, ICT, PSHE and citizenship. In lessons in these subjects, the work is pitched at just the right level for each individual. This ensures that all pupils do very well. The quality of teaching and learning is high because work is also pitched appropriately in Years 7 to 9 in English and 7 and 8 in mathematics. Overall in these subjects, teaching and learning are satisfactory.
18. Lessons are planned using a similar three part structure which is very effective as pupils know what to expect. Strategies to meet additional special educational needs are well thought through. For example, using a music score with larger and darker print for a visually impaired pupil and ensuring that a pupil with autistic spectrum disorder has adequate time for his reward activity. Pupils understand the highly successful WALT – 'we are learning today' and the WILF – 'what I am looking for' that are displayed and rehearsed at the beginning of lessons. They are confident that they know what to do, how they will be assessed and are able to get on with activities swiftly. Lessons are organised to enable pupils to use confidence gained to work independently. In music they set up their keyboards, plug in their headphones and soon concentrate on practising. Pupils also are helped to work together. In a PSHE and citizenship lesson, a small group of pupils worked with a support assistant deciding what questions they would ask a visitor from a local bank in the next lesson. They listened to each other's suggestions and made decisions about what should be included.
19. Teachers have very good skills for teaching literacy and key words are taught effectively in all subjects. Every opportunity is taken to get pupils to read. They often read the WILF and WALT at the beginning of lessons and read questions when going through work. There are instances, however, when pupils with literacy difficulties find work too difficult, for example in history and geography and this slows the pace of lessons. Teachers are very good at using ICT both to teach their lessons and also ensuring pupils have opportunities to practise their skills. Numeracy is taught effectively in subjects such as science where very good opportunities are identified when lessons are planned. Good use is made of the very high quality, spacious accommodation, for example, to organise group work and celebrate pupils' work attractively in

displays on walls and surfaces. Pupils are proud of their work and often appreciate being able to be away from the close proximity of others to enable them to concentrate on their work.

20. Pupils' behaviour is managed very well. Staff do not tolerate calling out in lessons and this is quickly and effectively dealt with through reminders and praising those who put their hands up and wait for their turn. The school systems of rewards and warnings are used consistently well. Usually, when a pupil, for whatever reason, prevents others from learning this is dealt with effectively. However, on one occasion during the inspection, temporary staff did not follow procedures effectively. The usual support was unavailable and, as a result, pupils misbehaved and their learning was unsatisfactory
21. Pupils are encouraged to do their best and they rise to challenges, for example, when tackling a 'slightly harder' worksheet on symmetry in mathematics. When they found the task too difficult, they gathered round the teacher, exploring different procedures together to solve the problem. By the end of the session, many were successful in replicating an image symmetrically. However, particularly in mathematics in Years 9, 10 and 11, teachers do not always set work at the right level for the less able pupils. As a result, work is at times not completed and too much is inaccurate.
22. Homework is usually collected and set at the beginning of lessons. Staff go through the work, which may be linked with what they have done before or what they are about to study. Pupils are clear about what they have to do and put the work in their planners. Although not all pupils complete homework, many do and to a high standard. This is partly because doing homework is linked to the reward scheme. It is also because staff build strong positive relationships with the pupils that encourage them to do well. This can be seen in the many incidents of humour in lessons. For example, pupils giggle when their mathematics teacher says "Fifty what? Bananas?" when they forget to add the word degrees when working out the size of an angle.
23. Assessment procedures are excellent in ICT and there is very good assessment of pupils' work in English in Years 7 to 9, in science, art and design, music and PSHE and citizenship. In these subjects assessment is thorough, used to respond to individual needs and ensures that pupils have a good understanding of how they can improve their work. In a number of subjects, such as in science, pupils assess their work themselves. This further helps them to see how they can do better. Assessments made when a pupil enters the school are used as a baseline so their progress can be checked effectively from year to year. There is a marking policy but comments on work are not always constructive to help pupils understand how to improve.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. It provides a good range of opportunities and activities during the school day, which support pupils well. It provides very good opportunities for enrichment through extra curricular activities. The quality of accommodation and resources are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well developed and organised to meet pupils' learning needs.
- The vocational education and training programmes help to prepare pupils very well for leaving school.
- French is not taught to pupils in Years 8 and 9.
- The use of 'Brain Gym' is very effective.

Commentary

24. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and a good range of learning activities is now provided for all pupils. The school has implemented the Key Stage 3 Strategy well overall and ensured that provision for ICT is greatly improved and taught through all subjects

as well as in specific lessons. The National Literacy Strategy is implemented well in Years 7 to 9 and elements from the National Numeracy Strategy are used effectively. However, due to difficulties in recruiting staff with the necessary expertise, French is only taught to pupils in Year 7.

25. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are taught an appropriate and relevant curriculum which successfully includes a number of good option choices including vocational subjects, expressive arts and work related activities. There are good opportunities for pupils to gain awards and examination passes including GCSE, the Certificate of Educational Achievement and Entry Level qualifications. Pupils' participation in mini enterprise is very good. Year 11 pupils attend Dudley College and do well studying taster courses in subjects such as carpentry, fashion, brickwork and soft furnishing. They achieve college certificates for each course they attend and these go towards their ASDAN bronze award accreditation and their Records of Achievement.
26. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by sessions of 'Brain Gym' twice a day. This series of exercises prepares pupils well and gets them into the right frame of mind for learning.

