

INSPECTION REPORT

Upper Avon School

Durrington

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126459

Headteacher: Ms. Rowena Brookes

Lead inspector: Mark R. Evans

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th March 2004

Inspection number: 259216

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	613
School address:	Recreation Road Durrington Salisbury Wiltshire
Postcode:	SP4 8HH
Telephone number:	01980 652467
Fax number:	01980 653568
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. Helen Jenkins
Date of previous inspection:	25/09/2000

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Upper Avon School was removed from 'special measures' in 2002, eighteen months after it went into that category. It received an achievement award for making such rapid and significant improvement. The school has also won Sports Mark and Sports Mark Gold awards, as well as Investors in People. It has just submitted a bid for Sports College Status.

There are 340 boys and 273 girls on roll. Nearly 96 per cent of the pupils have a white-British ethnic background. There are 5 pupils for whom English is not a first language. Almost a quarter of the pupils have some level of special educational need, and 32 have Statements of Special Educational Need. The school's intake is affected by a number of selective and single sex schools in the local area. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average.

Upper Avon is the lead partner in a recently established federation of 2 secondary schools and is supporting the other through Special Measures. The headteacher has been seconded to a neighbouring school as it prepared for OFSTED inspection. The two schools are now being established as a federation, sharing the same headteacher.

The sixth form as it stands has only a handful of students (8, all in year 13). This was after a conscious decision was taken to introduce more courses, provide better continuity and increase the student retention rate. In the current school year (2003-04) no year 12 courses were offered. From September 2004, the school will re-launch its year 12 curriculum.

There is a high proportion of Army children at the school (38 per cent), which has a number of significant effects. The mobility of the school population is much higher than the national average: more than twice as high. There is an unsettling effect caused by the absence of one parent, who might be on active service in Iraq or the Balkans. Furthermore, these pupils do not count towards the free school meal comparisons made between this school and other like it. This puts the school at a disadvantage, statistically. For the purposes of these comparisons, therefore, the inspection team has used the local education authority conversion ratio of 2:1. In short, this gives a fairer picture of the school's achievements by reflecting more closely the difficulties faced by the pupils, their families and in consequence, by the school itself.

The school has experienced significant staff turbulence in recent years. This has been due to its being in special measures, having a falling roll, the geographical isolation of Durrington and common national difficulties in recruiting teachers of subjects such as design and technology.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20999	Mark Evans	Lead inspector	
8941	John Fletcher	Lay inspector	
2200	Jim Stirrup	Team inspector	English
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics
22985	Jackie Sparkes	Team inspector	Science
4615	Mike Bostock	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
3832	John Ayerst	Team inspector	Art and design, and music
15163	Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Design and technology
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography, Special Educational Needs
15304	Reg Fletcher	Team inspector	History
23512	Patricia Fisher	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15312	Kay Lord	Team inspector	Physical Education
12179	Keith Page	Team inspector	Citizenship, personal, social and health education
7602	Ethel Milroy	Team inspector	Religious Education

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International
 Upperton House
 The Avenue
 Eastbourne BN21 3YB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	14
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	19
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	21
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	41

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Upper Avon School is a rapidly improving school with good features, especially teaching and learning. The positive ethos of the school increasingly permeates its work. It is providing satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership provided by the headteacher, the leadership team and the governing body is good and one of the reasons for the school's rapid improvement: however, opportunities to monitor within departments are limited;
- Teaching is good and nearly a quarter of lessons observed were very good;
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong, which has a beneficial impact on the quality of learning: pastoral care is a strength of the school;
- All staff at Upper Avon are fully committed to making further improvements to the school.
- Although pupils are not attaining national expectations when they enter the school in year 7, the standards achieved by the time they leave the school are average, mainly because of the good teaching;
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good;
- The partnership with parents is satisfactory and improving: the school is working very hard to improve further the contact with the local army bases;
- Standards of written work, especially amongst boys in years 7, 8 and 9 are not high enough;
- Not all teachers have a real understanding of assessment data, nor use it effectively enough in their planning for all the specific groups within the school (boys/girls, new pupils to the school/pupils who have been at school since year 7, etc.);
- The quality of provision for design and technology is unsatisfactory.

Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The school is working effectively to raise standards of attainment further. Teaching and learning are improving well. The school has introduced innovative and effective ways of further improving behaviour. The quantity and quality of the support for pupils with special educational needs has improved markedly.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	D	C	C	B
Mathematics	D	C	C	A*
Science	D	C	C	A

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils have attained similarly at the end of Year 6.*

Performance compared with:		all schools			Similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	C	C	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E	D	C	

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Pupils in all year groups achieve well. There are particularly good examples of pupils doing well in mathematics, history and French throughout the school and in science and geography in Years 7 to 9. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve well, as do pupils who are looked after by the local authority. In the sixth form, it is not possible to make a very secure judgement on the basis of the small number of students, but the evidence suggests that the students are achieving well. This improved picture is due to better teaching and strong management.

The pupils' attitudes to learning are good and in most classes, pupils clearly want to learn. The values they demonstrate and their social and moral development are good. However, a small number of boys, in a few lessons, exhibit poor behaviour, disrupting lessons for those who do want to learn. Attendance is satisfactory and good in the sixth form. The school could do even more to ensure that pupils are given a wider range of opportunities to take responsibilities during their time at school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by Upper Avon School is satisfactory and there are a number of good features. Teaching is good throughout the school. A very few lessons were not satisfactory because of inadequate subject knowledge or unclear objectives, leading to difficulty for teacher and pupils in judging the success of a lesson. Otherwise, in all year groups and subjects, the strengths of teaching were the strong relationships built up with the pupils and the respect demonstrated between adult and child.

The care, guidance and support that teachers and staff demonstrate are good: it is a strength of the school. The partnership that is being built up with parents is satisfactory and the commitment to this is another strength of the school, one that has an increasingly positive influence on the learning of the pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The governors provide very good support and critical assistance to the headteacher and leadership team. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very effective. She has created a strong leadership team, which is making a significant contribution to the success of the school. The management of departments is mainly good, and in some, like English, history, information and communication technology, mathematics, physical education, religious education and science, leadership is now a real strength of the school. However, in design and technology, not as much progress has been made, because of recruitment difficulties, despite the very hard work of the school and local education authority to rectify the situation. Opportunities to monitor with departments are limited.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are, in the main, satisfied with the school. Specifically, most parents report that their children are happy, that they think the teaching is good, and that their children make good progress at Upper Avon. However, a small minority are less positive about the school. Pupils are predominantly happy with the school, as reported by a wide range of pupils during the inspection week.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the standards of written work, especially amongst boys in years 7 to 9;
- Ensure that all teachers have a real understanding of the overall assessment data, both national and internal, and use it effectively to plan their teaching for all the specific groups within the school;
- Create more opportunities for senior/middle managers to monitor departments positively and actively;
- Develop further the quality of provision in design and technology.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form at Upper Avon School is currently partly closed, with only 8 year 13 students on the roll. It is therefore impossible to make secure judgements about overall provision. However, the management of the partial closure has been correctly handled and the recruitment of next years' intake is very promising.

The main strengths and weaknesses that can be judged securely are:

- The leadership provided by the headteacher and the head of sixth form is very good.
- Planning is effective: there is a good focus on making the courses to be offered useful and attractive for individual students.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve in the few lessons that were seen. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected fully.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English	Good. Good progress observed was enhanced by the teachers' good knowledge of the subject, by the range of teaching/learning styles used and by high quality group activities.
History	Good. The development of A-level history is attracting more students. Standards and achievements represented in past examination results and predicted grades for the current cohort in A2 history are good.
Information and communication technology	Good. Examination results are in line with the national average at AS level but below at A level. Current standards are in line with the national expectation. Teaching is good. Intranet resources and links with organisations are just satisfactory.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge. However the range of teaching and learning methods is too limited. Students attend regularly and work hard, but do not take enough responsibility for their own learning.
Physical Education	Very good. Standards are well above the national average. Teaching is very good. Numbers on roll are small, but recruitment for 2004 is secure. Leadership and management are very good.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The advice and support provided for students is good. Staff know the students well and so the students feel supported by the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is well managed and led. Managers are taking an imaginative approach to providing a wider range of courses than has been possible in the past, at the same time working within the federation to increase the overall size of provision.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

The students report that that they are supportive of the school. They enjoy attending the sixth form and feel that that the courses they are doing are suitable for their needs.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs and those looked after by the local authority, is **satisfactory**. Standards attained in pupils' work are **average**. By the end of years 9 and 11, standards in statutory tests, teacher assessments and results at GCSE are **average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Written work is generally below the standards expected in all subjects, especially for a minority of boys in years 7 to 9;
- Pupils in years 7 to 9 start from a low baseline, but make good progress in many subjects;
- Progress is less secure in design and technology for these pupils;
- Pupils achieve well at the end of year 11 in geography, modern foreign languages, and very well in history;
- Attainment is below average in design and technology, religious education, music and in art and design.

Commentary

1. Pupils enter Upper Avon school attaining standards that are below average. They generally make good progress, achieving well in years 7, 8 and 9. At the end of year 9, they are attaining average standards, except in their writing. In years 10 and 11, progress has been less good in the recent past, but it is improving now. In information and communication technology, pupils achieve standards that are in line with national averages at the end of years 9 and 11. Standards in religious education are approaching the expected standards by the end of year 9, but drop back during years 10 and 11. This is because of a widespread negative attitude to the subject, though this is being addressed and there are changes already noticeable. The small groups in the sixth form make meaningful comparisons impossible.

2. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well across all subject areas because their needs are known to all their teachers. A well-directed team of teaching assistants supports the learning of those pupils who have statements of need and ensures that they benefit from their lessons.

