

INSPECTION REPORT

THE BOLSOVER SCHOOL

Bolsover, Chesterfield

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112963

Headteacher: Mr Kevin Dean

Lead inspector: Helena McVeigh

Dates of inspection: 6 – 9 October 2003

Inspection number: 259972

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	854
School address:	Mooracre Lane Bolsover Chesterfield
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Oakley
Date of previous inspection:	22 February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is located in Bolsover, which is an ex-mining community a few miles from Chesterfield. Bolsover is one of three secondary schools in the North East Derbyshire Coalfields Education Action Zone (EAZ), whose aim is to confront deep-seated problems in the area, such as low personal aspirations, low parental involvement, and an isolated and insular outlook. The school is located in a district that is one of the most deprived in the country.

There are 854 pupils on roll, 446 boys and 408 girls. The overwhelming majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds (98 per cent). The remaining pupils are of White Irish, White other, mixed race, Indian and Pakistani origin. Two pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average: their needs range from dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties, behavioural and emotional problems, speech, hearing, and physical disabilities. The percentage with statements is well above average.

Pupils enter the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy: generally well below average. The school population does, though, include a wide spread of abilities, with a small group of very capable pupils. The intake in September this year appears to be closer to the national average than previously.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
32056	Helena McVeigh	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
9779	Suzanne Smith	Lay inspector	
15163	Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology
32328	Neil Donkin	Team inspector	History Religious education
15940	Norman Godfrey	Team inspector	Art Business Education
32334	Martyn Groucutt	Team inspector	Special educational needs Geography
31850	David Nevens	Team inspector	Drama/dance Music
28097	Sheila Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics
32322	Alan Potter	Team inspector	Science
18950	Carmen Rodney	Team inspector	English
19404	Les Schubeler	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school where staff strive hard to do their best for the pupils. Results in national tests are well below average, but have improved considerably. Standards seen during the inspection were better than this and reflected generally good progress in most subjects, with the exception of English. Improvements have accelerated under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, whose clear and focused vision is shared by staff and governors. Inclusion is at the heart of the school's ethos, and practice in this area is outstanding. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher and leadership team provide a strong commitment to raising standards and have set in place some very good management systems.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in most subjects, particularly GCSE mathematics.
- Standards in English are improving, but are still too low and this has a negative impact on pupils' performance in other subjects.
- Boys are lagging behind girls, particularly in General Certificate of Education (GCSE), though the school is working hard to redress this.
- The inclusion unit and support for pupils with special educational needs are real strengths and are helping these pupils to make very good progress.
- The school ethos is very positive; relationships are very good, pupils feel secure and cared for and they are respectful, polite and friendly.
- The supportive and effective governing body has played a key role in moving the school forward and in raising expectations.
- The way that teachers mark work and give feedback is not of a consistently high quality.
- Some of the accommodation is unsatisfactory and impeding learning, and pupils do not have enough access to computers.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the key issues have mainly been addressed well. Though there are still problems with the accommodation, there have been significant improvements, for example, with the addition of an excellent sports hall. Provision of computers has improved but needs to be enhanced even further. Standards in English are still too low, though some recent interventions are beginning to bear fruit.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
	E	E	E	E

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

The stark results indicated in the table above do not do justice to the **generally good achievement** of pupils from a low baseline in many cases, particularly in literacy. In the short time that the headteacher has been at the school, his drive to raise expectations and standards has started to bear fruit. Results have risen and those for 2003 were much improved. Most of the targets were exceeded. GCSE results have been depressed by the low performance of boys and by the significant number of pupils who were not entered for GCSE (a situation which has since been changed). Results in science and mathematics in Year 9 have improved significantly and reflect good progress from a low starting point. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress in most subjects. They achieve well by Years 10 and 11 in science, German, art, history, religious education, dance/drama, and physical education. Achievement is very good in mathematics and business education and for pupils with special educational needs.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They generally behave well, are polite and friendly. Attendance is in line with the national average, although there are more unauthorised absences. The school is working hard to improve attendance and its approach is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching is good and having a positive impact on pupils' learning; it is rarely less than satisfactory and often very good. Teaching in some subjects is consistently strong - for example, drama/dance and business education. The school provides a good broad curriculum that suits the needs of the pupils well. It is enhanced by a wide-ranging enrichment programme and good opportunities for out-of-hours learning. The school is beginning to make very good use of assessment data to indicate pupils' potential and to track progress. However, teachers' marking of books and feedback to pupils are inconsistent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The **headteacher's leadership is excellent** and he has achieved a great deal in a short time. He is well supported by a strong leadership team and a very effective governing body. Finances are managed extremely well and the school's involvement with the education action zone (EAZ) has been very productive and beneficial for pupils. Leadership of the inclusion unit and management of special educational needs are major strengths. The year heads are a real asset to the school and make a significant contribution to its positive ethos.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally very supportive of the school and feel that teachers work hard for pupils' benefit. They are very positive about the pastoral arrangements and inclusion unit. Some consider that marking is confusing, varies between subjects and is not always helpful. The inspection team shares these views and also considers that reports to parents could be more informative. A strong view came across, which is beyond the remit of the inspection, for the need to improve access to post-16 provision in the area.

Pupils generally have a very positive attitude to school. They are becoming increasingly involved in decision-making, through, for example, the school council. They generally consider that bullying is dealt with well by the school when it happens.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in English, by continuing to promote the improvements begun this year.
- Adopting a coherent and consistent approach to assessing pupils' work, to help them know how to improve.
- Continuing to implement strategies to improve the performance of boys in external tests and examinations.
- Improving the environment for learning in some of the small multi-purpose classrooms.
- Increasing the number of computers and improving pupils' access to them in all subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

When pupils start school in Year 7, their skills are often well below what one would expect. Literacy skills are particularly weak with nearly one half of the intake having reading ages below their chronological age. From this start, pupils generally make good progress in Years 7 to 9. Pupils do well in some GCSE subjects, but, overall, the proportion gaining five good GCSEs is well below the national average. Results in national tests for Year 9 and in GCSE examinations have, though, improved considerably.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection, but are still well below the national average.
- Standards in English are too low.
- Girls do considerably better than boys in several GCSE subjects.
- Achievement in many subjects is good and in mathematics and business GCSEs it is very good.
- Improvements in science are significant.
- Pupils with SEN make very good progress.
- Literacy, numeracy and ICT standards are not strong enough across the curriculum.

Commentary

1. From a low starting point, pupils often make good progress through Years 7 to 9. In mathematics and science, 2002 results indicated that pupils made much better progress than other schools. Progress in English is not as good and this has been a cause for concern for the school. The school has adopted a number of strategies to improve English and literacy across the curriculum, with strong support from the Local Education Authority's literacy consultant. These interventions are beginning to show signs of having an impact, in terms of generally good teaching and learning in English. Results in the national English test for Year 9 pupils in 2003 have improved, but were below target. Mathematics and science results in 2003 were much improved and better than the school's targets (see table below). The proportion gaining the expected level 5 or above in science in 2003 is close to the national average (though the figures are not yet validated).

The school's targets for external tests and examinations

	<u>Target 2002</u>	<u>Achieved</u>	<u>Target 2003</u>	<u>Achieved</u> <u>(Unvalidated results)</u>
% of pupils gaining				
English level 5+ Year 9	44	39	55	45
Maths level 5+ Year 9	55	55	55	65
Science level 5+ Year 9	54	58	54	66
ICT level 5+ Year 9	-	-	45	48
Five + grades A* to C	35	31	34	37
One + grades A* to G	95	90	93	98
Av GCSE pt score	33	32.5	32	32

Results for 2002 are indicated below:

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.0 (31.7)	33.3 (33.0)
Mathematics	32.0 (32.7)	34.7 (34.4)
Science	32.1 (31.4)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 157 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- The school has recently begun a thorough analysis of pupils' performance and how this compares with results in Year 6 tests and in Cognitive Ability Tests (CATS), which the school regards as a better predictor of success. The school's analysis for 2003 indicates that 72 per cent of Year 9 pupils did as well as or better than predicted in English, 90 per cent did so in mathematics and 95 per cent in science. This confirms that progress is not as good in English.
- The table below shows a summary of inspection judgements for standards (measured relative to what is expected for the age of pupils) and achievement (measured in terms of how well pupils do from where they started and for their capabilities).

Subject	Years 7 to 9		Years 10 and 11	
	Standards	Achievement	Standards	Achievement
English	<i>Well below average</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>	<i>Well below average</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>
Maths	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Very good</i>
Science	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>
ICT	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory¹</i>
Design and technology	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>
History	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>
Geography	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>
French	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>
German	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>Good</i>
Art	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>
Music	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>
Physical education	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>
Religious education	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>Good</i>
Citizenship	<i>Average</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>
Business education			<i>Above average</i>	<i>Very good</i>
Dance	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>Good</i>
Drama				

- Results in GCSE examinations, although still well below the national average, have improved considerably. The 2003 results show a 20 per cent increase from 1999 in the proportion of pupils gaining five good GCSEs. The school exceeded its target and success can be partially attributed to the new drive in the school arising from the headteacher's focus on raising standards.
- There is a significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls in GCSE, with a 16.5 per cent gap between the proportion gaining five good GCSEs in 2003. This difference can be partly explained by the relatively high proportion of boys with special needs in Year 11

¹ Achievement of those studying ICT or Business at GCSE is at least satisfactory. The judgement in the table is weighted towards those who are not following these courses, whose achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory.

last year—31.8 per cent compared with 15.7 per cent of the girls. However, the school considers that there is underachievement amongst some boys. The LEA reports that the situation in Bolsover is not uncommon in this part of Derbyshire. The school is well aware of the problem and is doing all it can to combat it. Strategies such as teaching and learning styles, the Learners' Mark and the Profile of Potential are potentially very useful, but have not had time to impact on examination results in any significant way. However, the school's approach to targeting students on the borderline of a C grade met with some success this year.

