

INSPECTION REPORT

MOUNT GRACE HIGH SCHOOL

Hinckley

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120240

Headteacher: Mr J R Thomas

Lead inspector: Mr D H Roberts

Dates of inspection: 6 – 9 October 2003

Inspection number: 259826

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 14 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	610
School address:	Leicester Road Hinckley
Postcode:	LE10 1LP
Telephone number:	01455 238921
Fax number:	01455 890677
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M J Herbert
Date of previous inspection:	30 November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils come predominantly from the town of Hinckley itself, where Mount Grace is one of four high schools. There is an even mix of boys and girls. Four per cent of pupils belong to non-white ethnic groups and there is one pupil for whom English is not the first language. Eleven per cent of pupils have special educational needs, a little below the national average; however, the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need is above the national average. Evidence from free school meals entitlements indicates that the school's socio-economic context is relatively favourable. Pupils' levels of attainment when they start at the school are above the national average in English, mathematics and science. The school achieved Investors in People status in 2002 and the School Achievement Award in 2001. The school is housed in buildings that largely date from the late nineteenth century.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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31129	J Pickering	Team inspector	Art & design
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school has a deservedly strong reputation in the area, based on an ethos that promotes a caring, genuinely inclusive learning community. Pupils achieve well during their three years at the school, reaching standards well above those for similar schools in national tests. **The overall effectiveness of the school is good, as too is the value for money it provides.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The effective ways in which it includes and values all pupils, including those with special educational needs, ensuring that all make appropriately good progress and enjoy their learning.
- The good teaching in most subjects.
- The good or very good progress pupils make, leading to standards which are well above average in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, music and religious education, with above average standards in several other subjects.
- The positive attitudes and good behaviour of pupils.
- The way the school develops pupils' personal qualities.
- The high quality care and welfare of pupils.
- The unsatisfactory progress pupils make, due to unsatisfactory teaching, in art and design, and in design and technology, and, due to insufficient co-ordination across the curriculum, in information and communications technology (ICT).
- Ineffective strategic planning, with the work of some key staff not well enough matched to the school's priorities.
- Inconsistent monitoring of teaching quality or strategies for developing and sharing good practice across the school.
- Over-use of exclusion of pupils as part of the school's new behaviour management strategy.
- Underdeveloped target-setting for individual pupils and at subject and whole-school levels.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in 1998. Standards remain well above average in national tests. There have been improvements in behaviour management although there has been a significant increase in the rate of exclusions. There has been good improvement in provision in many subjects (and very good improvement in modern foreign languages and music). The proportion of good and very good teaching has significantly improved although there are weaknesses in the teaching of art and design and design and technology. The provision for ICT is much improved through the introduction of the new discrete course and the increase in the number of computers, but this provision remains unco-ordinated across subjects. There remain minor weaknesses in reporting pupils' progress to parents. Changing facilities for indoor physical education have improved. While development priorities are clear, weaknesses in strategic planning remain and performance management is yet to be fully embedded.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A	B	A	A
mathematics	A	B	A	A*
science	A	A	A	A*

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

Standards overall are well above average. Results in national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 have been consistently above or well above the national average over recent years. These results compared better still with those for similar schools, particularly in mathematics and science, where they were very high. Pupils' good literacy and numeracy skills aid their learning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, with good support. Higher attaining pupils do better than the national average in mathematics and science tests, but not as well in English. Progress is unsatisfactory in art and design, and in design and technology. Pupils make good progress in the discrete ICT lessons in the Key Skills course. Their use of ICT in a number of other subjects is supporting their learning well, but is not yet adequately co-ordinated to ensure satisfactory progress in ICT overall.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils bring positive attitudes to their work and behave generally well. The school has good strategies for developing pupils' personal qualities. These factors make a significant contribution to pupils' success as learners. The recently introduced staged behaviour management strategies are generally effective, although too many pupils are excluded. Although attendance and punctuality are satisfactory, more could be done to challenge absence and lateness.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good overall. Pupils are well taught in most subjects, and very well in some, but not satisfactorily in art and design, and in design and technology. Pupils generally benefit from teachers who have good specialist subject knowledge. Good relationships exist between pupils and teachers; teachers know the pupils and their specific needs well, including those pupils with special educational needs. Assessment is satisfactory, but insufficient use is made of the information it provides. The curriculum serves pupils' needs and interests well and is enriched by a good range of additional activities. Pupils get good advice, support and guidance. Curriculum links with the upper school are now very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher's clear vision and values, with their strong emphasis on a high achievement learning community, are strongly supported by staff, pupils and parents. He provides good leadership and there is good leadership in many areas of the school. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. While appropriate priorities have been identified, the school acknowledges weaknesses in strategic management, in the use of pupil performance data, in the arrangements for monitoring quality and in the co-ordination of a number of strategies across the school. The school continues to improve satisfactorily.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents show strong support for the school. They consider that the school expects their children to work hard and that good teaching ensures good progress. Their children are happy to go to school. Parents are less satisfied with the information that the school provides about their children's progress. Pupils are similarly positive about the school. They report that staff take an interest in their progress, treat them fairly and have high expectations of them. A significant proportion is concerned about the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils, although inspection evidence does not bear this out as an issue in the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- To enhance the effectiveness of strategic planning so that the school's development activity is focused on raising standards further, with all key staff engaged effectively on the priorities which the headteacher has identified.
- To introduce systematic strategies across the school for monitoring the quality of teaching and management, sharing good practice and eradicating the unsatisfactory teaching found in art and design, and in design and technology.
- To ensure challenging targets are set for each pupil based on the data now available about their capabilities and performance; similarly to improve the setting of subject and whole-school targets, including those for pupils working at the highest levels.
- To improve standards in ICT and in art and design.
- To reduce the rate of pupil exclusions.

And, to meet statutory requirements:

- Extend the provision of collective worship to a daily activity.
- Ensure health and safety procedures are fully compliant.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, pupils achieve well during their three years at the school and reach above average or well above average standards in the national tests.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 over recent years have been consistently above or well above the national average; in 2002, results in English and mathematics were above average and in science were well above average. These results compare better still with those of schools that have similar profiles of attainment on entry in Year 7.
- Standards of work seen were well above average in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and music, and above average in geography, history, religious education and citizenship.
- Pupils make very good progress in English, modern foreign languages, music and religious education; they also progress well in most other subjects.
- Pupils' learning across the curriculum is aided by their good literacy skills and their competency in mathematics.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in response to the good support they receive; those with statements sometimes make such good progress that their statements are discontinued.
- Pupils use ICT well to support their learning in a number of subjects, particularly science, modern foreign languages and music, and make good progress in the new discrete ICT course. Their progression in developing ICT skills and capability through other subjects is, as yet, unsatisfactory. As a result, their overall standards in ICT remain just below the national average
- The standards which pupils reach in art and design, and in design and technology are well below average