3. At the end of year 9, pupils are achieving well in English, mathematics and science with the result that standards overall at this age are average. In comparison to schools with similar intakes, pupils achieve well overall, demonstrating good teaching and learning. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. In geography, pupils make satisfactory progress in years 7, 8 and 9, which, owing to their prior learning, means that their attainment is still below average at the end of Year 9. In art and design and in music, standards are in line with expectations. Standards in history are rising rapidly and pupils' progress is good, but due to their starting from a low baseline, the level they achieve by year 9 is below that expected. With a few individual exceptions, standards are low in design and technology.

Standards in national tests at the end of year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.9 (32.8)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	35.8 (34.5)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	33.6 (32.7)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 124 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. At the end of year 11, most pupils are continuing to do well and make at least average progress. However, a small but significant number of pupils, mainly boys, do not currently learn with any enthusiasm, and this reluctance brings down the overall GCSE grades. Girls do significantly better than boys at this age, especially in English and mathematics. Standards in English at GCSE are well below average, when compared to those found nationally. In mathematics, standards are in line with national averages, and good when compared to those in similar schools. In geography and history, good results by the girls are masked by lower than average results gained by the boys. Standards achieved in art and design and in design and technology are below average, mainly because of difficulties with staffing changes. The school has responded positively to the noted differences in the performance of girls and boys.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	33 (30)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	89 (84)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	28.5 (28)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 123 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Standards achieved in the sixth form vary greatly from subject to subject. Overall, and taking into account the very small sample sizes, the data that is available at present suggests that students do not gain many of the highest grades. This is in large part due to their low prior attainment, and there are clear indications that increasing standards are gradually working their way through the school. The enthusiasm with which the school is planning for the re-opening of the sixth form next academic year, is commendable.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	83.0 (n/a)	85.5 (92.1)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	0 (n/a)	27.6 (33.8)
Average point score per pupil	204.2 (169.0)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 21 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

6. Pupils' attitudes to school and to learning are **good**. Behaviour is **good** overall and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. In a few lessons, poor behaviour disrupts learning. Attendance levels are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vast majority of pupils enjoy Upper Avon: they show a genuine interest in school activities and, in most lessons, a desire to learn;
- Immature behaviour disrupts a few lessons and restricts learning;
- While many pupils show relatively low levels of confidence and ambition, they are very willing to take on responsibilities;

- Many pupils are responding well to the increasing opportunities to contribute to school life and to extend their personal aspirations;
- Levels of attendance and unauthorised absence are better than the national average for similar schools.

7. Pupils like attending Upper Avon. Observation in many lessons revealed pupils showing good levels of interest in their studies, getting enthusiastically involved in activities and becoming engrossed in their learning. Discussion with pupils of all ages revealed positive young people enjoying most learning experiences and speaking enthusiastically about the good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, particularly sport. Pupils commented favourably on trips and outings. Year 7 pupils excitedly reported how much they had enjoyed their residential visit during their first term in the school.

8. Attendance levels are satisfactory throughout the school and this is having a positive impact on the progress pupils make. The school has established rigorous systems to follow up unexplained absence and to monitor patterns of attendance. Pupils and parents experiencing difficulty with attendance are supported sensitively and effectively by the school and by the educational welfare officer. Punctuality to school is satisfactory although a few pupils, particularly in year 11, consistently fail to be present at the start of morning and afternoon registration. Daily proceedings run to time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.1	School data	1.0
National data	7.2	National data	0.1

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

9. The school is a safe and orderly environment. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good overall: it has improved well since the last inspection. Relationships are good and in most lessons, pupils communicate openly and politely with adults. Interaction between pupils is supportive and generally involves amicable and helpful exchanges. In a few lessons, where pupils' imagination and interest are not captured, concentration is easily lost and immature behaviour disrupts learning. At break and lunchtimes, there are some boisterous games but pupils generally behave in a considerate manner. Although no incidents were seen during the inspection, records suggest that there are instances of bullying and abusive behaviour. The school works hard to deal with these, consistently promoting acceptable standards of behaviour, dealing with bullying and harassment and using exclusion effectively in cases of both verbal and physical abuse. Pupils say they respect the behaviour code and believe that the school deals fairly and firmly with incidents.

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	588	147	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	13	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	6	0	0

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

10. Pupils generally have relatively low personal aspirations. They are starting to respond well to the increasing number of opportunities provided to contribute to day-to-day school life. For example, pupils of all ages take the school council seriously. They have used it to register their views on and effect changes to daily routines. The prefect system is a direct result of year 11 pupils being prepared to respond to an idea discussed at the school council. Whenever asked, pupils are willing to take on responsibilities and are they are proud to talk about them. Year 9 pupils were delighted to take on mentoring and befriending duties with year 7 pupils. The school puts great emphasis on pupils' personal development.

11. Students' spiritual, cultural and social development is good. Spiritual and social development is satisfactorily promoted through the school's curriculum and tutorial system. Pupils gain good spiritual awareness through a daily act of collective worship in the form of an assembly or a tutorial. These provide regular opportunities to reflect and comment on a provocative "thought for the day". Religious education makes a very good contribution to spiritual development. Pupils experience how worshippers in a range of faiths use reflection techniques, such as meditation in Buddhism, while being surrounded by real artefacts and appropriate music. Explicit spiritual education is also evident in history, English and the exemplary modern foreign languages scheme of work. The spiritual impact of the reformation is fully discussed and carefully chosen units of study, such as the works of Wilfred Owen, provide an emotional dimension to the community in which the pupils live. Pupils develop good understanding of their own and European culture through their citizenship lessons and the focus of work undertaken in history and modern foreign languages. However, because pupils do not live within a culturally diverse community, the school has to design explicit opportunities for them

to understand the cultures of other communities. Trips abroad that are deliberately designed to integrate curriculum areas such as geography and modern foreign languages are strong contributors to pupils' cultural development. Further successful enhancement is provided in religious education, mathematics and information and communication technology. However, there remain important areas of the curriculum, such as art and design, and technology, where spiritual and cultural development is not explicitly addressed.

12. Social development is enhanced by the good provision in personal, social and health education and in citizenship. Good relationships are fostered by the collaborative activities frequently provided throughout the curriculum during and after school. Some of the topics in history and novels studied in English are deliberately chosen to address social issues. As a result of this provision and the school's strong emphasis on pastoral and social care, pupils are increasingly showing a genuine concern for the school community and for other people. For example, pupils take a keen interest in the school council and have actively been involved in raising funds to support local and national charities. Social development has contributed to improved behaviour since the inspection in 2000.

13. Pupils' moral development is good.

14. In addition to the study of morals associated with different faiths and the way they have changed over time, pupils also learn the meaning of "fair play" in physical education, for example. The personal, social and health education and citizenship programme provides a strong programme to ensure that the moral implications of making decisions are fully understood. In geography and in information and communication technology, pupils discuss the morals behind economic development and the use of data. As a result of their increased moral awareness, pupils are keen to take on areas of responsibility such as becoming class and school council representatives, or prefects. They carry out these out these responsibilities diligently, while maintaining the confidence of their peers.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

15. The quality of education provided for pupils at Upper Avon school is satisfactory. Good teaching promotes effective learning for most pupils. All pupils are valued as individuals and supported well.

Teaching and learning

16. Teaching is good throughout the school. The quality of learning matches the quality of teaching for nearly all pupils. Assessment is also good in the main school and in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most teaching is good or very good;
- Nearly a quarter of lessons seen were very good: very good teaching was seen throughout the school;
- Teachers are good at encouraging and motivating most pupils – relationships are strong;
- Assessment is thorough and constructive: pupils' understanding of how they can improve is good in most subjects.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 74 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	17 (23%)	35(47%)	18 (25%)	4 (5%)	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 is good and is one of the most significant strengths of the school. This good teaching leads to good learning, in the large majority of instances.

18. The best teaching is brought about by a combination of careful planning, excellent knowledge of the pupils and their needs, and crucially, a sense of teachers' enjoyment of their subjects. The best lessons involve the teacher and the pupils having fun, as they learn. The pupils listen to the teacher intently and are very clear about what they have to do. The teacher has identified what the lesson is about and what the objectives are. The pupils talk about these and understand their own input into the learning process. Behaviour management is very good; indeed it is not an issue because the class is intent on their learning. This is a particular product of the very good relationships between staff and pupils or students and promotes good learning. There is appropriate use of subject terminology. Teachers promote learning further with skilled questioning, often building on pupils' own comments. Homework is set sensibly and regularly, and is a real aid to the pupils' learning.

19. The teaching assistants provide pupils with very high quality support. This is particularly effective when nurturing independence in the pupils is clearly a focus for the assistants: they prompt and support, but they do not do the work for the pupil.

20. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, lessons do not have clear aims or do not have sufficient excitement built into the content. Learning therefore is limited and occasionally does not relate to what the teacher thinks is being taught. A few teachers do not have strong enough relationships with the pupils to stop misbehaviour, usually by a small number of boys. Homework is not set consistently and links between the work in school and that set for home are too often unclear.

21. The assessment of teaching and learning is effective, despite occasional inconsistencies between departments. For example, the use of assessment data to construct plans in design and technology is too variable. A few departments need further support in using the wealth of data that is available to them. Whilst the mathematics and science departments, for example, are clear about how to evaluate the available data, not all departments are as effective in using the information to analyse the performance of the groups as well as the individuals being taught.

Sixth form

22. The standard of teaching in the sixth form, as seen in a very small number of lessons, is good. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and have strong relationships with the students. Assessment is used well to support learning.

The curriculum

23. The curriculum is good with a wide range of opportunities for enrichment and the vocational curriculum is well developed.. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils aged from 11 to 19 years;
- The vocational centre is an innovative idea that is meeting particular needs well;
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good;
- Extra-curricular provision is good, especially in sport.

Commentary

24. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Pupils study a full range of national curriculum subjects from years 7 to 9. In years 10 and 11 options provide a good choice of courses. The

vocational curriculum is well developed at this level and options include construction trades, motor vehicle studies, hair and beauty, leisure and tourism and sport. Collaboration with two local schools and a college provide satisfactory student numbers and enable facilities to be shared. The development of the vocational centre - a joint development with another local school - is an example of innovative practice designed to meet particular needs, and doing so effectively.

25. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in years 7 to 11, and is a good improvement on what was in place before the appointment of the present co-ordinator. Vocational options in years 10 and 11 are popular with less academic pupils, and a process of guided choice places them into the most appropriate combinations of subjects. In core subjects, the availability of the Certificate of Achievement means that pupils' achievement in the lower grade range can be acknowledged. Statements of Special Educational Need are in place and correctly reviewed, and all pupils in the School Action Plus category are also regularly reviewed. The co-ordinator leads a team that includes a special needs manager and ten teaching assistants, each of whom is designated to liaise with a particular subject department. Well-directed in-class support is provided for all pupils with statements. Regular, small withdrawal groups provide intensive literacy teaching, which improves pupils' reading standards. Pupils are further supported by a daily reading club that meets in the resource centre, where teaching assistants and year 11 pupil mentors hear pupils reading on a one-to-one basis.

26. In-class support for pupils with special educational needs operates effectively. Teachers keep notes on particular pupils' needs and plan their lessons to match the learning needs of individuals. The skills centre provides additional support for particular pupils on a withdrawal basis. Intensive literacy support is offered and information and communication technology is used effectively to provide personalised learning. The curriculum is inclusive. Ramps and disabled facilities are available.

27. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory, and includes summer schools and early entry for mathematics examinations.

28. The school finds that a minority of pupils have low aspirations, which it works hard to counter. Good careers guidance is provided and there are effective links with local colleges. Personal, social and health education is delivered effectively through a form tutorial programme and covers sex and health education, careers and citizenship. Tutors also monitor academic progress effectively. Personal, social and health education is a well resourced and established programme managed by an advanced skills teacher. The programme uses external speakers, such as a local magistrate and makes use of video conferencing to provide speakers remotely. Personal, social and health education lessons make use of national record of achievement progress file materials, which is effective.

29. Extra-curricular provision is good. The timing of the school day provides good scope for after school activity. Most sporting options are catered for, including, rugby, football, netball, basketball, athletics and hockey, and the school has achieved Sports Mark Gold. There is an annual musical production. There are field trips, theatre events and overseas visits. There is a range of clubs including art club, wildlife explorers club, baby care club, science club and information and communication technology club. The impact of these on pupils' development and learning is good.

30. Nearly all teachers are qualified. Teaching arrangements provide support for the consistency of teaching in many departments. Support teachers are effectively deployed. Because the school is currently undersubscribed, accommodation is more than adequate in many areas. However, some technology areas are too small. In particular, the resistant materials area is poorly resourced, and several science rooms need refurbishing. Information and communication technology provision is good and includes five computer suites and a classroom with video conferencing facilities.

Sixth form

31. The sixth form currently offers information technology, physical education, biology, mathematics, history and sport and recreation to the 8 students currently enrolled at this level. Within the constraints of a small sixth form, curriculum provision is satisfactory.

32. Good information and guidance is provided in relation to the main employment avenues - the services, local science establishment and financial services in Salisbury. A majority of students entered higher education last year. Teachers have the necessary skills and experience for working with sixth formers. Accommodation is generally satisfactory for the sixth form. Students have access to their own information and communication technology area and make use of Internet research facilities. There are suitable links with higher education institutions and sources of local employment.

33. The sixth form is set to expand with a new programme that will offer access to a wider range of academic and vocational courses.

Care, guidance and support

34. All staff work effectively to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Well informed support, advice and guidance are made available to all pupils as they progress through the school. Pupils' views are valued and there are increasing opportunities for pupils to register their opinions formally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school effectively ensures pupils' care, welfare, health and safety;
- Staff show consistently good levels of care and concern for pupils, working successfully to build trusting relationships with most of them;
- The school has good systems to track and record pupils' academic progress and personal development;
- Setting and agreeing of personal targets by pupils is good;
- Their views and opinions on school development are increasingly sought and valued.

Commentary

35. Daily routines are well established and respected by pupils and staff. The school is both vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities. Staff show consistently good levels of care and concern and have pupils' well-being in mind at all times. Appropriate supervision is always provided and full risk assessments are always undertaken in relation to visits and off-site activities. Good systems ensure that identified hazards or safety concerns around the site are quickly eliminated. Staff ensure that day-to-day activities are carried out safely. Comprehensive records of incidents and accidents are maintained and the school is quick to inform parents of any illness or injury. The large majority of pupils responds well to this consistent, caring approach and enjoys strong, trusting relationships with the teachers and tutors.

36. Good systems are in place to assess and record pupils' academic progress and achievement. Termly tutoring sessions are proving to be effective one-to-one meetings at which pupils can discuss achievements and agree targets for further development. At the same time, tutors are able to identify the need for additional support and guidance. Pupils value these sessions highly. The procedures for monitoring pupils' personal and social development are good. They ensure that any pupils experiencing problems or difficulties are quickly identified. The good quality in-house support and guidance provided for these pupils is often supplemented by the good use of a wide range of external agency professionals. The newly installed "Sleuth" system is starting to assemble a rich database of personal and social development information on every pupil. The school is planning to use this information to target more effectively the personal development of all pupils. A

good programme of careers guidance ensures all pupils have access to impartial advice on further study and job opportunities.

37. The contribution of pupils to establishing routines and influencing school development is good overall. There is no regular consultation procedure to gather pupils' views, although pupils are encouraged to express opinions on aspects of the provision at an individual level and through the school council. Over the last two years, the school has been working effectively to involve pupils more. It is committed to extending opportunities further. All pupils are now formally involved in agreeing their own academic development targets and this will shortly be extended to cover personal and social development targets.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

38. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and satisfactory links with the community. There is limited use of facilities by community groups. There are good links with feeder primary schools: links with colleges are also good and improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are broadly supportive, but a significant minority has negative perceptions of the school;
- The school is working hard to develop the partnership with parents but many are reluctant to become involved;
- The school uses community figures and organisations effectively to extend and enrich learning opportunities;
- Transfer arrangements with primary schools are good.

Commentary

39. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers agree that their children like school, that settling in arrangements are good and that staff expect pupils to work hard. A significant minority raised some concerns about behaviour, homework, about the seeking of parental views. They were concerned about being kept well informed on the progress that their children are making. Behaviour in the school is judged to be good overall. It is acknowledged that there are incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour and some bullying, but inspectors felt that the school is working effectively to minimise disruption and to support the pupils involved.

40. Inspectors agree with parents that there are inconsistencies in the setting of homework and that when set it does not always build on classroom learning.

41. The school welcomes parents into the school at any time and has recently started to collect views and opinions on various aspects of school development and routines, from those attending consultation evenings. Regular formal consultation of the whole parent body does not currently happen. The information made available to parents on progress is good. Termly assessment reports and the annual report provide good quality data, which charts pupils' progress effectively. Consultation evenings give formal opportunities for parents to discuss achievement in more detail. About two thirds of parents attend these consultation sessions. The introduction of termly academic tutoring sessions provides a good opportunity for pupils and parents to get more closely involved in agreeing the targets for further development. Very few parents attend these meetings, however. The arrangements for involving parents of pupils with Individual Education Plans are good and these parents do get closely involved in reviews and target setting.

42. The school is trying hard to develop the partnership with parents and to encourage more involvement in children's learning at school and at home. Parents with worries are actively encouraged to contact school at any time and the school is quick to contact home if there are any concerns. A recent initiative, which is being well received by parents, is the practice of contacting home with good news of effort and achievement. Day-to-day communication is encouraged through diaries or by telephone. A good quality termly newsletter keeps parents informed of school

development, pupil achievements and forthcoming events. The Parent Association is a committed group working hard to organise a good range of fund-raising activities and events. Attendance varies but is rarely more than 10 per cent of parents. Special evenings designed to encourage parents to become more involved in learning at home are valued by the small number of parents attending. A recent special evening on revision for parents of year 11 pupils attracted less than 10 parents. The school has managed to arrange staffing to keep the learning resource centre open in the evenings to enable parents to use the facility but take up of the offer has been very low so far.

43. The school has satisfactory links with the local community. Facilities are used by a few local sports groups and societies. Efforts to encourage the local community to use the learning resource centre after school have been disappointing. Some local community figures make regular contributions to the curriculum and pupils use some community facilities e.g. the swimming pool, to enrich their learning experiences effectively. Links with the Army bases, to which many of the pupils have strong ties, have not been as strong as the school would have liked.

44. The school has developed good relationships with the main primary feeder schools and there is effective consultation and collaboration over transition arrangements. Some pupils from one local primary school are using the learning resource centre on a regular basis and a few pupils from Upper Avon regularly visit the federation partner school. There is wide interaction through inter-school sports and other competitions. Links with the partner school, another secondary school and the local college are developing, and deal with vocational courses and the 14 – 19 curriculum. Plans are in hand to work closely to ensure a wide range of opportunities are available to all pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

45. Governance of the school is good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. The leadership of other key staff and the effectiveness of management within the school are good. They have improved further since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body provides effective stewardship of the school and is increasingly providing the necessary support and challenge at all levels;
- The headteacher is a very good leader and a very effective motivator, showing clear vision and high aspirations for the school and the pupils;
- Key staff fully support the development programme and show increasingly good leadership and management skills;
- Most middle managers and subject leaders operate effectively on a day-to-day basis;
- School systems for self-evaluation and review are improving: very good quality performance data is assembled, but is not yet consistently used in all departments;
- Day-to-day financial management and control is good and has ensured a rapid elimination of the deficit. Best value principles are embedded in all purchase decisions.

Commentary

46. Throughout a period of considerable turbulence for the school, the governing body has ensured that the key issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed, whilst providing a significantly improved level of support and challenge. The school is fulfilling all its statutory duties with the exception of provision for design and technology in years 7 to 9. Governors and senior managers are well aware of the problem, caused by the difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff, and are urgently trying to resolve the situation.

47. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses. The chair maintains close contact with the school and provides very effective personal support for the headteacher. The governing body has been fully involved in helping to shape the vision and future direction of the school, in addition to providing effective support and back up for day-to-day issues. A good committee structure

ensures that new initiatives and proposals receive constructive challenge and that good monitoring and review systems are always built in. Individual governors are allocated to particular curriculum departments and are actively involved in working with curriculum leaders in reviewing provision and helping them to draw up action plans.

48. Leadership of the school is good overall. There is a shared vision of the future direction that embraces both a clear commitment to the young people in the school and a determined focus on raising levels of achievement. The headteacher has used her very good leadership skills to manage effectively some major changes in style and expectation over the last two years. The leadership team now have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, are progressively taking ownership of their areas. They are increasingly acting as good role models and motivators for other staff. The school is a happy place in which the staff as a whole respect and support each other, and work with a common purpose. The fact that the school has maintained its course and progress over the last few months, whilst the headteacher has been involved with a nearby school, is a testament to the increasing effectiveness of the senior leaders in the school.

49. The school development agenda in the last two years has been driven mainly by externally identified points for improvement or as a result of senior management review of areas causing concern. With many critical issues now attended to, the process of regular review and self-evaluation of all aspects of the provision is starting to be built into the annual planning cycle. Middle managers and subject leaders contribute well to the determination of the whole-school improvement agenda through their annual action plans that are developed from their own review programmes. Many middle managers have established good review procedures and are taking effective control of development in their areas of responsibility but their practice is inconsistent. Performance management is well established in the school, taken seriously by all staff and is effective in bringing about change and improvement. The school is committed to staff development and ensures that training undertaken matches the needs of individuals as well as those of the school.

50. The study skills centre is well managed by the newly appointed co-ordinator of special needs, who has worked hard to ensure that all the necessary systems, reviews, and paperwork are in place. Members of the strong team of teaching assistants are well qualified and benefit from being able to further their expertise through in-service training.

51. Day-to-day financial management and control are good: administration staff are effective, committed members of the team. Prudent financial control has succeeded in eliminating a carried-over deficit and the school is now able to target all available resources at identified priorities. Common-sense principles of best value are automatically built in to all purchase decisions.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,480,129	Balance from previous year	-80,248
Total expenditure	2,349,249	Balance carried forward to the next	50,632
Expenditure per pupil	3,328		

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

52. Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement in years 7 to 9;
- The department provides an imaginative modular scheme of work for pupils in years 7 to 9 and interprets the GCSE syllabus in a demanding manner;
- Pupils have a good working relationship with their teachers, so the majority of pupils want to learn;
- Work does not always adequately match the needs and abilities of all pupils, especially in the more noticeably mixed ability classes;
- Pupils have too few opportunities to re-draft their work to improve its quality and presentation;
- Standards at the end of year 11 are adversely affected by the passive attitude to learning of a significant minority of boys.

Commentary

53. Attainment on entry to the school is below average in all aspects of English. Pupils achieve well in years 7 to 9, with the result that standards at the end of Year 9 are average. This is reflected in the most recent national assessment in 2003, when attainment equated to the national average and was above average compared with similar schools. Many pupils, including most girls and the more able boys, continue to make good progress in years 10 and 11. However, the reluctance of a minority of disaffected boys to take responsibility for their own learning, results in a minority of pupils making insufficient progress in their GCSE studies. As a result, attainment in year 11 is currently well below average. This deficiency was reflected in the GCSE English language and English literature results in 2003, when girls attained significantly higher grades than boys.

54. Most pupils in school display satisfactory social oral skills but are less secure in their ability to speak within a more formal, structured situation. Regular chances are given for pupils to talk in pairs about their work, although pupils engage too infrequently in whole-class discussions and debates. Standards in speaking and listening skills in years 9 and 11 are average. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported and achieve satisfactorily.

55. Many pupils display satisfactory technical reading skills in years 7 to 9. Some, however, are insecure in their reading comprehension skills, so a minority of pupils do not always fully understand the full meaning of what they are reading. Although critical reading skills are well taught in years 10 and 11, many pupils still have problems understanding the layers of meaning in the demanding texts which form part of their GCSE studies. A minority of pupils, often boys, read only at a surface level. They have problems in reading for sub-text and in appreciating how writers use language to convey tone, atmosphere, or the nature of individual characters, ideas and issues. Standards in reading in year 9 are broadly average, but below average in Year 11.

56. Most pupils improve their basic skills of punctuation, spelling and grammar in years 7 to 9, using them to good effect in an imaginative range of writing activities. Although pupils plan their work well, they have too few chances to re-draft or improve it in terms of structure, content and detail or by the use of more imaginative, descriptive language.

57. Standards in year 11 are variable, overall being satisfactory, largely dependent on the time and effort that pupils invest in their own learning. This means their reading the demanding texts in their own time so as to develop their understanding and their being prepared to re-draft their work to improve its quality.

58. The most able pupils produce work of good quality, showing the ability to sustain a strong personal response supported by relevant quotations. However, a significant number of boys produce written work of a minimum length and with limited detail and substance. Standards in writing in year 9 are average and well below average in Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

59. Teaching in years 7 to 11 is good, with very good teaching also observed during the inspection. Teachers use the English strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy to good effect. Evidence from lessons showed that this is making a positive contribution to raising standards in the subject. Teachers mainly provide pupils with an imaginative range of writing activities in years 7 to 9. However, occasions were observed in the mixed ability classes where pupils were involved in the same activity and using the same resource materials irrespective of their ability. This resulted in lower attaining pupils being unsure as to what to do and more able pupils being insufficiently challenged.

60. In the very good lessons, teachers had high expectations of all pupils regardless of their ability. They provided work which matched their needs and abilities, including extension activities for the more able, and enabled pupils to make progress in their oral, reading and writing skills within a single lesson.

61. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The well-informed, enthusiastic head of English is fully aware of the issue of boys' attainment and has put into place a number of strategies to address this issue: these have yet to be effective. All members of the department are committed to raising standards in the subject.

62. There are good assessment procedures, with all pupils getting individual targets for improvement. Additional programmes support lower attaining pupils in years 7 and 9. The department provides pupils with a good range of extra-curricular activities. These include a reading club, poetry and book days and chances to see a range of plays both in school and at local theatres.

63. Standards in the subject at the end of year 9 have improved well since the last inspection and have been maintained at the end of year 11.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

64. All staff have been involved in whole school in-service training for the development of literacy across the curriculum, with additional in-service training for new members of staff. All departments address this area of the curriculum this year and the strategies for its development are in their handbooks. Whilst this takes place in the majority of departments, there are some inconsistencies in its practice. There is a satisfactory whole school policy for the development of literacy across the curriculum. Current strategies have been in place since October 2001, but the school has yet to evaluate these practices in order to consider their impact across the curriculum. Good examples of the development of literacy skills can be found in history and modern foreign languages, though some subjects, such as art, geography and design and technology contribute little as yet.

Modern Foreign Languages

65. Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management have been successful in addressing issues raised by the last inspection;
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 meets pupils' needs well;
- the use of information and communication technology to support learning is good for all pupils;
- The introduction of visits to Germany and the continuing development of links with a German school are strengths;
- Standards in Years 7 to 9 are well below national averages;
- In years 10 and 11, standards are well below in French and Spanish;
- The analysis and use of assessment data is insufficient to have a positive impact on learning.

Commentary

66. All pupils begin to study German in year 7. In 2003 their attainment at the end of year 9 was well below the national expectation, whereas it had been above average in 2002. From the beginning of year 10, pupils no longer have to study a foreign language but may choose to continue with German or begin studying Spanish. In the current year 11, all pupils are still studying a foreign language chosen from German, Spanish and French. In 2003, GCSE results were well below the national average in French and Spanish and below average in German. Pupils were generally less successful in languages than in their other subjects. Throughout the school the attainment of girls is higher than that of boys, by a much greater margin than is found nationally. At the end of Years 9 and 11, pupils' results show underachievement in languages, so their potential was not being realised.

67. Standards of work seen, however, indicated that pupils are now much more successful. Attainment in lessons is in line with national expectations and a minority of pupils are beginning to achieve above expectations. In all languages and in all years, pupils with special educational needs achieve their potential and the more able are challenged to achieve more, usually to good effect. Pupils' exercise books equally reflect improved standards. They are mostly well organised, neatly presented and show that pupils take a pride in their work. Written work becomes increasingly sophisticated as pupils move through the school.

68. In lessons seen, the teaching was always at least satisfactory, generally good and occasionally very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and are also dual linguists. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk, the work is carefully graded and pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn during the lesson. In a very good German lesson where pupils were practising asking each other out, they were actively involved in their own learning and given the tools to enable them to speak and write independently. Relationships between teachers and pupils were always positive and there was a real sense of partnership: the pupils' behaviour was always good and their attitudes towards learning positive.

69. Good teaching and improving achievement of the pupils result from the good leadership and management of the department. All aspects of the work of the department are well documented. The staff work closely as a team and have taken positive steps to solve the recruitment problems and low standards of the past. However, there is still insufficient use of performance data.

70. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Leadership and management, day-to-day assessment, teaching and learning and the use of information and communication technology are now good. A revised curriculum in Years 10 and 11 gives pupils more choice and the concentration on German in years 7 to 9 meets pupils' needs better and helps to with staff recruitment. This is a very positive step and all indications are that it is already beginning to raise standards.

