

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN FERNELEY HIGH SCHOOL

Melton Mowbray

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120264

Headteacher: Mr C J Robinson

Reporting inspector: Mrs P D Freund
2225

Dates of inspection: 9th – 12th June 2003

Inspection number: 259909

Full 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

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Scalford Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr C Godber

Date of previous inspection: November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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2225	Mrs P D Freund	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13459	Mrs E Mills	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2277	Mr K W Valentine	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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6477	Mr G Haney	Team inspector	Mathematics	
33069	Mr S O'Reilly	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
30854	Mrs S Foster	Team inspector	History	
3965	Miss L R Taylor	Team inspector	Physical education	
17368	Mr G Lewis	Team inspector		Special educational needs
33078	Mr K Worrall	Team inspector	Citizenship	
18080	Mr A Hendry	Team inspector	Design and technology	
11676	Mr G Thomas	Team inspector	Music	
11764	Ms P A Flannery	Team inspector	Drama	English as an additional language
12044	Mr J Lemon	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
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17868	Mrs E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

John Ferneley is a mixed high school for pupils aged 11 to 14 years with 620 pupils on roll. It is a popular school. The roll has risen significantly in recent years and there is low pupil mobility. There is an almost equal balance of boys and girls, the majority of whom are white British. There is a small proportion of pupils of white European origin, and a few of Asian, Black British and mixed heritage. Two pupils have English as an additional language, but are fluent speakers of English. There are 41 pupils with special educational needs and 15 with statements of special educational needs, which is broadly average. The proportion of pupils on free school meals (7.7 per cent) is below average. The attainment of pupils on entry to John Ferneley is above average, although there is the full range of ability amongst pupils.

The school serves its immediate catchment area, on the edge of the market town of Melton Mowbray, and some of the surrounding rural villages.

The school has had a very high turnover of staff since the last inspection. Forty per cent of the staff are new to the school this year, and ten of these are in their first year of teaching.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a sound education. Standards are above national averages and pupils make satisfactory progress from entering the school. On the whole, teaching is satisfactory and some good teaching by the experienced members of staff was observed. The unsettling period now appears to be over but much remains to be done in order for pupils in some classes to respond responsibly to the changes brought about by the high staff turnover. The leadership and management of the school are good. Pupils' attitudes to their work are good. The school has many strengths. In view of the school's effectiveness and the progress pupils are making, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality teaching and achievement in art and design, modern foreign languages and music, (and the provision of ICT in music), is good and pupils learn well.
- There are high rates of attendance.
- The induction of staff new to the school is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good.
- Extra-curricular activities are a strength in the school.
- The provision for social development is good.
- The identification of pupils with special educational needs to support their learning is good.

What could be improved

- Assessment to improve pupils' learning and progress.
- The teaching in science and religious education.
- The planned use of ICT in the curriculum.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual development.
- Governors to ensure that religious education meets the requirements of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus and that collective worship meets the legal requirements.
- Training and support for some of the less experienced heads of department.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

The school's strengths outweigh its weaknesses. Other minor strengths are identified within the report and some minor weaknesses are highlighted in paragraphs 45, 63, 90, 104, 117, 119 and 138.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997. It has had some problems with recruitment and retention of staff in the past 18 months, which has had some effect on the rate of improvement and standards. On the whole the rate of improvement has been unsatisfactory, and there are some outstanding issues which have not been properly addressed. Results in the National Curriculum tests taken in Year 9 have maintained above average standards in English and mathematics. Standards in science declined to be broadly in line with the national average last year. Standards in music have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are now a strength in the school. This is not the case in religious education, which still remains an area for improvement, as does the provision for spiritual development. Targets for improvement are shared with pupils, but this is not yet a consistent feature across the school. Reporting to parents has improved, but inadequate reports on achievement remain in some subjects. The school now reports on the progress of the information and communication technology (ICT) action plan. The school has the sound capacity for further improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	B	A	B	C
Mathematics	B	A	B	C
Science	A	A	C	E

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Results in the National Curriculum tests taken in 2002 at 14 years of age have been above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science since the last inspection until last year, when there was a dip in science, when results were at the national average. This is attributed to staffing difficulties. Provisional results for 2003 show a clear improvement in science, particularly at the higher levels. There has been a decline in the percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels in English and science, although these are still in line with national averages. Pupils in this school achieve standards in line with other similar schools, except in science. Progress is unsatisfactory in science because of the variability of teaching quality amongst the staff in that department. The school reached its targets in English and mathematics, but not in science. Both girls and boys achieve results higher than average. While girls tend to outperform boys in the school, as they do in most schools, in some subjects this is more significant. Standards on entry to the school at 11 years are above average. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress.

Standards are above those expected in art and design, geography, modern foreign languages and music. They are in line with expectations in drama, design and technology, history, physical education, religious education and citizenship. In ICT, standards are below average. While good progress is seen in those subjects in which pupils achieve levels above those expected, progress is unsatisfactory in ICT and religious education. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achievement is good. The more able tend to achieve well, but the school does not identify the gifted and talented pupils sufficiently well; therefore, while many achieved well, a few very able pupils did not do as well as expected last year. Pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are above average, although their writing skills are not as good as their skills in oracy and reading.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils continue to display good attitudes in class. They take an interest and respond well to good quality teaching. The school places a great deal of trust in pupils.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Pupils behave well in lessons, but some, especially boys, lack consideration for others in congested areas of the school. Exclusions have risen since the previous inspection.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils show respect and courtesy to adults and each other. Pupils take initiative and there is independent learning of high quality.
Attendance	Very good. Well above national average for secondary schools.

Attitudes were described as very good in the last inspection. They are still good, but pupils are still developing relationships with the large number of new teachers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Despite the enormous turnover of staff in the past two years, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In most subjects pupils make satisfactory progress and those with special educational needs make good progress. Teaching generally meets the needs of boys and girls of all levels of attainment, although there is some lack of challenge for the most able in some subjects. Teaching is of good quality in English, satisfactory in mathematics, although there is a good proportion of good teaching from experienced staff, and unsatisfactory in science, because there is such variability. The teaching of basic skills is good. Teaching is good in art and design, modern foreign languages, music and physical education, and pupils make good progress. It is satisfactory in history, geography, design and technology, citizenship, drama, ICT and religious education. The very good use of ICT in music contributes to its success. In many subjects class control is good, and expectations are high. The school has had a turbulent two years with many staffing changes, which has affected the quality of teaching and learning, though these have now been largely resolved. Relationships are mainly good between teachers and pupils, which help pupils to become keen learners. There was a small amount of unsatisfactory and poor teaching seen, in science and mathematics. This was attributed to inexperience, where teachers are still getting to grips with the craft of teaching. This resulted in pupils becoming less motivated and behaviour deteriorating.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in most lessons and their ability to work independently and to initiate conversation and questions helps many able pupils to make good progress. The level of challenge is mainly satisfactory, and pupils respond well, making gains in learning. In history and religious education the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, and the needs of the least able are not always met in history and citizenship. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported with the extra help in English and mathematics and their progress is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory in range and quality. Statutory requirements are not met in religious education and there is insufficient breadth in ICT. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is provided.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school is very good at identifying those pupils with learning needs and other barriers to learning, and provision is good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	There is satisfactory provision for the personal development of pupils. Provision for social development is very good, it is good for moral and cultural development and poor for spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. The school meets the needs of all pupils. However, procedures for monitoring children's progress and assessing their levels of attainment are unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are good. The head has a clear strategic vision for the school and is well supported by the management team. Middle managers, especially those who are inexperienced, need further training. Subject management is good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils most of its statutory responsibilities, except with regard to religious education, collective worship and disability and access plans. Governors are well informed, share the strategic planning and have a strong commitment to the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory overall. The school has tackled many of its weaknesses, but some issues from the previous inspection remain. Its own judgement of its performance just prior to the inspection was inflated.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Financial management is good; spending priorities match the needs of pupils, staff and learning resources. Accommodation is adequate. A programme of refurbishment is continuing. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress their children make. • The approachability of staff. • Pupils are expected to work hard. • The range of extra-curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • The way the school works closely with them. • The recent high turnover of staff. • The information they receive about their children's progress.

Inspectors agree with most of the parents' views. The amount of homework could be given more consistently. Communication could be improved through greater use of the pupil planners. The quality of reporting to parents has improved, although in some subjects there is not sufficient detail on academic progress. Parents commented that the issue of the recent high turnover of teaching staff has now been resolved.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 When pupils enter the school at the age of 11, their levels of attainment are above average. These standards are maintained and satisfactory progress is made throughout the school.

2 Results in the national tests taken in Year 9 in 2002, the latest officially published figures, show that pupils achieved standards in English and mathematics above the national average. In science, standards achieved were average. Compared with results from schools similar to John Ferneley, standards are average in English and mathematics, but below average in science. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels was average for English and science, but above average for mathematics. Both girls and boys achieved results better than the national picture over the past three years, with girls outperforming the boys in the school. Provisional results for 2003 in mathematics and science show a clear improvement. Results for English are not yet available.

3 There was a dip in test results in English in 2002, and a downward trend since the last inspection. However, results have tended to fluctuate from year to year. This year results are predicted to rise slightly to remain at above average. There have been improvements in results in mathematics over the years and predications suggest that the above average standards should be maintained this year. The science results dipped sharply in 2002, mainly attributed to staffing difficulties. Prior to 2002, standards in science were rising to well above average. Teacher assessments suggest slightly above average attainment this year in science.

4 The school is making good progress towards achieving this year's targets in English, mathematics, and science. The targets for 2004 are challenging.

5 Evidence from the inspection clearly indicates that pupils achieve highly in English and mathematics, but not so in science, where pupils demonstrated well above average prior knowledge, but unsatisfactory progress. This can be attributed to fact that most staff are new to the department and teaching is of variable quality.

6 Standards are above those expected nationally in art and design and progress is good, mainly due to the good teaching. In geography standards are above average, and progress is better where pupils are taught by specialist staff. Standards in modern foreign languages are above average. In music pupils achieve well because of the good teaching. Pupils meet the expected levels in drama, where standards are improving, following a resolution of staffing difficulties. In history, standards are in line with national expectations, though there is some evidence that the most able are not sufficiently challenged. Standards in design and technology are in line with national expectations in textiles and food technology, but progress is unsatisfactory in resistant materials, mainly because of staffing difficulties in this aspect of the work. In physical education standards are in line with national expectations, although higher ability boys are not challenged enough and the curriculum is too broad to allow sufficient depth of study. There are significant differences in attainment between boys and girls in many of the foundation subjects (those subjects in the National Curriculum that are not English, mathematics or science). In citizenship, standards are improving, with most pupils attaining levels in line with expectations. The less able do not achieve as well as others because they are too passive in class in citizenship. Standards in ICT are unsatisfactory, because not all aspects of ICT are delivered. In religious education pupils attain the expected levels, but only a few of the most able attain the higher levels.