6. The school's analysis of CAT scores as predictors of success in GCSE indicates that in 2003, 92 per cent of pupils achieved results that were expected or better. Eighty per cent of those with above average CAT scores gained five or more good GCSEs. This represents a significant improvement on 2002, when only 66 per cent of more capable pupils achieved five GCSEs graded A* to C.
7. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make very good progress due to well-targeted and effective support from teaching assistants and teachers. The achievement of individual pupils who work in the SEN rooms, or in the inclusion unit, is sometimes remarkable. Very effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) packages to promote literacy and numeracy and pupils participate with enthusiasm and no small measure of pride. The progress made by each individual pupil is carefully monitored throughout their involvement with SEN staff.
8. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups are achieving as well as their peers. Results from previous years suggests that these pupils are included well and not disadvantaged. For example, one pupil who has recently arrived with little English is making good progress. He has been well supported in the inclusion unit and receives some specialist tuition from the LEA, which has helped him to be integrated into mainstream classes already.
9. The school has targeted its focus on English and literacy, which in the circumstances is very appropriate. There are indications that standards are rising and more subjects are contributing to the development of literacy, though this is an area that continues to need developing. Numeracy and ICT are not promoted consistently well across all subjects, partly as a result of shortages of equipment, but also because the school's priorities have, not inappropriately, been elsewhere. However, pupils generally achieve well in ICT and mathematics lessons but do not have enough opportunities to develop and practise their skills in other subjects, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	31.0 (28.0)	49.8 (48.3)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	79.0 (81.0)	90.8 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	90.0 (89.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	28.9 (29.6)	32.2 (39.0)

There were 146 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The large majority of pupils like and value their school. They develop very positive relationships with teachers, appreciating both their accessibility and efforts to make learning interesting. Their feelings of self-worth and aspirations are raised by the work done through the EAZ to broaden horizons.

Attendance is satisfactory overall and behaviour is usually good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's high expectations and successful strategies to improve self-discipline have resulted in good behaviour and reduced exclusions.
- The very positive relationships between teachers and pupils lead to good co-operation in lessons.
- The self-esteem of pupils is raised by the pride they have in their school and the opportunities to broaden their horizons and raise aspirations.
- Pupils' lack of confidence to carry out research limits their progress as independent learners.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2001/2 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.8	School data	1.3
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

- Levels of attendance are close to the national average. There is, though, a slightly higher proportion of unauthorised absences than nationally, generally a result of: holidays taken during term time; seasonal work taking some parents away from the area; families with social problems that impact adversely on their children's attendance; and where absence is condoned. A recent initiative through the EAZ has resulted in additional support from the education welfare service to develop closer links with families in the area. This has had a positive impact on attendance in primary schools, of which there is now evidence in the current Year 7. The recent introduction of BROMCOM (an electronic system for recording attendance and other information remotely) has been implemented effectively to monitor attendance, punctuality and truancy after registration. Members of staff use the available information well. Pupils are increasingly aware of their teachers' ability to track their movements and of the prompt action taken to contact parents on the first day of an unexplained absence. The breakfast club is valued and popular; it encourages pupils to arrive in good time. Standards of punctuality are satisfactory overall.
- The large majority of pupils are proud of their school and enjoy learning. In most lessons attitudes are positive and pupils are enthusiastic about their work. They particularly enjoy practical activities and are prepared to work hard. They get on well together and collaborate effectively in small groups, behaving in a responsible manner. The very good relationships and mutual respect between teachers and pupils result in high levels of co-operation in lessons. Although there are some good examples of independent research, for example in a Year 11 astronomy project, there is a tendency for pupils to be over-reliant on their teachers, often referring to them before there is a need. This has a negative impact on their development as independent learners. Little use is made of the library or of computers outside of lessons for independent investigation and research.
- Almost all pupils respond positively to the consistently applied strategies for managing behaviour. Occasional immature behaviour is usually dealt with well and not allowed to disrupt learning for others. Although the number of exclusions last year was high, it is reducing well in response to efforts to ensure that pupils are very effectively supported on their return to school.

See figures in the table below for last year:

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	839	70	6
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0

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

13. Despite the high proportion of pupils returning questionnaires saying they were aware of bullying at the school, none was seen during inspection. Pupils approached, across the full age range, were confident that there is very little bullying and that it is dealt with well.
14. There is a good response from pupils to the positive learning ethos created by the school. Many pupils have widened their career horizons as a result of the priority given to raising self-esteem and aspirations. They respond well to the opportunities provided for them to take responsibility, for example, through the school council, as prefects, in ‘manning’ the bully-line and in recent training for peer counselling. They are proud of the role they have had in influencing lunch-time menus.
15. Relationships between pupils are positive. They show high levels of respect and sensitivity when asked to evaluate the work of their peers and are patient with those needing support with their learning. They develop an effective awareness of the lives of other people. For example, in geography they discuss the multi-ethnic and cultural diversity of English society. In history they consider the use of medicine by different cultures and in music and drama they enjoy the opportunities to explore the traditions of Latin America, India, China and Asia. Residential visits, including opportunities to travel abroad, broaden their horizons and develop social and personal effectiveness. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and uphold the school’s code of conduct that is based on a consideration of the implications of actions on other people.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education that the school provides is good and improving. Teaching is generally good and quite often very good. The few weaknesses that remain with the curriculum have been identified by the school as areas for improvement in its plans. The accommodation is unsatisfactory in a few areas, which undermines learning, and pupils do not have enough access to computers.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good in all year groups and it is often very good. Teachers' good subject knowledge and variety of teaching methods are helping pupils to achieve well. Although the school has recently introduced well-managed systems for promoting academic performance and pastoral care, the quality of marking and assessment is inconsistent. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

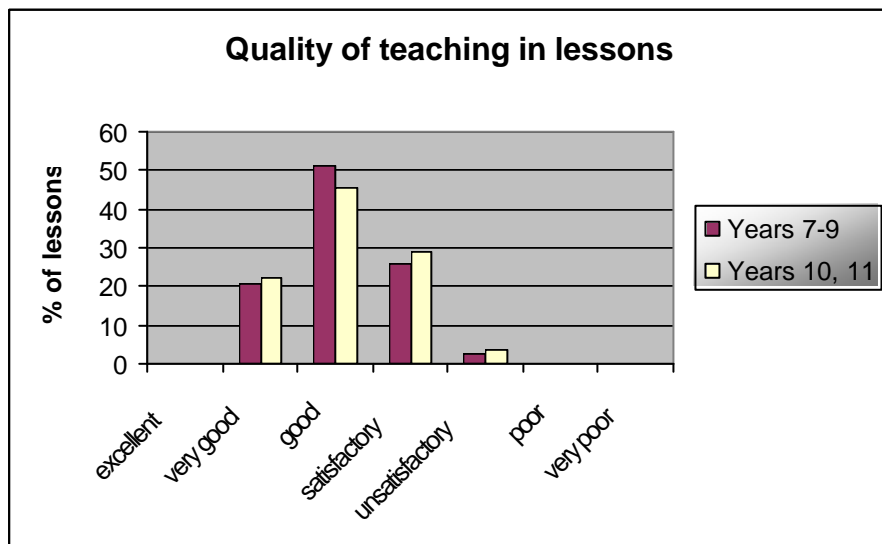
- Teachers' good subject expertise, good planning and management and very good relationships ensure that pupils' learning is productive.
- There is an increasing use of a range of learning styles to motivate and meet the different needs of pupils.
- The strong emphasis on challenging pupils is resulting in good levels of concentration and interest, thus raising academic aspirations.
- There is some good practice in the use of assessment and the development of literacy and numeracy but these skills are not consistently used by all subject teachers.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 98 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0 %)	21 (21 %)	47 (48 %)	27 (28%)	3 (3 %)	0 (0%)	0 (0 %)

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



16. As can be seen from the bar chart above, the pattern of teaching was found to be similar in both key stages². There is also a very close match between the quality of learning and the quality of teaching.

² Key Stage 3 includes Years 7, 8 and 9 and Key Stage 4 includes Years 10 and 11.

17. The good quality of teaching and learning in the school closely reflects the culture of change instigated by the new headteacher. There is now a robust approach to the monitoring of lessons. In addition, the formation of the Teaching and Learning group as a model of good practice is leading to faculties quickly absorbing new strategies to improve teaching and to stimulate pupils' thinking skills. Inspection evidence confirms that these strategies are having a positive impact across all year groups and in most subjects.
18. Most teachers have a good command of their subject. Some are also adopting a relentless focus on thorough preparation for examinations in order to raise pupils' aspirations. This is particularly strong in mathematics, business education and science, where assessment is integrated well into teaching.
19. More and more departments are making good use of visual, oral and kinaesthetic approaches to enthuse and encourage pupils to achieve well. These approaches are used particularly well in modern foreign languages, science, history and the inclusion unit. The following approaches were seen during the inspection to be effective in promoting good learning for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties:
 - a range of audio aids to demonstrate specific teaching points
 - modelling, humour, rhyme and mnemonics to make lessons fun
 - skilful and in-depth questioning techniques to involve all pupils and increase their critical and communication skills
 - pictorial notes, tables for comparison, mind maps, models, colour-coded cards, case studies to stretch their imagination and thinking
 - interactive approaches and role-play in subjects such as English
22. Teachers' planning includes clear learning objectives that are usually shared with pupils and timed activities, which keep pupils alert and enthusiastic about the next stage of their learning. Many teachers review previous work effectively, which helps pupils to remember what they have learned, and highlights areas of weaknesses.
23. Pupils work productively in pairs or groups. The very good relationships they enjoy with their teachers help to maintain their interest. However, some pupils find sustained concentration difficult and they rely too heavily on their teachers. The level of challenge for higher-attaining pupils is not as extensive as it could be in all subject areas. The needs of minority ethnic pupils and the small number who are learning English are well met. There was no obvious difference in the responses of boys and girls during lessons.
24. Teachers and teaching assistants who work with pupils with special needs and in the inclusion unit promote very effective teaching and learning. Professional development has been used to good effect, for example, to enable an assistant to obtain a counselling qualification. Teaching is heavily focused on the individual needs of every pupil, which are understood in detail. Pupils' learning, both in formal and in informal settings, is sometimes outstanding. This excellent practice has a beneficial impact on teaching throughout the school.
25. Only three lessons were unsatisfactory. Features of these lessons and others that were only just satisfactory included:
 - Poor time management and a slow pace so that pupils achieved little
 - Ineffective management of pupils' behaviour
 - Insufficient emphasis on explaining vocabulary
 - Poor modelling of work
 - Not enough involvement of the pupils, with the result that some 'switched off'
26. In some lessons, there is a lack of urgency to drive pupils forward and there are missed opportunities to develop their oral skills. Homework is set regularly in most subjects, and used well in humanities and art to extend learning in lessons. Some parents felt that homework was

not always demanding enough for the most capable pupils. The inspection found that the picture was inconsistent across subjects, but generally satisfactory.