MATHEMATICS

71. Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is very good, and management is good, although not yet fully effective;
- Standards are rising and achievement is good, especially by the end of year 9;
- Teaching is good overall, with some excellent features but inconsistent across the department;
- Assessment is good, with detailed data analysis;
- Pupils' attitudes are good, the majority show interest and work hard, although a minority are disrespectful and lack effort;

Commentary

72. Standards in national tests and examinations have steadily improved since the previous inspection. Year 9 pupils' national test results dramatically improved in 2003 to above the national average, and were well above those in similar schools. Increased results were due to greater challenge in lessons, the modular structure of the curriculum and the development of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Extra 'booster' homework, designed to raise pupils from level 4 to level 5 and to increase the number gaining level 8, also helped to improve results. GCSE results at the end of year 11 were in line with the national average in 2003, although the proportion of A*-C grades was lower than in 2002. Girls obtained significantly better results than boys, well above the national A*-C percentage for girls. Boys' results were well below the boys' national figures. This was a reversal of the previous year when the proportion of boys gaining A*-C was higher than that of girls. In 2002 and 2003, GCSE results in mathematics were well above those in similar schools, and were higher than in English or Science.

73. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment in mathematics, varying between girls and boys in each year. The current year 7 was close to the national average. By the end of year 9 standards equate to the national average, and pupils' achievement is good. Year 7 pupils are broadly grouped by ability for all subjects and taught at different times for mathematics. This leads to inflexibility and some anomalies. More able year 7 pupils showed interest and understanding in considering alternative ways of calculating division. A lower attaining group particularly enjoyed the practical, creative activity of constructing Rangoli patterns, since the teacher described the spiritual and cultural context well. From year 8 on, pupils are set across each year by ability, allowing greater challenge, depth and pace of work for the more able. There is, however, insufficient match to individual pupils' aptitude and prior attainment, especially where groups are very large. Small sets of less able pupils or those with special educational needs allow individual attention from the teacher and teaching assistants. This was demonstrated very well by a year 9 class learning probability key words and simple calculations.

74. More able pupils are identified early and well challenged, with, for example, master-classes held for promising year 6 pupils in primary schools. Year 10 top sets are accelerated through the GCSE syllabus, taking the examination in November of year 11, followed by GCSE in statistics. However, this strategy produced too few higher grades in 2003. Preparation for external tests or examinations is very good, as was seen in a year 11 middle attaining set going through past GCSE papers. Excellent interactive whiteboard displays showed methods and how marks are awarded, with detailed reference to pages for revision in pupils' text-books. All pupils have copies of relevant texts at home, as well as well matched quality texts and well prepared worksheets for use in school. Regular tests give levels or grades for all topics learnt, and numerical targets are set for each pupil, and class. Although teachers' assessment of standards is good on the whole, with feedback of levels and grades, their marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. The policy of allowing pupils to self-mark from teachers verbal answers

did not result in all work being corrected. Detailed correction of homework was seen, with very constructive comments to guide pupils on how to improve.

75. Teaching is good. There was a significant minority of very good lessons, with some excellent features, but there is inconsistency across the department. Work is not always at the correct level and occasionally negative attitudes and unsatisfactory behaviour from a minority of pupils affects learning. All teachers are specialist mathematicians, with good knowledge and understanding of their subject, due to their varied experience. Teachers' planning of lessons is a strength, and based on the recommended three-part structure and timed activities. However a greater range and variety including more practical work, structured discussion and group-work would benefit learning. Successful 'starter' sessions involve pupils in the recall of knowledge and mental calculations. This is especially effective when teachers use the individual whiteboards, which give them instant assessment of pupils' attainment. Most lessons end well with summaries of learning, related puzzles or problems, or setting the scene for the next stage of learning. High expectations with clear routines are understood and appreciated by most pupils. Teachers know their classes thoroughly, and develop good relationships with pupils. They circulate continuously in class, giving help and guidance and have excellent questioning techniques. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics and to their teachers are mostly very good. They are willing to work hard, although too few show initiative or are enabled to take responsibility for their own learning.

76. Leadership is very good, with raising standards as its focus. Clear vision and a drive for improvement build well on the good work of the previous head of department, who is now a member of the school's leadership team. The faculty includes information and communication technology and all teachers have relevant expertise. Computers are increasingly used by pupils and teachers, with increasingly innovative use of interactive whiteboards. Management is good. There are extensive monitoring and recording systems, but too much inconsistency across the department. Data analysis is thorough, although it does not yet inform effective action consistently. Schemes of work have developed well. They do not, however, contain guidance on teaching and learning methods or any explicit references to citizenship and the spiritual and cultural dimensions of mathematics. The mutually supportive team of specialists works very well together, but they are too few in number to enable realistic class sizes or planned developments. The three mathematics rooms are large and well resourced, with excellent displays in rooms and corridors. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, as standards have risen together with better teaching and increased monitoring and evaluation.

Mathematics across the curriculum

77. The manager of years 7 to 9 is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of numeracy across the curriculum but recognises that little has developed since the whole-staff training of three years ago. Wiltshire local education authority consultants contributed well to the training and development of numeracy in years 7 to 9, and new teachers now receive induction into school procedures. The mathematics department's handbook refers to their drive for improved numeracy. Other departments mention numeracy in their handbooks or schemes of work, but this is inconsistent across the school. In science, graphical skills are good and pupils manipulate formulae or use scales and clocks well. Spreadsheet work in information and communication technology is well developed and there is also good use of numeracy skills. There is little evidence of numeracy in design and technology lessons, and pupils are weak at measuring. In other subjects, there is occasional use of line and bar graphs, although inappropriate use was seen in geography. Pupils' numeracy skills are weak on entry to the school, especially their awareness of time patterns in history, but these improve in successive years.

SCIENCE

78. Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, leading to good achievement;
- Examination results at the end of year 9 have improved well;
- Pupils' investigative skills are good which supports their learning in all scientific areas;
- GCSE examination results reflect previous underachievement;
- The use of data-logging equipment by pupils is underdeveloped.

Commentary

79. In 2003, national test results at the end of year 9 were in line with the national average. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. These results were a good improvement on those achieved in 2002 and the trend in these results since the last inspection has been upward. GCSE results were below average although all pupils achieved a grade in the range A*-G in both dual award and single award examinations. The girls attained better than the boys. These results represent good achievement in years 7 to 9 and satisfactory achievement in years 10 and 11.

80. Standards of work seen during the inspection are satisfactory overall. The achievement of current pupils is good, including those with special educational needs, due to the support that they receive in lessons. Pupils in year 9, for example, describe various processes for the separation of mixtures and higher attainers write equations using chemical symbols. Year 11 pupils have a good understanding of the digestive system and are able to discuss the factors affecting the rates of chemical reactions. Pupils display competency in the literacy and numeracy appropriate to the science curriculum. Behaviour during lessons is good and pupils rise to challenging questions. They handle apparatus and chemicals with confidence in all years, listen attentively and remain on task during written and practical work. Pupils' investigative skills are well developed.

81. Teaching is good in all years and so pupils learn well. Lessons are well organised and teachers have good subject knowledge, enabling them to give pupils clear explanations that enhance their learning. In lessons, relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Number skills are successfully practised through the use of scientific formulae and the graphs necessary in science. Good attention is paid to literacy, with strong emphasis on new terminology. Information and communication technology is applied regularly in lessons, but the use of data-loggers by pupils is underdeveloped, due to a shortage of equipment. Work is well matched to the needs of the pupils and is matched to different ability levels. Teachers set homework on a regular basis and use it well to reinforce work covered in lessons. Pupils' work is carefully marked and annotated with clear guidance on areas for improvement.

82. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has a clear sense of direction and is keen to continue improving standards and results. Meetings are held regularly to discuss progress and share expertise. Several new initiatives have recently been introduced to improve the examination results and these are being successful. Pupils now follow the dual award modular GCSE course, as it motivates them more than the linear course. Applied Science has also been introduced as an alternative course, which also appears to be being successful. A new scheme of work has recently been started in year 7. There are very good links with the local community and pupils benefit from visiting speakers and science trips out of school. There is a thriving lunchtime environmental club for interested pupils. Assessment, recording and monitoring are good and pupils are kept well informed of their target grades. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory and the excellent displays of pupils' work are informative and help to improve their learning environment. The department receives good technical support from two technicians. Improvement since the last inspection has been good in years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in years 10 and 11.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

83. Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall;
- Planning and assessment of the subject is very effective;
- The number of computers and range of information and communication technology resources for subjects is above average;
- Development of information and communication technology across subjects is not consistent enough.

Commentary

84. Attainment at the end of year 9 is currently at the nationally expected level. In 2003, most pupils in year 11 took the RSA CLAIT examination, and one group of pupils took GCSE information and communication technology. Taken as a whole, results were in line with the national average. The attainment of boys and girls was similar both in years 9 and 11.

85. The current standard in year 9 is in line with the national expectation, having risen from year to year. In year 11, the current standard is in line with the national average. The new GCSE course is encouraging greater achievement and development of pupils' information and communication technology capability than the previous RSA skills course.

86. Pupils arrive at the school with mixed experiences of using information and communication technology. The department has adapted the National Strategy materials for information and communication technology in years 7 to 9. These provide a progressive learning programme that is leading to good achievement by year 9.

87. Achievement in year 11 is good in relation to pupils' prior attainment and capability. Pupils create a database of plants for a garden centre, for example, or mail merge a customer database with a letter document. Pupils with special educational needs make progress equivalent to that of other pupils.

88. Teaching is good in all years. Preparation and planning are strong features of lessons, as is the assessment of pupils' work. Lessons are prepared in the form of presentations using data projectors. These and other resources ensure that pupils understand the purpose of the lesson and what is expected of them. In the best lessons, management is highly effective in ensuring that all pupils remain on task and make good progress. Teachers assess work well, providing useful comments and explaining the levels that pupils are working towards in the tasks undertaken.

89. Leadership for information and communication technology is good. The school has made significant improvements in its provision since the last inspection. There is a clear vision of how the subject can promote learning across subjects and in particular improve the achievement of boys. The management of information and communication technology is also good. The schemes of work are exemplary. Teaching is regularly monitored and well supported by teaching assistants and other teaching staff. Team teaching allows the best practice in class organisation to be shared. A new GCSE course provides a progressive route for current pupils with higher levels of information and communication technology capability levels than previous year groups.

90. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Attainment in years 9 and 11 is now in line with the national expectation. Boys and girls now perform equally well. Statutory requirements are now met in respect of the study of measurement and control. Teaching and learning is now good in all years. There is now an above average number of computers and the use of information and communication technology in subjects is satisfactory and developing.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

91. There is an above average number of computers in the school and good scope for departments to exploit teaching and learning using these resources. Statutory requirements for information and communication technology application in subjects are met, with most departments developing its use beyond the minimum entitlement. Mathematics makes particular use of software with built-in assessment. This approach is reinforced for particular pupils in the skills centre. Pupils have well-developed information and communication technology skills by year 9. The majority of teachers have developed their interest in information and communication technology following the national training programme. Many teachers have laptop computers, and the increasing availability of data projectors is leading to ever greater numbers of teachers structuring their lessons around presentations.

HUMANITIES

Geography

92. Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in years 10 and 11 so GCSE results are improving rapidly;
- Attainment is below expectations in years 7 to 9 due to weak literacy and presentation skills;
- Teaching and learning are good, but a few lessons do not provide for the full range of ability in the group;
- Good leadership and management are bringing about equally good improvements.

Commentary

93. In 2003, GCSE results were below the national average and significantly below pupils' results in their other school subjects. However, girls' results were above average, boys' results well below, and owing to a preponderance of boys choosing the subject, overall results were adversely affected. This is a considerable improvement on results gained in 2002, because of the intensive teaching input of the newly appointed subject co-ordinator. Work seen during the inspection was of an average standard. High attaining year 11 pupils have a good understanding of the topics they have studied, such as economic development and write adequate examination answers, but lower attainers do not explain their conclusions well. Achievement is good in years 10 and 11, with clear improvement in standards compared with the work of year 9 pupils.

94. Pupils come into the school in year 7 with below average geographical skills and knowledge. By the end of year 9 these standards are still below average, showing satisfactory achievement. Pupils' geographical knowledge and understanding increases during these years but weak literacy and presentation skills mean that many do not express or explain well what they know. In lessons where work is planned to suit the various needs of pupils in the class, they all achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs are all well known to their teachers. They are well provided for and supported by a teaching assistant as well as getting additional help from teachers. However, this provision is not consistent, because the best practice in teaching is not yet being systemically shared in the department. In the better lessons, literacy is well developed through the intensive use of key vocabulary. Numeracy is used where necessary for graphs and diagrams, but weak presentation suggests that pupils are not clear about the standards required of them.

95. Teaching and learning are good overall. The better lessons are well managed and provide a succession of short, practical activities so that pupils remain focused. In the weaker lessons, tasks are more extended and not well explained, so pupils become disaffected, talk out of turn and lose concentration. Homework is well used to support the work done in lessons. Assessment is good,

both through questioning in lessons and teachers' marking of books: many pupils are aware of their levels of attainment and know their targets for improvement, but this does not apply to all year groups. Moral and cultural themes, and references to citizenship, are part of the developing schemes of work, but are not made explicit in lessons. Information and communication technology is well used on a regular basis, for example to produce coursework and assessment assignments, and to interrogate the Internet for information.

96. Management and leadership are good. The subject co-ordinator and the head of the humanities faculty are both working hard to put appropriate management and monitoring structures into place. They are raising attainment through improved schemes of work and the effective use of departmental data to determine planning priorities. Thus the capacity for further improvement is very good.

History

97. Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Led by a committed, visionary head of department, the very well qualified, devoted and hard-working history staff is a valuable asset;
- Very detailed planning, presentation and delivery of a broad, balanced curriculum is strongly focused upon improvement in all aspects;
- Very good teaching, learning and achievement contribute to rapidly improving standards;
- The use of information and communication technology in teaching and pupils' increasing access to it in the suites are major strengths.

Commentary

98. In 2003, teacher assessments at the end of year 9 showed standards to be average, although boys' attainment was markedly lower than girls'. Work in class confirms this and the continuing drive for improving standards augurs well for the future, especially given pupils' very low attainment in history on entry in year 7. The results gained by increasing numbers of candidates in GCSE are above average, especially given pupils' prior levels of attainment. The standards of the few students taking A-level are high.

99. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment in history is well below expectations. Standards in teachers' assessments are close to expectations by the end of year 9, representing very good achievement. A few pupils have difficulty with some important historical concepts. The majority of pupils are developing greater confidence in study skills, working well both collaboratively and independently. The focus of pupils' attention improves significantly, especially when debating issues increasingly critically and analytically. By year 9, this development provides a secure, if not yet sufficiently broad and deep, foundation for those increasing numbers who choose to follow GCSE courses. By the end of year 11, pupils' historical knowledge, understanding and skills are further improved. While standards and achievement have been poor and remain unsatisfactory in years 10 and 11, they are rising rapidly. In year 13, small numbers of A-level students have recently attained higher than average standards, continuing this very good achievement.

100. Teaching and learning in history throughout the school are never less than good and usually very good, with some outstanding features. In all year groups, the impact of well qualified teachers is clear in the very detailed planning, preparation and presentation of lessons. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' engagement with history. Pupils use primary source material well, applying their critical and analytical skills in reading, writing and research. Teaching is characterised by unusual levels of energy and dynamism, coupled with sensitivity to the needs of individuals. This promotes increasingly positive attitudes, behaviour and attention to the task in hand by the vast majority of pupils who clearly value their history lessons highly.

101. The department is very well led with clear vision of historical educational priorities and high levels of commitment and energy. Management is very good. The curriculum is broad, balanced and rich in its cultural and stylistic variety. However, it is constrained, especially in years 7 to 9, by inadequate accommodation and resources, in particular the lack of computers. The department makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, notably in the considerable breadth of cultural experiences it offers. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Religious education

102. Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall, and very good in years 7 to 9;
- The subject is very well led and management is good;
- The excellent subject knowledge of the main subject specialist raises pupils' expectations;
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development;
- Negative attitudes and lack of commitment in years 10 and 11 reduce pupils' GCSE attainment: results are lower than they should be;
- In a few classes, the unsatisfactory behaviour of some boys restricts achievement for all.

Commentary

103. Low standards of literacy on entry impede progress in the subject, especially in written work. Many pupils speak well, so they can express their earlier understanding. They have lower, but satisfactory, listening skills. Standards approach the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus by the end of year 9. Pupils acquire a broad, elementary, understanding of world religions, including Islam and Buddhism, as well as consolidating their knowledge and understanding of Christianity. Teachers' perceptive, quick, analysis of pupils' answers in lessons stimulates their thinking very effectively as the teacher weaves them into the lessons. This helps to develop the understanding of all pupils, from year 7 onwards.

104. Standards in year 10 and 11 are lower, so at GCSE pupils achieve much lower than average grades. The whole year group is entered for the short course examination and very small numbers for the full course GCSE. Some pupils do not take the subject seriously enough and resent its compulsory nature. Standards of debate and discussion are good and pupils in year 11 affirm their enjoyment of these aspects. Students say discussions are much more spontaneous than in other subjects. They recognise that their opinions are valued. However, pupils' efforts in written work are not sufficient to ensure that they achieve the examination grades of which they are capable. A minority of pupils resist the good teaching they receive. The excellent subject knowledge of the main subject specialist raises some pupils' standards and expectations. While many lower attaining pupils are daunted, higher attainers rise to the challenge very well, especially in their studies of Buddhism. Among the year 10 and 11 pupils, there is a tendency to dismiss studies of Christianity and, as they stated, "the God bit".

105. Teaching in years 7 to 9 is very good and good in years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching develops respect for all faiths. Wise choice of sensitive materials helps pupils to come to terms with difficult moral and social issues, such as abortion. Boys as well as girls expressed their increased emotional understanding of the plight of women with unwanted pregnancies, both before and after the legalisation of abortion. Most pupils learn well, but in years 10 and 11 insufficient planned homework is set. Teachers do not give enough practice of questions under examination conditions, so that pupils can gain better results. The lack of support for pupils with behavioural difficulties reduces learning in a very few classes, as the lesson fragments and behaviour checks disturb progress. Lessons are always well planned and carefully sequenced, with a good variety of activities.

Information and communication technology is very well integrated and promotes learning effectively, for example, through presentations or pupils' own research on the internet.

106. Leadership and management are good but capability is over-stretched by the additional county-wide responsibilities of the subject co-ordinator. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are unusually clear about the difference between religion and culture, due to the valuable experience many have of living in other societies. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Examination results are improving very slowly. The much more positive attitudes of pupils in years 7 to 9, induced by the new head of subject are already having a beneficial effect on learning.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and Technology

107. Provision in design and technology is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Problems with staffing have impacted negatively on standards;
- Technology as an essential problem-solving activity is little found in the school, so pupils do not work hard enough in the subject;
- Lessons have no realistic, specific objectives, so neither teachers nor pupils can evaluate learning or take necessary action;
- Teachers make insufficient use of computers to make lessons more effective or improve pupils' learning.

Commentary

108. In 2003, almost all year 11 pupils entered for GCSE in an area of technology. Almost all obtained a grade and nearly two thirds reached the target grade C, compared to just over a half nationally. Both for the whole age group and for boys alone, these results are higher than in other subjects. Overall they are above average.

109. Most pupils enter the school with a grasp of technology that is well below expectations. In recent years, they made good progress through the lower school: now, however, progress is satisfactory at best. Many pupils in years 7 to 9 become skilful at following such rules, including those about how to describe the product development process in portfolios. Few gain much understanding of specialist terms, such as 'product specification', 'seam' or 'target audience'. The match between the pupils' grasp of technology and National Curriculum expectations is weak in years 7 to 9.

110. Pupils currently in year 11 are the last for whom a GCSE technology option was compulsory. In the lessons, in their folders and files, and in discussions, most show little real interest in the subject. While their theory work is of satisfactory standard, they know few facts or ideas, nor understand them. Skills development is satisfactory only where the pupils have higher motivation, in textiles and in food technology.