Standards of work seen during the inspection

7 Standards of work seen in individual subjects generally reflect the results of the Key Stage 3 tests. In English progress is at least satisfactory, the majority of pupils achieving above average standards. This is because pupils enter the school with above average oral skills and they listen well in class. They are helped to develop good reading comprehension skills, though they need more help in writing in the drafting stage to improve further. In mathematics progress over time is satisfactory and achievement is good, particularly with the most able pupils who are provided with a high level of challenge. Nevertheless, their ability to apply and use their mathematics skills is below the level of other aspects of the work. In science, many pupils have the ability to gain good standards, but progress is unsatisfactory because the quality of teaching is so variable. Progress of the more able pupils is sound.

8 Standards and progress in art and design, modern foreign languages and music are good. In design and technology, although much of the work is in line with national expectations, the pupils in Year 9 and those of higher ability do not achieve their full potential. In geography, the achievement of boys has improved significantly with the introduction of strategies to support boys' achievement. Girls outperform boys in history; the most able are not sufficiently challenged in some lessons and needs of the least able are not always met. Standards in drama are sound. Pupils in Year 7 are making better progress than their counterparts in Year 9, who have not benefited in the past from continuous specialist staffing. In religious education, pupils are making unsatisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of the different religions studied. In physical education and citizenship, progress is satisfactory. The progress in ICT is unsatisfactory, although it is better in Year 7, where standards are close to national expectations.

Pupils with special educational needs

9 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achievement is good. This is particularly the case when pupils enter the school with low literacy and numeracy skills. Standards are not high enough in independent writing, and although pupils are developing their verbal skills throughout the school, oral and written skills are not exploited enough to promote higher achievement. There are good examples such as the use of narrative writing to describe processes in science which helps the pupils to express their thoughts. Pupils are well supported in 'catch-up' programmes in English and mathematics, which helps them to become more prepared and confident in other areas of the curriculum, which contributes to their good achievement.

Literacy and numeracy

10 Pupils' skills in literacy are above average. Pupils read well and their written work, although above average, is not quite as good as their skills in reading and speaking and listening. The revised scheme of work in English is having a beneficial effect on standards. The literacy strategy is being developed in modern foreign languages, art and design and religious education. Weaknesses occur in science where not enough attention is paid to literacy when work is marked, and in geography and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), where spellings are not always corrected.

11 The numeracy strategy is not well developed in school, although most pupils can handle the demands of mathematics in the curriculum.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12 Pupils display good attitudes to their work. They take an interest in their studies and respond well to good quality teaching. Pupils enjoy coming to school and most pupils work hard, show commitment in their lessons, and participate well in school activities. In most lessons pupils display confidence and maturity, concentrating hard and co-operating well when working in pairs or in groups. They listen well to their teachers and to each other, ask appropriate questions and are actively engaged in discussions and in practical work. In a few lessons seen during inspection some pupils, mainly boys, did not give their full attention to their work and were noisy and disruptive, and this adversely affected the learning in these lessons. These less positive attitudes were seen where teaching was weaker and class management less effective.

13 Overall, behaviour is satisfactory. In lessons it is generally good. In most subject areas pupils relate well to each other and to their teachers. However, some parents believe that the many staff changes have had a detrimental effect on the overall behaviour in the school; inspectors agree, although there have been recent improvements. In the dining hall and on the playing fields pupils mostly act in a responsible way. At lunchtime pupils respond well to the trust placed in them by behaving well with minimum supervision in classrooms designated for their use. However, in corridors between lessons where there is a great deal of congestion, some pupils, especially boys, show a lack of consideration and, in a few cases, some deliberate jostling. The number of pupils excluded from the school for a fixed term is high and has risen sharply since the previous inspection, and last year this number was very high. In the current year there has been a slight decrease. Pupils involved are nearly all boys and the reasons for these exclusions are mainly for abusive language or violent behaviour.

14 Relationships between boys and girls, and between pupils of different ethnic backgrounds and of different age groups, are mainly good and pupils work and socialise well together.

15 The behaviour of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They take interest in the work provided for them when it is at an appropriate level and respond well to the prompts and suggestions of support staff. They express satisfaction with the work they do and are pleased at their progress. They are, however, frequently dependent on support staff for prompting to stay on task and a few contribute to disruption in the classroom and corridors when adult supervision is not sufficiently assertive or clear about boundaries.

16 Pupils respond well to opportunities to take initiative and some high quality independent learning was observed in some lessons. The Pupil Committee comprises representatives from all tutor groups and their views are considered by senior managers. Opportunities to take responsibility around school are, however, limited. Property is respected and pupils take good care of equipment and resources.

17 Attendance rates at the school remain high and are well above those achieved nationally in secondary schools. Punctuality to school and to lessons is good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18 Despite the enormous turnover of staff in the past two years, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In most subjects pupils make satisfactory progress and those with special educational needs make good progress. Teaching generally meets the needs of boys and girls of all levels of attainment, although there is some lack of challenge for the most able in some subjects.

19 Teaching was satisfactory or better in just over nine out of every ten lessons seen. It was good or very good in seven out of ten lessons and two excellent lessons were observed, in English and modern foreign languages. There were eight unsatisfactory lessons, including two poor lessons.

20 Teaching is of good quality in English. It is satisfactory in mathematics, with a sizeable proportion of good teaching from experienced staff. Teaching is unsatisfactory in science, because there is such variability. Much of the unsatisfactory teaching in science can be attributed to new teachers who are just getting to grips with the craft of teaching. Weaknesses were noted in class control, level of challenge and clarity in explaining tasks. Sound and good teaching was also observed in science, which led to a good response from pupils.

21 Teaching is good in art and design, drama, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. It is satisfactory in history, geography, design and technology, citizenship, drama, ICT and religious education.

22 In the very good lessons in English, the teachers' expectations were high and pupils responded to the challenge. Excellent planning led to pupils extending their prowess in reading a text analytically. Challenge and pace in the lower sets, together with learning support, ensure pupils make very good progress. In art and design, the good features include good demonstrations of techniques, and very good classroom management skills and relationships with pupils. Good individual attention is given to pupils of all abilities to meet their needs and pupils respond with very good attitudes and interest in the subject. In music pupils respond well to the enthusiastic teaching and the good subject knowledge shown by teachers. In physical education there is a good balance in the teaching between demonstration, explanation and opportunity to practise, enabling pupils to increase their consistency, control and accuracy in athletics. In modern foreign languages good teaching is exemplified by all members of the department having a high level of subject knowledge, communicated well.

23 Good lessons were characterised by challenge, pace, very good classroom control, well-structured programmes of work and interesting themes, such as environmental disputes in drama, in which the teaching stimulated pupils' interest. These resulted in sustained concentration and interest from pupils and good progress being made. The high level of challenge provided to the most able in some lessons resulted in a rigorous working atmosphere, as seen in English. Pupils are given the opportunity to use ICT to good effect in music and for computer-aided design in textiles in design and technology.

24 In the unsatisfactory or poor lessons, often but not always by inexperienced teachers, there were weaknesses in the management of pupils, a lack of sustained challenge and an inability of teachers to sustain the pace of work. Inappropriate behaviour of pupils ensued. This was the case in mathematics and science. In design and technology, the unsatisfactory teaching in one aspect of work was entirely due to a lack of expertise in the department, resulting from the long-term absence of an experienced teacher. In religious education the lack of subject knowledge led to low expectations of pupils.

25 There is increasing awareness of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy, with teachers explaining clearly the objectives for the lesson and ending with a plenary session. However, the strategy is generally in its infancy in this school and teaching and learning have yet to reap the benefits. The science department would benefit from adopting the teaching methodology incorporated in the strategy. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is also inconsistent across subjects.

26 Assessment is unsatisfactory across the school, because of its inconsistency. There are good assessment processes in art and design, music and design and technology, which enable pupils to do better. Procedures are satisfactory and developing in history. In English pupils are not fully involved in assessment of their own learning, and this aspect, together with inconsistencies across the subject, must be considered a weakness. In religious education, pupils know their levels but no targets for improvement are set. The lack of a scheme of work in physical education makes it impossible to monitor learning and to set targets for improvement. There are weaknesses in assessment in mathematics, science, ICT and geography.

27 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The subject teachers develop a good knowledge of their pupils through their own assessment and the information provided by the good quality individual education plan booklets. They respond positively to this information and prepare work accordingly. When this response creates high expectation and good pace, the teaching is good. There are, however, some occasions when teaching is not of this high quality, expectations are not high enough, and the learning of pupils with special educational needs is disrupted by poor behaviour generated from a lack of direction and aspiration. The monitoring of individual progress varies from subject to subject, and much assessment in special educational needs focuses strongly on learning behaviour. Measurable targets are not set frequently enough in order to encourage changes to teaching styles to suit the various needs of pupils.

28 Although much of the teaching is done in ability sets and, therefore, work is tailored to the needs of the pupils, there is no specific identification or monitoring of gifted and talented pupils across the school. This does not mean that pupils do not achieve their potential. Indeed, there were some good results last year by very able pupils. However, some also slipped through the net. In art and design, exceptional performance is highlighted and displayed so that pupils can see what this categorisation means. The school should learn from this practice.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

29 A generally sound quality and range of learning opportunities are provided to all pupils. Statutory requirements are met, except in the case of religious education where the requirements of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus are not met.

30 Strengths in curriculum provision include courses offered in modern foreign languages and in music. The mathematics and English catch-up programmes are also a strength. The curriculum offered to pupils with special educational needs is good, with a particularly strong feature being the identification of learning requirements of individual pupils.

31 Although the teaching of ICT meets statutory requirements the quality of provision is unsatisfactory. The work offered to pupils lacks breadth and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT in the other subjects they are studying. The school is attempting to meet the recently-introduced requirements for the teaching of citizenship, and the provision is satisfactory.

32 The provision for the teaching of literacy skills is sound, although more emphasis could be placed on improvements in the teaching of re-drafting in pupils' writing across the curriculum. The provision for the teaching of numeracy skills across the curriculum has only been developed to a limited extent.

33 The provision for personal, social and health education has been a matter of consideration by the school since the time of the last inspection. Staff training has taken place and new teaching materials have been introduced. The course for personal, social and health education, including sex education and drugs misuse, is sound and lessons observed during the inspection showed no unsatisfactory teaching.

34 The curriculum offers equality of access and opportunity to all pupils. In English, mathematics and science there was little difference in the attainment of boys and girls last year. Across the curriculum, teaching takes appropriate account of differences in aptitude and ability.