Assessment

27. Procedures for using assessment data to monitor and assess pupils' work have improved under the new leadership team. The school has recently introduced new and innovative systems – the Learners' Mark and Profile of Potential (POP) – to improve planning and pupils' attitudes to their learning by setting individual targets and monitoring academic performance and attitudes. At this stage, the whole-school approach is relatively new; nevertheless, it has a great deal of potential to raise expectations and has been accepted very positively by staff and pupils.
28. The leadership group makes good use of the school's rich body of performance data when reviewing the work of faculties and setting new targets. Although staff are now more aware of assessment data, few, apart from the science faculty, are using it rigorously enough to track pupils' progress. There are much needed plans to ensure a common marking policy, regular reviews and greater consistency.
29. Assessment of pupils' work is generally unsatisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 but better in Years 10 and 11. The marking of pupils' work is irregular and inconsistent. Each faculty adopts a different approach, which parents and pupils find confusing. Practice in some departments is good, with clear constructive feedback given to pupils, for example, in history. This is not always the case in other subjects.

The curriculum

The school provides a good broad curriculum that suits the needs of the pupils well. It is enhanced by a wide-ranging enrichment programme and supported well by appropriate opportunities for out-of-hours learning. Resources for learning are generally satisfactory. The school is well aware of deficiencies in the accommodation and for some time has sought to remedy them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well-structured and meets the needs of pupils. It is enriched by good extra-curricular provision and out-of-hours learning.
- Accommodation, overall, is satisfactory but there are deficiencies in several areas, including the library and dining facilities.
- Resources are satisfactory, but there is insufficient access for cross-curricular ICT.

Commentary

30. The breadth of curricular opportunities is good. Throughout the school the curriculum is well-structured to provide a balanced education. In Years 7 to 9, the National Curriculum is fully implemented. However, although ICT is taught discretely in these early years, there is still limited re-enforcement of the pupils' ICT skills across subjects, partly because of difficult access and insufficient resources. Curriculum areas are at various stages of development with regard to the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, but this has already brought about improvements in standards, particularly through the use of well-planned three-part lessons. Previously the school has focused attention on the pupils' cross-curricular literacy skills, although the impact is not yet clearly visible in many lessons. Procedures to support numeracy across the curriculum are not yet fully in place.
31. With the introduction of a wider range of vocational and applied GCSE courses, business studies and health and social care in Years 10 and 11, the range of provision now meets the pupils' needs well through a mixture of academic and vocational options. There is a very wide range of option choices at the end of Year 9, with almost every pupil successfully gaining access to their preferred choices. However, there are still deficiencies in the provision of ICT for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. The school has identified this lack and has plans in place for the next academic year to ensure that ICT is included in the core curriculum for all pupils.

32. The school has forged very good links with institutions offering post-16 provision, and with further and higher education establishments. Through a range of visits, residential opportunities and invited speakers, the school seeks to raise pupils' and parents' aspirations for post-16 education in a locality with no easily accessible provision. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 speak highly of the work-shadowing and work-experience opportunities provided for them. At the same time, there are good curricular links with the main primary and feeder schools. Many heads of subject visit the schools to identify pupils' achievements so as to make a focused start to Year 7. College places for Years 10 and 11 for those pupils following an alternative curriculum are at a premium. As a result the school is seeking new avenues to find an option for these pupils that provides accreditation. It is likely, for example, that applied engineering courses will run next year in conjunction with a local college.
33. Arrangements for reviewing the curriculum are good. The present headteacher has introduced annual curriculum audits to assess the impact of change and to identify areas for improvement. There are successful accelerated-learning routes in mathematics and in religious education. Notable curriculum development is taking place with the withdrawal of Certificate of Achievement courses. There is now a rationale for the grouping of pupils, and an expanding applied GCSE programme.
34. The formal taught curriculum is enhanced by good enrichment opportunities across a range of sporting, arts and other activities. It is a strength of the school. Take-up is generally good and regularly monitored, although some pupils' access to ICT clubs is hampered by local transport arrangements. Funding from the EAZ has had a very positive impact on the provision of out-of hours learning, and on broadening the curriculum. For example, it has enabled pupils to take part in residential university-run summer schools along with their peers from other schools.
35. The school's accommodation is satisfactory but there are deficiencies in a number of areas. Physical education benefits greatly from excellent facilities but the school is short of classrooms, so that several departments are dispersed. This has a negative impact on the subject-specific resources for learning used by teachers, particularly for teachers working outside their specialisms. The library is very small and, as a result, is inadequate to support a multi-resource area or whole-group activities. Dance and drama are similarly hampered by size; music has no practice rooms; the proximity and size of both the dining-room and hall hinder the use of both areas. The housing of science in separate buildings is both a drain on resources and on support staff's time.
36. Across the school, resources are satisfactory, with the exceptions of ICT and music. The school is relatively well staffed, with almost a full complement of teachers and support staff. However, a number of staff teach outside their own specialism, particularly in mathematics, ICT and humanities. Training and support have ensured that there is little negative impact on the curriculum, apart from religious education (see paragraph 112). The two vacancies in mathematics are filled appropriately by long-term supply teachers. Administrative and technical staff provide a very effective service to the school, lessening the burden on teaching staff. There is a well-matched group of committed and effective learning-support staff.

Care, guidance and support

The school's approach to the care, welfare and support of its pupils is good. There are strong pastoral teams that know individual pupils and their personal circumstances well. Pupils feel secure and able to share concerns with their teachers. Individual pupils' special needs are very well looked after. Although pupils value the new 'Learners' Mark,' they do not always have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. Careers guidance is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships with staff are very positive, which makes it easy for pupils to share their concerns.
- High priority is given to the care and protection of pupils.

- Strong pastoral support is provided by the heads of year.
- The guidance and support pupils receive about education and training beyond Year 11 are good.
- Pupils usually know how well they are doing but are less confident about how to improve.

Commentary

37. The school makes good provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils. Child protection procedures are thorough and meet locally agreed guidelines. The school liaises well with support agencies, providing necessary reports and attending cross-agency meetings as required. Suitable action is taken to minimise hazards in lessons and around the school. The assessment of risks for the school is reviewed each year, although at present is not used as well as it should be during the checks of the premises that take place each term.
38. There are very high levels of mutual respect between staff and pupils. Pupils like and trust their teachers and say that this enables them to ask for help and advice when needed. Teachers use the information from BROMCOM very well to identify where guidance is needed, for example, where there are patterns of non-attendance or problems with homework. This is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' personal development.
39. The inclusion unit plays a very effective role in helping pupils to develop self-discipline and manage anger. Arrangements to monitor and support pupils returning after periods of exclusion are effective in bringing about improved patterns of behaviour.
40. Induction arrangements for pupils at the time of transfer from Year 6 are well planned and ensure this is accomplished smoothly and with minimum interruption to their learning. Guidance given during Year 9 about choices to be made for GCSE courses is valued and results in good levels of satisfaction with the Programmes of Study followed. There is a very good careers education programme that includes information about the nearest post-16 providers and enables pupils to sample university life through a residential stay. The newly introduced Learners' Mark is understood well by pupils.
41. Pupils have good access to their teachers and heads of year, who willingly listen to their views and opinions. Issues raised by pupils are usually channelled through the school council, which has representatives from the whole school. Council members are confident that issues discussed by them and put forward to the management team will be considered seriously and action taken. The school is working with pupils to raise awareness about healthy life styles. It seeks and acts on their views about improved lunch-time menus and this has resulted in, for example, the purchase of a 'baked potato machine,' reduced use of salt and the less frequent appearance of chips on the menu.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The large majority of parents think highly of the school. There are strong links with other local schools and post-16 providers. Links with primary schools that feed into Bolsover are constructive. Parents are not very involved in the life of the school. The annual progress reports are not providing parents with enough information about their children's progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-developed links with local schools and post-16 providers.
- Parents have good access to teachers and heads of year.
- The attendance of parents at consultations with their children's teachers is good.
- There are few formal opportunities for parents to contribute to the school.
- The quality of written reports to parents about their children's progress needs improving.

Commentary

42. Parents value the good access they have to the heads of year, which enables them to discuss problems and concerns. In addition to an annual consultation meeting, they have other opportunities to find out about their children's progress; for example, early in the autumn term Year 7 parents can discuss how well their offspring have settled in. There are meetings about choices for GCSE examinations and briefings for work experience placements. Attendance at such events is high, showing parents' interest in their children's progress. Opportunities for parents to find out about the school before their children start in Year 7 are well planned and effective. At present, there are few formal opportunities for parents to contribute their views and opinions, for example, about the policies that guide the work of the school and there is no parents' association.
43. Annual progress reports include good information about attitudes to school and behaviour. They do not, though, provide a consistently clear evaluation of how well pupils are doing or what they need to do to improve. Reports are well written in some subjects, such as English.
44. The EAZ has initiated strong links within the local family of schools. This has resulted in very effective arrangements for the transfer of information when pupils start school. For example, in addition to samples of work and Year 6 test results, the school receives pupils' completed test papers, which inform Year 7 teachers about specific strengths and weaknesses. The group of schools has developed a common approach to behaviour support, raising levels of attendance and arrangements for gifted and talented pupils. They identify pupils in danger of underachieving, before they transfer. These arrangements, together with strong pastoral links and close liaison about pupils with special education needs, help to ease the transition and minimise potential problems. Arrangements to share subject expertise and experience are developing well in physical education, mathematics and science.
45. The school has worked successfully to develop links with a range of training and post-16 education providers. Arrangements to help pupils explore post-16 educational opportunities are well planned, although the lack of convenient public transport acts as a deterrent in some cases. The proportion of young adults in training or education after the age of 16 is very low in the area. The lack of easy access to post-16 education is not helping to redress this situation, which is of concern to the headteacher and governors. Parents at the meeting before the inspection and on some of the questionnaires expressed a very strong view that what the area needs is better access to local post-16 provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good and have a significant impact on raising expectations and aspirations in the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The clear vision and focus of the headteacher and his success in inspiring and motivating others.
- Strong leadership of the governing body.
- Good management of most subjects.
- Good analysis of data and some promising initiatives such as POP and the Learners' Mark, which are designed to monitor progress and improve the achievement of boys.
- Excellent management of the inclusion unit.
- Very good pastoral care and management by year heads.
- Need for more systematic planning and monitoring of some whole-school aspects.