111. Less than a quarter of year 10 pupils currently follow a technology course, there being one group each in resistant materials and catering. The former group was without a specialist teacher at the time of the inspection and their grasp of technology was poor.

112. Staffing problems have also a negative impact on the morale of the specialist teachers, although teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers' main strengths are keeping pupils on task and in order. The teachers have a good knowledge of their craft areas, but do not make clear the problem-solving nature and systems of technology. Pupils do not, therefore, know why they are performing

tasks, nor do they see how their learning in one area applies to work in another. The teachers make insufficient use of clear, specific objectives, so neither they nor the pupils can focus their learning or judge the success of lessons.

113. Since the previous inspection, the school has had a number of people responsible for aspects of the subject's leadership and management. At the time of inspection, there were signs of improved teacher focus and pupil motivation. These were due to efforts by the head of faculty, analysis by the local authority's adviser, assessment by a teacher from another school, and of determination by the main supply teacher.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

114. Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are interested in the subject so they work hard in lessons;
- The teacher is well qualified and enthusiastic about the subject;
- Tasks are imaginative and engage pupils' interest;
- There is insufficient focus on the development of skills;
- The teacher's expectations of pupils are, occasionally, not made sufficiently clear.

Commentary

115. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*- C in the 2003 GCSE examination was below average. Pupils gained lower grades in art and design than they did in other subjects. The school reports that the achievement of pupils in that particular year had been reduced by a number of staff changes in previous years. Work seen in lessons and analysis of finished work by the present year 11 pupils, showed that standards are now broadly average.

116. In years 7 to 9, achievement is satisfactory and standards in art are broadly in line with expectations by the end of year 9. In many lessons, pupils work hard at interesting tasks, such as making and decorating clay masks, or making armour out of cardboard. These activities provide good learning opportunities in the design aspects of the subject and much of the 3-dimensional work is of good quality. The work is, however, not always sufficiently focused on the development of technical art skills. Consequently, the development of drawing and painting skills, in particular, is not consistent. However, most pupils' understanding and use of colour are good. In most lessons, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, but on occasions individual boys find it difficult to sustain their concentration, so their attention wanders. They move off task with increasing frequency as the lesson develops. This is usually because the task has not been adapted to match more closely the needs of these pupils. However, the very effective teaching assistants are often successful in re-engaging them.

117. The quality of teaching and learning is generally satisfactory. The art and design teacher has good knowledge and understanding of the subject, so that pupils' learning is well supported. Tasks are imaginative and engage pupils' interest, but the teacher's expectations regarding standards in art are occasionally not made clear, because pupils are concentrating on other aspects of the project. Relationships are good, since the teacher manages the whole class and individual pupils well. Resources are well organised and used effectively. The pace of lessons is satisfactory, but it is too often left to the pupils to dictate. The management of learning could therefore be more rigorous.

118. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. There is an adequate scheme of work and a sound assessment policy. Assessment is however, not tied closely enough to the progression of pupils' skills. The scheme of work is carefully designed to provide interesting, attractive tasks that engage

pupils. Art and design is well represented in the current expressive arts action plan and issues for development are well judged.

119. Art clubs are held after school, providing opportunities for pupils to further their interest in the subject. Good links have been formed with a local college, which provide pupils with experience in more specialist areas of art, such as CAD animation, sculpture, film and television. Pupils are occasionally taken on visits to London, to the National Gallery or the Tate Britain. It has not been possible to arrange for professional artists to visit the school. The curriculum provides good coverage of multicultural experiences. There is evidence of some work using information and communication technology in art, but there is no dedicated computer in the art rooms and other information and communication technology resources have not been fully developed. For example, there are no gallery programmes on CD-ROM. Art was not reported on at the last inspection.

Dance

120. It was only possible to see a very small sample of dance lessons.

121. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a weekly dance lesson. The planning of these lessons is sympathetic to the needs of boys, who participate well. Standards at the end of year 9 are good. Assessment, developed with the help of the local education authority adviser, is rigorous but does not feed into the assessment of physical education. Teaching is good, with well planned lessons, delivered with good diagnostic feedback to help pupils improve. Relationships are good and pupils work well in pairs and small groups, developing their ideas and improving their performance.

122. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and there are no specialist rooms. There is frequent disruption during examination time and other whole school events. Pupils cope well with the lack of changing rooms.

123. Support from senior management and the link governor is good. The subject leader is a well qualified, experienced physical education teacher who brings her experience to bear on the effective delivery and management of lessons, so that learning is good in consequence.

DRAMA

124. Provision in drama is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching contributes much to pupils' good achievement in the subject;
- Pupils are provided with an imaginative range of drama activities in years 7 to 9;
- Pupils are insecure, both in their discrete drama skills and techniques and in their ability to apply them;
- Pupils in years 10 and 11 have insufficient knowledge of the work of influential directors and theatre practitioners;
- Pupils' written work in years 10 and 11 is marred by their underdeveloped literacy skills.

Commentary

125. The majority of pupils enter year 7 with lower than average knowledge of drama. They achieve well in years 7 to 9, so standards at the end of year 9 equate to national expectations. Pupils make good progress in developing their drama skills in years 10 and 11, though it is insufficient for any to achieve the higher GCSE grades A* - C. Results in 2003 were, consequently, below the national average.

126. Pupils in year 7 make satisfactory progress in their ability to interpret scripted plays, for example as they worked in pairs to explore a scene from *The Tempest*. The majority of pupils

worked well together. A similar approach was observed in year 9, as pupils explored a particular scene from 'Macbeth'. Although a number of groups of pupils produced work of satisfactory quality, some groups lacked self-discipline and concentration, so their finished work was only superficial. While pupils have satisfactory general improvisational skills they have only limited discrete skills and techniques with insufficient ability to apply them in their work.

127. Pupils in years 10 and 11 display positive attitudes to their GCSE studies. This was observed in a year 10 lesson, where pupils engaged in imaginative devised drama on the theme of 'dreams'. Pupils in year 11 were involved in some interesting scripted drama, as they worked on a scene from *Billy Liar* from the point of view of both an actor and a director.

128. Standards in drama are adversely influenced by pupils' inadequate critical and analytical skills and by their inability to write about activities they have been involved in or plays they have seen. All too often pupils' written work is descriptive, rather than evaluative. Some pupils still have problems in developing even basic literacy skills.

129. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, although good teaching was also occasionally observed. Lessons are well planned and organised, though without enough distinct focus on the development of discrete drama skills, techniques and strategies. The teacher of drama gives good support and advice to pupils, providing them with the chance to evaluate both their own and others' work, with the intention of improving it.

130. Leadership and management in the subject are satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has created an imaginative scheme of work for pupils in years 7 to 9. The GCSE drama syllabus is likewise interpreted in an effective manner. Appropriate procedures are in place for assessing pupils' progress and standards. Pupils benefit from seeing a good range of drama productions, which extend their wider knowledge of theatre. With its emphasis on the need to work together and the chance to explore a number of moral and contemporary issues the subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal, social and moral development.

MUSIC

131. Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is satisfactory, with a few lessons of very good quality;
- Pupils have positive attitudes to music, so they are attentive, work hard and remain well on task;
- Pupils make good use of the electronic keyboards;
- Aural and basic musical skills are underdeveloped;
- Opportunities to extend musical skills and understanding are too limited in years 10 and 11;
- Extracurricular activities, including opportunities to learn instruments, are insufficient.

Commentary

132. Music is not taught as a discrete subject in years 10 and 11. Pupils have access to music through the expressive arts course, but this does not provide for the regular development of musical skills. Standards at the end of year 9 are broadly average in all three areas of composing, performing and listening and appraising. There is little evidence of pupils achieving higher standards in music because their opportunities to play an instrument are very limited. Even so, pupils have sound understanding of the elements of composition. They use basic structures, such as repetition and contrast, with confidence in their compositions. When they perform their compositions they understand and use the dynamics of loud and soft, crescendo and decrescendo, to good effect.

133. In most lessons pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of musical skills and understanding. By the end of year 9, the achievement of pupils across the ability range is sound,

including those with special educational needs. Pupils make particularly good use of the electronic keyboards, which they play with confidence in most of their projects.

134. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with occasional examples of very good teaching. Lessons are planned well with clear aims and strategies. The teacher has good knowledge and understanding, which enables her to provide good support for pupils' learning. Relationships, control and classroom management are always very good, so learning is effective and the good selection of strategies supports learning well. Pupils have good opportunities to make musical decisions. However, expectations about the quality of pupils' work are not always sufficiently clear. On occasions, the pace of lessons is slow and pupils' attitudes to learning are too relaxed. In the very good teaching seen, pupils were listening to film music as a preparation for their own composition. The teacher led the lesson very well. The quality of her interventions and questions was very good and focused pupils' attention very well on the musical and dramatic effects of the music. This promoted very well their understanding of the elements of music.

135. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Curriculum documents are well thought through and provide a good basis for planning. Assessment is satisfactory but needs further development to tie it more closely to pupils' progression of skills in the subject. Opportunities for pupils to learn instruments, to take part in extracurricular activities or to take music to GCSE level are very limited. The expressive arts syllabus in years 10 and 11 is a good one for many pupils, but it does not provide the progressive curriculum of a discrete subject.

136. Development plans for music are sufficiently included in the expressive arts action plan. One of the priorities identified is to improve the use of information and communication technology in music, which at present is underdeveloped. In general, the curriculum provided for years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but it is constrained by lack of good quality acoustic instruments. Music was not reported on at the previous inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

137. Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in public examinations are above the national average;
- Teaching overall is good;
- Leadership and management are very good;
- Assessment is detailed and rigorous, which supports good learning;
- Pupils' participation is good;
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory for indoor provision and theory lessons.