Example of outstanding practice

Pupils were taking time to settle down to their lessons. Because of this it was decided to introduce two sessions of 'Brain Gym' (a series of simple movements designed to help learners co-ordinate their brains and their bodies better), one during the morning registration session and another in the afternoon registration session.

Key factors in the successful development of the programme have been intensive staff training and investing sufficient time, in extended registration sessions, for the activities. It is now highly successful. Pupils in all year groups take the sessions very seriously and all join in which is remarkable given the short time it has been operating in school. At times, pupils lead the sessions for their classes, insisting that everyone does the exercises correctly – even staff. Movements are co-ordinated and new elements introduced effectively. The end result is an invaluable calm and a sense of community in each class which leads to an orderly start to each session that continues throughout the morning and the afternoon.

27. A great deal of importance is placed on promoting pupils' PSHE and citizenship. These subjects are taught effectively in all lessons, during planned activities at break and lunchtimes as well as in discrete lessons. Sex education with personal relationships and education about drug misuse are included extremely well.
28. Additional activities for all pupils are many and varied. There are very good opportunities for outdoor education and pupils can go on two residential visits per year. They take part in activities that build their confidence and help them to become more self reliant. There is a very good range of after school and Saturday morning activities organised by the school's learning link worker.
29. Pupils are rightly proud of their school building. There are excellent specialist areas, for example for ICT, science, design technology and art. The library has been re-sited and there are plans and funding to develop the overall area and improve the currently, poor stock of books. The school shares the adjacent sports field with the high school for games lessons which works very well. There are very good resources to support the school's work in all subjects.

30. Overall, there are sufficient teaching and support staff, but there are recruitment difficulties. There is no permanent teacher for English in Years 10 and 11 and as a result pupils are not learning as effectively as those in Years 7 to 9. The lack of a teacher for teaching French in Years 8 and 9 means that these pupils are currently, not making any progress in this subject. A determined effort is again being made to rectify this. Support staff are not always used appropriately as although pupils with additional special needs are very adequately supported, at times, pupils with low literacy skills struggle in lessons and occasionally this leads to unsatisfactory behaviour.

Care, guidance and support

The school meets a very good standard in the care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils. It provides good support, advice and guidance for its pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development. The school is good at seeking the views of pupils and acting on them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of relationships between staff and pupils are excellent.
- Arrangements for pupils' care and welfare are very good, as are all health and safety arrangements.
- Through the School Council, pupils are becoming more involved in the development of the school.

Commentary

31. All pupils agree that there is a member of staff they feel they can confide in. The consistent, supportive way in which the pupils are dealt with at all times underpins the quality of relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils know they will be treated fairly according to the behaviour policy. Staff in the learning support unit are particularly effective in helping pupils understand how they are feeling when they misbehave and helping them to control these feelings. All pupils have regular one-to-one interviews with their form tutors when they discuss any behaviour difficulties they are having and ways to work round them. This progress is only possible because of the high degree of trust between adults and pupils in the school. The care, guidance and support of pupils have improved well since the last inspection.
32. All statutory health and safety checks are undertaken and comprehensive risk assessments exist for all relevant areas of school life. Incidents and accidents are recorded thoroughly and regular analysis of these records highlights any patterns which may be emerging, so they can be dealt with. Child protection procedures in the school are very effective. The school works hard to promote a healthy lifestyle to its pupils, whilst still supporting them to make choices. An example is the tuck shop. A range of snacks are available clearly labelled with a 'traffic light' system, with 'green' snacks being the most healthy option and 'red' the least. Further, the provision of a bottle of water for each pupil which is available all the time also supports the healthy lifestyle.
33. Effective use is made of targets to guide and support pupils in their learning. They have targets for all subjects of the curriculum, which help pupils to understand what the next step is for them in their learning. They have similar targets for their personal development. These targets are contained in their planners which pupils carry with them to all lessons and to home. During the time pupils have with their form tutors each week they also review their progress and receive any additional help or guidance that they need. Progress is tracked from a baseline assessment and test results are closely analysed to ensure no group of pupils is being disadvantaged. To ensure that 'looked after' pupils are receiving an appropriate level of support and guidance, there are regular meetings with foster carers and social workers. Personal education plans are reviewed separately and feedback is given to the Carers Forum regularly.
34. The school works hard to seek and take account of the views of its pupils. There is a vibrant, although recently formed, School Council, comprising a representative from every class in the school. They meet regularly and discuss all aspects of the life of their school. Through the School Council every pupil in the school has a voice in the development of the school. Their

major achievement to date is to get the toilets refurbished to a high standard. They are currently looking at ways to have the computer club available at breakfast time, changes to school uniform and improvement of the playground.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are good links established with parents. Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good links with the local community help pupils to expand their horizons.
- There are very good links with a neighbouring high school which enhance the curriculum for pupils from both schools.
- The formal channels of communicating with parents are effective.
- Links with carers of looked after children are established well.

