

INSPECTION REPORT

CHILTON TRINITY TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Bridgwater

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123881

Headteacher: Mrs P Hollinghurst

Lead inspector: Mr R Palmer

Dates of inspection: 26th – 29th January 2004

Inspection number: 260785

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
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1024
School address:	Chilton Street Bridgwater Somerset
Postcode:	TA8 3JA
Telephone number:	01278 455631
Fax number:	01278 444361
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Ballard
Date of previous inspection:	8th – 12th March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is of average size for secondary schools and is almost fully subscribed. It became a specialist technology college in 2002 and holds the awards of Sportsmark and Investor in People. The school is part of the Bridgwater Education Action Zone. Boys outnumber girls in all years. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is below average. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Very few pupils are from ethnic minorities. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, nearly one in five, is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is average. Most of these pupils have speech and communication difficulties or have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
31198	R Palmer	Lead inspector	
9163	G Humphrey	Lay inspector	
8503	A Allfree	Team inspector	Design and technology
8104	J Child	Team inspector	Music
27277	O Coates	Team inspector	Mathematics
1517	D Griffith	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs
10385	K Hopkins	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
30240	C Mathews	Team inspector	Physical education
32367	J Pike	Team inspector	Art and design Citizenship
19214	G Price	Team inspector	English
31112	M Simm	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
21866	D Tracey	Team inspector	Science
20497	V Williams	Team inspector	History Geography

The inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections

51 High Street

Chasetown

Burntwood

Staffordshire

WS7 3XE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **satisfactory** and improving school. It has many good features. It provides **satisfactory** value for money. Standards are below average when pupils join the school and average when they leave. Achievement is good overall but is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The quality of education is satisfactory for pupils of all backgrounds and capabilities. The quality of teaching is good and the quality of learning is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- In 2003, national test results in Year 9 were well above those of similar schools.
- GCSE results, particularly in English, indicated underachievement overall in 2003.
- Good teaching helps pupils to reach higher standards than expected from standards on entry.
- Pupils underachieve in religious education in Years 7 to 9.
- Most pupils behave well, but poor attitudes and low aspirations of a few limit others' progress.
- The headteacher's good leadership sets a clear direction for improvement.
- Monitoring is not always effective in sharing good practice widely and quickly.
- A good curriculum and very good out of class activities enhance pupils' all-round development.

Improvement since the previous inspection is **satisfactory**. Results in public examinations are rising at a suitable rate, but GCSE performance in English and mathematics should be higher. Teaching remains good. Good leadership by the headteacher has resulted in important developments such as technology college status. The school responded positively to the previous key issues so that standards are substantially higher in information and communication technology (ICT), have improved in literacy and teaching is now satisfactory in art and design. Teachers in all subjects make increasingly effective use of assessment.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	C	E

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

Standards are average by Year 11 and indicate **good** achievement overall. Pupils make faster progress in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Standards are above average by Year 9 and represent good achievement. Results are rising at an above average rate in the Year 9 national tests. In 2003, they indicated very good achievement overall and were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. Achievement is good overall in Years 7 to 9, but is unsatisfactory in religious education. GCSE results are improving at the same rate as nationally. However, in 2003, though average, they were well below those of similar schools and represented unsatisfactory achievement. Results in ICT were significantly above average and indicated high achievement. The low self-esteem of a small minority of pupils has an adverse effect on GCSE performance. Currently, standards by Year 11 are average in English and mathematics, above average in science and well above average in ICT. They are below average in art and design and history and are at least average in all other subjects. Achievement by Year 11 is very good in ICT and geography, good in science, design and technology and physical education. It is satisfactory in English and mathematics and all other subjects.

Provision for pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Attendance is average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**.

Teaching is good overall. Learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects apart from religious education in which it is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs receive good teaching and support. Teachers are succeeding in raising boys' achievement through a range of different activities. Satisfactory use of assessment helps pupils to improve their work. The best teachers have high expectations, use many teaching methods, explain the work clearly, challenge pupils to think for themselves and ensure that work matches individual pupils' capabilities well. They insist on good behaviour that enables all pupils to make good progress. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching is a result of low expectations, inadequate management of behaviour and, occasionally, the teacher's lack of expertise in teaching the subject. Low aspirations of a few pupils, mainly in Years 10 and 11, have an adverse effect on learning. Teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT is satisfactory.