Commentary

46. The headteacher is an excellent leader. He has been in post for a year, during which time he has had a significant impact on the school. His clarity of focus and vision for the school have inspired staff, pupils and governors. As one teacher said, 'there is a real buzz about the place now'. The inspection team was struck by a genuine sense of a school that knows where it is going and is improving rapidly. The headteacher has established a strong leadership team with clear responsibilities, all of whom share the commitment to raising standards. The focus has been where it matters most: the quality of teaching and learning; improving pupils' behaviour; improving boys' results in examinations; and modifying the curriculum.
47. Bolsover is an inclusive school that works hard for all its pupils. The inclusion unit, part-funded by the EAZ, has been a real success story. The manager of the unit works closely with the head of special needs and their practice is exemplary. The unit is seen as an asset to the school. Pupils in the unit, particularly those referred for behavioural difficulties, know exactly why they are there and the quality of the work that is expected of them. The contact with, and involvement of, parents and the home is another very positive factor that raises expectations and results, while the views of the pupils are also taken fully into account.
48. The school is managed very well. Some recently introduced systems are beginning to bear fruit. For example, the focus on improving teaching and learning has already had an impact. The regular monitoring of lessons has enabled the leadership team to have a very clear and accurate idea of the quality of teaching and learning in all subjects. Teachers who are less effective in the classroom have been identified and supported using a mentoring and coaching arrangement. The positive impact of this can be seen from the consistently good teaching that was observed during the inspection. The Learners' Mark has only just been introduced, but already is well understood and appreciated by pupils and staff. The POP is a very promising development, which the school has just started to use to identify and track the progress of all pupils to ensure that they are achieving well. Though the school provides some very good enrichment and out-of-school activities for the most capable pupils, there is no clear policy on identifying and supporting gifted and talented pupils in lessons.
49. Most faculties are led and managed well, with a clear focus on raising standards and pupils' aspirations. Particularly successful departments include drama/dance, art, mathematics, science, physical education and business.
50. Inevitably, and probably appropriately, the leadership team has not been able to bring about quick fixes in all aspects of the school's work. More needs to be done to ensure that there are consistent approaches to assessing pupils' work and to promoting literacy, numeracy and ICT across all subjects. Through the school's very thorough and accurate self-evaluation, these weaknesses have been identified and there are plans to focus on them in the near future.
51. The school has benefited considerably, financially and otherwise, from its involvement with the EAZ. Relationships across the zone are strong and good practice and ideas are regularly shared. Support from the local education authority (LEA) has been instrumental in bringing about improvements in some areas, such as literacy and in the monitoring of lessons.
52. The governors give very good support to the headteacher and leadership team. They have a clear vision for the future development of the school and have a very good understanding of its present strengths and weaknesses. The governors bring a wide range of useful expertise to their roles and many have their own children in the school. They are very keen to see the school make further progress. Governors are closely involved in the preparation of the school improvement plans and in the financial decisions needed to bring about change. They fulfil their statutory duties but realise where further improvements need to be made. Governors are particularly keen to promote policies which will enable the school to provide a service to all pupils and the wider community.

53. After many years of difficult financial circumstances the school is benefiting from extra funding from a number of sources. The governors' decision to make a new appointment of business manager in January 2003 to oversee all financial matters shows every sign of being a success. As a result, managers and teachers in the school will be able to devote more time to the pupils. There is sound financial planning in place and appropriate procedures for dealing with money.
54. As part of an EAZ, the school receives generous funding and the headteacher works closely with nearby schools in planning how to make best use of it. Many projects are already underway which will directly benefit the pupils of the school. These include enhanced monitoring roles for heads of year, extra training for middle managers and the transfer of administration tasks from senior managers.
55. A major obstacle to raising achievement is the lack of aspiration in the area, which the EAZ is trying hard to combat. In addition, but not unrelated to this, the lack of accessible post-16 provision undermines the school's attempts to raise expectations and aspirations.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,476,079
Total expenditure	2,447,782
Expenditure per pupil	3,003

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	129,002
Balance carried forward to the next	157,297

EXAMPLES OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

The work of the inclusion unit

Bolsover's inclusion unit was established to improve attendance and reduce exclusions. It is a major success story that is highly regarded by pupils, parents, staff, governors and the EAZ.

The unit is making a real difference to the lives of young people who exhibit difficult behaviour, poor patterns of attendance, or who are in danger of exclusion or are in some way isolated and vulnerable.

Every pupil is seen as an individual. Their needs are carefully analysed when they are first admitted, using a three-day assessment process that takes into account not only the views of teachers, but also those of the pupils and their families. There is a team effort from the start, with the anticipated result being reintegration into the main school at the earliest opportunity. From the outset, maximum possible contact is maintained with the curriculum experienced by pupils in the rest of the school. The unit is certainly not regarded as an easy option by anybody. The teaching is rigorous and there is no stigma attached to the unit by other pupils or teachers, who acknowledge the contribution it makes to the success of the school as a whole. Within the unit there is very close collaboration with the SEN team who share the same building.

Opportunities for informal education start from the moment the pupils arrive, with the breakfast club providing food and a splendid opportunity for social learning. Teaching assistants work closely with the teacher in charge to deliver small group or individual teaching. The unit is well equipped with computers and first class software programs, which are used very effectively to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Pupils, who, in other circumstances, have demonstrated anger and frustration, work hard and take pride in their achievement – to the point of asking the inspector to join in with them and offering help in using the software.

COMMUNITY PROVISION

The effectiveness of the community provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A growing number of adult education classes are using the school's premises.
- Derbyshire Youth Services organises soccer coaching classes using the school's excellent sports hall.
- Local arts groups, dance groups and theatre groups are invited into the school. Pupils have been involved in the Bolsover Children's Festival.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly involved in local community events.
- Local community members are invited to the Christmas carol service at St Lawrence's Church and to attend the many successful drama productions.

Commentary

56. There is a clear desire by the governing body that the school should become the community centre for the locality. To this end they have encouraged the Derbyshire adult education service to use the school site for adult evening classes. This has resulted in classes in Spanish, art and computing, which have proved to be very successful. The Derbyshire Youth Service runs a highly successful weekly soccer school using the Brazilian type of ball. This class is over-subscribed, with a list of people waiting to join. The school's excellent sports hall is being used by a number of local sports clubs.
57. The school is making a considerable effort to attract local people to its activities, and members of the local community have attended the school's Christmas service at St Lawrence's Church and many events in the school.
58. The school's pupils and, in particular, the school's art department, have been very actively involved in the Derbyshire tradition of Well-Dressing and the Lantern parade through Bolsover.
59. The school has made very positive steps to improve its contacts with local primary schools, and one of the schools is currently using the school's physical education facilities. In addition, pupils and staff have performed dance presentations in a number of local schools.
60. During the last few years the school has made a significant effort to involve the local community in its activities, and for the school's pupils to become involved in local community events. While much has been achieved, the school recognises that there is room for further development in this area.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision for English is **unsatisfactory**, although showing signs of rapid improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well below the national average.
- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in the subject are good.
- The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 now reflects the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, although pupils' literacy skills are still too low.
- Constructive teamwork and strong links with the LEA's literacy consultant have resulted in a shared drive towards raising standards.
- Assessment is underdeveloped.
- The most capable pupils are not always challenged enough.

Commentary

61. Assessment data over the last two years show an improving profile of pupils entering the school, but many still begin Year 7 with very low reading scores. Pupils' low literacy skills have a serious impact on their standards of work in English and other subjects. The 2002 results in the National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations were well below the national average. There was a rise in the 2003 tests, but results were still well below average and the faculty did not meet its target for the proportion of pupils gaining the expected level 5. Pupils' results in English have been consistently lower than those in mathematics and science and standards have not improved since the last inspection. However, standards in the current Years 7 and 8 are better and bode well for an improvement in the 2004 Year 9 tests.
62. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory, overall, by Year 9. Achievement is slightly better by the end of Year 11, but pupils make slower progress than expected. This is particularly so for boys, whose results are far behind those of girls at the end of Year 9 and even more so by Year 11. The school has begun to look more closely at teaching styles and approaches in order to raise boys' achievement.
63. Pupils often achieve appropriately during lessons when they are engaged in short tasks, but, over time, they cannot sustain this and standards are well below expectations. Pupils answer questions and explain their ideas, but replies are brief and debating skills are undeveloped. However, pupils in Years 7 and 8 confidently speak at length in role-play and when evaluating their work or answering questions. Reading skills improve as pupils move up through the year groups. Technical language, including poetic, narrative or non-fiction terms, are used with ease and understanding. They often use frames to retrieve information from narrative or factual texts and comment and speculate on themes and characters. However, comprehension work lacks detail and most pupils do not critically analyse aspects of language, form and structure. From the work seen, attainment in writing is well below average. There are weaknesses in the breadth of pupils' vocabulary, in their structuring of writing and in the accurate use of sentence structures and punctuation.
64. The quality of teaching is good and is an emerging strength. Teaching has improved significantly since the last OFSTED report. The strong emphasis on the Key Stage 3 Strategy has led to a small but significant improvement in the 2003 test results. Teachers set clear

lesson objectives and strategically place these on the board as a reference point for pupils. The clear structure and planning of lessons ensure that pupils make progress as they work through a range of different activities. Pupils achieved well in lessons where the following methods were used:

- lively interactive approaches that involved short, timed activities before pupils began cascading and discussing information
- thoughtful open-ended questions that developed pupils' oral and thinking skills as they were required to give full answers and justify their opinions
- exploratory reading, with the teacher intervening and using talk as a central activity to assess their understanding of themes, character and language
- carefully chosen activities and resources, as seen in a very good lesson where Year 7 pupils used role-play to explore the use of language in Swindell's *Jacqueline Hyde*. The activity led to their evaluating, exploring and recognising that different tone and registers reflect people's background and circumstances
- a range of different group settings, including whole-class, paired and group work.