Commentary

1. The attainment levels of pupils when they join the school at age 11 are generally somewhat above average. The school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been above average or well above average in recent years. This indicates good achievement by pupils while at the school. This is due to the quality of the teaching in most subjects and the self-confidence and positive attitudes of pupils, which the school helps consciously to develop. Over time, improvement has been in line with the national rate.
2. The relative differences between the standards achieved by boys and girls are similar to those found nationally. The achievement of gifted and talented pupils is good, although higher attaining pupils do not perform as well in English tests as they do in mathematics and science. The school exceeds its targeted results but the process of target setting is not sufficiently robust, particularly with regard to higher attainers. Analysis indicates that lower attaining pupils make good progress.
3. The standards achieved in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and music are well above average and those in citizenship, history, geography and religious education are also above average. However, there are weaknesses in art and design due to shortcomings in the teaching and expectations that are too low. In ICT, the good standards being reached in the discrete course are, in general, not matched by those found where the ICT curriculum is taught in other subjects. As a result of this, and inadequate co-ordination across the curriculum, standards in ICT, overall, are somewhat below average.

4. Pupils' progress is well supported in all subjects by their above average standards of literacy and numeracy. Development of these skills is being further enhanced through the school's Key Skills curriculum, although co-ordination across the curriculum is insufficient. Poor development of their graphical skills is leading to pupils making insufficient progress in design and technology.
5. The very good progress in English, modern foreign languages, music and religious education is due to the preponderance of very good teaching in these subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.0 (34.6)	33.3 (33.3)
Mathematics	37.4 (36.4)	35.3 (34.7)
Science	37.8 (36.0)	33.7 (33.3)

There were 210 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance and punctuality at the school are **satisfactory**, the pupils' **attitudes and behaviour** are **good**, despite the high incidence of exclusion of pupils. Pupils show interest in their school activities and the school provides **good personal development** for pupils, with some very good features. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall with some elements that are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' positive attitudes and generally good behaviour make a significant contribution to their progress as learners.
- The school's strategies for pupils' personal development are good.
- Arrangements for the school to improve attendance and punctuality lack vigour.
- The staged behaviour management strategies are generally effective, although there are too many exclusions.

Commentary

6. In class, at assemblies and around the school, the great majority of pupils behave very well. In lessons, pupils of all abilities work hard, remain on task and concentrate well. Pupils with special educational needs display positive attitudes towards their work and they behave well. They remain positive when tackling tasks they find difficult.
7. The school's strategies for improving behaviour are good, including, in lessons, the use of seating plans that help ensure a focus on learning. All pupils co-operate well in a variety of work situations and this supports learning and progress well. However, a lack of challenge and behaviour management in a minority of lessons can allow poor behaviour to interfere with learning. On occasions, out of lesson time, contact between pupils is immature and overly rough and aggressive.
8. The school's strategies for behaviour management, using "discipline level" sanctions such as detentions, and a practical reward system, provide a good basis for the management of behaviour. The system for dealing with unsatisfactory behaviour does not, however, provide a wide enough range of options before pupils are excluded. As a result, exclusion rates in the school are high at 65 fixed-period exclusions for 32 pupils, and 3 permanent 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	546	60	3
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	33	3	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	1	0
Chinese	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	8	0	0

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

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.1	School data	0.3
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

9. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Attendance in the year 2001/02, at 92.6 per cent, was above the national average for secondary schools, but below that for middle deemed secondary schools. For the year 2002/03, attendance has dropped to 92.1 per cent. Although the school makes first day calls for some pupils, calls are not made quickly enough to the homes of those pupils where the reasons for absence are not known. The school does not always challenge parents to establish why pupils are absent or late into school. Detailed examination of attendance data is not made to identify any particularly patterns.

10. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall with some very good features. Assemblies often include a Christian dimension and are spiritual experiences. Pupils learn about other faiths in religious education lessons. They consider what faith entails and reflect about personal beliefs. Pupils' moral development is strong and they contribute to drawing up the school's code of conduct. The difference between right and wrong is highlighted and there is emphasis on caring for others. Pupils develop their decision-making skills by discussing moral issues, such as crime, fair trade and the location of a local airport. They are challenged to think for themselves and justify their points of view. Pupils' social understanding is also well developed and they are pleasant and polite and show respect to adults. Pupils willingly support a range of charities. Pupils' cultural development is improved through local trips and visits abroad. They also take part in a number of events, such as the school show, Poetry in Motion and the Young Writers' Competition. Pupils are helped to a better understanding of the world in which they live. The workshops run by an Indian dance troupe and visits to places of worship also strengthen appreciation of other cultures.

Throughout the school, there are many opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and to take responsibility, for example, through the school council.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. Pupils are well, or very well taught in most subjects by teachers who have good specialist knowledge. Pupils learn well. However, teaching is not good enough in art and design or in design and technology. The quality of assessment is at least satisfactory in most subjects. The curriculum serves pupils' needs and interests well and is enriched by a good range of additional activities. Pupils have access to good advice, support and guidance. Curriculum links with the neighbouring upper school are very good.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of **teaching is good**, with much that is very good. The proportion of teaching which is good or better is broadly in line with the national average. **Pupils learn well.** Teaching and learning are not satisfactory in art and design and in design and technology. **Assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory** overall. In many subjects, it is not yet well enough used to set targets for individual pupils.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 107 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (4%)	31 (29%)	42 (39%)	23 (21%)	7 (7%)	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.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils benefit from specialist teaching throughout the curriculum.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, creating a good atmosphere for learning.
- Teaching is very good in English, modern foreign languages, music and religious education, and is good in most other subjects.
- Literacy skills, including those of speaking and listening, are well taught, particularly in the core subjects.
- Learning by pupils with special educational needs is well supported in lessons by the teachers' use of an appropriate range of strategies and the work of the support staff when present.
- Marking is generally thorough and, in science, music and the discrete ICT course, evidence from assessment is well used to plan lessons. Pupils generally know how well they are doing.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in art and design and in design and technology.
- ICT skills and capabilities are well taught in the discrete course. While computers are well used in a number of other subjects, teaching of ICT across the school is not yet adequately co-ordinated.
- Assessment is not adequately used to set targets for improvement in the achievement of individual pupils.

Commentary

11. The school has successfully attracted teachers with appropriate specialisms to all vacancies as they have arisen. The confidence in, and enthusiasm for, their subject which teachers demonstrate helps them to provide stimulating learning experiences for pupils. In allocating teachers to the Key Skills programme teams, the school has taken care to draw on those with appropriate interests and experience. The skills needed to teach the ICT curriculum through subjects are not yet well enough developed in a number of staff.