Commentary

35. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The local business community is now very supportive of the school. They have made significant contributions using their management expertise and through making gifts to the school's reward system. Local businesses offer worthwhile work experiences for pupils and also give employment to former pupils of the school. The school building is regularly used by the local community for rehearsals and a variety of clubs.
36. Links with the neighbouring high school are of mutual benefit. Sutton pupils are able to use the playing fields of the high school and access additional resources for mathematics. High school pupils have opportunities to work in The Sutton School as part of their community work programmes. The joint residential visit enhances the social development of all who take part. Another special school uses one of the science laboratories as they do not have such good facilities for their pupils. Older pupils benefit academically from being able to follow courses of study in a wide range of subjects at Dudley College. These sessions help them to appreciate what further education has to offer and many attend college when they leave school. Pupils also benefit socially by being with a larger group of students.
37. Parental requests to come into the school for any reason affecting their child's progress or well-being are welcomed. Staff always respond to parents, with daily telephone calls where appropriate to keep them informed. If necessary, members of staff visit parents in their home to provide information and support. Effective links are developed with foster carers and social workers to ensure 'looked after' pupils do as well as they can.
38. The formal channels of communication are good. Annual reports for parents about their children's progress are good on the whole, giving detailed information about what the pupil has done, although not always explaining what they have learned. There are two parents' evenings each year, in addition to the annual review meeting. Parents are fully informed about their children's targets as they are all listed in the excellent planners which pupils take home each day. This gives parents a very good opportunity to be involved in their children's learning at home. Parents and the local community are included in the very good enrichment programme instigated by the high level of participation in the Education Action Zone activities. Currently, two computer classes are held each week at the school, run by the local college, and the learning link worker has run workshops for parents in reading, cookery and music. Recently a parents' meeting room has been added to the school which is a useful addition.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is very good and management is good. The governance is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a very clear vision of how the school will develop.
- The leadership of senior key staff is very good.
- The procedures for financial management are effective and the principles of best value are applied well.
- Improvements have been introduced very well.
- The staff work very well together as a team

Commentary

39. The leadership of the headteacher and members of the leadership group together with the broader senior management team is very good. They have achieved a great deal over the last two years. An enormous strength of the school is the unity of the staff who work together successfully to implement improvements. As a result, the school is an exciting and stimulating place for the staff and pupils. The vision for the school is very well focussed on improving the education for pupils and currently includes a specialist school bid and an application for Investors in People. Strategic planning is very effective, for example, in order to improve the quality of information and communication technology considerable financial investment has been made in equipment and staff have been well trained in its use. Consequently, although the interactive whiteboards have only recently been installed, staff are confident and use them well, and pupils are making significant progress. Appropriate staffing changes such as a two tier senior management structure work well. This helps to ensure that staff in key positions have opportunities to carry out their roles effectively. Responsibilities are delegated well, such as monitoring the quality of records of achievement.
40. Six of the subjects inspected or sampled are led and managed very well, which makes a major contribution to pupils' success. However, in English the leadership and management are barely satisfactory overall. Even though Years 7 to 9 are led and managed very well, there is no co-ordinator for Years 10 and 11. As a result, standards achieved in Years 7 to 9 fall to satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 in spite of support from senior staff because there have been a number of temporary teachers. In mathematics, the leadership and management are satisfactory. Good elements include the links established with the local specialist college which have broadened the curriculum and the monitoring of the work of pupils taught by other staff in the department. Weaknesses centre on the lack of satisfactory provision for a few less able pupils in Years 9 to 11.
41. The school improvement plan sets out priorities and action needing to be taken very clearly. However, costing and time scales, although known, are not included for all elements, which make it difficult for members of the governing body to monitor progress. They have been involved in ensuring that savings accumulated over the years, prior to the appointment of the current headteacher, and additional funding has been appropriately spent. Care has been taken to ensure that quotes for expenditure are competitive and work is to a high standard. Further funding from the balance carried forward is earmarked, for example, to roof-in one of the quadrangles to make a quiet area.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	Balances (£)
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Total income	837,449.00
Total expenditure	938,702.00
Expenditure per pupil	8,856.00