65. In contrast to these methods, teaching and learning were sometimes no more than satisfactory because teaching activities were not well planned and pupils were not challenged to work at a fast pace. The plenary was often too short and opportunities were missed to develop pupils' critical thinking because teachers dominated the talking. Whereas good support was given to middle-attaining pupils and those with a special educational need, planning does not always reflect the needs of the higher-attaining pupils. On occasions, when the work ethic lapsed, teachers were not always quick enough to spell out their expectations of work and behaviour. However, in general, classroom management is good and relationships with pupils are very good.
66. The learning support assistants work productively with pupils with special educational needs. They provide intensive one-to-one support and use well-tailored resources, such as coloured coded cards, with 'stop', 'listen' 'do' to signal the kind of work needed.
67. Assessment and marking are inconsistent and teachers' comments do not provide enough information for pupils to know how to improve their work.
68. There have been shortcomings in the way the subject has been led and managed in the past. With strong support from the new leadership team and the LEA, the head of faculty has recognised the urgency of tackling underachievement and promoting literacy. Prior to this, the faculty had not used the large body of available assessment data to identify and address underachievement. Over the last academic year, the faculty has made great strides in developing the curriculum and adopting new approaches to teaching and learning. This is having a positive impact on the ethos for learning. There is an increasing awareness of strengths and weaknesses in teaching, because of the intensive work with the leadership group on monitoring teaching and learning and the emphasis on accountability.
69. Since the last inspection, improvement has been unsatisfactory because standards and achievement are still too low, assessment is underdeveloped and the needs of higher-attaining pupils are not fully met. Nevertheless, other areas have improved significantly over the last year. The curriculum and the quality of teaching are emerging strengths. Under the new headteacher's direction, there is a clear sense of purpose and understanding of what needs to be done to raise standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

70. The commitment to improving pupils' literacy skills is very strong and is now a key priority in the school improvement plan. Although there has been professional development on this aspect of the curriculum, the Key Stage 3 Strategy has not been fully embraced and embedded in all schemes of work or teaching and learning across the curriculum. In English, the high level of co-operation with the LEA literacy consultant has had a significant impact on

teaching and learning styles while the inclusion unit has good specific programmes tailored to the needs of pupils. There are no systems for monitoring the teaching of literacy across the curriculum and the weak literacy skills of pupils are hindering the drive to raise standards.

71. While some departments such as modern foreign languages, history, art and business education pay good attention to developing pupils' literacy, there is too little emphasis in other departments. Opportunities are sometimes missed to emphasise, through displays and explanations, the technical vocabulary in subjects. Often, pupils do not have a wide enough vocabulary to comprehend questions or to read between the lines, which has an impact on their performance in external tests and examinations.
72. Pupils listen attentively, and there are good opportunities in subjects such as business education, art, and modern foreign languages for them to join in discussions. However, pupils are not always encouraged to give extended explanations and starter activities are not used enough to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills. Writing skills are weak and, while subjects such as English, history, and business education involve extended writing, pupils rarely write at length in other subjects. Teachers' marking is patchy and does not pick up literacy errors. There is some good practice in the marking of literacy skills in history and science, but this is not commonplace across the school.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in German are good and boys perform as well as the girls.
- The strong leadership of the department ensures a commitment to raising standards.
- The teaching of German is effective and promotes good learning.
- Pupils' speaking skills in both French and German are underdeveloped.
- Assessment procedures do not show pupils how to improve their performance.
- The very good classroom practice that takes place is not shared widely enough among all teachers.

Commentary

73. GCSE results show an overall steady upward trend since the last inspection. The last two years in particular have shown a marked improvement in German. The 2003 figures indicate that results in French recovered after a fall in 2002.
74. Current standards in modern foreign languages are below average in Years 7 to 9. They are slightly better in German than in French. All pupils achieve at least satisfactorily. In Years 10 and 11, standards are below average in French and above average in German. Pupils make particularly good progress in German and by the end of Year 11 their achievement is good. Girls perform better in French than boys, reflecting the national pattern. However, in German, boys buck the national trend and perform as well as girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
75. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good, overall, although there are some inconsistencies. The teaching of French is satisfactory, with some good features. The teaching of German is generally good and sometimes very good. Teachers of both languages plan their lessons well. They provide a good variety of appropriate activities that enable pupils to develop their language skills and to participate actively in lessons. Teachers' classroom management is good and, consequently, pupils behave well and show interest. The teaching of German is more successful than that of French because it is more consistent and more effective in inspiring and motivating pupils.

76. Teachers contribute effectively to their pupils' literacy development by encouraging them to think about language patterns. Although access to computers is now better than it was, the use of ICT to help pupils develop their language learning is still underdeveloped.
77. In both French and German, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to use the language in everyday exchanges with one another or with their teachers. As a result, pupils lack confidence when speaking outside of the controlled situations created by their teachers in lessons. Assessment information is not used adequately to set targets for pupils, especially in Years 7 to 9. Older pupils have a clearer picture of how they can improve because they have a good understanding of the GCSE requirements.
78. The leadership of the department is good. The head of department has a strong commitment to raising standards. He is well respected by his colleagues and he leads by example in driving the department forward. The management of the department is also good. There is a good team spirit and ideas are shared informally. However, the monitoring of teaching, especially of French, is insufficiently rigorous and there is not enough dissemination across the whole department of the very good classroom practice that exists. There has been good improvement in standards and the quality of teaching since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in mathematics by the end of Year 9.
- Standards at the end of Year 11 match national expectations. Pupils achieve very well in GCSE examinations.
- Teaching is good, overall; teachers are committed to helping their pupils to do well and relationships are very good.
- Early entry for GCSE examinations is successful in raising the pupils' self-esteem and aspirations but there are missed opportunities to widen and enrich the mathematics curriculum.
- Marking and informal assessment, although satisfactory, lack consistency across the department
- The leadership and management of the department are good and this has sustained the consistently good examination results.

Commentary

79. Standards in mathematics are in line with national expectations and among the highest in the school by the end of Year 11. Pupils' attainment in mathematics when they enter the school is well below average. Results in the national tests for Year 9 have been consistently below, or well below, average, over several years, although in 2002 pupils' rate of progress was well above the average for schools with a similar starting point. In 2003, results have improved further to levels similar to the 2002 national average.
80. Standards in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were above the national average, but a significant number of pupils were not entered. Although the 2003 results appear lower than those for 2002, they represent a fairer reflection of achievement, as almost all pupils are now entered for GCSE. Overall, achievement by the end of Year 11 is very good. Girls' results are better than boys but the gap is narrower in mathematics than in most other subjects.
81. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in Year 9 are close to the national average. Achievement in lessons is generally at least in line with expectations at this early stage of the year, and the work in the pupils' books reflects consistently steady progress across all the areas of mathematics. Many pupils have very weak numerical skills when they enter the school, as seen in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were insecure in their understanding of rounding and approximating. They have difficulty in using correct mathematical notation, even

in simple processes. Numerical skills develop well in Years 7 and 8, so that higher-attaining pupils extend such processes into good manipulative algebraic skills. Work on shape and space and data-handling is sound but graph- drawing skills are underdeveloped with sometimes poor presentation. Pupils find it difficult to interpret graphs or to give reasons for their answers.

82. By the end of Year 11 pupils achieve well, overall, with the majority making at least the expected progress from Year 9. Pupils entered early for GCSE mathematics are able to perform a wide range of skills with reasonable accuracy. However, many find difficulty in applying these skills to less obvious questions, such as those about standard form, for example. Coursework tasks are conscientiously completed but contain few imaginative or independent ideas. The content of work in lessons provides the challenge appropriate for most students but there is too little emphasis on preparing gifted pupils for the further study of mathematics. Generally, pupils can readily spot patterns, and this supports work on similar triangles, for example. Some pupils who follow a two-year GCSE course, including pupils who have special needs, still find difficulty with money questions and simple data-handling, as well as other areas of mathematics. However, when there is a high level of support, as in a Year 11 lesson preparing for GCSE coursework, these pupils can sort and classify a number of variables successfully.
83. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good, overall. Relationships are very good and all teachers are committed to helping pupils achieve of their best. Pupils learn well because of the consistently high expectations of teachers and the well-informed preparation for tests and examinations. Although the best lessons are carefully structured, pupils have too few opportunities to articulate their thinking. Not all teachers, particularly with younger year groups, differentiate work sufficiently to match pupils' needs, including those pupils who have individual education plans. Generally, teaching does not include a wide range of activities nor resources for learning. There is a strong, and successful, emphasis on text books and written work, but there are missed opportunities to develop the students' communication and language skills in mathematics. Generally, most pupils are co-operative and actively engage in lessons, but rely heavily on their teachers.
84. The use of day-to-day assessment in mathematics is satisfactory, overall, but requires some improvement. All teachers set homework frequently and regularly. Most pupils receive helpful and immediate oral feedback on their work in lessons and there are examples of good quality diagnostic marking that enables pupils to improve their work. However, some of the marking is cursory and too infrequent. Some teachers fail to check individual pupils' progress during lessons, and thereby miss opportunities to correct errors at an early stage.
85. The quality of leadership of mathematics is a strength. The head of department has a clear vision for its development and has encouraged a committed team approach. The department runs an accelerated mathematics entry successfully. However, there are missed opportunities to enrich the pupils' mathematical experience. The department is well managed, and day-to-day running is smooth. While the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department is satisfactory, more could be done to develop a wider range of teaching and learning approaches.
86. Since the last inspection, progress within the mathematics department has been good. Standards have risen and teaching has remained good in spite of staff changes. There is extensive liaison with primary schools to ease the transition for pupils and to ensure a good start in Year 7. However, there is still a need to develop further the use of ICT in mathematics, and to encourage teaching styles that support learning and understanding for all pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