12. The school, through the headteacher's commitment to a caring and achievement-orientated ethos, has been successful in putting much emphasis on creating the best circumstances for pupils to enjoy their lessons and develop confidence in their learning. As a result, pupils achieve well.
13. The very good, and some excellent, teaching found, particularly in English, modern foreign languages, music and religious education, is characterised by very good use of time ensuring a good pace to lessons and a good variety of well-planned activities which demonstrate high expectations and challenge. Teaching is also very good in the discrete ICT course, but only satisfactory overall due to weaknesses in the teaching of the ICT curriculum in other subjects.
14. Where teaching is unsatisfactory in art and design and in design and technology, and very occasionally elsewhere, this is characterised by one or more of weak classroom management, leading to poor attentiveness and behaviour, an unchallenging pace to the work or the deployment of too narrow a range of teaching strategies.
15. The teaching of literacy and numeracy has been enhanced by the impact of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. However, the co-ordination of these initiatives across the curriculum has not been sufficient, nor has their impact been well enough monitored. The school acknowledges that it has yet to start on the co-ordination of ICT teaching across the curriculum.
16. Teachers are provided with good information on pupils' special educational needs by the school's learning support team. This helps to ensure that pupils with such needs achieve as well as they can. Many teachers plan adapted strategies, resources and questioning to meet these needs and use learning support staff effectively in lessons. However, there is inconsistency and some teachers do not plan well enough due to a lack of focus on pupils' specific needs. To some extent, this is due to the targets in pupils' individual development plans being insufficiently detailed. The most able pupils are identified in all subjects and are appropriately challenged in the majority.
17. Marking is generally well done, providing helpful information to pupils. The evidence from teachers' assessment of pupils' work is not yet well enough used to suggest how teaching needs to develop, nor to identify appropriate achievement targets for each pupil in each subject.
18. The very effective links now developed with the neighbouring upper school help to ensure the continued good progress of pupils once they move on from Mount Grace.

The curriculum

The curriculum provision in the school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a good range of enrichment activities and opportunities for supported study outside the school day.
- The Key Skills curriculum, which arose from a recent substantial curriculum review, and personal, social and health education programmes make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development and to their skills and capability in literacy, numeracy and ICT, the latter through discrete teaching of the subject.
- There is good curriculum continuity through positive links with the upper school to which pupils transfer.
- The co-ordination of literacy and numeracy and for the planned progression in ICT, across the whole curriculum, are inadequately developed.

- There are deficiencies in some subjects in accommodation and access to computers, including in mathematics.

Commentary

19. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and for religious education. Pupils attend assemblies on four days a week, many of which have elements of collective worship. However, the requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not fully met. The amount of taught curriculum time is somewhat lower than experienced by most pupils of this age.
20. The curriculum makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs. There is equality of access for all pupils, irrespective of their prior attainment, to all aspects of work in the school and the school provides good support for learning, both during lessons and outside the school day. A wide range of enrichment activities, including competitive sport and participation in drama and music, contributes well to the quality of education which pupils receive.
21. The school provides very effectively for pupils' personal development through its Key Skills course. This includes a thoughtfully planned and very well taught personal, social and health education programme, which includes sex education, health education and attention to alcohol and drugs misuse. The Key Skills programme also includes education for citizenship, literacy, numeracy and ICT, and makes a positive contribution to the development of thinking and study skills. The Year 9 *Choices* course makes an effective beginning to pupils' education for careers and preparation for the future.
22. The school has very effective procedures to ensure continuity of learning when pupils transfer to the next stage of their education. There is very good liaison between subject teachers in the two schools and, in some cases, there are effective bridging programmes taught in both schools that enable pupils to continue to make progress without a break.
23. Work in most subjects is well planned and in line with the requirements of the national learning strategies for pupils of this age. In some subjects, the planning of work is not satisfactory because it lacks detail and cohesion. Several subjects make good use of computers to support and enhance learning. This is particularly effective in science, music and modern foreign languages, but less so in mathematics and religious education. However, the co-ordination of the development of pupils' ICT capabilities across subjects remains unsatisfactory.
24. The provision of resources for learning is satisfactory overall. There is a good match of specialist and support teachers to the curriculum. Textbooks are sufficient in number and of satisfactory quality in most subjects and suitable for the school's work. There is a better than average ratio of computers to pupils, but access to them by some subjects is limited. Equipment in design and technology is unsatisfactory; there is too much heavy equipment and no facilities for computer-aided making.
25. The schools' accommodation is well maintained but retains some unsatisfactory features. In physical education, changing rooms have been improved but the indoor facilities remain inadequate. In design and technology, the provision for resistant materials is unsatisfactory. There are no specialist facilities for drama and there are insufficient laboratories to cater for all timetabled classes in science. However, pupils' progress in these areas is not significantly inhibited by these shortcomings.

Care, guidance and support

The care of pupils, their welfare, support and guidance are **good**. Pupils' involvement in the work and development of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The care and welfare of pupils, and the provision of support, advice and guidance are good.
- Staff know the pupils and their specific needs well.
- Transition processes from primary schools are very good, including for pupils with special educational needs.
- The provision of early morning additional support groups for identified pupils is good.
- Pupils with statements of special educational need contribute to their own progress reviews and resulting individual education plans.
- Child protection arrangements are good.
- There is some lack of health and safety compliance in parts of the school.

Commentary

26. From the time of their entry into the school from primary school, until they move into their upper school, pupils are cared for well. All members of staff are aware of pupils' specific needs and attend twice-weekly meetings to agree strategies to support and advise pupils. Such support can be available from within the school or from outside agencies. A significant minority of pupils, when responding to their questionnaires, were unable to say that they could name an adult they could refer to when in need of help. Concern was expressed about behaviour by about a quarter, but this was not seen as a significant issue in inspectors' discussions with pupils. There was a very positive response from pupils to all other elements of school life.
27. A lack of consistent academic target setting does not adequately inform pupils about how they can progress, or engage them in the process. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well and they are involved in setting their own targets. The new *Choices* system set up with the careers education provider is well received by the pupils, as is the Key Skills programme designed to provide health, welfare and social education. There is good careers advice for pupils, resources are being developed and pupils benefit from the nearby *Connexions Centre*.
28. The School Council gives pupils an opportunity to express their feelings about school and to influence its management. The council has an annual budget of £1,000 to spend on school improvement. This is a valuable opportunity for pupils to take on responsibility and to express their feelings about the school.
29. The transition processes in to and out of the school are very good. Health, medical and welfare support for pupils is good, as are arrangements for child protection. Although the school's policy is out of date and there is inconsistency in the training of staff, there are very good links with care and support services. The local area child protection committee requirements are met. While any racial incidents that occur are recorded, these records are not kept separately as required.
30. There are inconsistencies in arrangements for health and safety. Although members of the governing body and the staff have skills in this area, the school's policy is out of date. Day-to-day issues are dealt with well and there are good risk assessment procedures in place, especially for visits and trips. Regular tests and checks of most equipment are undertaken, although there is inconsistency in the checking of fixed and portable electrical items.
31. In the design and technology area, weaknesses identified in the last inspection have still not been addressed. In art and design, machinery used in making ceramics is not always secured appropriately and there is no evidence that equipment has been regularly maintained, checked or tested.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents and with the community are **good**. There are **very good** links with other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have very positive views of the school.
- The school provides parents with good information about the curriculum and how to help their children at home.
- Very good links with the primary schools, the receiving upper schools and other local schools provide many benefits for pupils.
- Communication with parents of pupils with special educational needs are very good
- Home/school books are used well for the daily exchange of information.
- Written reports on pupils' progress do not always show parents clearly enough how well their children are progressing or how they can improve.