Balance from previous year	164,248.00
Balance carried forward to the next	62,995

42. The governing body is more involved in the work of the school than at the time of the last inspection. They receive detailed reports from the headteacher and the curriculum committee has a rolling programme where co-ordinators give reports on their subjects. This helps governors to be better informed about developments. Although they attend functions at the school and one governor is a 'reading buddy' once a week, they do not yet have sufficient first hand information to enable them to work well as 'critical friends'. Staffing difficulties, largely due to uncertainties surrounding the future of the school after the Local Education Authority special school review, have led to statutory requirements not being met for the teaching of a modern foreign language. There are, however, firm plans to ensure that pupils in Years 8 and 9 are taught a modern foreign language from September.
43. The day-to-day running of the school is smooth. All staff, including administrative, and ancillary, are very aware of their roles and their targets set through performance management interviews. The consistent implementation of policies throughout the school is a significant improvement since the last inspection and contributes to the overall, very good improvement that has been made.
44. Notably, over the last two years there have been a number of significant changes successfully made to the way the school is run. Continuing professional development has been very well planned to ensure that staff have the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence. They have worked together effectively, for example, to meet the challenge of improving pupils' behaviour: systematically targeting unacceptable behaviour, introducing a positive reward system and establishing a learning support unit have resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of exclusions and incidents of misbehaviour are rare. The introduction of curriculum initiatives has also been managed well. All staff participate in 'Brain Gym' with their classes during at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and elements of the Key Stage 3 Strategy can be seen in the work of all pupils. Planning has already started on developing a new modular curriculum to meet the needs of pupils in Years 10 and 11.
45. There is an extensive range of monitoring strategies that are used very well, including visits by consultants, the local education authority and the regular 'in house' observation of lessons. Subject co-ordinators also check planning and look at samples of work, apart from in English in Years 10 and 11 where there is no subject co-ordinator at present. Specific monitoring is undertaken periodically and has recently included a focus on the use of interactive white boards. There are plans to monitor the teaching of numeracy in all subjects. This is an inclusive school and information on pupils' progress is systematically collected, analysed and compared with other similar schools effectively, particularly for gender and ethnicity, but also for other 'groups' to ensure that all pupils make the progress they should. For example, two pupils from traveller backgrounds were issued with palm sized computers (PDAs) to use when they were identified as not achieving as well as others in their year group in ICT. Pupils with additional special educational needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder or sensory impairment, have their needs very clearly identified and met.
46. As one of the schools in the Education Action Zone, much has been done to improve parental involvement and support parents through the development of the role of the learning link worker in the school. There has also been a considerable amount of joint work with the next door specialist mathematics and computing school at a management level both specifically with regard to mathematics and computing and also to wider issues.

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 is **satisfactory** overall. It is **very good** in Years 7 to 9.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have implemented the National Literacy Strategy effectively and this is helping to raise achievement for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are particularly good.
- The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory but is less than in previous years because of staffing difficulties.
- Pupils' writing is very good in Years 7 to 9.
- Literacy is taught well in other subjects.

Commentary

47. Pupils join the school with very low levels of literacy. Many have speech and language difficulties and a few have associated behavioural difficulties. During Years 7 to 9 pupils make very good progress and their skills develop well because:
 - There is very good management of behaviour.
 - Teaching of speaking and listening skills is very effective
 - The skills of the speech and language therapy assistant are used well.
48. An example of this was seen in a Year 9 lesson when pupils watched a video on *The Diary of Anne Frank* and spoke about the empathy they felt towards her. One pupil pointed out that "Anne is like her Dad – very positive, even when facing arrest by the Gestapo!"
49. Teachers make good use of individual targets for pupils as they work through the reading scheme. Improved resources have helped to raise achievement since the last inspection. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 benefit from additional support in reading from a parent governor and two midday helpers. Achievements in writing have improved and are now very good for Years 7 to 9 pupils. For example, many enjoy writing stories such as 'The Magic Finger'. Information and communication technology is used very well. For example, during a Year 8 lesson pupils used laptops, computers and hand scribed their *Treasure Island* stories with great enthusiasm and with very good attention to accurate spelling and punctuation detail. Within their stories they demonstrated their ability to redraft their work, paying particular attention to singular and plural words.
50. The quality of teaching and learning is very good for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The National Literacy Strategy is adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those with additional special needs. There are well-organised procedures for assessing pupils' learning and achievement. As a result, teachers are quite clear about what each pupil knows, understands and can do and what the next step of their learning should be. In addition, each pupil has their own assessment folder in which they self assess their own progress towards their literacy

targets. This is very successful and enables pupils to see how well they are learning and boosts their self-esteem. Teachers have high expectations and pitch the work so pupils have to work hard. They structure lessons carefully and as a result, pupils' learning builds up gradually, enabling them to cope with challenging tasks.

51. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Very occasionally it is unsatisfactory because pupils' behaviour is not managed effectively. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have been taught by a series of temporary staff for the last 18 months. This has resulted in disruption to their learning and a slower rate of progress. Their achievement is satisfactory overall.
52. Most pupils continue to make very good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills because opportunities are made for them to discuss their work. They are encouraged successfully to express their opinions. For example, they give their views about what makes a thief steal after reading a poem called *Stealing*. Satisfactory progress is made in improving reading and writing skills for most pupils. They use appropriate language and the correct formats for formal and informal letters and improve their comprehension when reading texts. Pupils' work is very focussed on the requirements of externally accredited coursework and examinations. The more able pupils work hard on practise tests including studying poetry and plays, for example, work on *Romeo and Juliet* is well presented. However, the less able pupils often struggle with their low literacy skills and support staff are not always used effectively to help. There are not sufficient opportunities for these pupils to continue to improve their reading and writing. Homework is very regularly given to all pupils, which helps them work independently.
53. The leadership and management of Years 7 to 9 are effective. Pupils' work is monitored well and courses are planned to build on pupils' learning from one year to the next. This does not carry through to Years 10 and 11, however, where temporary staff have been supervised by the senior team. They have provided satisfactory leadership and management by keeping a clear focus on pupils achieving examination success. Overall there has been moderate improvement since the time of the last inspection. In spite of the lack of permanent staff, the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress have improved. There are plans to appoint an overall subject leader within the near future.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