35 Pupils with special educational needs have good access to a broad and balanced curriculum. This is mostly delivered in classrooms with their peers although groups are withdrawn at the discretion of the support staff to pursue parts of the work. The access to the wide range of activities provided by the school outside the classroom is also good and pupils take up the opportunities offered. There are weaknesses in the availability of specialist and direct responses to pupils' specific learning needs. The school is aware of this and the special educational needs co-ordinator and learning support assistants manager are beginning to develop the expertise of staff to meet needs, drawing on the good support of the school's educational psychologist. For example, key staff have recently acquired techniques to support the anger management of pupils.

36 The provision for work-related education lies within the personal and social education programme. Pupils express confidence in the guidance they are offered regarding subject choices made in preparation for their learning in Key Stage 4. However, this confidence does not extend to guidance offered on the career implications of subject choices. Improvements are required in the guidance offered to pupils so that the implications of Key Stage 4 choices are more fully appreciated by pupils.

37 The quality of links with the community is sound, but links with other schools vary to an unsatisfactory degree. Links with feeder primary schools have been the subject of in-service training of teaching staff, and there has been a concentrated effort related to the National Strategies in literacy, numeracy and science. Links with the upper school are unsatisfactory. The bridging units used in mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 do not meet the requirements of pupils at the time of transition to the upper school. In mathematics the bridging units lack challenge and stimulation. In the case of the science bridging units, the investigations offered to pupils lack a context which is appropriately challenging and motivating. Insufficient attention has been paid to the need for continuity and progression in pupils' work at the end of Key Stage 3 in a number of subjects.

38 The provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is sound overall. However, the provision made for pupils' spiritual development is poor. This was a key issue in the last OFSTED report and it remains a matter of concern. The statutory requirements for collective worship are not met. Assemblies deal with moral issues but do not provide an opportunity for spiritual development or worship. The religious education programme has a time allocation below that recommended in the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus; the programme does not deliver the syllabus; and the teaching does not provide adequately for pupils' spiritual development. Although examples of provision for pupils' spiritual development were observed during the inspection the provision for this across the curriculum continues to be limited in scope.

39 The provision for pupils' moral development is good. Discussion of moral issues is prominent in school assemblies, and the personal and social education programme provides an appropriate time allocation for pupils to consider moral issues.

40 The provision for pupils' social development has a major strength in the very good range of extra-curricular activities. These activities embrace many sporting and musical opportunities, complemented by a good range of clubs offered by subject departments. Further enrichment is added through opportunities for visits organised by the school in this country and abroad. The provision for pupils' social development in the day-to-day working of the school is not of the same high standard. Variability in the quality of teaching results in some variation in the quality of pupils' attitudes and behaviour in class. Movement of pupils around the school is similarly variable, and not helped in some areas by the narrowness of corridors and staircases.

41 The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. A particularly strong contribution is made by the art and music departments. The drama course adds to pupils' cultural development, although it mainly offers experiences in white, western European culture. The art department demonstrates good examples of consideration of wider multi-cultural issues, with the design and technology and music departments also making specific contributions where appropriate. The school's arrangements for multi-cultural education are better than at the time of the last inspection, although improvements have largely arisen from individual initiatives rather than a whole-school consideration of a preferred provision.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42 The school has appropriate systems to ensure that pupils have access to personal support, and measures taken to ensure their health, safety and welfare are satisfactory overall, although there are some areas which require improvement.

43 Tutors remain with their group for the three years they are in school and parents appreciate this system, expressing the view that this provides continuity of support. However, the high turnover of staff has limited the effect of this system in the last year for some pupils. Team leaders, who also have subject responsibilities, and members of the senior management team, oversee the procedures for providing personal support for pupils and this offers a good link between academic and pastoral staff. Information is shared and parents are confident that the school deals well with pupils' concerns.

44 The school has due regard for issues involving child protection and follows guidelines agreed locally. Staff new to the school are fully informed of the need for vigilance and of the school's systems. There is good contact with supporting agencies. The school nurse provides effective support and a useful facility with the weekly 'drop-in' clinic, where pupils can discuss medical and personal problems.

45 There is a comprehensive health and safety policy and the school has full support of the governing body in the regular checks made of the building. In most departments risk assessments are detailed and those carried out for visits out of school are excellent. First aid arrangements are good. However, the increased number of pupils in the school has resulted in congestion in corridors which on occasions presents a health and safety hazard. Systems for moving around the school are not always followed and the inconsiderate behaviour of some pupils results in potential risk. Some of the toilet facilities are in poor condition, especially those in the girls' changing rooms. Staff in the design and technology department have had no training in workshop techniques and health and safety procedures.

46 There are very effective systems to monitor the attendance of pupils, with good liaison between form tutors, team leaders, senior managers and the educational welfare service. This, in addition to the good support of administrative staff, results in high levels of attendance.

47 There are procedures to monitor and record instances of misbehaviour. Strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour vary and in some cases poor behaviour goes unchallenged. Successes, both academic and personal, are rewarded using the school's merit system and this is appreciated by pupils and parents. There is an effective system for pupils to report in confidence any concerns they may have and any instances of bullying. A recent pilot scheme has been set up to support pupils with behavioural problems. Learning support staff have been trained in anger management techniques and the teaching of social skills.

Assessment

48 Overall, the procedures for assessing pupil attainment and the monitoring of progress are unsatisfactory. There has been insufficient progress in the use of assessment to support learning since the previous inspection. The school makes good use of an external assessment monitoring system called MIDYIS to help it set targets for the future, but takes insufficient note of the results of the Key Stage 2 assessments in its analysis of performance.

49 The school has a sound system of setting targets for pupils and reporting these to parents through the annual reports. This is supported in the report by a clear indication of a pupil's present attainment so that the parents can judge progress towards the target. Through this system the school has a sound basis for developing effective procedures. However, there are a number of deficiencies within the assessment process that presently limit effectiveness. Insufficient staff training to ensure the consistency of assessment has been provided, especially given the high level of staff turnover. The effectiveness of assessment within subject areas is variable. There are some examples of subjects, such as art and music, making good use of assessment to inform curricular planning, but many other subjects require improvement. There is no assessment of the citizenship programme; assessments in ICT are inadequate and inaccurate; design and technology assessment does not adequately inform planning. In general, the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have sound assessment procedures, but their use of the information to track progress and inform pupils of their achievements in a way they can understand could be further improved.

50 The pastoral system is deficient in the monitoring of the progress of individual pupils over time. There is no effective check on the achievement of pupils that would result in the early identification of potential underachievement across all subjects studied. Too much reliance is placed on subject managers to check on progress within a subject area without a rigorous quality assurance system to ensure consistency. As a result the school has not identified why there is a significant difference in the reported levels of attainment of boys in many subjects.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51 Parents are supportive in most areas of the school's work. They are particularly positive about the progress made by their children, the expectations staff have that their children will work hard and the approachability of staff. Some have reservations about the amount of homework set for pupils, the information provided for parents, especially on progress, and how closely the school works with parents. A number of parents are concerned about the many recent staff changes and some feel that this has had an effect on their children's education. The level of response to the questionnaire was much reduced since the last inspection with only around 20 per cent of parents expressing a view.

52 The inspectors support the positive views of parents. The level of homework set during inspection was not always sufficient. The use of homework is inconsistent and not always in line with school policy. Information provided for parents in the form of consultation evenings and informal access to staff is good. Annual written reports have been improved since the last inspection and in most subjects now report well on pupils' progress and their levels of attainment. However, reports for some subjects are too general with little reference to the subject to which they relate. In many reports the targets for improvement are mainly concerned with pupils' attitudes to their work and the humanities subjects are not reported separately.

53 Satisfactory information about the school is provided in the prospectus and in regular newsletters. The governors' report to parents contains useful information about the work of the school but fails to include any information on the school's arrangements for the admission of pupils with disabilities, the facilities for these pupils or details of a plan to improve and increase disability access. The inclusion of this information is a legal requirement.

54 The school has good contact with parents if they have any concerns about pupils' work or their behaviour. Parents are supportive of the school when problems arise and are kept fully informed by form tutors or team leaders. The use of planners to record homework is inconsistent and they are not well used as a means of communication between home and school although many are signed by parents.

55 Links with parents for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. The provision of information is good, but insufficient work is done to enlist parental contribution to the programmes being followed by the pupils and to create a dialogue about short-term and medium-term progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56 The high staff turnover over the past 18 months, together with some difficulties in teacher recruitment and a rising pupil roll, left the school in a fragile situation in the summer of 2002. The appointment of 14 new teachers, ten of whom were newly qualified, provided the headteacher and senior managers with the challenge of assimilating the staff and pupils into the culture of the school. The headteacher and governors showed considerable determination in not losing sight of their vision and values for the school, with the emphasis on rights, responsibilities and respect. The commitment to a broad curriculum has been upheld.

57 The leadership and management are good. There is effective strategic planning and good participation by governors in this aspect of the school's work. The strategic plan is complemented by well-considered departmental plans and staff training plans. However, the most recent self-evaluation of the school is over-generous and does not reflect a level of challenge in the school's thinking which will lead to further improvement. The management team has expanded to meet the needs of the growing school and to lead the various aspects of school improvement. However, in determining the roles of the team, the head and senior managers did not identify the personnel responsible for tracking individual pupils' achievement across all subjects in the school. The school, therefore, has no way of assessing quickly any patterns of underperformance in individual pupils, or indeed, if pupils are excelling across the board.

58 Other management responsibilities are carried out well. Monitoring of teaching is systematic, though in some subject areas managers would benefit from further training to make the performance management system more robust. The head and senior managers

are committed to staff training for all staff and the induction programme of the newly-qualified teachers is well managed and effective.

59 The management of subject departments is good. There are clear planning documents, with identified priorities and good support for teachers. The less experienced heads of department require management training, but their lack of experience is balanced by their enthusiasm to do a good job. Those heads of department of the core subjects, who also have additional responsibilities as pastoral heads, have limited management time for the two responsibilities. The management of learning support is good, and individual education plans are detailed and accessible for teachers, who make good use of them to plan work for pupils with special educational needs.

60 Governors are well informed and supportive of the work of the school, taking their responsibilities seriously. They have satisfactory knowledge of the schools' strengths and areas for development, and communication between school and governors is good. For the most part, statutory requirements are met.

61 However, the school does not meet the requirements of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus for religious education or to provide a daily act of collective worship, nor does it have a disability and access plan.

62 The school has a full complement of well-qualified staff, except for religious education and design and technology; the former subject being taught by humanities' teachers and the latter by visual arts' teachers. A large number of staff are inexperienced and just getting to grips with the craft of teaching. Nevertheless, the majority have made a good start, supported by the effective induction programme. The large number of experienced learning support assistants have had a beneficial impact on classroom practice. However, where additional teachers act in support they are not proactive in developing teaching styles or materials appropriate to improve teaching and learning. They frequently support in lessons where they themselves are not skilled.