87. There is good provision within mathematics to develop pupils' numeracy skills. However, pupils have few opportunities to use these skills systematically in other subjects. Pupils make appropriate use of their mathematical competence to support work in subjects such as science and geography, although the skills required are quite low level. Pupils' weak skills in drawing and interpreting graphs sometimes hamper their progress in science, for example, in a Year 9 lesson on the factors affecting populations. Generally, though, when required to do so, pupils can substitute values into simple formulae and calculate with reasonable accuracy.
88. There is some use of mathematics in modern foreign languages, art, music, business studies and design and technology. However, too few departments have integrated the use of mathematics into their schemes of work. The school does not yet have a policy for numeracy across the curriculum and there is insufficient guidance for teachers on how to teach mathematical principles. Some staff training has taken place but, as yet, this cross-curricular aspect is underdeveloped.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been sustained improvement in external test and examination results over recent years.
- Practical skills are being developed well in all year groups.
- Leadership and management are good, with planning and curriculum development particularly strong.
- Marking is not used well to tell pupils how to improve.
- There are not enough computers in laboratories, which restricts the use of ICT in practical work.
- There are some problems with the accommodation that have a negative impact on teaching and learning.

Commentary

89. Standards are average, overall, and there is evidence of strong sustained improvement over the past few years. Pupils enter the school with standards in science well below national comparisons. By the time the pupils take the external tests in Year 9, they are achieving results not only well above the level for pupils in similar schools but reaching the national average for all schools. This is a significant achievement. GCSE results also show good improvement and, again, pupils' results are close to the average for all schools in the country. Work seen in the classroom shows that pupils are making good progress, particularly in practical work where they are developing important skills and achieving high standards. Boys and girls have performed equally well in the Year 9 tests, but boys have been ahead in recent GCSE examinations.
90. Teaching is generally good, with some examples of very good practice. There was no unsatisfactory teaching nor were teachers in difficulty when teaching outside their own specialist science areas; both of these were criticised in the last Ofsted report. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and, as a result, pupils learn well. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, the teacher challenged high-attaining pupils by careful questioning so that they were able to talk confidently about the specialisation of cells. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils were taught effectively to carry out a simulated photosynthesis experiment on a computer and they displayed their results in graphical form using other programs. There are, however, not enough computers for use in practical work, which is hindering developments in the use of ICT in science.

91. Pupils come to their lessons with generally good attitudes and enjoy the challenges presented to them by their teachers. Their literacy skills are not well developed and the department is aware of this. Teachers introduce new science words carefully, as in a Year 7 lesson on energy. Pupils of lower ability were able to use the words 'kinetic' and 'thermal' confidently by the end of the session.
92. Leadership and management of the department are good. There has been a positive response to the need to improve standards, and progress since the last inspection has been good. New courses have been introduced throughout the department and these are already having a positive impact on standards. Planning within the department is also a strong feature. Assessment has been developed well and informs decisions in the department, but the marking of pupils' work is not always rigorous or informative enough. The department benefits from the good support of technicians and the basic level of equipment is now good. However, the present arrangement of science laboratories in two different locations leads to the duplication of resources and makes it difficult for technicians to provide comprehensive support. In addition, some science lessons are taught in rooms other than laboratories, which restricts opportunities for practical work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and standards achieved by pupils in the GCSE course.
- The leadership of ICT as a timetabled subject.
- The lack of systematic planning and monitoring of opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to develop their ICT skills in other subjects.
- There are currently too few computing resources.

Commentary

93. Pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in ICT are below the expected standards for Years 7 to 9. The proportion that was assessed by their teachers as reaching the expected level 5 by Year 9 has improved over the years but remains below the national average. ICT teachers are attempting to improve standards by introducing a new scheme and finding better ways to assess pupils. The low standards are partly the result of the generally weak skills of most pupils when they enter Year 7. The work seen during the inspection supports the finding that standards are generally below average, but most pupils make good progress during Years 7 to 9. By Year 9, almost all pupils can use a word processor, keyboard, mouse, menus, network and printers and most have gained at least some idea of the importance and dangers of ICT in society.
94. The GCSE results in recent years have always been above and sometimes well above the national average. Most Year 10 and 11 pupils following the GCSE course demonstrate good practical skills and a secure good grasp of why different kinds of software are used in different contexts. However, the majority of Years 10 and 11 do not follow a course in this subject or in business studies. There are no timetabled ICT lessons for these students and their experience of ICT in subjects is fragmented and uncoordinated. The school has undertaken an audit of where the ICT knowledge and skills are taught, but this is not yet monitored thoroughly enough to know whether the students are developing their knowledge and skills with computers. Few students can suggest an appropriate ICT-based solution to deal with an information-handling problem, let alone design and produce one.
95. The quality of ICT teaching is satisfactory, overall, and often good, especially in the GCSE classes. The main strengths are the teachers' command of the subject, their effective use of

limited resources, their high expectations (especially in Years 7 to 9) and their use of homework to reinforce and extend work covered in lessons. The groups are large, which makes it difficult for teachers to assess individual pupils' progress in lessons and tailor work to their needs. As a result, the most capable pupils are sometimes not stretched enough.

96. ICT as a timetabled subject is well led: the two main teachers have a shared vision, with a clear focus, and the determination to innovate and improve. They also work hard to draw in the other ICT teachers who contribute only a small part of their time to this subject. The management of ICT is shared by several people, which makes it difficult to co-ordinate. There are fewer computers in the school than average, which is having an impact on the pupils' access to them. Few students were seen using computers outside lessons. There is not yet a 'high tech' culture within the school, where computers are a regular feature. The school is well aware of this weakness and there are appropriate plans to improve the situation from September 2004.
97. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen and staffing has improved.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

98. Since the previous inspection, a senior staff member has been appointed to coordinate the use of ICT throughout the school. Most teachers have had some training and are gaining in confidence and expertise. This has led to a growth in demand for computers to be used in lessons. However, there are few computer rooms for a school of this size and they are quite heavily used for ICT and business studies lessons. None is large enough for all classes, with the result that the demand is not always easy to meet. There is some good practice, for example, in drama and business studies. Computers are used extremely well in the inclusion unit. In general, though, the focused use of computers by teachers and by pupils is still too low. This means that pupils in Years 7 to 9 have little opportunity to practise what they learn in their ICT lessons, so make less progress than they should, and most pupils in Years 10 and 11 cannot properly develop their capabilities (as discussed above).

HUMANITIES

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching by specialist teachers who are committed to the success of their pupils results in pupils achieving well.
- The use of varied teaching strategies and the planned use of literacy to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of history.
- Teachers' awareness of different learning styles enhances learning.
- An inclusive learning environment gives all pupils the opportunity to be successful.
- There is limited use of assessment data to enable pupils to set appropriate targets for their learning.

Commentary

99. Pupils achieve well in history. Standards in Year 7 are well below national expectations, but by the end of Year 9 they are in line. The small numbers of pupils studying history in Years 10 and 11 make good progress and attain appropriate standards.
100. Teaching is good. Teachers prepare lessons thoroughly, based on good schemes of work for all years. They make effective use of their good subject knowledge and skilful questioning to re-enforce and extend pupils' understanding. Teachers use a variety of strategies to retain pupils' interest and improve their learning. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils were given

cards to sort, which produced lively paired discussions on the push and pull factors in American migration to the west. In a Year 7 lesson, the appropriate use of video and the pace of the lesson led to very good learning about Hadrian's Wall. The teachers encourage students to use pictures and highlighting in their note-making and to use tables for comparison. Their good awareness of different learning styles enhances pupils' learning.

101. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning. Only one instance was seen of poor behaviour and this quickly ended when the pupils became interested and involved in the work on Galen's dissection of a live pig. The teachers sometimes provide a range of tasks for pupils of different abilities. However, many tasks are accessible to all students and the output is differentiated by their abilities. For example, in Year 7, a letter home from a Roman soldier produced positive responses from all pupils. Teachers have adopted literacy strategies, which have helped pupils to develop and express their understanding of history. The relationships between staff and students are warm and caring, which ensures an inclusive and positive learning environment.
102. The head of faculty's leadership is very good and shows clear vision. He has completed a thorough audit of the subject and has produced a well-focused development plan that recognises the need to improve assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress. Pupils are not always clear about the level at which they are working or their targets, though they are graded for understanding and effort, using the agreed faculty system. The day-to-day management of the subject is good. The head of department monitors the work of colleagues effectively by observing lessons and looking at pupils' work.
103. History has made good progress since the last inspection. Vision and planning are clear. Standards in Year 9 have reached national expectations and those who follow the subject in Years 10 and 11 achieve well.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department has produced a good new scheme of work for Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in their lessons, both by teachers and by teaching assistants.
- Standards, in Year 9 and in the most recent GCSE results are below the national and the school's own averages.
- There is still a need for greater use of ICT in teaching and learning, although a start has been made.
- More opportunities are needed for fieldwork, which has declined.

Commentary

104. Standards are below average against both national and school comparisons in Years 7 to 9, although in part this is the result of instability in the teaching of the subject in the past. In Years 10 and 11, results have gone up and down over the years, although the most recent show a decline from those at the time of the last inspection, when they were at the national average. The attainment of boys lags behind that of girls, although the difference is not as marked as in some subjects.
105. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is being improved by the revision of the scheme of work. A strength of the new scheme is that it identifies opportunities to develop the use of literacy, numeracy and ICT in line with the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. ICT, in particular, remains underdeveloped at the moment, in part because of difficulties of access in the school, but also because it is not yet at the heart of teaching and learning in the department.