54. Throughout the school, teachers of all subjects provide opportunities to teach language and literacy. Teachers introduce new key words in lessons to make sure that misunderstandings are not a barrier to learning. At appropriate times words are written on boards and worksheets to serve as reminders to learners. As a result, many pupils recognise subject specific words and know what they mean. For example, during a Year 7 mathematics lesson key words such as circle, square and rectangle were reinforced. In a Year 7 religious education lesson pupils remembered well the key words relating to Islam, the Qur'an, the prayer mat and the Mosque. Year 10 pupils are recorded on a video speaking clearly and confidently explaining what they are doing in their work in art and design. Pupils show very good use of technical vocabulary and a mature awareness of the rules of conversation. This contributes to their very good progress in speaking and listening.

Modern Foreign Language

French

55. French is taught only to Year 7. The teaching and learning in the one lesson observed was very good. There is, however, insufficient evidence of pupils' work in files and records to make a judgement regarding their progress, achievement or of overall teaching and learning. There is no progress or achievement for pupils in Years 8 and 9 at present because they do not have any lessons.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 learn very well.
- In Years 9 to 11, more able pupils make good progress but less able pupils make unsatisfactory progress.
- Structured lessons with very clear learning objectives for pupils are used consistently.
- Marking of work in Years 9 to 11 does not give enough information to help pupils improve.
- Links with the local high school have led to exciting innovation such as visits with a focus on mathematics.

Commentary

56. Pupils' progress and achievement in mathematics is satisfactory. However, very good teaching in Years 7 and 8 results in these pupils making very good progress. Good opportunities are taken to reinforce learning. For example, Year 7 pupils revised their previous learning about shapes in a quick fire question and answer session together. They then had the confidence to work their way through a booklet about shape and concentrate well.
57. In Year 9, most pupils including the more able make good progress. For example, they learn to identify lines of symmetry and calculate the average height of pupils in the class. However, some lower attaining pupils make unsatisfactory progress. They need a great deal of support to understand concepts such as reflecting simple patterns. Their books show they have difficulties with much of the work they are asked to do and they do not meet their weekly targets sufficiently well. In Years 10 and 11, the picture is similar to Year 9. The more able pupils make good progress in their work towards the GCSE examination. Some pupils also study for the Certificate of Educational Achievement. Many learn to work out fractions and the more confident pupils quickly grasp how to work out the next number in sequences. Most pupils know how to devise a tally chart and produce a graph to show their findings.
58. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. At times it is good and an example of excellent teaching was seen in a Year 7 lesson. In this lively and well-paced session work was pitched at the right level of challenge for each pupil and clear questioning ensured all were learning effectively. Elements from the National Numeracy Strategy have been implemented particularly well in Years 7 and 8. In all lessons, teachers check that pupils are very clear about what they are expected to learn and ensure pupils understand words used. Effective activities to start each session help pupils to improve their accuracy in working out calculations in their head. For example, a card game encouraged older pupils to make decisions based on the probability of the next card being more than or less than the one on view. At the end of each session, pupils are encouraged to think about what they have learnt and check whether they have achieved the objectives. Staff ensure that pupils with additional special educational needs have the right conditions for their learning; for example, by checking that a visually impaired pupil is able to see particular colours on the interactive board.
59. Strategies for teaching less able pupils in Years 9 to 11 are, on the whole, unsatisfactory. Work often becomes more complex too quickly. At times, pupils complete too much work incorrectly before the teacher checks their progress and too much of their work is never finished which contributes to their lack of overall achievement. Marking is not always fully

effective. Comments more often reflect accuracy and how hard pupils have worked and do not indicate how they can do better.

60. Leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory ensuring that satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. The co-ordinator, who has been in post for less than two years has developed a range of strategies to check what is being taught by other teachers in mathematics and has built useful links with the adjacent specialist mathematics school. This has included joint residential visits with a mathematics focus and the sharing of resources. Very good preparation by staff made a recent ‘mathematics’ activity, a visit to the local zoo, a great success. Pupils worked their way round the zoo completing calculations and solving problems in their work books showing interest and enthusiasm for their work as they learned.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. The teaching of mathematics through other subjects is satisfactory overall although there is variation in quality between subjects. The school is aware of this weakness and has plans for more rigorous monitoring of the overall provision. The development of numerical skills is very good in science and pupils can make calculations and study a graph showing how temperatures have risen. In the ASDAN course pupils carried out a survey of hygiene products using data collection procedures and drew graphs of findings. Different angles were discussed when tackling a problem in ICT. There is much use of mathematics in music and this is in the process of being identified and mapped throughout each module.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well because of the very good subject knowledge of the teachers.
- Teachers question pupils well to ensure that they understand their work.
- Lessons are very well planned and interesting resources are used.
- Leadership of the subject is very good.
- Presentation of work is not consistently high.