Commentary

32. Parents and carers have very positive views of the school and, as a result, the school is oversubscribed. The school works well with parents, encouraging them to support the school through the Friends Association and to help their children at home. The parents are particularly positive about the efforts made by the school to minimise disruption for the pupils moving in to school and going on to upper school. The school provides a good range of information for parents about the curriculum and how they can help their children at home, although some faculties are better at this than others. Parents consider the school's responses to suggestions or concerns to be good.
33. There is one opportunity each year for parents to meet staff formally to discuss their children's progress. Written annual reports for parents are satisfactory, they inform parents what their children know, understand and can do, and some give areas for development. However, the quality of this information is not consistent and parents complain that information is not given early enough if their child's progress is unsatisfactory. The reports do inform parents where their children are in relation to national expectations, but do not include all the information required by law on pupils' attendance.
34. Links with other schools are very good and are a strength of the school. A very effective induction programme, carried out with partner primary schools, ensures that the school is well informed of the achievements and support needs of pupils about to enter Year 7. As a result, these pupils are confident about the change and are able to settle down quickly at the school. Some impressive joint work being carried out by the Hinckley Development Group is increasing curriculum continuity for pupils moving on at the end of Year 9.
35. Parents of all pupils who have special educational needs have very good links with the school. All parents of pupils with special educational needs are involved in setting and reviewing their children's targets and individual education plans. There is good contact with the special needs staff of the primary schools. The level of liaison is good and ensures a smooth transition to the next school for these pupils.
36. The school's links with the community are good, although they have suffered in recent years due to the ending of the school's work-shadowing scheme for legal reasons. As a result, apart from the good links with *Connexions*, there are few opportunities for pupils to experience or talk about the world of work. However, the school organises many visits and visitors as part of lessons and assemblies, as well as the Key Skills and *Choices* programme. The school has very good relationships with support agencies to help the school maintain a high level of care

and support for pupils. The school nurse and learning support staff bring particular strength and skills to this area.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory** overall. Leadership by the headteacher is good and that of other key staff is satisfactory overall, with strong features as well as some omissions. Most teams are well led, but there is unsatisfactory leadership in art and design and in design and technology. Management is satisfactory taken overall, again reflecting significant strengths, but school self-evaluation has some weaknesses. Governance is satisfactory taken overall. Governors know their school well but there are shortcomings in some statutory duties.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's clear vision and values, which include an emphasis on high achievement by all, within a supportive setting, are strongly supported by staff, pupils and parents alike.
- Effective leadership and management of most subjects, including some where this is very good.
- The chair of governors knows the school's strengths and weaknesses well; governors are learning how to operate as critical friends to senior management.
- Appropriate priorities for development have been identified and are beginning to be addressed; however, strategic planning does not support these priorities well enough and there is some related lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities.
- Underdeveloped use of pupil performance data to target improvement.
- Lack of systematic monitoring of teaching quality and gaps in performance review leave some weak practice unchallenged, predominantly in art and design and in design and technology, and leaves development needs unsupported and few opportunities to share good practice.

Commentary

37. Overall, leadership is satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership based on his clear vision for the continued success of the school. This is underpinned by a clear set of values that are respected by staff, pupils and parents. These values reflect the entitlement of all pupils to learn and achieve their best, and have provided the foundation for the school's continuing success. There is effective leadership and management of most teams in the school. In the best cases, leaders show initiative and provide good role models for those in their teams.
38. The above aspirations are reflected in an appropriate range of development priorities for the next few years. These were drawn up by the headteacher in consultation with staff and governors. Strategic planning to secure these developments is not, in general, adequate as yet although the plan for further improvements in the provision for ICT is well developed. Planning is not clearly enough related to targeted improvements in pupils' achievement. As a result of the lack of a published school development plan, some staff and departments are left with too little guidance as to what is expected of them. While the majority of staff are well led (and some very well) and highly committed, this leaves scope for weaker practice in others to remain insufficiently challenged, leading to some unsatisfactory outcomes for pupils. The effectiveness of the school's senior leadership team is hindered by inadequate strategic thinking in the allocation of roles and responsibilities.
39. Overall, management is satisfactory. The improvements in the quality of teaching and in other key areas of the school since the last inspection are evidence of effective school management in relation to identified priorities. The day-to-day management of year groups, the learning support team and most subject teams is good. However, the school has not engaged in sufficiently rigorous self-evaluation, leading to insufficient evidence being available to back up judgements on performance. The school now has access to quite sophisticated data on the performance of individual pupils and has begun to make useful analyses of these. Although

there is good practice emerging in some areas, notably science, the school is not yet using data analysis widely enough to ensure that individual pupils' achievement is being effectively targeted or that more appropriate teaching strategies are developed. The process of target setting at whole-school level is also underdeveloped.

40. While governors' approach to the headteacher's performance review is secure, practice across the school is, as yet, too uneven. Many teachers have not had benefit of the governors' agreed policy for some time and too few, including senior staff, are sufficiently conscious of targets set following their performance review. There is too little monitoring of classroom practice. Unsatisfactory management in parts of the school has had some negative impact on the quality of teaching. There is good commitment to staff development, including for support staff, via attendance at courses. Training is broadly linked to whole-school priorities and takes account of the outcomes of performance reviews. Department heads are insufficiently involved in planning professional development in their subject. The impact of in-house professional development is hindered by the decision to reduce the number of whole-day in-service training sessions.
41. The school has a strong commitment to initial teacher training and works well to develop student teachers. The quality of its induction of newly qualified teachers is too dependent on the quality of subject leadership, resulting in uneven support.
42. The school benefits from high quality support staff in a variety of roles. Some roles are currently performed by senior teaching staff and this makes inefficient use of their time and skills; these roles should be transferred to support staff.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,425,336	Balance from previous year	(8,084)
Total expenditure	1,411,988	Balance carried forward to the next	3,163
Expenditure per pupil	2,315		

43. The school's financial and resource management is good. The construction of the budget is not adequately related to priorities for development and some allocations rely too heavily on historical practice. The school has responded to certain principles of best value to good effect, although there remains too little consciousness of the overall requirements and potential benefits of this approach, including the benchmarking of costs or levels of provision.
44. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are knowledgeable and committed in their significant support for the school. They play a part in formulating the school's development priorities, although headteacher's written reports do not adequately inform them of progress on these priorities. They are generally effective in ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory duties. However, procedures for recording any racial incidents that might occur need tightening up, as do omissions in the approach to health and safety.
45. Governors demonstrate a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have developed a confidently challenging approach to senior managers, while remaining vigorously supportive of the work of the school and its achievements.