63 The quality of accommodation is adequate for the delivery of the curriculum and the school's priorities for improvements in accommodation are appropriate. The pupils rightly point to the urgent need for refurbishment of their changing rooms and toilets, and the school has made provision for these improvements in the budget for the year. The school has made efforts to improve the environment, but corridors are in need of redecoration, and pupils say there are not enough displays around the school. Inspectors agree. The work displayed in the excellent art gallery should have a more prominent position in school.

64 The provision of learning resources is good. In ICT, the ratio of computers to pupils is better than average, and there is a very good range of technology in the music department. The library holds a good range of books and multi-media resources.

65 Financial management is very good. The school's budget is well spent. Priorities for improvement are properly funded and the school spends more than most on supporting staff development. There is a good application of the principles of best value. The day-to-day management of the school's finances is very good and information is clear. The minor recommendations from the recent audit have been rigorously followed up. This is an effective school which gives satisfactory value for money.

66 The rate of improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory, which is evident in the variability in pupils' standards of attainment and lack of improvement in some aspects of the school's provision. However, the school has been challenged by an unusually high turnover of staff and faces the new academic year in more settled circumstances. It has a sound capacity for improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67 In order to improve the effectiveness of the school, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

I. Improve assessment by:

- training staff to assess pupils' performance;
- providing assessment for citizenship;
- improving assessment in ICT;
- ensuring progress of pupils is properly tracked and communicated to them so that they know what to do to improve;
- ensuring that the pastoral system collates progress of individual pupils across subjects and analyses patterns of underachievement in individual and groups of pupils.
(Paragraphs 49, 50, 57, 72, 85, 92, 104, 126, 143, 151, 161, 167, 177).

II. Improve the quality of teaching:

In science by:

- incorporating methods used in the Key Stage 3 Strategy;
- continuing to monitor, evaluate and develop teaching strategies.

In religious education by:

- ensuring governors meet the requirements of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus;
- appointing a suitable subject specialist;
- adopting a more challenging scheme of work;
- training staff to increase their subject knowledge;
- using external consultants to support, monitor and evaluate teaching.
(Paragraphs 25, 104, 163, 164, 167).

III. Improve the provision of ICT across the curriculum by:

- developing a comprehensive scheme of work which provides full coverage of the National Curriculum in ICT;
- developing further the use of all aspects of ICT in subjects across the curriculum;
- monitoring the use of ICT in extra-curricular time to ensure that boys and girls have equal access to extend their learning.
(Paragraphs 91, 104, 111, 125, 143)

IV. Provide for pupils' spiritual development by:

- ensuring the statutory requirements for collective worship are met;
- ensuring the programme of work delivers the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus and ensure there is adequate time for this;
- ensuring adequate provision of spiritual development through the better use of morning assemblies and in the teaching of subjects in the curriculum;
- monitoring the provision of spiritual development in other subjects.
(Paragraphs 38, 61).

V. Provide management training for middle managers, especially those who have been in post for a short time.
(Paragraph 59).

VI. Minor issues:

- Provide health and safety training for teachers in design and technology.
- Review reports and improve the quality of report writing particularly in religious education, history and physical education.
- Improve liaison with the upper school, particularly with respect to the bridging units in mathematics and science.

(Paragraphs 45, 104, 117, 138).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	96
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	16	31	39	5	2	0
Percentage	2	17	32	41	6	2	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y9
Number of pupils on the school's roll	620
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	39

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y9
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	41

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	26

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.2

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	109	105	214

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	71	81	79
	Girls	92	84	78
	Total	163	165	157
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (82)	77 (80)	73 (83)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (46)	58 (54)	31 (52)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	79	88
	Girls	93	90	93
	Total	170	169	181
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (82)	79 (79)	84 (83)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	45 (41)	57 (48)	44 (51)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	6
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	603
Any other minority ethnic group	8

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	40	3
Other minority ethnic groups	7	2

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y9

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	34.65
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17:9

Education support staff: Y7 – Y9

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	350

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y9

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.4%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y9

Key Stage 3	25.8
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002-2003
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	£
Total income	1,396,112
Total expenditure	1,372,094
Expenditure per pupil	2,334.65
Balance brought forward from previous year	88,724
Balance carried forward to next year	112,741

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	620
Number of questionnaires returned	127

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	49	7	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	36	58	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	58	8	1	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	49	18	5	1
The teaching is good.	22	65	6	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	55	22	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	49	4	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	46	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	15	53	20	6	6
The school is well led and managed.	33	53	4	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	54	5	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	40	5	0	8

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

68 Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning is good, sometimes very good.
- The standards reached in speaking/listening and reading are well above average.
- Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- The development of pupils' written work, with a focus on the drafting stage.
- The encouragement of independent learning through the provision of good starter activities, guided reading and the better use of classroom assessment.
- Better provision for gifted and talented and higher attaining pupils in order to accelerate learning.

69 Standards of attainment on entry to the school, in all areas of English, are above the expected levels. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress, with attainment at 14 remaining above average for writing and well above average for speaking and listening and reading. In the national tests in 2002 at the end of Year 9, attainment was above the national averages but average when compared to similar schools, with 76 per cent of pupils achieving level 5 in comparison to a national average of 66 per cent. Scrutiny of English work suggests that standards are likely to improve slightly this year. Standards dipped sharply between 1998 and 2000, with an improvement in 2001 followed by another dip in 2002.

70 The majority of pupils enter the school with well-developed oral skills. In lessons most pupils listen well to their teacher and friends. In the upper sets pupils are keen to initiate lines of enquiry and to give extended answers to the teacher's questions. This was evident when higher attainers were following a video of the story *Dear Nobody* by Berlie Doherty. They very quickly made connections between the actor's interpretation of the characters they portrayed and that found in the written text and clearly communicated that understanding to their teacher. In the lower sets the majority of pupils express themselves clearly, as in a Year 9 class where one boy ably defended his position as one of the story's central characters. He remained in role as his friends plied him with relevant questions. A few pupils are reticent about speaking in whole-class situations but their teachers address this issue in a positive manner, by providing regular opportunities for pupils to talk in small groups, or individually to the teacher, about their work. Standards in speaking and listening at the end of Year 9 are generally well above average.

71 Standards in reading skills upon entry to the school are above average. Pupils with identified reading skill problems receive good help from support staff. The English department provides pupils in Years 7 to 9 with the chance to read a wide range of literature, including poetry and stories from other times and places and the plays of Shakespeare. Pupils enjoy researching the origins of Modern English in Britain. They acquire new understanding as they explore contemporary issues such as teenage pregnancy and racism. All of this contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are also helped to develop good reading comprehension skills, although more emphasis could be given to using the library for guided reading. Gifted and talented, including higher attaining, pupils already read for enjoyment. They would benefit from more specific advice from their teachers and planned opportunities to develop higher order skills such as inference, and

reading for different purposes. As a result of the good resources provided, pupils generally make sound progress, and standards in reading at 14 remain well above average.

72 Though standards in writing at the end of Year 9 are above expected levels there is insufficient emphasis on the drafting stage for pupils to improve further. In many books, from 2002, marking is not helpful in identifying gaps in pupils' learning and setting sharp enough targets for improvement. Occasionally evaluative written feedback is incorrect. Too often judgements are made about the work without the assessor sharing, with pupils, the specific qualities that are worthy of note. In these cases assessment remains a secret formula held by the teacher but not shared with the pupils and this slows progression. An improvement in standards of writing is evident in pupils' work in 2003. In this period written feedback is more focused, and presentation, consistency in spelling, punctuation and the use of capital letters are more accurate.

73 Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are much better than those to be found in corridors. In class pupils usually behave well and relationships are good.

74 The overall quality of teaching is good, with some very good teaching seen. The department has responded well to the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, with lesson objectives and level descriptors clearly displayed in all lessons. Very generous teaching and learning support assistance ensures that the pupils with special educational needs progress well, although on one occasion planning their deployment could have been improved. Teachers' expectations are high and pupils respond well to challenging but interesting tasks that involve boys and girls equally. Starter and finishing activities in many lessons need further improvement. At present there are missed opportunities for involving pupils in classroom assessment by identifying success criteria before working and then providing opportunities for pupils to reflect on whether they have achieved their identified goals. Where teaching is at its best, teachers demonstrate a personal enthusiasm for the work in hand, have high expectations of pupils of all abilities and provide them with a range of activities, which match these abilities well. As a result of this an animated, rigorous working atmosphere is created where very good learning can flourish.

75 Leadership and management of the department are good. Although there is still much to achieve, a great deal has been improved in a relatively short period of time, including the writing of good units of work. Staffing problems have largely been resolved and resources are good. The use of ICT is appropriate with written communication and research figuring in all schemes of work. Cable problems have limited the use of the interactive whiteboard thus preventing electronic presentations by teachers and pupils. The library is a good resource that is used regularly by the English department.

76 The department is judged to have made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection because results are now improving and the quality of teaching and learning is much better after a period where staffing problems adversely affected standards.

Literacy across the curriculum

77 The school has made satisfactory progress in promoting literacy across the curriculum. The best provision is in the planning for and delivery of the progress units in Years 7 and 8. Pupils benefit from the opportunities provided for them by learning support assistants during tutor time, and make good progress. In lessons across the curriculum where teachers refer to sentence structure for example, pupils who have attended these special sessions report that they feel good because they are well prepared for the lessons. The English department has revised its schemes of work in Years 7 and 8 to take account of the national strategy, with a positive effect on the teaching of literacy skills in English lessons. Teachers have all had training in developing literacy, and subject displays of key technical words in most classrooms indicate that pupils' needs are being considered. In 2002 there

was a good turn-out of parents for the literacy and numeracy evening arranged for them by the school.

78 In modern foreign languages, teachers plan lessons to build on pupils' prior literacy experience in order to develop learning. In art and design there is a good emphasis on the correct use of vocabulary, with spellings displayed related to each topic studied. In religious education good attention is given to pronouncing religious words correctly. Weaknesses are evident in some subjects, for example, in geography and personal, social and moral education where spellings are not always corrected, punctuation is often poor and capital letters are used inconsistently. The standard of marking has recently improved in English although there are differences among teachers in the way they mark. Marking in science reveals similar characteristics. In these cases teachers do not give enough attention to literacy skills when they mark pupils' written work.

Drama

79 Standards in drama are average but rising, especially in Years 7 and 8. This is because the subject has been strongly re-established since September 2002, after a period in which there were gaps in staffing.

80 Particular strengths include subject leadership, strategic planning, good teaching and the willingness and enthusiasm of pupils who like the subject and want to do their best. Drama also contributes very well to pupils' moral, social and cultural development and to their skills in speaking and listening.