Commentary

62. Pupils’ achievement and the quality of teaching and learning have improved well since the last inspection and are now very good. This is because teachers use their subject expertise very well to plan exciting lessons so pupils’ attention is maintained. For example, a well structured lesson enabled pupils to enjoy testing various types of insulation for energy saving properties and using the results of their work to debate which they thought was the best.
63. Pupils show interest, enthusiasm and concentrate well and as a result, they improve their scientific knowledge. As part of their studies on forces, electricity and energy, pupils in Year 9 measured the heating effect of an electric current. They were totally involved in their experiments as they investigated the temperature of a light bulb over different periods of time and with different currents. In a very well organised lesson on saving energy, pupils showed that they understood the conditions for a fair test as they investigated different forms of lagging. They gave clear, confident answers to their teacher’s skilful questions showing that they knew why their test could not be classed as fair. Pupils in Year 11 have investigated the effect of gastric juices on food and teachers’ questioning showed that they understood the process of digestion and could use the correct vocabulary associated with it. The use of key words for science is a feature of every lesson and ‘loop’ games and other exercises have been

developed to improve literacy skills. Both technical and learning support staff are used very effectively to improve learning.

64. Teaching and learning are very good and firmly based on a well planned curriculum. Pupils know they are expected to do their best and rise to the challenges set for them. Many practical activities using a very wide range of resources keep pupils' interest and ICT is used very well. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils were very sure in their knowledge of the solar system and enjoyed a *Journey to Mars* using the interactive whiteboard. They named the planets and located their position in the solar system. Pupils understood and could explain key words such as atmosphere, gravity and orbit. Although individual pieces of work are well presented as a whole, standards are not maintained because a wallet folder is an unsatisfactory means to store work.
65. The co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and leads and manages the subject very well. Planning and work are monitored very well. Very effective assessment procedures ensure pupils' learning builds on what has been taught before. The accommodation is very good. The two very well equipped science laboratories enable pupils to learn successfully through extensive practical activities.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement and progress are very good.
- Assessment is excellent.
- Accommodation and resources are excellent.
- Pupils are keen and interested and enjoy using ICT.
- Questioning is used well to ensure pupils understand.

Commentary

66. Since the last inspection, pupils' achievement in ICT and the quality of teaching and learning have improved considerably. Last year, 80 per cent of the pupils gained a distinction and the remainder a merit in their entry level examination. This is because the teacher has good expertise and uses information gained from a thorough assessment of pupils' work to plan effectively what they will do next. For example, pupils in Years 7 to 9 have produced video clips of a tour of the school while exploring the use of digital video.
67. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and both pupils and teachers enjoy using the excellent ICT room and the up-to-date computers and interactive white boards. These facilities help pupils to achieve the very good quality and the variety of work. Their own interests are often used, skilfully adapted to the work in hand, to grab and sustain concentration. The youngest pupils learn to word process, label and classify, represent information graphically and to combine text and graphics. They use the skills gained to produce a newspaper report. In all lessons, understanding is carefully checked through skilled questioning and shows, for example, that they understand that machines and devices have to be controlled and need precise instructions. As pupils' knowledge and understanding increases they use data bases, spreadsheets and multi media presentations. Pupils are proud of their skills and happy to demonstrate what they can achieve. The co-ordinator worked successfully with a group of Year 11 pupils to develop a multimedia presentation which helped to introduce the implementation of 'Brain Gym' into the school very effectively.

68. The subject is very well managed by an enthusiastic and innovative co-ordinator, ably assisted by well qualified support staff. Long term planning of what is to be learned is well developed. New ideas are introduced systematically and pupils are involved in several pilot schemes. For example, they are trialling the use of PDAs in physical education lessons.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. ICT is used extensively and very well throughout the curriculum and every classroom has the recently acquired benefit of an interactive whiteboard which enhances teaching. Pupils use ICT extensively in art and design both to produce interesting patterns for their work and to demonstrate technique. In design and technology video clips were used to explain timber processing and laptop computers used in English to word process work. Pupils use 'magic pens' in food technology to help them match pictures of utensils to their names on the interactive board. The Internet is used in religious education; for instance, pupils search for information about Mother Teresa.

HUMANITIES

Only three lessons were seen in geography and one lesson in history and although work was examined it is not possible to make judgements on all aspects of these subjects.

Geography

70. There is clear evidence from the teacher's detailed planning that work in geography is varied and interesting. Pupils study geography up to the end of Year 9. Year 7 pupils, for example, are able to describe the differences between town and country. The teacher makes the topic very relevant to the pupils by using two 'soap operas' Eastenders and Emmerdale to illustrate the differences. Year 9 pupils discover that towns and cities developed around natural resources and understand key words such as immigration, emigration and migration. In scrutinising pupils' work it is evident that all pupils self assess their work which is good practice. The subject leader is extremely enthusiastic and imaginative in planning learning opportunities for pupils that are a good match for their needs. However, on occasions the literacy level of work is too difficult and support staff are unavailable. The subject contributes very well to pupils' cultural, spiritual and social development.

History

71. Pupils develop historical skills and knowledge systematically as they move up through the school. For example, Year 8 pupils can recall the reasons for the spread of the 17th century plague in England. They describe how Catholics and Jews were blamed with spreading the disease and the meaning of the word prejudice is introduced to them. By the use of such an exercise pupils' awareness of others and their lives is developed effectively and this makes a very positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good because lessons are effective and well planned.
- Year 10 pupils are working towards an external examination this year.
- Religious education lessons contribute well to pupils' spiritual, social and moral development.