106. All the teaching observed was at least satisfactory, and some elements were good. Geography is taught by three teachers, one of whom is a non-specialist who has needed considerable support from the head of department. In view of the overall satisfactory teaching, this support has been effective. Teaching is well planned and lessons have clear objectives and outcomes. As a result, pupils make satisfactory progress from a low baseline of geographical understanding and skills.
107. Good practice was observed in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs in geography lessons. Such pupils are identified in teachers' record books and the individuals' education plans are known and implemented. The teaching assistants are effective in supporting pupils with special needs and enable some who have quite challenging needs to make good progress.
108. Most pupils work hard in lessons. However, when the pace slackens there is a tendency for some of the pupils, particularly older boys, to become restless. Overall, however, pupils enjoy their lessons and participate well in discussions and in question and answer sessions, which reinforce teaching and show that learning objectives have been achieved. The department has a good marking policy that enables pupils to know the level that they have achieved and what needs to be done in order to make progress.
109. Resources were criticised in last inspection, but are now satisfactory. There is, though, not enough use of ICT in lessons or for individual research and study by pupils. The opportunities for pupils to undertake fieldwork have declined since the last inspection. It is now only undertaken by those relatively few pupils who are following a GCSE course. This lack of fieldwork denies pupils the opportunity to study the diverse and rich local environment at first hand. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, overall.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**, overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because teachers use a good variety of strategies and show an awareness of different learning styles
- The provision of GCSE courses for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 results in improved achievement
- In the full GCSE group, the teacher's high expectations, challenge and support have led to rapid progress by pupils at the start of their course
- The use of non-specialist teachers in Years 7 and 8 is having a negative impact on pupils' learning
- There is inconsistency in the marking of pupils' work and in the setting of learning targets

Commentary

110. Pupils' achievement is good in religious education. The standard of pupils' work at the start of Year 7 is well below national expectation. By Year 9, standards have risen, but are still below average. However, the standards seen in Years 10 and 11, and the results gained in GCSE in 2003, were close to the national expectation. The provision of GCSE courses for all students in Key Stage 4 has contributed to this improvement in standards.
111. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have adopted a variety of teaching strategies and show an awareness of pupils' differing learning styles. The teachers' use of literacy strategies has helped pupils to articulate their understanding. Homework has been set consistently and is used well to extend pupils' knowledge. Pupils who are studying the full GCSE course are

making rapid progress, because of the challenging teaching. However, some lessons in Years

7 and 8 are taught by non-specialist teachers, whose lack of subject knowledge is having an adverse impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

112. The leadership of the subject is very good. The heads of faculty and subject have a clear vision for its development. Their management is good. They ensure that work is scrutinised and lessons observed. Teachers are complimentary about the head of subject's support. However, the non-specialist teachers need more support to interpret the scheme of work and teach it well. Marking is inconsistent, as is the use of the agreed faculty grading system. Pupils are not clear about the level at which they are working or their targets. In Years 10 and 11, pupils receive some developmental feedback, which they said has helped their learning. Staff who have adopted the literacy profile in Years 7 to 9 have helped pupils know how to improve their literacy skills in religious education.
113. The department is very inclusive. Pupils are treated with respect and are valued. They have a positive attitude and behave well in lessons. The support assistants know what they were doing and help pupils learn. The department provides good opportunities for spiritual development. A profound moment occurred in a lesson on creation when a Year 7 pupil captured her classmates' full attention when she expressed her amazement at how perfect the world is and how everything fits together.
114. The department's improvement since the last inspection is good. GCSE courses are provided for all pupils and the department has a focused development plan.

TECHNOLOGY

Provision in design and technology (DT) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- The quality of resources for DT, including staffing, enhances the effectiveness of the subject.
- The quality of teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is good.
- There is a lack of coherence across the faculty and no explicit shared view of DT as a single "problem-solving" life skill.
- The use of formative assessment is not well-developed as a tool for improving learning and teaching.

Commentary

115. *The main scope of the inspection of DT in the school was food technology. The other areas involved - electronics, graphics, textiles and resistant materials - were sampled.*
116. Pupils' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. The standard of pupils' DT work in these years is below average, but this represents good achievement from a low baseline. Year 9 pupils' work improved steadily through the 1990s. It has since settled at around two-thirds reaching or passing the expected level 5, which is slightly above the national average. The pupils' work seen during the inspection (in lessons, in their notes, and in talking with them) confirms that they achieve well. They do particularly well in practical work. Teachers give pupils a lot of opportunity for practical work and their strong emphasis on techniques helps pupils to remember them unusually well. For instance, most of a Year 9 electronics class were able to undertake soldering effectively and confidently, even though they had not done it for some months. Pupils draw on prior learning well during food technology practical work-thinking hard about what they have to do and why.

117. Overall, standards in DT GCSE are low, though they are above average in food and textiles technologies. There has been a quite significant variation in how many achieve good grades (A* to C), with a slight improvement since 1998, though still below the national average. The standard of pupils' work seen during the inspection confirms these findings, though there are big differences between the five areas studied. On the whole, the pupils' DT strengths are on the practical side. However, their skills in Years 10 and 11 no longer progress as fast as in Years 7 to 9, except in textiles, which is not studied before Year 10, where learning and achievement are particularly good. Generally, their coursework folders – while sometimes meticulous – indicate that they do not have a clear enough grasp of problem-solving nor of the basic technical knowledge that underpins GCSE work in the subject. For instance, there is widespread uncertainty about the physical and electrical properties of different materials that pupils choose for given products. Also, few pupils focus their “market research” and product evaluation on their product specifications.
118. The quality of DT teaching is satisfactory, with plenty of good practice, in Years 7 to 9. It is good in Years 10 and 11. The teachers are generally successful at encouraging boys and girls to work hard and at making effective use of an often wide range of resources and techniques. They encourage GCSE pupils to work more and more on their own. There is a good emphasis on practical skills, but some lessons can be so busy that teachers do not have the time to assess how well individuals are doing. On the other hand, the teachers' end-of-unit assessments are good and there is also very good practice in finding out what the new Year 7 pupils know towards the end of their first term.
119. Leadership and management of the faculty are satisfactory overall. There is not, though, enough emphasis on the fundamental problem-solving nature of DT. As a result, pupils often do not know the point of particular activities. Even those in Years 10 and 11 do not naturally relate the different stages of the “design and make” process to each other or to the purpose and target market of the products they are devising. Some aspects of leadership and management are good, such as within food technology, where GCSE results are particularly high. Technical staff, who are very effective but in short supply, are deployed well.
120. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, overall, and good in some respects. There are still some problems with the accommodation, as hardly any of the food technology rooms are large enough for the classes that use them. Practical work can, therefore, be potentially hazardous, especially when there is insufficient storage space for stools, bags and coats.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art

The quality of provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving for all pupils because of the good teaching.
- The relationship between the teachers and pupils creates a very good learning partnership.
- The management of the department is good, promoting high expectations and improving standards.
- There is a lack of opportunity for pupils to experience computers in art.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to experience three-dimensional work.
- The unsatisfactory level of resources is having an adverse effect upon opportunities for learning.

Commentary

121. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and by the end achieve standards that are in line with the national average. They have access to a good range of materials and experiences and respond well. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection, where progress was judged unsatisfactory.
122. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are also improving and pupils make good progress as a result of the good teaching and their positive attitudes. This also demonstrates improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were below average. In previous years boys' achievement was below that of the girls. This situation is gradually being improved because of good teaching and enhanced opportunities in lessons where topics that interest boys are being explored.
123. The quality of teaching is good. Teaching was considered to be generally unsatisfactory in the previous inspection. Lesson planning is now very effective. The majority of lessons are challenging but could be further improved for the most capable pupils. Teachers promote a clear code of conduct, and therefore relationships in all lessons are very good. The personal development of the pupils is improving because they are encouraged to develop opinions through discussion, share ideas and assist in the distribution and collection of materials and equipment. Language skills are improving because key words are introduced into most lessons as part of the school literacy policy. The majority of pupils are articulate when discussing their work and many are capable of understanding and using technical language. Regular references are made in most lessons to the work of significant artists and cultures. Assessment is generally satisfactory; most pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, are aware of their progress and how they might improve. Homework is set regularly and is used effectively as preparation or reinforcement for lessons. The previous inspection indicated that additional opportunities should be provided for all pupils to gain experience of using computers in art. This continues to be an area for development.
124. The management of the department is good. Department documentation is well organised, providing a clear structure for the present and future development of the subject. Training for teachers in the standardisation of work would improve the quality and accuracy of teacher assessment, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. The monitoring of teaching is helping to improve the quality of learning. Accommodation is good, providing the pupils with a pleasant and attractive environment in which to work.

Drama/dance

The provision for drama/dance is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and promotes stimulating and rigorous learning and good achievement.
- The wide-ranging curricular and extra-curricular opportunities offer pupils very good contact with professional artists and theatre work practice.
- Drama/dance makes a good contribution to improving pupils' literacy skills and personal development.
- Leadership and management are very good and continue to make a strong impact on subject development and on pupils' positive and enthusiastic responses.