81 Areas for improvement include further work on assessment, differentiated planning, especially for the most able pupils, and the development of liaison work at Key Stages 2 and 4. There is also a need for more opportunities for pupils to work in multi-cultural contexts and to build better cross-curricular links, especially to English and ICT.

82 At the end of Year 9 pupils are achieving an average standard. Drama has been re-established since September and there are now no gaps in staffing, but the lack of continuity has had some negative impact, especially on some older pupils. They achieved a satisfactory standard in their work on the theme of bullying, but a substantial minority struggled to turn their ideas into effective and controlled freeze-frame scenes. Some boys, in particular, lacked confidence and needed a lot of teacher support.

83 Year 7 pupils, who have had a full opportunity to benefit from the drama provision, showed very good attainment in their lesson on mime techniques. The teacher's effective planning and good organisation enabled them to work at a good pace and their self-organisation was exemplary as they worked hard to prepare their scene to its best standard. In co-operative groups they demonstrated a very good grasp of the conventions of the genre and used gesture, facial expression and movement to convey their stories with energy and control. They were able to make constructive critical evaluations of their own work. Year 8 pupils also achieved well and the pupils with special educational needs were well supported to enable them to participate fully in the lesson. Their performance standards were good. The majority of pupils showed a developing awareness of how to communicate in non-literal ways, how to use improvisation and how to entertain an audience without losing the focus of their story.

84 Teaching is good in the department and very good in Year 7. Through the use of stimulating themes, including bullying and environmental disputes, the teacher harnesses the interest of pupils. Good planning is supported by an appropriate scheme of work that progressively supports the development of more complex skills. The implementation of the scheme is effective. Good organisation and behaviour management help promote high expectations and maintain an appropriate but challenging pace. Opportunities for pupils to

develop self-confidence and critical awareness are fully used. The ethos is very positive, emphasising self-respect and the capacity to work towards common goals. There is a strong contribution to pupils' self-confidence and oral skills.

85 The department is very well led by a knowledgeable practitioner. The links to music are well established and development needs are appropriately identified. Implementation is progressing well. Key areas are further work on assessment to match the process in music. Curriculum planning must take account of the experience of pupils in Key Stage 2 and the demands they face in Key Stage 4. Tasks also need to be fully matched to the capacity of the most able and make explicit links to English and ICT. Ensuring opportunities for pupils to work in multi-cultural contexts is a further need.

MATHEMATICS

86 Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The attainment of pupils is above the national average.
- Able pupils achieve well and show good levels of knowledge and skills.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and there is concise teaching that provides clear explanations and methods for pupils to follow.
- The mathematics department has clear and appropriate plans for further improvement.
- There is good provision for lower attaining pupils to have regular mathematical support teaching in addition to their normal lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment to track pupils' progress and provide pupils with a knowledge of how well they learning what they are supposed to learn.
- Development of the use of oral and mental starters to lessons to teach a greater variety of number strategies.
- More effective development of the using and applying of mathematics to place pupils' learning in an understandable context. The mathematics curriculum makes insufficient contribution to pupils' wider understanding of the world.
- The use of ICT to support learning.
- Inconsistency among teachers in their teaching quality.

87 The overall standard of pupils' work has been consistently above average in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9. The work in pupils' books shows a good level of skill across a wide range of mathematical topics. The most able pupils achieve well and make good progress. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

88 Pupils' knowledge and skills in number, shape and space, and data handling are generally above the National Curriculum expectation. Pupils show calculation skills in line with their ability and higher attaining pupils use algebra to solve equations and re-arrange expressions. However, some quite able pupils are slow at finding mental strategies to work out answers to number questions such as 112×8 . Pupils show a sound understanding of mathematical vocabulary and use this well when talking about their work. Most pupils are able to use simple formulae to work out the areas of shapes, and the more able in Year 9 are using Pythagoras' theorem and simple trigonometry. Pupils display a good knowledge of data-handling techniques, but are less experienced in using their skills in different contexts. Overall, the ability to apply and use mathematics is below the levels demonstrated within their other work.

89 Progress over time is satisfactory and it is good for some pupils. Pupils arrive at the school with above average standards in mathematics and the standards achieved at the end of Year 9 have been above the national average in two of the past four years from 1999 to 2002, and well above average in the other two. The school is successful in enabling a very good proportion of its pupils to score highly in the national tests for 14 year olds. The school's own assessment this year shows an improvement. Pupils in the upper sets are provided with a high level of challenge; teachers' expectations are high and the pupils respond well. Pupils in the middle and lower sets make satisfactory progress and are also provided with appropriate challenge. Those pupils with special educational needs are well supported and there is a very well-organised catch-up programme for those pupils in Years 7 and 8 who have not yet achieved a National Curriculum level 4 in mathematics.

90 The quality of teaching is sound overall, with a significant proportion of good teaching from the experienced members of the department. These teachers provide a well-structured programme of work that is clearly explained. The pace of these lessons is brisk, with sufficient time being provided for pupils to consolidate their knowledge and able pupils are provided with extension work. This results in pupils showing good attitudes to learning and sustained concentration. However, there is some unsatisfactory or poor teaching that is characterised by a lack of sustained challenge; this results in a lack of concentration, some inappropriate behaviour and unsatisfactory learning. Year 9 pupils, at the request of the upper school, were studying a unit of work on data handling. The expectations within this programme were low and detrimentally affected the standard and quality of work in these lessons.

91 The department has made sound progress in implementing the National Numeracy Strategy. The scheme of work for mathematics has been revised for Years 7 and 8 and incorporates the expected range of work, but does not fully reflect the National Framework. Teachers use oral and mental starters to engage pupils in mathematical activity and these get the lessons off to a fast and active start. Pupils respond well to this. However, these starters sometimes lack a clear focus and do not provide a means of teaching mental strategies – only for practising them. The objectives for lessons are clearly identified in teachers' planning, but they are not always explained to pupils and there is insufficient review of these objectives at the end of lessons. At times pupils are not provided with an appropriate understanding of why they are studying the mathematical topics or where they could be used. The range of teaching methods used is too narrow and pupils report that mathematics lessons are always of the same format and character. There is insufficient opportunity for pupils to use and apply their knowledge in different ways. Problem solving and investigative approaches are insufficiently used to enliven the teaching. The use of ICT within mathematics is haphazard and lacks co-ordination. Relationships are good and this results in pupils generally doing their best and making good progress in lessons.

92 There is good leadership of the department, which is sustaining the quality of work and appropriate actions are being taken to improve provision further. Teachers set targets for pupils to achieve by the end of Year 9 and clearly identify their current attainment on the parents' reports. This information is collated for each pupil, but insufficient use is made of it to track and evaluate achievement. Assessments of units are defined in the mathematical scheme of work, but these are not sufficiently linked to the key objectives for pupils and hence provide limited feedback on what they do well and where they need to improve. This lack of specific information on achievement is then reflected in the quality of curricular targets for pupils that are reported to parents.

Numeracy across the curriculum

93 The mathematics department staff has completely changed since the previous inspection, but the high standards of attainment have been sustained. The integration of problem solving within mathematics appears to be less effective than previously. The use of assessment and marking to inform pupils of their learning still requires improvement.

94 Numeracy across the school has received a limited focus. An audit of provision has been conducted, but there is no specific action to address continuity across different subjects. During the inspection pupils had sufficient mathematical skills to cope with the demands placed on them during other subject lessons observed.

SCIENCE

95 Overall, the quality of provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Strength

- The new staffing of the department offers an opportunity for improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Fuller implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Science Strategy.
- Greater use of ICT in science teaching.

96 Pupils' standards of attainment as measured in the National Curriculum assessments in 2002 were broadly average, and are predicted, by teacher assessments, to be only slightly above average in 2003. Prior to 2002 standards of attainment in science were well above average. Provisional results in 2003 indicate clear improvement, particularly at the higher levels.

97 Standards of attainment observed in lessons indicate that pupils have the ability to gain well above average standards. Many pupils show a good grasp of the ideas involved in their work and have the ability to communicate these with confidence. Pupils are competent in the conduct of investigations and often make accurate inferences from them. Some pupils have the ability to pose challenging questions and offer suggestions in class which demonstrate well above average prior knowledge. However, pupils' progress throughout Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. Last year's National Curriculum assessment showed underachievement in science. Pupils were not helped by changes in teaching staff, particularly the one-term absence of the previous head of science, and the only partially successful efforts of supply staff.

98 Pupils' progress continues to be unsatisfactory this year because the quality of teaching amongst most teachers is variable. In some cases, pupils' progress is hindered by the lack of effectiveness of teachers in maintaining the pace of work and encouraging a high level of pupils' motivation. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are variable and, despite the additional adult support offered in some lessons, teaching staff are not fully effective in class control and this hinders pupils' progress.

99 The progress of more able pupils, which is generally sound, could be enhanced by greater precision and challenge in the objectives and content of lessons. Some pupils show the ability to do better than is found at present.

100 The quality of teaching is variable amongst the majority of teachers, and the extent of weaknesses observed results in the school's provision being judged unsatisfactory. All staff

in the department have joined the school in the past 18 months and three are new to the profession. This has led to challenges faced by staff in establishing productive relationships with pupils and to weaknesses in ensuring that pupils make the progress they should.

101 Continuing efforts must be maintained so that teachers have secured class control in all lessons. Through continuing induction support and clear guidance, some newly-qualified teachers require further help to improve their teaching skills. The weaknesses noted during the inspection relate not only to the issue of class control, but also to clarity of exposition, appropriateness of challenge, and the need to make science a more successful and enjoyable subject in the minds of pupils.

102 There was both sound and good teaching during the inspection, which drew a good response from pupils. For example, in one lesson observed on friction the teacher engaged pupils using an effective debating style which pupils found motivating. The lesson proceeded at a good pace and finished with an effective review of what had been learnt.

103 The priority for the department is to re-establish a quality of teaching that gains the same high standards that have been attained by pupils in science in earlier years.

104 The head of department demonstrates a positive, confident approach to management. The priorities for the department in the science development plan are appropriate and, allied to improvements in the quality of teaching, will improve the provision for pupils. There is some evidence of implementation of the ideas from the Key Stage 3 National Science Strategy, but this could be further strengthened, particularly in respect to the three-part structure of lessons. Further dissemination of the national strategy within the department is required. More use could be made of the plenary session in lessons to reinforce their content and allow teachers to assess their lesson objectives. Improvements are required in the monitoring of the progress of individual pupils with subsequent mentoring of those underperforming over time within the key stage. The department is increasing its use of ICT and this should continue. At present the level of its use of ICT is unsatisfactory. Further consideration should be given to the quality of bridging units which are used with Year 9 pupils in anticipation of their transfer to the upper school. Pupils should be provided with bridging units which provide a motivating and challenging context in which to carry out investigations.