Commentary

72. Pupils are taught a good range of topics that help their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, good opportunities are provided for pupils to get first hand information and improve their social skills through talking with visitors, including a Baptist Minister and a member of the Salvation Army, about their culture, beliefs and practices. There are plans for both a Sikh and a Muslim leader to visit the school in the near future. Pupils have opportunities to think about how faith influences behaviour, exploring wider moral issues, such as the life of the homeless in India. In the good balance of work covered, pupils learn about many world faiths, for example, in Year 7, pupils are able to recognise features inside a mosque.
73. Information and communication technology is used well in religious education teaching and this helps older pupils' low literacy skills which otherwise impedes their progress with written work. During a Year 11 session where teaching and learning were very good, pupils were able to use computer presentations to illustrate and present their work on Mother Teresa. This was a culmination of hard work done by them in researching her life during a previous lesson. An examination has been introduced for the first time in Year 10 and it is anticipated that pupils will gain a further entry level GCSE next year. This is good improvement since the last inspection.
74. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The recently appointed subject leader is making good changes to improve what pupils are taught and has addressed areas of weakness, such as ensuring the Agreed Syllabus is followed and that clear targets and objectives are shared with the pupils. Assessment has improved with the introduction of pupil self assessments which helps pupils appreciate their own improvement.

TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The work is well planned to enable pupils to build on their previous learning.
- Pupils enjoy the lessons especially food technology.
- There is good specialist teaching.
- Accommodation and resources are very good.

Commentary

75. Pupils' progress and achievements are good. They develop a good range of skills and techniques in Years 7 to 9 which enables them to design and make products. At the start of each year, pupils follow a clear overall plan which is focused on graphic skills which enables them to portray their design ideas more effectively. They also study food technology which they enjoy immensely. Pupils in a Year 9 class developed their cutting and shaping skills as they successfully make cheese and tomato whirls. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work well towards a Certificate in Educational Achievement. There are very good links with other subjects, for example, they use their design and technology skills to make educational toys as part of their childcare course. The very good quality toys produced include wooden trains and coaches, chessboards and wooden jig-saw puzzles. Additionally, the design and make element of a card production mini enterprise is also part of the examination course.
76. Pupils do well because teaching and learning are good overall and at times very good. Planning is detailed and ensures that pupils are helped to make their design portfolios as well as improve their skills and knowledge. Good use is made of ICT. For example, when recapping the

process of obtaining wood, from tree to timber, the interactive board is used effectively. The pupils were helped by the visual clues to ask questions and the teacher is able to show the use of natural shape and grain in wood.

77. The leadership and management of the subject are good, ensuring it is very well planned and that assessment is thorough. The large teaching rooms are very well organized and the broad range of resources accessible. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection. A recently introduced working area, so that pupils do not have to work on uneven benches, has improved the quality of drawing work. Support assistants are used effectively to allow all pupils to join in the work to the best of their ability.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Only one lesson was seen in each of music and expressive arts, too few to make judgements on all aspects.

Music

78. In the one lessons of music in Year 9 seen during the inspection the quality of teaching and learning was very high. Pupils made very good progress. Pupils improve their skills in performing, for example, using keyboards and singing. They compose pieces effectively and build their knowledge of different composers and genre of music such as Ragtime. Year 9 pupils play pieces such as Scott Joplin's *The Entertainer* working towards performing it together. Their concentration levels are very high and staff are skilled in helping pupils to improve their performances effectively.
79. Leadership of music is very good. The quality of pupils' work is closely monitored to ensure progress is maintained. Detailed lesson planning from well structured modules of work and a good range of resources including sufficient key boards for all the pupils in a class to use, contribute very well to pupils' progress. Pupils are inspired to develop an interest in music and fifteen are currently receiving specialist tuition in playing instruments.

Expressive arts

80. In the lesson seen pupils in Year 11 made very good progress towards an award in the ASDAN challenge. Pupils perform pieces such as the theme from the film *Titanic*, playing in an ensemble. During the Christmas production based on *A Christmas Carol*, pupils performed music and lyrics which they had composed and helped to make props. This curriculum area is very well led and organised. It links well with other subjects such as childcare, when, for example, pupils explore the design of a children's playground, park or public area and look at ways of making improvements. Pupils' work is presented to a very good standard as scrapbooks they have compiled about their 'visit to an interesting site' ably demonstrate.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils gain examination success.
- Work is exciting and interesting.
- There is very good use of ICT by staff and pupils.

- The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The accommodation is used very effectively.