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

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average for similar schools.
- The achievement and progress of pupils is very good because of the very good teaching.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons is very good.
- Collaboration between pupils in collective tasks is very good.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

46. Standards achieved in national tests have been well above the national average in three of the last four years, including in 2003. Compared with similar schools, the 2003 results were well above average. However, the proportion of pupils who achieved at the highest levels in 2002 was a little less than would have been expected. Both boys and girls significantly exceeded the national average for their gender.
47. By the end of Year 9, pupils' skills in English are very good. Pupils speak with confidence and listen well to each other and to their teachers. For instance, in a Year 7 group discussion on friendship, pupils encouraged all members of the group to participate and drew out contributions from even the most reluctant. Achievement in reading is also very good and pupils evidently enjoy reading in school, where many opportunities are provided. There is a very good level of understanding of the poems and letters from the First World War from Year 9 groups, and a good understanding of Shakespeare text. There is also evident enjoyment of the poetry presented in assembly and lunchtime for National Poetry Day. Pupils' achievement in writing is very good overall. In particular, there are very good examples of extended writing, such as the 'School Under Siege' project, which allows for a wide range of different kinds of writing. Pupils also write very well for real audiences, such as the beautifully produced books for younger readers and the booklets for the village theme, which culminates in a day's fete for pupils who will be transferring to Year 7 education.

Teaching and learning

48. Teaching is very good, ensuring that pupils make very good progress. There is very good use of time in lessons and the variety and pace of activities keep pupils interested and challenged.

Working in groups is also well used to develop and share ideas, and this is also effective in developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Teaching is stimulating, for instance, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils were asked to work together on several fronts, to explain different spellings of similar sounding words to find a way of memorising a spelling and to present this in an entertaining and memorable way to another group. Lessons are also challenging in enabling pupils to experience feelings, such as the experience of soldiers in the First World War. There is a very good use of photographs, music, letters and personal reflection to introduce the poetry and this leads to very good learning from boys as well as girls. There are very good relationships in the classroom and pupils collaborate very well together. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by teachers and support staff, and they make very good progress.

Leadership and management

49. The department is led well and there are clear priorities for development. These now need to be expressed as a development plan to include time-scales and resource implications. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in providing more opportunities for extended writing and ensuring a greater frequency of responses from boys. Accommodation is, however, cramped and, although teachers cope with these conditions very well, this does limit activities such as drama.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. In most subjects, pupils show good literacy skills and there is good learning. Pupils express themselves well and there are lots of examples of good listening and speaking skills. Group work is a frequent feature of most subjects and pupils show good levels of confidence. Key words and literacy are built into most lesson plans and schemes of work. There are also examples of extended writing in most subjects. Literacy is taught well in the Key Skills programme, though the course is only recently established and only just beginning to impact on standards. The schemes of work are detailed and prescriptive to ensure consistency across the school. However, there is a lack of co-ordination and monitoring of the teaching of literacy across the school.

Modern Foreign Languages – French and German

Provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is almost always at least good, and often very good.
- Effective use is made of ICT to promote languages learning.
- Pupils achieve well and they reach well above average standards.
- There is good curriculum continuity and links with the upper school.
- The scheme of work is unsatisfactory.
- There is insufficient monitoring of the work of the department.
- There is no provision for pupils to study a second foreign language.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

51. Pupils' attainment in the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, were well above average in 2002, when nearly two-thirds of all the pupils reached standards above or well above the national average. Attainment in the tests was even higher in 2003. Girls perform better than boys, but the difference is not as marked as it is nationally.
52. At age 14, most higher attaining pupils are able to write extended passages and use the past tense accurately. Average and lower attainers need more support to write longer passages, but most are able to reach the nationally expected level by the end of the year. In speaking, most pupils can respond to a range of questions and situations, and give simple accounts of what they like or where they have been and what they did, sometimes backed up through a PowerPoint presentation on the computer. Understanding of French and German when spoken is well above average, and most pupils achieve high standards relative to their capabilities. Knowledge of language is also very well developed.

Teaching and learning

53. Teaching contributes very effectively to good learning and high levels of achievement because the teachers have high expectations of their pupils, both in the knowledge of language which they expect of them and in their comprehension of the spoken word. Lessons are planned in considerable detail and the content is matched to the needs and capabilities of the pupils in the mixed-ability classes. Teachers employ a range of interesting and adventurous strategies to promote good learning, including effective use of computers and visual materials. All have good language skills, and all pay due attention to the understanding of language.

Leadership and management

54. Leadership in modern languages is satisfactory, although there is a lack of clear strategic planning in line with the school's aims and aspirations. Teachers in the department work together well as a team. Management is, overall, satisfactory, but the scheme of work gives too little guidance to any teacher new to the department and there is insufficient monitoring of the work of the department. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Teaching has improved, standards have risen and there is now good use of computers to support learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is good and provides a clear direction for the subject.
- Standards in national tests are above the national average and well above the average for similar schools.
- Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching.
- Assessment arrangements do not check on pupils' progress well enough.
- Limited access to computers restricts their use to support learning.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

55. Standards achieved in national tests have been well above the national average in three of the last four years, including in 2003. Compared with similar schools, results in 2003 were very high..
56. By the end of Year 9, pupils' mathematical skills are well above average. Most pupils have a good command of their tables when doing mental calculations and they use calculators confidently. Pupils' data handling skills are above average; they understand how to find a range of measures for sets of data and draw graphs effectively. Pupils are developing their problem-solving skills well; they are able to identify patterns, find rules and use formulae. Achievement for all groups of pupils is good, given pupils' standards when they join the school. The Key Skills programme is supporting well the standards achieved.

Teaching and learning

57. Pupils benefit well from the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers structure lessons well; a range of oral activities is used to begin lessons so that pupils are able to develop their mental arithmetic skills effectively and time is usually given at the end of lessons to allow pupils to reflect on what they have learned. Good attention is given to pupils' literacy skills; key words are identified in teachers' planning, displayed in classrooms and are referred to often during lessons. ICT skills are not developed well enough, due to access to computers being limited. Teachers plan well for the needs of different groups of pupils. Thus, pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as most other pupils. Teachers develop pupils' skills and understanding through a variety of activities that often challenge pupils well. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning.
58. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good; good relationships and effective management of lessons ensure pupils apply themselves well to their work. Teachers' subject knowledge is good; skills and concepts are explained well. Although teachers mark pupils' work constructively, assessments are not used well enough to monitor and guide pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

59. The department is led and managed well; a clear direction is provided and the team works well together. However, opportunities to review teaching are not provided, the subject's development plan is not linked to the school's priorities well enough and data is not used well enough to analyse performance in the subject. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards are much higher.