105 The school's provision for science is less good than at the time of the last inspection. However, with the continued implementation of current development priorities, greater stability in staffing, and improvement in teaching skills there is a sound capacity for improvement.

ART AND DESIGN

106 Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

Strengths

- There is good teaching that leads to good standards and progress for all pupils.
- There is good provision for ceramics in all years.
- Management, including planning and assessment, is good.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to art, and this contributes to their success.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough use of ICT in Years 8 and 9.
- There is not enough time devoted to developing drawing skills

107 When pupils enter the school at the start of Year 7 their attainment in art and design is at the expected level. In 2001 and 2002, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 judged standards to be above average.

108 In work seen during the inspection standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and similar to teacher assessments. This represents good progress.

109 In Year 7, pupils use the *Paint* program in ICT effectively and achieve very good standards in landscape and pattern work. They can evaluate and improve their own work by making comparisons with the work of the artist David Hockney. In Year 8 pottery, pupils have done good research and acquired imaginative designs for teapots. They are successful in constructing cardboard models that provide good templates for the final construction in slab pottery. They can enlarge their work successfully by scaling up using grids. They show confidence in drawing freehand for this purpose and this leads to their success. In Year 9 pupils research African art in good depth to provide inspiration for their masks and pottery. They can construct masks impressively using a range of methods and materials, with initiative. In all years, pupils' work in ceramics shows good concepts of design. All pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of the properties and potential of clay. They understand the essentials of the use of oxides for colour and the effects of glaze. Although pupils do drawing from direct observation at the beginning of all topics this is not extensive enough to fully develop their drawing skills. There is also a need for more depth in the study of shading techniques to achieve tone. In all years, pupils have impressive experiments in the use of different materials to explore the impact of surface texture.

110 The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers impart good specialist knowledge of the subject to their pupils in all lessons. They give good visual demonstrations of the skills and techniques required in each lesson. These demonstrations enable all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with poor skills in literacy, to know what is expected. The teachers have very good class management skills and ensure that all pupils work with discipline. They create a very good working environment in all lessons: calm and purposeful yet lively and enterprising. This leads to pupils showing good respect for the subject and for their teachers. Behaviour is very good. Pupils watch closely and listen attentively to demonstrations. Their very good attitudes contribute significantly to their achievement. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, benefit from individual teacher attention in all lessons. There is some good extension work for the gifted and talented in homework and in work based on recent GCSE examinations. However, in many lessons there is insufficient emphasis on how the gifted and talented might strive for greater success.

111 There is some very good use of ICT in the development of pupils' work in Year 7. However, there is insufficient use of ICT to extend pupils' experience of art in Years 8 and 9.

112 Art makes a good contribution to pupils' skills in literacy. There is good emphasis on using the correct vocabulary and on correct spelling. Pupils write impressive short poems and make clear notes to illustrate their ideas.

113 Leadership and management are good. There is good vision for the department. Documentation, including assessment and recording, is good. Schemes of work are well structured, well illustrated and in good detail.

114 The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by considering these aspects in African and aboriginal art and in the social situations that gave rise to Pop Art.

115 There is good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have improved and pupils now make good progress. Teaching has improved as has planning for the longer term.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

116 The quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The department is well managed.
- Assessment of pupils' work is being used effectively to support attainment and curriculum planning.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching of making skills in resistant materials needs to be improved.
- Work across the subject should be made more challenging to extend more able pupils.
- Schemes of work should be extended to include electronic systems and control.
- Pupils should have greater access to computers to support their design work across all aspects of the subject.

117 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national average in some areas of the subject and in particular in the making element of resistant materials. The standard of design work in textiles is in line with national expectations. The standard of work achieved by the majority of pupils in Years 7 and 8 is of a satisfactory standard in most aspects of the subject, but pupils in Year 9 and more able pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not achieve to their full potential. Less able pupils and pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in line with their capability. In food technology and textiles, pupils work with materials and use equipment safely and with the confidence and skills appropriate for their age. However, when working with resistant materials, pupils do not demonstrate such equal confidence with the use of tools.

118 Pupils develop and are able to use technical language when discussing their work. They are able to analyse and evaluate their work at an elementary level. For example, in food technology Year 8 pupils were able to link cause and effect when evaluating the quality and appeal of a bread product which they had made. Pupils use ICT to good effect in textiles for computer-aided designing and making. Year 8 pupils were confident in using software programs to design a logo for a hat project, and graphics were being used to good effect by pupils for the design of packaging. However, more use could be made of ICT to support design work across the subject if pupils had better access to computers during design and technology lessons. Pupils show interest in lessons; they work well individually, in pairs and in groups which serves to develop their social skills. Behaviour in lessons is satisfactory.

119 Teaching is mostly satisfactory, but the teaching of making skills in resistant materials is unsatisfactory when wood and metalworking tools are being used. This is attributed to a lack of expertise in the subject caused by the long-term absence of a teacher. Management of the subject is good. Schemes of work are well written and modules of work reinforce the designing and making cycle. There is, however, insufficient progression built into modules to equip pupils to tackle design and make problems in a holistic way. Project specifications do not give pupils the freedom to consider a range of materials and manufacturing processes. Current schemes of work do not include work on electronic systems and control. Teachers employ appropriate strategies in the classroom, and the relationship between teachers and pupils is good.

120 The assessment of pupils' work is carried out effectively and is linked to the process of target-setting with individual pupils. Pupil assessment is used to inform curriculum planning across the subject. Good use is made of displays to brighten work rooms and provide examples of expected standards of work. Teachers enjoy good relationships with pupils and use an effective range of teaching strategies which are appropriate for the subject. However, the difficulties that the school has encountered in staffing design and technology and pupils' below average progress in the aspect of resistant materials have resulted in unsatisfactory progress overall since the last inspection.

121 The subject enjoys excellent support from a technician who assists with preparation of materials for lessons and departmental record keeping. However, the allocation of technician time for the subject is low for the size and diversity of the department.

GEOGRAPHY

122 Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching seen during the inspection, including the planning of lessons.
- Attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons.
- Departmental documentation.
- The vision and commitment of the team, especially the head of department.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching strategies including the use of map work, ICT and fieldwork.
- Provision within the lessons for pupils with differing abilities.
- The accuracy of assessment and its use to inform planning and improve learning.

123 In 2002, standards in the Year 9 teacher assessments were very good. The school's performance in these tests was above average. In 2001 and 2002, at the end of Year 9, the performance of girls, in terms of attainment of level 5 and above, was above that of the boys. Present performance suggests that boys have caught up. This change is partly in relation to strategies introduced by the department to improve the performance of boys. Better standards of work were seen in those classes being taught by specialist staff. This has resulted in much better progress for these pupils.

124 By the end of Year 9 attainment is above average. The highest attaining pupils in Year 9 have good knowledge and understanding of recent work on the fashion industry but their skills in investigative work are not strong. The majority of pupils can draw accurate maps but their skills with Ordnance Survey maps are underdeveloped. Lowest attaining pupils in Year 9 have difficulty with terminology but understand, for example, the differences between more and less economically-developed countries and how these affect their peoples. Pupils make good progress overall.

125 The quality of teaching observed was good in three-quarters of the lessons and all lessons seen were satisfactory or better. Where the teaching was good or better, it was enhanced by the use of good planning and high expectations. Evidence of challenge was seen in the lessons relating to Brazil when pupils were plotting and interpreting climate graphs. A limited range of investigation and ICT activities is used. Pupils are placed in the appropriate class according to their ability and the work given to them reflects what the class should be able to do. Within these groups, activities are sometimes designed for individuals, but further work needs to be done to ensure that tasks are of a suitable level for all the pupils. Some examples of independent learning were seen in assessments but these need to be

more carefully targeted so that the higher-order skills are accessible. There is at present no fieldwork being undertaken by the department although this is being planned for.

126 Work is marked regularly by the teachers but additional opportunities to establish levels and explanations as to how pupils can improve their work are needed. Most pupils are clear as to their current National Curriculum level and what this means. Additional staff development is needed for teachers to ensure accuracy of assessments. The quality of reports is satisfactory but not enough information about how the pupils can improve is given. The use of homework to support pupils' learning is satisfactory, although many tasks are related to the completion of class work.

127 Attitudes to learning and behaviour are good. The use of formal teaching methods has enabled class teachers to establish a good rapport and good order within the classroom. This approach to classroom management sometimes restricts activities to those that are 'safe' and whole class. As a consequence, individual investigative skills are underdeveloped.

128 Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department is enthusiastic and has vision.

129 Whilst the schemes of work contain references to the contribution of the department to the development of spiritual education, there has been little impact on the pupils' learning in this area. Planning for and the delivery of citizenship, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory. The contribution made towards the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is also satisfactory, but some development is still to be carried out in the support of numeracy. Accommodation has improved since the last inspection. The recent provision of an ICT suite adjacent to the department will enable the pupils to further develop their ICT skills. The learning environment in some classrooms needs improving. Resources are good with adequate provision of textbooks; however, additional copies of maps need to be purchased.

130 Since the previous inspection, staff changes have caused instability. This has adversely affected the work of the department. There is, however, a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. Morale is good and, although the head of department is inexperienced, the department is poised to move forward.

HISTORY

131 Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Excellent documentation and record keeping.
- Some good teaching.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to history.
- Clear learning objectives shared with pupils.
- Energetic and enthusiastic head of department.

Areas for improvement

- More consistent planning for all abilities with appropriate tasks and assessments.
- The quality of teaching and learning in history by establishing a more systematic and rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation.
- Further development of the use of primary sources and artefacts and build up a wider range of history resources.
- More effective use of assessment to inform planning and set appropriate pupil targets.

132 Provision for history is satisfactory with pupils having one hour each week in all year groups. Standards in history are sound across all years and in line with national expectations. The majority of pupils work at appropriate National Curriculum levels, though there is a lack of challenge for the most able in some lessons and some evidence of lower attaining pupils struggling with too difficult tasks. Pupils' attitude to learning in most lessons is satisfactory and often good. Behaviour in lessons is satisfactory.

133 Attainment is satisfactory in all year groups as most pupils are working at appropriate National Curriculum levels. By the end of the key stage pupils' attainment in history is above average, based on teacher assessments. Girls outperform boys across the board. However, some lessons are planned which do not challenge sufficiently the more able and there is not enough evidence that the needs of the least able are always met. For example, in one Year 8 lesson, which was examining bias in historical sources, there was a lack of material to extend the most able, and the least able struggled to access the learning because the texts were too difficult.