Commentary

81. Pupils make very good progress by Years 9 and 11, because overall, they are taught very well. At times, the teaching and learning and the progress pupils make are excellent. This shows very good improvement since the last inspection. Modules of work are very well planned to give pupils a very broad range of activities and techniques. For example, Year 9 pupils did observational drawings of pieces of machinery. They used flat printing techniques to make repeating patterns and selected a part of their original drawing to use as a model for making a clay mould. The intricate plaster casts created from the mould were finally painted to bring out the patterns. Pupils choosing to study art and design in Years 10 and 11 work towards examinations and last year, eight of the nine pupils gained distinctions in the Certificate of Educational Achievement. This year, several pupils are expected to gain grades in the GCSE examination. At all levels, the teacher sets exacting standards and as a result, pupils work carefully and seek to improve. Work on William Morris using clip art, fabric and pastels leads to large and small pieces using a similar style. Pupils enjoy exploring the work of Roy Lichtenstein, explain why they chose particular pieces and use pastels correctly to cover large areas.
82. Video recordings and digital photographs of pupils talking about their work are used effectively to show other pupils what to do and also to celebrate good work and build confidence. Computer programs allow pupils to explore techniques quickly; for example, selecting a small section of a picture and applying it as a repeating pattern. Sketchbooks are used very well and demonstrate pupils' abilities to build up designs and research into the work of artists and craftspeople. Their cultural development is particularly enhanced through this work. Opportunities are made for them to work collaboratively, such as in the design and furnishing of miniature rooms in boxes. The art room is an excellent facility. It is very well organised for working with a wide range of media and to encourage pupils to access their work and materials themselves. The excellent quality of displays, for example, pupils' work in the entrance hall in the style of Monet, builds pupils' self esteem and contributes strongly to the very positive ethos of the school. Leadership of the subject is very good with clear guidance given to staff teaching the younger pupils to ensure skills and techniques are developed systematically. Expertise is used effectively, particularly the technology skills of the support assistant who both supports pupils in this area so they achieve very well and also takes high quality digital photographs of pupils and their work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

83. It was only possible to see a few lessons of physical education. However, the subject is well planned and assessment procedures are effective. It is clear that pupils are enthusiastic and teachers use methods to make sure that everyone, including those with additional special educational needs, is involved and active in lessons. Pupils in Year 7 practise their skills in gymnastics. They work to perfect a sequence of moves, including rolling, balancing and jumping in pairs or threes. When it is their turn to demonstrate their efforts they show good finishing and ending stances and enjoy the applause of their classmates. Self and peer assessment is carried out effectively during each lesson and Year 10 pupils use PDAs to record their circuit training achievements. There is a comprehensive programme of work which includes football, hockey, cricket, basketball, swimming, dance and athletics and all pupils achieve Certificate of Educational Achievement awards. Every year group has a residential visit where they take part in outdoor pursuits. Pupils visit North Wales, The Lake District and

Stourport. Girls take a full part in all activities including football teams, running clubs and the after school rugby club.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

84. Although this is the first year that business education has been taught, pupils are gaining good experience and understanding of the world of work. The course is well planned and encompasses business studies for Year 10 and team enterprise in Year 11. Pupils' ICT skills are used effectively. Pupils in a Year 10 lesson compiled a good list of 'do's and don'ts' when dealing with customers and ably compiled a grid with their results. However, their work was slowed because they needed help with their spelling in this lesson. Good teaching and learning based on careful planning of lessons with interesting activities develops pupils' skills well. For example, pupils' confidence and self esteem grew and their use of language increased when they made a video of their role play returning a purchase to a shop. In Year 11, pupils researched materials using the Internet and designed and costed Christmas and Valentine cards. They then set up a production line and made a profit.

Travel and tourism

85. When pupils reach Year 10 they are able to choose the humanities option of travel and tourism. Teaching and learning in the one lesson observed was very good. Pupils were able to describe the skills and qualities needed in the travel and tourist industry.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is very good and as a result, they gain certificates each year and an award in Year 11.
- The quality of teaching and learning are very good.
- Topics taught are very relevant to the pupils.
- Effective involvement with theatre groups helps pupils learn about difficult topics.

Commentary

86. The very high quality of the planning of lessons contributes to the very good progress that pupils make. They learn to become more responsible for their actions. By Year 9, they have learnt about caring for the environment and managing money. Very well organised sessions ensure that there is a variety of interesting and challenging activities for pupils, such as to discover how advertisements work and the effects of the misuse of drugs and alcohol. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 work towards gaining the Dudley Young Persons Charter. In Years 10 and 11, they work on a broad childcare project which gives scope for exploring health and safety, first aid and sex and relationships education. Pupils make very good progress towards achieving a Certificate of Educational Achievement in Childcare. Last year, all 18 that were entered passed, four with merit. Through their work on citizenship, pupils further their understanding of rights and responsibilities in the workplace and explore their responsibility for the environment.
87. Opportunities have been developed for all pupils to become involved with theatre productions, which are an excellent means of helping pupils to understand issues. These are very successful and wide ranging. For example, for Year 7 there is 'GLUG' which is about alcohol, and 'Jimmy Sniffs' about solvent abuse. Year 8 participate in an interactive production about risk taking, 'Playing for Real' and in Year 9 there is 'BUZZ' about the misuse of drugs. Older pupils join other schools for 'What can I say?' about sex and relationship education.
88. The two subject leaders provide very good leadership. There is a very clear policy and plan for what will be taught. Innovative practice is demonstrated by showing the objectives for citizenship lessons on blue paper so pupils recognise when they are working from this part of the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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