Mathematics across the curriculum

60. Pupils' competency in mathematics is above average; as a result they cope well in other subjects with numeracy tasks. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented well in mathematics lessons but few subjects plan well enough to support pupils' numeracy skills in lessons. A training day has made teachers aware of the National Strategy, but not enough guidance has been given as to how teachers should support numeracy as part of their lesson planning.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership provides clarity of vision, and has created a very effective team that produces well pupils' above average results in national tests year-on-year.
- Teachers' subject knowledge, effective lesson planning and their use of a wide range of teaching methods lead to all pupils achieving well.
- Pupils are not often challenged to make predictions, to form hypotheses, and the teachers' questions are not sufficiently directed to keep all pupils on task.
- Pupils are not involved enough in self-evaluation and target setting relative to National Curriculum levels.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

61. Standards achieved in national tests have been well above the national average in each of the last four years.. Compared with similar schools, results were very high in 2002 and 2003, including well above average results at the highest levels. Both boys and girls significantly exceeded the national average for their gender. These results surpass realistic targets set by the department.
62. In most lessons, pupils are making good progress. Most pupils recall prior knowledge well, employ a good level of practical skills and achieve the learning objectives. They record their work well. Higher attaining pupils can make predictions. Lower attaining pupils discuss their work well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in response to the good support they receive. All pupils work well together and most want to do well. Pupils' positive attitudes to work have a significant impact on their achievements, as do their good levels of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Teaching and learning

63. In the best lessons, clear learning objectives and reinforcement of key words focus pupils well on to what they have to achieve. Exciting starter activities motivate all pupils and good pace, through a variety of learning activities, maintains a good level of concentration throughout the lesson. The impact of the Key Stage 3 Strategy is making a significant contribution to the level of pupils' participation and to their progress. Some good questions challenge pupils well throughout, but opportunities are missed to further extend pupils' understanding of the topic. As a result, some pupils are passive and others move off task. Teachers use assessment of pupils' achievements well in planning, but there is a lack of focus and rigour in sharing assessments with pupils and in setting targets for them. Homework is used well to reinforce and to extend learning. Some lessons are not taught in laboratories, but teachers manage this unsatisfactory situation so that any impact on standards is kept to a minimum.

Leadership and management

64. Leadership is dedicated to continuing to improve the pupils' achievements in all areas of the department. It results in clear strategic planning for improvement supported by an innovative evaluation process that is shared by the whole team. Management is good. There is effective delegation of responsibilities. Monitoring of teaching and learning is good, but too little time is given to this. Monitoring of performance data is good but the success of inclusion strategies is not evaluated.
65. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Opportunities to use and practise ICT are now built into schemes of work. There is an improved level of science texts in the library and in the laboratories, but still not enough to support work and independent learning at home. Long-term planning remains an issue for the department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Standards	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- School leadership has very good vision and plans for the improvement of ICT, and has already taken action to support this.
- The discrete course provides pupils with a very good grounding in basic skills and understanding, giving scope for the use of ICT in other subjects.
- The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects has improved since the last inspection but there are too few opportunities to teach the ICT curriculum and, thus, to raise pupils' standards in the subject.
- Below average standards at the end of Year 9 are the result of unsatisfactory planning for progression in the use of ICT across the three years.
- Pupils are not given opportunities to use ICT independently in other subjects, except in music.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

66. Work seen for Year 9 supports school assessments, showing that standards are below the national average and in comparison with the pupils' standards in other subjects. Whereas the current arrangement of short blocks of discrete lessons give pupils good basic skills that support work in other areas of the curriculum, pupils do not apply these skills independently, except in music, where the standard is very high. All other work seen is competently carried out but is closely directed, resulting in overall achievement which is unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

67. Teaching in the discrete ICT course is very good. In Year 7 lessons, teaching develops pupils' understanding of the basis for decision-making, so that they are applying their judgement as well as using their skills. The teacher assesses performance through the pupils' work in their first session, thereafter working to address their individual needs. The technician provides excellent support for teachers by helping pupils with the development of their ideas as well as the hardware and software issues that may arise. There is, however, very little teaching of the ICT curriculum in other subjects and pupils have too little opportunity to develop the ability to apply ICT independently. Taken overall, therefore, teaching is only satisfactory.

Leadership and management

68. The head of department provides good leadership, including excellent vision for the development of ICT within the school. Her assessment of standards is accurate, with clear analysis of the reasons for low performance and realistic action to address this. Management of the discrete ICT course is good and the use of ICT within other subjects has improved greatly since the last inspection. The school has given staff very good personal access to ICT and very good training. However, the school continues to rely on the other subjects as the main means of teaching ICT. This is unsatisfactory because of the emphasis on the needs of those host subjects rather than on the ICT curriculum itself. Taken overall, therefore, the management of the subject is only satisfactory.
69. The school is well equipped with good quality computers, but cannot give enough access to discrete ICT teaching while allowing that access across the curriculum to which staff have become accustomed. Arrangements to improve this, by providing an additional computer room in the near future, will overcome this bottleneck.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have positive attitudes and good relationships with teachers.
- Where the teaching is good, pupils behave and respond well.
- The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good, particularly where they benefit from the support of classroom assistants who have good knowledge of their needs.
- The role of the head of department is underdeveloped.
- The quality of teaching has declined since the previous inspection.
- There is a lack of evaluation of teaching and learning through classroom observations in order to share and develop good practice.
- There is no systematic use of ICT to enrich and develop geography skills.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

70. Pupils make satisfactory progress over their three years at the school and, by the end of Year 9, standards are above average. Progress in gaining geographical skills, especially the use of maps is good. Pupils study a good variety of places and can describe the physical and human features of those places. Good support is provided by learning support assistants for pupils with special educational needs, including those with behavioural difficulties, so that the majority of these pupils make good progress.

Teaching and Learning

71. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and, in good lessons, match their methods and activities to the needs of the pupils so that pupils of all abilities are enthusiastic and sustain concentration throughout lessons. In these lessons, teachers establish good relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils can be relied upon to take part in activities that require independent work. Occasionally, classroom management is weak and, as a result, pupils' attention and behaviour deteriorate and little progress is made. Assessment of pupils' attainment is satisfactory but this information is not used to set targets for future performance and pupils are not involved sufficiently in exploring how they can improve.