The good curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. Through active participation in very good extra-curricular activities, pupils enrich their learning, particularly in drama and sport. Accommodation and resources are adequate. Pastoral care is good. Pupils receive suitable support and guidance. Partnership with parents, schools and the community is good overall and supports pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory** overall. The leadership of the headteacher is **good**. Governance is **good**. However, the school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. Monitoring of teaching and learning is adequate but lacks the consistency to ensure the spread of good practice. Improvements are taking place in raising achievement and developing teaching and the curriculum. Governors and senior staff know the school's strengths and weaknesses well, check its performance closely and effectively and set suitable targets. Financial planning and management are good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are very happy with most aspects of the school. Their main concern is about behaviour. Although the vast majority of pupils behave well, a few pupils have behavioural and emotional difficulties and behave poorly at times. Procedures to manage behaviour are good but not always applied consistently.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise achievement in GCSE examinations, particularly in English;
- raise achievement in religious education in Years 7 to 9;
- raise pupils' aspirations and ensure consistency in managing any poor behaviour;
- improve the monitoring of teaching and learning and spread good practice more effectively;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- make provision for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards are rising and are average by the end of Year 11. The achievement of boys and girls of all capabilities and backgrounds is good overall. It is good by Year 9 and satisfactory by Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in Year 9 national tests are above average and indicate very good achievement.
- Although GCSE results are average and rising steadily, they were not high enough in 2003.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in religious education in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards in ICT are particularly high by Year 11.
- Strategies to raise boys' achievement are successful, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- The poor attitudes of a few pupils restrict achievement, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

1. Pupils' standards on entry to the school are below average overall. Standards are average when they leave the school at the end of Year 11, as shown by GCSE results that have matched the national average in the past three years.

2. Over the past three years, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 were broadly average. Results are higher than at the time of the previous inspection. Boys gained slightly higher results than girls. Results for boys were above the national average for boys. Those for girls matched the national average for girls. In 2003, results were above average overall and much higher than expected from pupils' levels of attainment on entry in Year 7. They were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. Compared with pupils' attainment in these subjects when they joined the school, these results represented achievement that was excellent in English, good in mathematics and unsatisfactory in science. Results in these tests are rising faster than the national rate of improvement. The school exceeded its suitably challenging targets for performance in these tests in 2003.

3. GCSE results are improving at the same rate as the national improvement. Boys and girls both attain results that match the respective national averages for boys and for girls. The performance of girls is slightly higher than that of boys, but the gap between their performances is narrower than the national difference. In 2003, GCSE results, in terms of the points gained from pupils' best eight subjects, were well below those of schools that had similar levels of prior attainment at the end of Year 9. Taking into account the non-GCSE courses taken by nearly one in 10 pupils, the results in 2003 nevertheless represented unsatisfactory achievement based on pupils' previous attainment at the end of Year 9. However, they represented good achievement when compared with their standards in Year 7. Results in ICT were significantly above average for the large number of pupils entered and indicated excellent achievement. The school fell short of its targets for performance in GCSE examinations in 2003. As observed in a few classes, a few pupils, particularly in Year 11, have low self-esteem and have attitudes that indicate 'can't or won't do' rather than 'can or will do'. These attitudes have an adverse effect on GCSE performance.

4. Until very recently, the school has been judging its GCSE performance against that of schools in similar social circumstances and with similar numbers of pupils entitled to receive school meals. These comparisons show that in 2002 and 2003, GCSE results were above average. However, they did not point out that pupils were not achieving as well as they should. The school is now, suitably, concentrating its efforts on making more effective use of value-added information to build on pupils' previous standards.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	48.0 (46.0)	53 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	84.0 (88.0)	89 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96.0 (97.0)	95 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	32.3 (32.9)	34.7 (34.6)

There were 209 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. In Years 7 to 9, standards are currently above average and represent good achievement overall. Standards are above average in English, mathematics and ICT. They are average in science and all other subjects, apart from art and design and religious education in which they are below average. Achievement is good in English, mathematics, science, ICT, design and technology geography, history and physical education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects except religious education in which it is unsatisfactory. Boys and girls of all capabilities, including those with special educational needs, make similar rates of progress in Years 7 to 9. The very small number of pupils of ethnic minority background achieve as well as other pupils.