Commentary

138. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average. Pupil numbers in GCSE groups are rising but more boys than girls take the course. Boys perform better than girls in practical work but girls do better in theory. By the end of year 9, standards equate to expectations, but the proportion of pupils achieving level 6 and beyond is rising, with boys outperforming girls. Standards in boys' basketball are particularly good, with pupils showing a good understanding of zonal defence. By the end of year 11, standards in core physical education are in line with the national expectation, with a minority of pupils very securely beyond this level, especially in swimming.

139. Teaching is good, with some very good teaching by the subject leader. Assessment is securely established, with detailed, rigorous processes involving pupils in their own assessment. All pupils benefit from having knowledgeable teachers with high standards and expectations. The department creates a caring learning environment in which the pupils feel valued. This atmosphere is particularly supportive of the learning of pupils who enter the school mid-term as a result of Army

postings. Pupils in years 10 and 11 are given opportunities to take responsibility through leadership courses, which also contribute to their personal development. Some pupils extend this activity to support the work of pupils in several of the feeder primary schools. Pupils enjoy their lessons and participate well. They have a good standard of kit. Learning in a minority of lessons is impaired because the match of activities to the age and ability of the pupils is not good.

140. The subject co-ordinator offers strong leadership with a clear vision, and is working towards specialist college status. She uses review and assessment well to identify strengths and weaknesses in the department. Management is very secure with clearly defined departmental practices to support the day-to-day routines. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They work well together, giving willingly of their time to run a variety of extra curricular activities.

141. All pupils receive their statutory entitlement of 2 hours per week of curricular time. This is extended in years 7 to 9 by access to one hour per week of dance, as part of the performing arts programme. Provision for outdoor activities is satisfactory, but the range of curricular opportunities is limited by lack of access to indoor facilities. This situation is alleviated a little by access to the adjacent leisure centre swimming pool. Whilst there is a designated classroom for theory work, it needs a major refurbishment to make it fit for purpose.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership provided by the subject leader is very good, providing a very clear vision of what can be achieved.
- Excellent lesson plans for years 7 to 11 fully meet the statutory requirements for personal, social and health education and citizenship.
- Students respond enthusiastically to a very wide range of opportunities to work collaboratively.
- The core provision and contributions from other curriculum areas have not been monitored or evaluated so as to assure consistently high quality.

Commentary

143. Personal, social and health education and citizenship are delivered as part of a combined course in years 7 to 11.

144. Standards are satisfactory. Pupils of all abilities display above average knowledge and understanding of themselves, how others see them, health issues and local community and culture. Pupils of both genders have good speaking and listening skills. They enthusiastically and confidently apply these to very good effect during whole class discussions and when working collaboratively in small groups. However, pupils' lower than average literacy skills frequently limit their ability to interpret written information, record ideas, or take responsibility for their own learning.

145. Achievement is good, because teachers ensure that the activities are adapted meet pupils' needs. Pupils are very positive about the subject's role in their personal and social development. There is a very wide range of activities, including some extra-curricular ones, enabling pupils to consider social and moral dilemmas and to feel positive about themselves. For example, year 8 pupils willingly assumed the role of magistrates and discussed a case in small groups, matching the "sentence" to both the crime and personal circumstances of the perpetrator. Furthermore, there are creative opportunities that challenge and extend pupils' opinions about becoming responsible citizens. These include video conferencing with a federated school, to consider for example the reaction of the law to the use of cannabis. After school, older pupils successfully help to supervise activities provided for primary school pupils. The school council has been effective in establishing the

perfect system. The most significant impact has been a marked improvement in pupil's attitudes, and behaviour since the inspection in 2000.

146. The core curriculum in personal, social and health education and citizenship for years 7 to 11 is exceptionally well planned. In addition to meeting statutory requirements, it lies at the heart of the school's pastoral provision. Form tutors teach the school's scheme of work effectively, supported by excellent lesson plans that fully integrate the strands of the National Curriculum guidance. The lesson plans, developed and co-ordinated by the subject leader, actively encourage pupil involvement, so they discuss and analyse their views in accordance with the principles of becoming good citizens. Lesson activities make full use of the school's systems and structures for self-assessment. The celebration of success, option choice, careers and vocational education are given high priority. They are excellently resourced, using very good links with the community, such as the Army, and inputs from visiting speakers, information and communication technology and videos. All of these elements have been thoroughly evaluated before being presented to pupils.

147. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is very good when the teacher supplements the original lesson plans with innovative ideas. These involve working with each small group of pupils so that they work collaboratively and all have an opportunity to express their views. However, in a very few lessons, many pupils do not contribute fully, a consequence of whole class discussion being heavily weighted in favour of the teacher.

148. The subject co-ordinator is an excellent role model and has undertaken a very thorough audit to identify individual subject contributions and links to the core provision. There are good examples of effective personal, social and health education and citizenship in modern foreign languages and history. However, contributions from other areas have not been evaluated, because of time constraints.

149. Since the last inspection a good personal, social and health education and citizenship programme has been well developed, which incorporates the full National Curriculum guidance on citizenship and continues into years 12 and 13. Simultaneously the programme has been constructed so that pupils can see exactly how the pastoral care provided by the school links with their local community and helps them to become informed citizens.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

150. In the inspection, it was not possible to report on subjects and courses in detail, because of the small sample size. However, lessons and work in four subjects and courses were sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

151. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English	9	100	99.4	11	36.3	73	80.9
Mathematics	6	100	96.7	17	55.6	67	88.8
Physics	2	100	96.7	100	44.6	100	81.7
Chemistry	5	100	97.6	0	49.0	72	84.9
Drama	3	100	99.5	0	40.1	67	83.6
History	5	100	99.0	20	44.6	64	84.6
ICT	4	100	95.6	0	24.6	70	69.5
Sociology	9	100	98.2	22	44.3	67	83.6
Spanish	3	67	98.3	33	50.2	47	86.9
PE	6	100	98.0	17	30.9	73	75.2
Sport & recreation	6	100	98.0	0	30.9	71	75.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English Literature

152. One A-level English literature lesson was sampled. During this lesson students were seen to be making good progress in developing their critical and analytical skills, as they considered a range of poetry, novels, plays and autobiographical books written both during and after the First World War. Students carefully considered how different writers responded to the horrors of the war from different perspectives and in different genre. The good progress observed in the lesson was enhanced by the teachers' good knowledge of the subject matter, the range of teaching and learning styles employed and the chance for students to take control of their own learning through well planned group activities. The outcomes of mid-course examinations and a scrutiny of a limited amount of written work indicated that students taking the course are on target to achieve A or C grades.

MATHEMATICS

153. Only one lesson was observed. The choice of A-level modules was appropriate, although students preferred statistics and found the pure modules difficult and less enjoyable. Teachers have good subject knowledge, although their teaching methods and consequently students' learning are too limited. Students attend regularly and work hard, but take little responsibility for their own learning.

154. Three students in year 13 are studying A-level mathematics. They completed three modules in year 12, but their results were well below the national average, despite their having entered the course with GCSE A grades. Re-takes in January of this year did not significantly raise students' standards, so at present their work in pure mathematics modules is still well

below national expectations, and progress is slow. The students prefer the study of statistics, and their current performance shows better understanding, due to intensive help and guidance received from the teacher, as they work through past examination questions. Although students work hard, little initiative is shown, nor are opportunities given for research, presentations or discussion, Teaching and learning styles are limited, although teachers have appropriate subject knowledge, and give time willingly to help and guide students. Plans to develop more relevant courses next year to suit a wider range of students, show good leadership, initiative and management.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

155. Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of A-level information and communication technology is good;
- Intranet resources and links with organisations are not as strong as they could be.

Commentary

156. Examination results at AS level are in line with the national average for this subject but at A-level the results are below the national average. However, only small numbers of students study this subject at A-level, which makes national comparisons difficult. The results achieved, however, are in line with students' prior attainment at GCSE.

157. Current standards at A-level are in line with the national expectation with all students on course to pass in the middle grade range. Students can, for example, develop a system to manage the accounts of a commercial organisation. They develop complex spreadsheet formulae to carry out calculations and track monthly accounts. Each stage in their project work shows attention to detail and there is an emphasis given to testing the system and documenting a user guide. Students understand the key concepts in database design and they identify the entities and relationships within example systems.

158. Most students began their A-level course with pass grades at RSA level and are currently demonstrating good achievement in relation to prior attainment. Progress within lessons, and over time, is good, and is aided by positive attitudes and conscientious application by students. A detailed approach to learning assures that a good depth of understanding of the theoretical aspects of the subject underpins the students' practical work.

159. The teaching of A-level information and communication technology was good in the small sample of lessons seen. The small group size provides the advantage of individual guidance and very good relationships. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a variety of teaching methods to draw students actively into the learning process. Real-life examples are used to provide contexts in which to discuss abstract concepts. Questioning is used to good effect to ensure that students understand and apply their subject knowledge.

160. Leadership and management of the subject at A-level are good. Current studies are designed to promote good progress from a low prior attainment in information and communication technology. The teaching and assessment of students' work is well organised.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

161. Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average;
- Teaching is very good;
- Leadership and management are very good;
- Numbers are small, but recruitment for 2004 is secure.

Commentary

162. There are currently only two students on the A-level course and two on the AVCE course. Standards on entry are good, with students having achieved good grades at GCSE. Standards in external examinations are very good and although numbers are small, students achieve well. Teaching is very good, with exceptional subject knowledge leading to well planned and resourced lessons. Lessons have high levels of challenge and expectation. Students successfully research aspects of their own work. Presentations are supported by skilful questioning from the teacher, which extends students' knowledge and understanding. Students show high levels of independence, as was seen in a lesson about monitoring heart rate. They have confidence in using information and communication technology to make their presentations.

163. Students have good access to a range of leadership opportunities through 'Step into Sport', 'Millennium Volunteers' and 'Community Sports Leader' awards. They use these skills to contribute to lessons in years 10 and 11, in which they provide a good role model for younger pupils.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	4	4
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	0	4
Overall standards achieved		3
Pupils' achievement	4	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	3	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7) – (0) signifies that there was insufficient evidence, (8) signifies 'not applicable'.