Leadership and management

72. The head of department has only been in post since the start of the Autumn term. Leadership is satisfactory with clear ideas for sharing good practice in teaching and improving assessment. Management of the subject is currently unsatisfactory. As yet, there is no coherent action plan to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and raise standards. The scheme of work is satisfactory, but should give pupils more opportunities to explore issues, such as environmental change and sustainable development.
73. Unsatisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection, when all lessons were found to be good or better and progress in geography was found to be good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Clear leadership is provided by the head of department.
- Pupils behave well, accept responsibility readily and have positive attitudes.
- The progress of the majority of pupils is good and almost all pupils achieve well compared to their attainment on entry to the school.
- The quality of teaching is good and a significant proportion of lessons are very good.
- ICT is not used systematically to enrich and develop history skills.
- There is limited evaluation of teaching and learning through classroom observations in order to share and develop good practice.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

74. Standards achieved by both boys and girls are above national averages. By the end of Year 9, pupils have good factual knowledge and understanding of the history of Britain and the wider world. They understand that there are different sources of evidence that can tell us about the past and, by Year 9, pupils understand that these can be interpreted in different ways. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially when supported by learning support assistants, who have very good knowledge of the needs of individual pupils.

Teaching and Learning

75. Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage their lessons with confidence, using a variety of activities to engage pupils. As a result, pupils show interest in their work and are enthusiastic and willing to learn and sustain concentration. Pupils are polite and courteous and work together sensibly. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils, so that pupils can be relied upon to take part in activities that require independent work. Assessment of pupils' attainment is good, but this information is not used to set targets for future performance and pupils are not involved sufficiently in exploring how they can improve.

Leadership and management

76. The head of department provides clear leadership. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, with improved quality of teaching and standards. However, there are no systems for the head of department to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, and share good practice. This has been identified as a key area to develop in the current improvement plan for history.

Religious Education

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

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and this ensures pupils make very good progress from the wide range of starting points when they enter the school at age 11.
- Pupils enjoy religious education and so are well motivated to succeed.
- More books are needed, as are more ICT resources and better access to ICT facilities.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

77. By the end of Year 9, pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other world religions are above national expectations. This is the case for both boys and girls, although girls do better than boys. Pupils' standards in relation to the second attainment target 'Learning from religion', are particularly strong. They make informed, mature and thoughtful responses to moral and religious issues.
78. When pupils arrive in the school, their attainment in religious education is very variable and consolidation is needed. Most pupils of all abilities and needs make very good progress, and, overall, their achievement is very good.

Teaching and learning

79. Pupils' standards result from highly skilled and expert teaching that motivates pupils well and matches tasks suitably to pupils of differing abilities, including homework tasks. All teaching seen was in the range of very good to excellent. Pupils are thoroughly engaged and interested throughout the lessons, and enjoy the many opportunities to be actively involved. Expectations are high with progressive challenge across the three years. The lessons are very beneficial to pupils' personal development. Lesson planning is well informed by the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. Marking is thorough and helpful.
80. The following example illustrates the best of the very good teaching in this subject. It shows how an imaginatively planned and resourced lesson, confidently and knowledgeably taught, can have a real impact on pupils' learning, achievement and personal development.

Example of Excellent Practice

A Year 8 mixed-ability lesson demonstrated how effectively pupils learn from their own active involvement and experience. They progress because they enjoy the tasks in a context that is very well structured and guided, and where very high expectations for work, behaviour and respect are well embedded. The initial task reminded and reinforced the pupils' understanding of symbolism, and how they were to look at things for "shoots and roots". That meant looking for the external aspects of things, then the deep feelings and thoughts that lay behind them for a believer. The lesson was in a unit on worship and the lesson was to explore what '*puja*' is and what it means for Hindus. The pupils were seated in groups and each group had plates with all the objects relating to *puja*, such as fresh flowers, water, kumkum powder in various colours, rice, raisins, an incense stick and a bell. They were invited to explore the objects and to discuss and establish from their existing knowledge what the objects might mean and how they might be used in a *puja* ritual. This involved using all five senses. There was an excellent reflective atmosphere, much excited and purposeful discussion as a tight time schedule had been made clear, and not one pupil misused the objects or showed disrespect in any way. All pupils were purposefully involved, and in an excellent 'plenary' afterwards they were very keen to contribute their ideas. They were able to make connections with other religions, the teacher insisted on using correct terminology, and she built up a summary of what they had learnt on the board. Finally, pupils checked their learning with brief written explanations given by a Hindu lady of how all the objects were used in *puja*. The pupils had been very absorbed throughout and had made great strides in gaining a sensitive and sympathetic understanding of a new example of worship. Homework was set, very suitable for extending what had been learnt, and it was ready-prepared on worksheets. There was a choice, so that any pupil who felt able to tackle the higher-level version of the task could do so.

Leadership and management

81. The subject is very well led with clear direction. The previous high standards have been maintained, and there have been significant improvements. Assessment according to national advisory levels, has been successfully introduced although it is a little too modest. Pupils understand the procedures and know how to raise their level of work. The curriculum is enriched with visits out, visitors coming in, extension classes, and lively displays of artefacts. Good links with the upper school have been established including a 'bridging project' into the GCSE courses which pupils will follow. Good management is reflected in the policies, records and evaluations, and schemes of work.
82. The stock of library books has improved for this subject since the last inspection and it is now adequate for pupils' needs, but ICT resources and access to facilities are still inadequate. There are insufficient books to support teaching and learning and this makes lesson planning more difficult.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and Design

Provision in art and design is **unsatisfactory**.

Standards	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships within the department are good and there is a capacity to improve.
- Pupils' standards of achievement are not high enough.
- The teaching of drawing and pupils' use of sketchbooks needs to be improved.
- Both teachers' and pupils' expectations of work undertaken are too low.
- The amount of time allocated to teaching art and design throughout the year does not meet with recommendations.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

83. Teachers' assessments for pupils at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are average. These assessments are generous. Below average basic skills are holding standards down. Evidence from their work shows that pupils' drawing skills are not well enough developed. Their observational skills are very weak, with line quality unconsidered. Shading often flattens form rather than accentuating it. Pupils' sketchbooks are not well enough used for any personal response to methods and materials and are often more a collection of pictures from magazines. Annotation is descriptive rather than evaluative. Pupils find it difficult to talk about their own or other artists' work. There is insufficient evidence of influence of art and artists in pupils' work. Sketchbooks and folders are not always well cared for, reflecting unsatisfactory attitudes.

Teaching and learning

84. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. The scrutiny of pupils' work shows that learning, over time, is unsatisfactory. There was unsatisfactory learning when almost half a Year 8 class had not completed their homework; work that was the basis of the lesson. There are good relationships between pupils and teachers, but gossip is a significant feature of lessons. The unchallenging nature of the work leads to slow learning. When the task is appropriate and when they are offered responsibility for their own learning, pupils respond positively. Teachers have good subject knowledge. There was good learning in an ambitious, well-planned lesson when pupils were using computers to make animated films.
85. Teachers have good knowledge of those pupils who have special educational needs but their achievements are also unsatisfactory, again because their drawing skills are undeveloped. The inability to observe, analyse and record through drawing also limits the achievements of the most able, preventing them knowing how well they are doing, or how they might improve. Pupils' dependence on their teacher is almost absolute. The assessment of pupils' work is not used to set targets or recognise weaknesses in the curriculum.