6. In Years 10 and 11, standards are currently average. They represent good achievement compared with pupils' standards on entry to the school and satisfactory achievement based on performance at the end of Year 9. Standards are well above average in ICT and above average in, science, design and technology and geography. They are average in English and mathematics and all other subjects, apart from art and design and history in which they are below average. Pupils' achievement by Year 11 is very good in ICT and geography, good in science, design and technology and physical education. Achievement is satisfactory in English and mathematics and all other subjects.

7. The larger proportion of boys than girls in all years has the effect of lowering the school's overall GCSE performance in comparison with national figures. This is because the attainment of boys is lower than that of girls nationally. Nevertheless, boys achieve as well as girls in the school. Teachers work hard to raise boys' achievement and have been particularly successful in Years 7 to 9. Strategies that have helped boys to concentrate well and to work productively to improve their work include: the deliberate seating of boys next to girls, for example, in some English classes; the increased use of ICT in subjects such as design and technology; the frequent feedback about GCSE coursework in several subjects and the careful choice of assignments, for instance in geography, that are of particular appeal to boys.

8. Standards of literacy are average overall. They enable pupils to cope competently with the reading and writing requirements of all subjects. Pupils' skills in numeracy are average and competent to support their work across the curriculum. Skills in ICT are particularly good, but limited access to computing equipment means that pupils are not able to use computers often enough to enhance their work across subjects. The school's status as a technology college has enabled it to increase the computing resources considerably. This good provision has contributed considerably to pupils' high standards in ICT by Year 11.

9. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall, achieving as well as their peers. For example, they develop good skills in making products in design and technology and use spell-checkers well and redraft their work competently in ICT. Pupils receiving specialist support in the Enrichment Centre achieve well.

10. Through its involvement in the local Education Action Zone, the school has identified pupils who are gifted or talented and provides suitable opportunities to help them to achieve their potential. Gifted pupils achieve well over time. They usually receive extension work that is of appropriate

difficulty and challenge. Talented pupils benefit from a range of good opportunities, particularly in extra-curricular activities, that encourage them to reach high levels of performance in areas such as drama, music and sport.

11. Achievement is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11 for a few reasons. In Years 7 to 9, the effective implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategies across subjects has helped pupils to correct previous underachievement in various aspects of their work, particularly in English and mathematics. This means that pupils are working at levels that at least match their potential by the end of Year 9. Accordingly, the starting point for measuring achievement in Years 10 and 11 is much higher. The school's previous difficulties in recruitment of staff, long-term absences through illness of a few staff, and the use of non-specialists have left gaps in the skills and knowledge of pupils currently in Year 11, in subjects such as mathematics, music and religious education. The low aspirations and poor attitudes of a small minority of pupils have a more adverse effect on achievement in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The unsatisfactory achievement in religious education in Years 7 to 9 is mainly a result of inadequate leadership and management of the subject and the use of too much non-specialist teaching.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are satisfactory. Attendance is average. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The large majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well.
- The poor behaviour of a few hinders the learning of others in a few classes.
- Low aspirations of a small minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 restrict achievement.
- Good teaching of spiritual, moral, social and cultural values promotes personal development.
- Satisfactory attendance and good punctuality assist continuity of learning.

Commentary

12. The large majority of pupils say that they enjoy school and find the work interesting and challenging. These pupils behave well, want to learn, and show interest and commitment towards their work. However, behaviour is only satisfactory overall because, in a few lessons and around the school, a small minority of pupils do not behave as well as they should. Their inconsiderate behaviour detracts from their own learning and that of others. The school has suitable procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour, which recognise the rights of all pupils to be treated fairly and as individuals. A small amount of bullying occurs but the school's response to reported incidents is rigorous, quick and effective. Pupils say that when bullying or harassment takes place they have the confidence and trust to talk with members of staff. The school places a strong emphasis in its programme for pupils' personal development on promoting good relationships and racial harmony. Pupils with learning difficulties have good attitudes to learning and respond positively to well planned lessons.

13. To maintain its expected standards of behaviour, the school takes a firm approach in the use of exclusion. The rate of exclusion is high but is used appropriately as a last resort. Pupils say that the operation of the exclusions policy is just and fully understood by all.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1010	90	3
White – any other white background	7	0	0
Mixed – White and black Caribbean	0	2	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other black background	1	0	0

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

Attendance

14. Attendance is satisfactory and matches the national average. It has improved over time as a result of the schools' rigorous monitoring and results in continuity of learning. Sensitive contact with the families of pupils who do not have good records of attendance helps to overcome difficulties in a spirit of mutual co-operation. Pupils arrive at school on time. Their good punctuality ensures a prompt start to lessons.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.6	School data:	0.9
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.