134 Marking in exercise books tends to make judgements relating to presentation and effort rather than give a diagnosis of strengths and areas for improvement. In Year 9 the marking is more diagnostic, showing clear indications of how pupils can improve their work. In Year 7 and Year 8 the range of activities is limited and tends to be somewhat repetitive. Learning is often not consolidated, with the most able making the least progress in Year 7 and Year 8. Pupils with special educational needs make most progress when they have in-class support. Pupils use ICT to enhance understanding in history and to develop independent learning skills, but this aspect is underdeveloped. Progress is satisfactory in Year 7, is unsatisfactory in Year 8 but then is good in Year 9. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory and often good.

135 The quality of teaching is sound. Lessons are planned using the National Curriculum framework and there is good coverage of significant individuals and events in the history of Britain and the significant periods of world history. Despite this, there is a need for more variety in the design of some tasks to meet the needs of all pupils.

136 The good teaching seen in one Year 9 lesson on the Holocaust was a role-play of the transportation of Jewish children to Britain immediately before the Second World War. It was characterised by the teacher's ability to enthuse and inspire pupils by playing various roles. The lesson was well planned, had appropriate pace, rigour and high expectations and was

enjoyed by the majority of pupils. Consequently pupils' learning was good. Use of primary sources is underdeveloped and links to local history through visits to museums and historical sites are virtually non-existent.

137 Leadership and management of the subject within the humanities department are good given that the head of department has been in post for less than a year and also has responsibility for all three humanities subjects. Work has already begun to develop a team approach, which will enable the history teachers to work co-operatively to develop their skills and share examples of good practice. Accommodation and basic resources are good but there is a need to build up a range of artefacts, software and other resources to give pupils the opportunity to use first-hand sources for historical enquiry and interpretation. The department is now well placed to begin to translate the excellent documentation into effective teaching and learning strategies, building on the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Priorities for development should be established and appropriate support and advice sought.

138 Since the last inspection, progress in history has been satisfactory. The monitoring of teaching and learning, and leadership in the department have improved. Reports to parents, however, have not improved sufficiently as they still do not provide enough detailed information on progress and targets. The teaching of history remains satisfactory overall.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

139 The quality of provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- The use of prepared resources in some lessons to illustrate teaching points and aid pupil understanding.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs.
- The range of opportunities in taught ICT lessons, and in other subjects, for pupils to exchange and share information using ICT.

Areas for improvement

- The development of a comprehensive scheme of work which provides full coverage of the breadth of the National Curriculum in ICT.
- Consistent and accurate use of assessment to guide pupils' progress and inform teachers' planning, thus ensuring that all pupils can achieve their best.
- Monitoring of extra-curricular uses of ICT to ensure that both girls and boys have equal opportunity to extend their learning.

140 Standards of attainment, as observed in lessons and in pupils' work, are below national expectations by the end of Year 9. In 2002, attainment, as reported by teacher assessment, was above average nationally, but evidence collected during the inspection does not support this view. Pupils' work shows that frequent opportunities exist to exchange and share information using ICT, both in the taught ICT course and in other subjects. Pupils demonstrate appropriate skills and make informed choices in layout, the use of colour and choice of images to create group newspapers. However, the delivery of other aspects of the National Curriculum is unsatisfactory. Few opportunities exist for pupils to explore computer models, or to use ICT for monitoring events. There is effective use of ICT in music to compose and to control music keyboards, but other opportunities for computer control across the school are very limited.

141 Standards of pupils' work in Year 7 are close to national expectations, although the full requirements of the National Curriculum are not delivered in taught ICT time. Pupils were

observed working on a project to develop a proposal for a new common room. They had considered appropriate questions, collected responses and entered these into a spreadsheet to create charts of the results. They then used the Internet to locate costs for equipping the room, demonstrating the ability to perform basic searches and transfer the results into a word processing program. They show little appreciation of the potential to model total costs using a spreadsheet, limiting themselves to looking for the cheapest items. A good standard of work was seen in an earlier activity when they had produced brochures for attractions such as Disney World, making appropriate use of images, colour and layout to create eye-catching results. Support for pupils with special educational needs enables them to match the progress of the majority of pupils. However, given the current activities carried out by Year 7 and Year 9 pupils, overall progress of pupils from joining the school until the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory.

142 Teaching is satisfactory, with some examples of good practice. In well-managed lessons, teachers use the projector to engage pupils in constructive evaluation of examples of work to illustrate teaching points, and provide tasks which allow all pupils to engage at levels appropriate to their understanding. In less well-managed lessons, there are occasions when the expected outcomes are insufficiently structured to maintain the active involvement of all pupils throughout the lesson. The standards of teaching and learning observed during the inspection are better than those indicated from analysis of pupils' work over time.

143 Priorities for development are, firstly, the development of a comprehensive scheme of work which fully addresses the requirements of the National Curriculum for ICT, and thoroughly reflects the roles and responsibilities of other subjects to complement the limited curriculum time available through the taught course; secondly, the consistent implementation of an assessment regime which provides guidance to pupils at relevant stages during their work, which informs teachers of the curriculum areas that would benefit from additional explanation or development, and which enables accurate assessment of pupils' work to National Curriculum levels. Thirdly, the department should monitor the extra-curricular uses of ICT to ensure that boys and girls have equal opportunity to extend their learning. The recently appointed co-ordinator has already identified appropriate development priorities for ICT and, although management of ICT is currently unsatisfactory because of the areas highlighted, there are grounds for optimism that the position is already beginning to change. The co-ordinator will require support, such as that available from the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, to implement his ambitious but needed agenda.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

144 Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

Strengths

- Good standards and progress in French and German.
- Quality of teaching is good.
- Very good leadership and management of the department.

Area for improvement

- Assessment procedures to inform target-setting.

145 Attainment at Key Stage 3 is well above average. Girls significantly out-perform boys. Almost one in three girls attains level 6, whereas fewer than one in five boys attains this level. In both French and German, pupils achieve good standards.

146 Oral work is consistently good and in some lessons it is very good. The majority of pupils reach good standards of fluency and respond confidently in French and German. Pupils respond readily and accurately and show an ability to take the initiative in producing their own meanings in the target language. High attaining pupils show quick response and good understanding. Pupils are given good opportunities to practise and express themselves both orally in pairs, and in written work, which reflects good standards of attainment at all levels. Work in exercise books is well presented and shows care and motivation. Marking is consistent and helpful. Standards of work in ICT are high. Teachers use ICT very well in presenting and preparing lessons and pupils' word-processed work demonstrates good levels of attainment in French and German and ICT. All pupils have good access to computers to complete learning tasks.

147 Progress was good in all lessons seen. Most pupils understand and use new vocabulary and structures with confidence. In pair work, they are offered good opportunities to elaborate their own meanings and most pupils consolidate their learning creatively. Speaking, listening and writing are interactively practised with learners of all abilities. Tasks well matched to pupil ability are sensitively supported and lead to secure progress and learning. Pupils with special needs receive good support from classroom learning assistants who are well prepared to collaborate and to support speaking and writing activities.

148 Behaviour and attitudes to learning are always good, sometimes very good. Pupils participate willingly and show interest with good levels of concentration. Pupils work very well in pairs and consistently use the target language. They are confident to work independently and ask for help when they need it, sometimes appropriately in French or German. Pupils remain on task and enjoy their work. They collaborate with each other and with teachers very well.

149 Teaching overall is good, and in some lessons very good. All members of the department have a high level of specialist subject knowledge. Teachers use French and German as a means of communication and instruction. In all lessons there are language exchanges which prioritise meaning. Explanations are clear and English is used appropriately to illustrate key points. All lessons are well planned and prepared and there is a good variety of stimulus and pace in most lessons. Teachers engage pupils, who are encouraged, supported and rewarded in their creative use of language. Teacher-produced materials are attractive and there is good use of the overhead projector and ICT. In the best lessons, teachers challenge pupils to blend new learning with existing knowledge and pupils respond with confidence.

150 Management and control are achieved mostly through the use of French and German. Objectives for learning are given explicitly and learning is focused through a plenary session. There is scope for the department to be more precise in its objectives for learning and to include a more active role for pupils in the plenary phase. Classroom assessment and feedback are good because teachers interact sensitively with pupils. However, a system of pupil tracking and target setting needs to be developed.

151 The department is very well led and managed. Departmental documentation is thorough and provides good guidance on teaching and learning routines, marking, and ICT. More detail should be included on target setting and the use of test data. The department is well resourced and the head of department has promoted a consistently good learning environment for languages in all teaching rooms. Strategies for teaching and learning in the foundation subjects are effective and influenced by staff development and by good example from the head of department. The department works as a team and shares materials and methods so that there is good continuity of teaching and learning throughout the school. There are plans to improve further the provision of ICT for language learning. Responsibility for ICT is delegated to an experienced member of the department and consideration should

be given to sharing other features of development and improvement such as target setting and pupil tracking.

152 Since last inspection the department has maintained high levels of attainment. All four language skills are good, with very good work in speaking. Writing is particularly good among Year 9 high attainers. Progress and attitudes continue to be good and ICT is a strength for teaching and learning. Assessment procedures to inform target setting remain undeveloped.

MUSIC

153 Overall, the quality of provision in music is **very good**.

Strengths

- Progress since last inspection.
- Use of ICT in the classroom.
- Connection between classroom, extra-curricular and peripatetic activities.
- Assessment and recording of pupils' work.

Areas for Improvement

- Stability in staffing.
- Use of homework.
- Even more challenge for the most able.

154 The music department is actively engaged in providing high-quality musical experiences for its pupils. Standards are improving; last year's end of key stage figures were slightly above the national average at level 5, and well below at level 6. Ongoing teacher assessment, confirmed by observations during inspection, suggests that these figures will rise over the next two years. Pupils are particularly good at using musical vocabulary and composing extended pieces within a given structure. The most able pupils in Year 8 are already discussing and using primary and secondary chords as well as dominant sevenths. Many pupils throughout the key stage are able to provide good answers to open questions, including reference to timbre, mood, dynamics, tempo, structure and texture. The vast majority of pupils are confident in their use of ICT, and group work frequently combines tuned and untuned percussion with ostinati or repeated chord sequences produced using *Cubasis*. Continuity and retention of knowledge are positive features of the carousel arrangements that provide pupils with 57 hours of music each year. Pupils are increasingly confident as performers and maintain independent parts well, frequently in threes and fours, using their voices, sequenced accompaniments and a range of classroom instruments.

155 Teaching is at least good, sometimes very good. Lessons are well planned and, despite the lack of overt learning objectives, pupils are engaged with their learning and understand what is expected of them. Good timekeeping, good pace, appropriate expectations and slick changes of activities lead to good progress, most pupils being consistently on task. The hour lessons are used well, with little or no time wasted. Good subject knowledge and well-prepared lessons increase pupils' understanding and aid learning. The support staff ensure that pupils with special needs make good progress. Classroom activities are enhanced by the opportunities for those pupils who learn instruments to use them in class. About a fifth of pupils in the school have lessons from the visiting instrumental teachers. Participation in extra-curricular activities is high and pupils enjoy performing, especially in concerts in school, in local venues and in feeder schools.