Commentary

125. Pupils make good progress in drama/dance from a low starting point in most cases and their achievement is good. By Year 9, standards are in line with the national average and, by Year

- 11, they are above average. GCSE results in expressive arts have been amongst the highest in the school and the proportion of A* and A grades has increased over the last three years.
126. Pupils with special needs, who are fully integrated into the lessons, achieve as well as other pupils. Higher-attaining and talented pupils are extended well by many extra-curricular opportunities and through greater independence and responsibility.
127. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 9 to 11. Pupils experience a very good balance between practical skills development, understanding of concepts and accumulation of knowledge. Pupils' evaluation of their own work and of others is a particularly good feature of their learning. Lessons are structured well, starting from clear learning outcomes, through warm-up to the main purpose of the lesson and then a final review of the level and quality of pupils' success. Teachers' make challenging demands, both in the type and level of activities, such as break-dancing and video interviewing techniques, and through rigorous questioning. As a result, pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, develop good analytical and thinking skills, which means they can plan, discuss and refine their creative ideas and use the dynamics of groups and the whole class to realise them. Pupils regularly test their performance and scripting skills against audiences inside and outside the school.
128. An especially potent factor in promoting pupils' good achievement is their contact with practising theatre and dance artists both in lessons and in extra-curricular opportunities in and outside the school. Regular workshops by visiting artists, including specialists in a range of multicultural traditions, provide exceptional access to the working practices of the theatre and dance professions.
129. Drama and dance make positive contributions to pupils' development in English and literacy through their descriptive, historical and evaluative writing. Pupils also provide a valuable accumulated record of their work, including good use of technical language and definitions. Group activities develop good relationships, teamwork and negotiating skills. Pupils learn to listen to and value each other's efforts and ideas. As a result many develop better self-esteem, maturity and awareness of cultural diversity.
130. Leadership and management are both very good. Clear aspirations for pupils' high standards are realised through very good curriculum planning, effective team teaching, efficient organisation, strong links with partners, strategic monitoring and review. Most pupils' responses are positive, enthusiastic and productive. Although the previous inspection report identified no weaknesses, additional provision and opportunities continue to advance pupils' learning. These include more varied active partnerships and the increasing and effective use of computer technology. As a result, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Music

The provision for music is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is good and promotes good learning and achievement in Years 9 to 11.
 - Leadership and management are good.
 - The accommodation is unsatisfactory as it limits pupils' access to a wide range of resources and activities, especially ICT and instrumental lessons.
131. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 from a low baseline and by the end are attaining standards that are in line with the national average. By Year 11, standards are approaching the average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. GCSE results are improving, although numbers have been too small in recent years to make reliable comparisons with the national average. Girls generally do better than boys in Year 9 teachers' assessments and in GCSE examinations. All pupils in Year 11 took London College of Music keyboard examinations in 2003, with creditable results.

132. Pupils with special educational needs generally achieve as well as others. Some higher-attaining and talented pupils do not achieve as well as they could, as they are not always given enough freedom to develop independence and responsibility.
133. Teaching and learning are good, overall, in Years 7 to 9 and in Year 10. There are currently no pupils in Year 11. Some very good, stimulating teaching and very challenging learning was seen. The pace of learning is brisk, all available time is used productively and pupils organise themselves quickly in different types of activities. Pupils use electronic keyboards well as their predominant practical medium for performing and composing. Because of the good scheme of work and teachers' integrated approach to the practical, theoretical and historical aspects of music, most pupils' knowledge and understanding are well developed. Every lesson identifies specific technical language and definitions, which helps develop pupils' confidence in appraising and evaluating the stimulating range of music they listen to.
134. Although pupils sometimes work away from keyboards, using voices, percussion and piano, the severe limitations of accommodation restrict the use of wider resources and group activities. Pupils have no access to computer programs. They cannot extend their interests and develop their aptitudes through instrumental lessons, which restricts the experience of pupils choosing music for the GCSE examination. Nevertheless, pupils participate in a good range of well-coached extra-curricular activities.
135. Leadership and management are good. The head of department, who is also co-ordinator for the arts, inherited a subject in which the previous inspection report identified many key weaknesses. Improvement since then has been good.

Physical education

The quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership in the department is good.
- Pupils' achievement in dance is very good.
- Staff give very generously of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Very good relationships between pupils and their teachers lead to high expectations for attainment and good progress.
- There is high quality accommodation for the subject.
- Pupils need to be more involved in the planning and evaluation of their work.

Commentary

136. Although the GCSE examination results in physical education indicate below average standards, the majority of pupils taking the examination achieve well relative to their capabilities and prior attainment. The number of pupils gaining the higher A* to C grades has risen significantly since the previous inspection. Achievement in dance, which is part of the expressive arts GCSE, is very good.
137. Pupils arrive from their primary schools with a range of physical education experiences and standards, often below the national expectation. They respond quickly to the good teaching, make good progress and, by Year 9, most are reaching the standards expected for their age, which represents good achievement. The good progress is maintained in Years 10 and 11, and by Year 11 most pupils, particularly those in the examination groups, are achieving standards that are at least in line with the national average with a significant number doing even better. One example of this level of achievement was observed in a Year 10 practical

GCSE lesson where pupils accurately analysed the performance of their partners' soccer skills and then make perceptive suggestions on how performance could be improved.

138. The quality of teaching is good, overall, and sometimes very good. A key element of this is strong classroom management that gives all pupils confidence to become involved. The aims of lessons are made clear, content is appropriate to the pupils' needs and abilities, and the resources are relevant and well organised. Teachers inject fun and enjoyment into their lessons, and pupils respond very positively and enthusiastically. Pupils are well-behaved and co-operative and demonstrate a real enjoyment of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of work being set that is thoughtfully planned so that it meets their particular needs.
139. Strong leadership, clear direction and a positive ethos characterise the management of the department. Good quality documentation covers all aspects of its work, and helps the delivery of the subject. The teachers are hard working and talented. They work well together, supporting each other and showing a strong commitment to their pupils, for example, through providing a wide range of clubs and teams outside lessons.
140. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The number of pupils entering for the GCSE examination has improved, as has the number of pupils gaining the higher grades. The accommodation for the subject has been significantly improved by the provision of an excellent sports hall.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

Provision in Business education is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards achieved are very good because of very effective teaching and the positive attitude of the pupils.
- Teaching is very good: lessons are well planned, expectations are high and, therefore, progress is very good.
- The quality of management of the subject is good, providing a clear vision and high expectations.
- Assessment is good and pupils are thus aware of their achievements and how they might improve.
- There needs to be greater use of resources, such as periodicals, magazines and newspapers, to foster a wider understanding of current issues relating to business and society.

Commentary

141. Business Education is provided as GCSE Business Education and GCSE Applied Business Studies in Years 10 and 11. Standards are above average, which represents very good achievement, considering pupils' prior attainment. Progress is very good because of the effective teaching and pupils' positive attitudes. Pupils' work is well organised, providing evidence of good research skills and some analytical ability when dealing with hypothetical business situations. In all lessons, pupils are engaged in discussions on a range of issues that demonstrate reasonably well-developed skills in forming and defending opinions. Pupils are able to plan their own work when researching and completing assignments. They make good use of computers.
142. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject. They foster interest and understanding in the pupils through carefully planned

lessons. Teachers use excellent computer-designed presentations, which ensure that pupils are well aware of expectations in lessons. Relationships are very good, demonstrating high levels of mutual respect and understanding. Teaching strategies are carefully orchestrated to promote knowledge and understanding through whole-class and small group activities. Teachers' expectations are high and the work is challenging, allowing all pupils to experience the complex nature of business. Literacy is an integral part of all lessons, which helps pupils to improve their skills in communication and in the presentation of work. All pupils have been given targets and they are capable of discussing their progress towards achieving them. Some of the pupils interviewed were knowledgeable and articulate when discussing their work. They fully appreciated the quality of teaching, support and guidance given to them by their teachers. The quality of pupils' learning about the local and world view of business could be enhanced by better provision of relevant newspapers, periodicals and magazines.

143. The department is well managed. The teachers work as a very effective team with a shared vision of high expectations. They exchange ideas for good practice and support each other effectively. Schemes of work are detailed and implemented well. Assessment is very effective, being used to influence the planning of lessons and giving the pupils a clear understanding of their progress, attainment and future expectations. Improvements since the previous inspection have been good and the number of pupils opting for business as a GCSE subject is increasing.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most of the demands of the new syllabus are being met within personal, social and health education lessons and in other subjects.
- The quality of teaching is good, overall.
- There is a need for comprehensive monitoring of the subject in order to ensure that all topics are effectively taught and pupils' achievements recorded.

Commentary

144. Citizenship became a compulsory subject of the National Curriculum from August 2002. In September 2002 the headteacher instigated an audit of the school's curriculum. This revealed that many of the demands of the new syllabus are already being met. The citizenship agenda of political literacy, social and moral responsibility and community participation strongly underpins the school's ethos, thus providing a very sound basis for the delivery of the school's citizenship curriculum.
145. Most subjects, as well as personal, social and health education lessons and tutorial lessons, are delivering many aspects of the subject. In addition, pupils are learning the skills of actual citizenship and political literacy though tutor periods. They are encouraged to have their voices heard and are provided with opportunities to participate in school decision-making, such as in the school council meetings.
146. Inspection evidence indicates that the quality of the teaching of citizenship is at least satisfactory, with some lessons judged to be good or very good. Teachers are very well prepared for their lessons and pupils respond very positively. Pupils are encouraged to take an active part in lessons. A good example of this was observed when a group of Year 8 pupils discussed the effects of vandalism in their community and came up with perceptive comments on how it could be reduced.

147. Following the successful introduction of this new subject, there is now a need for a more structured approach to its implementation. The school is considering the introduction of discrete citizenship lessons that may ensure that all aspects of the statutory syllabus are taught. The school would then be in a better position to monitor its effectiveness.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

Provision in PSHE is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, curriculum planning ensures a good range of opportunities.
- Careers education and guidance are very good.

Commentary

148. All pupils in the school follow a PSHE programme. The programme is well organised and the school meets its statutory obligation to deliver a programme of drugs education and sex and relationships education. The programme is well designed to enable pupils to develop clear and responsible approaches to these matters.
149. The work that pupils do is well-structured. The overall quality of teaching is good. The best teaching enables pupils to engage in a meaningful discussion of issues, as seen in a Year 8 lesson in which pupils debated vandalism.
150. The school's programme for careers education and guidance is very well managed and is very effective in helping pupils to prepare themselves for the next stage of learning and the world of work. The preparation for the work experience programme that all pupils in year 10 undertake is very good. Last year almost 60 companies or organisations were involved. The school also arranges extended work experience, which sometimes entails one day per week, for a small number of pupils from the inclusion unit. A particularly good feature of the school's approach to careers education is the job-shadowing programme, which involves pupils in Years 7 to 9. Last year, over half of Year 7 pupils and a third of those from Years 8 and 9 took part, spending one day at work with an adult they knew. Pupils complete a booklet on their experience and are awarded a certificate.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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