15. Pupils welcome, and participate actively in, the many opportunities provided for them to take responsibility and show initiative. For example, Year 9 pupils volunteer to train as 'Ambassadors' who visit primary schools and become mentors to individual pupils when they transfer to Chilton Trinity. The school council provides an effective platform from which pupils express their views, contribute to the development of school policies and take part in the life and work of the school. However, a small minority of pupils lack self-esteem and have low educational aspirations, particularly in Years 10 and 11. As a result, the good rate of progress made in lessons in Years 7 to 9, slows in Years 10 and 11 and is only satisfactory. Pastoral staff and subject teachers try hard, and with increasing success, to engage the interest of these pupils, for example through provision of alternative and work-related courses for older pupils.

16. Pupils develop good self-awareness and personal values through the good teaching of spiritual, moral and social values across subjects and, particularly, in lessons in personal, social and health education and religious education. The vast majority of pupils respect the views of others, develop good social skills and learn to act according to their own principles. They are prepared, in a mature way, to challenge things that they consider to be unfair. They develop a good appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions through work in many subjects, contributions from parents and other visitors, and through frequent and regular opportunities to visit places of cultural and historic interest. Very good provision of extra-curricular activities, for example in sport and drama,

make a very positive contribution to pupils' all-round personal development. The school has maintained the positive ethos that was reported in the previous inspection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education in Years 7 to 11 for boys and girls of all backgrounds, including those with special educational needs. The curriculum is good and, enriched by very good extra-curricular activities, meets the needs of pupils of different capabilities. The resources and accommodation available are adequate. The quality of care is good. Assessment is satisfactory. Pupils receive appropriate support, advice and guidance, based on monitoring.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 11. The quality of learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Assessment is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is helping to raise standards, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers set work that challenges pupils of all capabilities to think carefully.
- A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching hinders learning, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching strategies to raise the achievement of boys are succeeding.
- Although satisfactory, assessment and marking are of inconsistent quality across subjects.
- Most pupils are keen to learn, but low aspirations of a few pupils hinder the progress of others.

Commentary

17. The quality of teaching is good overall, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. It reflects the view about teaching expressed by pupils and parents in the questionnaires completed for the inspection. Teaching observed varied from excellent to unsatisfactory. The proportion of very good or better teaching observed has increased slightly but the amount of unsatisfactory teaching is about the same as in the previous inspection. Teaching was good or better in around three out of every five lessons seen. Good teaching was observed in all subjects. The unsatisfactory teaching was spread across a few subjects, particularly religious education and citizenship.

18. The implementation of performance management and other systems has helped to ensure that teaching is good overall. However, though satisfactory, the monitoring of classroom performance lacks consistency and does not always ensure the effective sharing of good practice within and across subjects.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 137 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (2%)	24 (18%)	57 (42%)	45 (33%)	8 (6%)	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.

19. Learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Management is not fully effective in raising the aspirations of the small minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 who tend to write off their chances of academic success. An important reason that pupils' learning and achievement in Years 10 and 11 are only satisfactory, despite good teaching, is the low opinion that a small minority of pupils have about their potential. Many teachers try hard to counter this feeling among pupils that they can't do the work. In subjects such as ICT, science, design and technology, geography and physical education, which contain many practical and interesting activities, all pupils usually respond positively and work hard and productively. Lower attainers in Year 10 were observed working with enthusiasm and making good progress on work-related courses at the local further education college because they find the work relevant and interesting and they are encouraged to do their best. However, a small number of teachers do not share the high expectations of the large majority of

teachers and allow the pupils who have insufficiently high aspirations to underachieve. For example, a high proportion, nearly one in 10 pupils does not enter the GCSE English examination. In a few lessons, despite good teaching, the poor attitudes and occasional bad behaviour of a few pupils hindered the progress of other pupils.