156 The department is well led by an experienced teacher, who is also a musician, and it is well resourced. Accommodation, whilst not large, is well designed to meet the needs of the variety of activities enjoyed by pupils during the lessons. Both teaching rooms have sufficient computers for pupils to work in pairs, and these machines have *Cubasis* and *Band in a Box* as well as Karaoke software. Performances are always recorded on good quality video. Pupils and teachers evaluate the work and assessment is well developed and well used in the department.

157 There has been very good progress since the last inspection. The staffing changes continue, but the school is attracting high quality teachers. Attainment is now above national expectation and, in particular, performing and composing are of a high standard. In addition, pupils who have extra instrumental tuition now make good use of their skills during lessons. Progress is at least good for all pupils, lessons now have a good pace and provision for pupils with special educational needs is still good. Singing is now a strength, with girls and boys performing confidently. Good warm-up activities help the singing, boys with breaking voices are treated with care and pupils sing confidently in parts. More work is needed on support and breathing, as well as extending the range in the voice. Musical pupils are now being challenged, although there are still some examples of the most able not being stretched.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

158 Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **good**.

Strengths

- Pupils are acquiring and developing skills to a good standard. Pupils can link skills together and apply them with increasing accuracy in a game situation.
- Pupils are beginning to understand and use successful techniques in athletic events.
- Learning objectives are shared with pupils at the start of lessons and are reviewed in the plenary.
- Physical education terminology is taught in all years.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and are motivated and enthusiastic.
- Pupils maintain concentration and are capable of sustained physical activity.
- Management and organisation of pupils are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Boys of average and higher ability need to be challenged more both academically and practically.
- Develop a scheme of work including assessment that is linked clearly to teaching.
- Involve pupils in activities differentiated by task as well as by outcome.
- Target setting for pupils – this has not been addressed since the last inspection.

159 Standards of attainment in physical education are in line with national expectations. Teaching and learning are good overall.

160 Teaching is clearly focused on achieving the learning objectives with activities following on from one another. Clear explanations and good demonstrations both by teachers and pupils enable the practising of skills to begin immediately. The correct technical language is taught and reinforced throughout lessons. For example, in a Year 9 athletics lesson, girls were able to discuss the meaning and practical application of aerobic and anaerobic exercise. Many pupils, both able performers and those who are not as skilful, are able to explain the meaning of words and phrases and practically demonstrate them. When pupils are questioned to assess their understanding some teachers do not allow pupils

sufficient time to develop their answers. The more able boys and those of average ability understand and demonstrate the practical elements of activities quickly, for example in a Year 8 cricket lesson. However, they are not taught to modify or develop their own skills and tactics in order to initiate a further improvement in their quality of performance. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

161 Assessment is not used effectively in some lessons to provide pupils with targets to improve performance. This is linked to the lack of a written scheme of work that would identify what pupils need to be taught and how they might learn, and ensure that the four strands of the National Curriculum are planned for. The six-week units of work do not allow sufficient time for depth of study. The extensive extra-curricular programme both during and after school involves over 75 per cent of pupils and successfully complements curriculum activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

162 Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- A dynamic and enthusiastic head of humanities, who recognises the need to develop a more rigorous approach to religious education in order to improve standards.
- Good attitudes and behaviour of pupils.
- Quality of teaching sound and sometimes good.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils - enable pupils to share views and opinions about sensitive issues with confidence.

Areas for improvement

- Appointment of a specialist religious education teacher to the humanities department to enhance teaching and learning and provide the necessary rigour to ensure improvements in the subject.
- Raising attainment in religious education by appropriate staff development; adopting a more coherent and challenging scheme of work based on the new Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus and by improving planning to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Developing a more rigorous system of monitoring teaching and learning.

163 Provision for religious education does not meet the recommended minimum requirement of five per cent of total curriculum time as required in the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus. Nor do the schemes of work reflect the content, coherence or in-depth study of the range of religions required by the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus. Standards of attainment are satisfactory, though the higher levels are attained by only a few of the most able pupils.

164 Attainment is satisfactory in all year groups with the majority of pupils attaining appropriate levels within the non-statutory national framework. However, lessons are planned which do not challenge the more able sufficiently. For example, much of the work in Year 7 is based on low level tasks which do not offer pupils the opportunity to relate religious beliefs to their own experiences. Some activities and tasks have a tenuous link to religious concepts such as the Year 8 topic on 'Death and Entertainment', which does not develop a secure understanding of the religious concepts of death and reincarnation. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls.

165 In Year 7 and Year 8 most pupils make unsatisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of the important beliefs and practices of the religions they study. Much of the work is at a superficial level with a greater emphasis on learning about rather than learning from religion. This imbalance does not allow pupils to show their deepening

understanding of religious concepts such as forgiveness or reconciliation. It also stifles the creativity that some pupils can bring to the religious education classroom. Marking in exercise books tends to make judgements relating to presentation, spelling and grammar rather than concentrate on a diagnosis of strengths and areas for improvement. Factual inaccuracies are sometimes marked as correct. Learning is often not consolidated, with the most able making the least progress. Only limited opportunities are available for pupils to use ICT to enhance understanding in religious education or to develop independent learning skills.

166 The quality of teaching is sound and sometimes good, but teachers' lack of expertise and subject knowledge often results in low expectations and a lack of rigour in lesson planning. The teaching does not clarify sufficiently the connection between what people believe and the way they live their lives.

167 Leadership of the subject within a humanities structure is satisfactory but has the potential to be good with appropriate training and support provided by the school and external expertise. The head of department is very enthusiastic and recognises the need to review the current schemes of work in light of the new requirements of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus, particularly the need to link learning objectives to levels. He has come a long way in a very short time. The key focus has been to devise a scheme of work which can be taught by non-specialist teachers and which is enjoyed by pupils. This has been largely achieved. There is a clear need now to develop a more rigorous approach to teaching and learning in religious education and especially to improve the use of assessment to inform future planning.

168 There have been some positive developments in religious education since the previous inspection; however, there are still concerns in areas which were featured in the last report. The time is ripe for developments that will lead to improved attainment in religious education and the head of department is in a very strong position to be able to achieve this.

CITIZENSHIP

169 Overall, the quality of provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- There is a clear and effective management structure to support the planning, implementation and delivery of citizenship.
- Schemes of work are clear and structured, and contain appropriate pupil activities and learning outcomes.
- Schemes of work provide appropriate breadth and coverage and link effectively to the National Curriculum programme of study.
- Funding has been used effectively to support the establishing of a new PSHCE programme for all year groups with the purchase of stimulating resources.

Areas for improvement

- A whole-school approach to citizenship is still to be established.
- Citizenship across the curriculum is currently implicit rather than explicit.
- Assessment procedures are still to be developed.
- The collation of evidence of pupil achievement is still to be established.

170 Overall, pupils achieve a satisfactory standard of work in Years 7 to 9. Scrutiny of written work shows that issues and topics are covered in appropriate depth, with pupils developing a sound level of knowledge and understanding. Work includes written tasks, posters, illustrations, presentations and notes made for debate and discussion. Pupils are

willing to express opinions and listen well to the views of others in small group or whole-class discussions.

171 The subject is taught within a PSHCE programme by a committed and enthusiastic team of form tutors. Teaching is satisfactory. Lesson planning is sound, with clearly-defined learning objectives, a variety of teaching styles and appropriate pace and structure. There is a good variety of resources including pupil task sheets, information booklets produced by specialist agencies and video material to provide a supportive framework for the exploration of topics to enhance learning.

172 Lessons observed during the inspection took place during PSHCE in which all year groups participated. During lessons boys and girls participated equally in group and whole-class discussion. Pupils of all abilities made satisfactory progress and contributed to discussion on a range of issues. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils discussed coping with loss and bereavement. During the discussion pupils demonstrated good speaking and listening skills. Also, pupils communicated their feelings and emotions sensitively and all had the opportunity to express an opinion.

173 Departments are currently investigating ways in which citizenship can be taught through discrete subject areas. Curriculum managers have reviewed schemes of work and identified opportunities for the delivery of citizenship themes, for example within humanities and English. The school is looking to develop explicit delivery of citizenship across the curriculum.

174 Eight PSHCE lessons were observed during the inspection. In a Year 7 class pupils investigated the issue of bullying through story and personal accounts. All pupils demonstrated a good understanding of social and moral responsibility in relation to citizenship. The school's anti-bullying policy underpinned this lesson, which effectively gave pupils the opportunity to reflect on the problem of bullying and discuss possible solutions in an open and supportive environment. Pupils offered a number of adjectives to describe the feelings of someone who is bullied and identified different types of bullying, such as mental and physical intimidation. By the end of the lesson all pupils had extended their understanding and knowledge about developing relationships, mutual respect and tolerance. A Year 8 class investigated the topic of friends and relationships. Underpinning this lesson were the good relationships pupils had developed with both the form tutor and their peers. A flexible and challenging approach by the class teacher ensured that by the end of the lesson all pupils recognised the importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships as an integral part of being a good citizen.

175 However, when pupils did not make satisfactory progress this was due to inappropriate teaching strategies in dealing effectively with sensitive issues. A Year 8 lesson intended to challenge stereotypes, in fact, had almost the reverse effect and appeared at one point to reinforce prejudice. There was, therefore, no discussion about the ethical aspects of racial stereotyping.

176 In a Year 9 lesson pupils discussed the issue of valour and bravery. Pupils offered personal insights into bravery and related their experiences well within a whole group discussion. When discussing symbols of bravery and courage pupils made an effective link to artefacts studied as part of a project on African art. Pupils effectively demonstrated sound appreciation of different cultural traditions and features of contrasting societies.

177 The PSHCE programme supports the ethos of the school as represented in the school charter and it links with the wider community. There are clear aims and objectives for programmes of study within the PSHCE scheme of work and appropriate teaching and learning strategies are suggested. Form tutors are encouraged to teach the content in a flexible, stimulating and challenging style in order to excite and engage all pupils. The school

intends to develop a process of assessment and produce an annual report to parents during the coming year.

178 The school has made satisfactory progress in the planning, implementation and delivery of citizenship at Key Stage 3. However, there is still much that remains to be done. Despite changes in staffing, the school has worked effectively to ensure that the new PSHCE programme has become firmly embedded. Further whole-school training may be necessary to support staff in developing the next stage of citizenship provision. Overall, leadership and management and delivery of the subject are satisfactory.