Leadership and management

86. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The department is well staffed by specialist teachers who have great capacity to improve. The monitoring of teaching and learning and planning to raise standards have been neglected. The rotational system of pupils moving from art and design to design and technology, makes continuity of learning difficult for them.
87. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards have fallen, and drawing skills remain below average. The use of sketchbooks continues to be weak and pupils' understanding of art and design remains below average. The quality of teaching and learning is now unsatisfactory.

Design and Technology

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

Standards	Average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff display good subject knowledge.
- Pupils show interest in and enthusiasm for the subject.
- A significant number of more able pupils underachieve.
- Teaching fails to set clear learning objectives, or to interest, engage and challenge pupils.
- Inadequate computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) experiences for pupils.
- Assessment is inadequately used to inform planning and set learning targets.

Commentary

Standards and Achievement

88. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a reasonable grasp of the design process. They can generate ideas but the quality and range of design thinking is hampered by poorly developed graphical skills. Pupils are not paying sufficient attention to the ongoing evaluation of their designs. Technical knowledge and understanding, particularly of more able pupils, is average. Pupils use tools and equipment confidently and safely; accuracy of final product and finish standards are of average quality. Provision for CAD/CAM is inadequate and is a barrier to extended learning. Pupils show much interest and enthusiasm for their work in all material areas.

Teaching and Learning

89. Overall, pupil attitudes and interest in the subject are good, often very good. Pupils support each other well and show an aptitude for sustained concentration but teachers' expectations are too low. More efficient organisation of activities and groups needs to be underpinned by fair and clear authority. Work is too loosely matched to pupils' differing needs. Teachers' questioning and intervention do not provide sufficient challenge or extend learning. Learning materials and resources are insufficiently demanding of pupils. Thinking skills are not adequately developed to enhance pupils' capacity to work independently. The range of teaching strategies used in lessons is too narrow to help pupils learn successfully. Marking is done regularly but assessment is not used to inform lesson planning.

Leadership and Management

90. Subject leadership is weak; management lacks focus and influence. Decisive action needs to be taken to raise the quality of teaching and level of pupils' attainment. Unsatisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Resources need to more closely match National Curriculum requirements. The failure to fully upgrade workshop accommodation to meet health and safety requirements remains a concern.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the subject provides a clear vision.
- Pupils achieve very well because of the high standard of teaching.
- Composing with ICT is well above average.
- Extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons add value to the subject.
- There is insufficient singing in the scheme of work.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

91. By the end of Year 9, pupils' musical ideas are very well developed. Pupils are familiar with musical conventions, such as binary, ternary and variation form, and many have built up a wide vocabulary of technical terms. Since lessons are planned with skill, pupils are exposed to many musical experiences that promote a higher standard of learning. Because of this pupils are motivated and they achieve well. The pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour also contribute to the progress that they make. In lessons seen, there was no significant difference between the work of boys and girls.

Teaching and learning

92. In Years 7 to 9, pupils benefit from lively teaching, which inspires them to do well. Lessons are very well planned with pace and challenge which interests and motivates all pupils. Those pupils who are recognised as talented are often the first to answer questions: in group work they give support to the less confident pupils. Although homework is not given regularly, many pupils take the opportunity to go to the music technology room at lunchtimes and after school to improve upon their compositions. The first-class accommodation and good resources also support learning. Assessment of pupils' work is done well with reference to National Curriculum levels, which are helpfully displayed. As a record of their achievement, each pupil is given a CD of their work over Years 7 to 9 when they leave to go on to the upper school

Leadership and management

93. The department is managed well and inspired leadership ensures that music has a high profile in the school. There is close liaison with feeder schools and the local upper school that gives continuity to the subject throughout the whole statutory school age.

Physical Education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of good quality, enthusiastic teaching.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities is offered to pupils.
- Poor indoor accommodation affects the quality and range of the curriculum.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

94. By the end of Year 9, standards vary between the activities taught but are in line with those expected. They are above average in netball in Year 9, because pupils play the game well as a result of above average knowledge and understanding of the game. Pupils enter the school with below average skills in games, and standards observed in Year 7 are below average. Pupils achieve well overall, and make good progress. Many pupils have achieved representation at local, regional and national level in a range of sports. School teams are particularly successful.

Teaching and learning

95. Teaching is good and results from teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge of the activities taught. Their knowledge of the National Curriculum is less secure. Planning does not always include learning objectives and this has not improved since the last inspection. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and often pupils work hard in lessons of brisk pace. Pupils are attentive, listen to instructions and co-operate well in group work. Their behaviour is at least good. Pupils with a special educational need are integrated into lessons and make at least satisfactory progress in their learning. The department provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Leadership and management

96. Leadership is good. The head of department is enthusiastic and a good role model. He is keen to raise standards and enhances feeder school links by his involvement in a national project to ensure a smooth transition of pupils into the school. Management is less effective and only satisfactory. The schemes of work are in need of updating. The time allocated to some activities is insufficient to fully cover the national programmes of study and there is no clear link with the revised National Curriculum recommendations.

97. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The accommodation for indoor physical education has not improved and continues to affect the quality and range of the curriculum, leading to a bias towards games. Staff have done their best to minimise the impact on standards resulting from these shortcomings. Changing rooms have been refurbished. The school makes good use of swimming facilities at the local upper school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The quality of teaching is good, with good working styles leading to good achievement in Year 9 by pupils across the whole ability range.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject and enjoy the work.
- Coverage of the subject outside the formal course is not closely monitored.
- The course has not been evaluated and pupils' standards in the subject are not assessed.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

98. By the end of Year 9, the work that they cover has given pupils good understanding of their legal rights and responsibilities. They understand the implications of criminal behaviour and can discuss different means of controlling it. They know about the British political system and understand the importance of elections. Pupils are able to listen and react to the views of others. They behave responsibly towards each other. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, express their views in writing and the more able support them in a mature manner. Both boys and girls work thoughtfully.

Teaching and learning

99. This good achievement is the result of good teaching. Teachers' emphasis on pupils' participation and group discussion allows the most able pupils to develop their ideas to a high standard, while providing a stimulus to the majority and supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers take advantage of issues relevant to the local area to interest pupils. They also explore controversial issues well. Teachers mark work with comments, but standards are not yet formally assessed and so the impact of the course is not evaluated.

Leadership and management

100. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The course, that started a year ago complements existing experiences such as the School Council, to cover the National Curriculum requirements and to meet the needs of the pupils. Subjects across the curriculum contribute to citizenship, but this is not planned to ensure that pupils make progress. Teaching is carried out by a very keen team of teachers. Communication between them is informal and they have had no subject-specific training. The group is now beginning to meet regularly and to evaluate lessons. There has, therefore, been a satisfactory beginning to the course.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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