20. Teachers generally insist on good behaviour in class. The large majority of pupils respond well and respect the learning of others. In a few classes, the poor behaviour of a small number of pupils leads to unsatisfactory learning for the rest of the class, despite good attempts by the teacher to control such behaviour. Strategies to promote the achievement of boys are successful. They include the setting of short, carefully timed activities that involve rapid and encouraging feedback and the adjustment of the curriculum to ensure that activities appeal to boys' interests.

21. Many positive features were evident in the good or better lessons observed. Expectations of teachers were suitably high. Teachers made effective use of their expertise and knowledge in the specialist subject to provide a wide variety of activities that interested and challenged all pupils in the class to think carefully and to make good progress. Confident, clear explanations and probing questions ensured that pupils knew exactly what to do and why they were doing it. Effective use of praise and encouragement motivated pupils to work hard and to have high expectations. Good relationships between staff and pupils promoted good learning. Teachers provided good advice and support to pupils as they worked in groups or on their own. They encouraged all pupils to participate actively, and, as seen in an English class in Year 9, ensured that girls contributed fully to discussions in class without deterring the eagerness of boys to provide rapid answers. Pupils responded to the good teaching by completing the work as quickly, fully and accurately as they could. In these classes, teachers use their good knowledge of the pupils to react sensitively to their differing individual needs. In Years 10 and 11, for example in design and technology, teachers help pupils to prepare well for GCSE examinations and provide short-term targets to sustain their interest.

22. Typical of one of the very good lessons was a very well planned Year 10 science lesson for high attainers on the process of electrolysis. A brisk opening tested pupils' recall of previous work and ensured that students were very clear about what they were going to learn. The teacher used the electronic whiteboard very competently to highlight the main points about electrolysis. High expectations and a good focus on key words helped pupils to make fast progress. Computerised animations that required pupils to explain what happens during electrolysis and why, challenged pupils to think and kept higher attainers working at full stretch. Pupils developed their practical skills well through carrying out the purification process for themselves. A comprehensive plenary session at the end of the lesson, using a card game, consolidated learning and indicated that all pupils had made at least good progress. Pupils made a very good contribution to their learning by behaving very well, concentrating well and playing a full and active part in a range of practical activities.

23. The main shortcomings that made otherwise good lessons only satisfactory included limited opportunities for pupils to think or speak for themselves, over reliance on text books, and pupils being allowed to chatter off task. In a few English lessons, the lack of focus on steps for learning left pupils unsure about tasks and what progress was expected of them. The poor attitudes and lack of motivation of a few pupils occasionally slowed the progress of other pupils. The main features of the few unsatisfactory lessons observed included low expectations, inadequate handling of poor behaviour and, occasionally, the teacher's lack of expertise in teaching the subject.

24. The teaching of literacy, oracy and numeracy is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. The effective implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategies is a positive influence on pupils' good achievement by Year 9. The use of ICT to assist teaching and learning is satisfactory. Because access to computing equipment is often limited, pupils do not always have enough opportunities in lessons to use their good ICT skills to enrich and extend their work. However, in a few subjects such as design and technology, geography and science, teachers make good use of ICT as a teaching aid and provide good opportunities for pupils to use computers to research, gather and interpret information, to solve problems and to enhance the presentation of work.

25. Recruitment difficulties, some long-term staff absences and use of non-specialists have hindered pupils' achievement in a few subjects in recent years. This used to be the case in science. However, the department now benefits from suitably qualified and experienced teachers, with the result that achievement has improved considerably and is now good. The use of too many non-specialists to teach religious education is a contributory factor to underachievement in the subject in Years 7 to 9. The regular supply teachers used by the school provide good support and help to raise standards, as in mathematics, which currently is affected by long-term staff absence through illness.

26. Overall, teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs are good. The use of in-class support is particularly effective for the few pupils who have highly specific learning needs. In science, pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties achieve well because teachers provide stimulating work that keeps them busy through practical activities and use of computers. In design and technology these pupils benefit from frequent opportunities to discuss work individually with the teacher. In ICT, suitable software programmes encourage them to progress on to more challenging work as soon as they are ready. Pupils do not always make the same good progress because a few teachers do not make good use of the available background information on pupils. This is noticeably the case with temporary teachers and when different teachers teach separate topics of the same course.

27. Pupils with learning difficulties who attend some of their lessons in the new purpose-built Enrichment Centre receive well-organised support that meets their wide range of needs effectively. They improve their work through good use of personal folders and progress files and through involvement in setting their own targets. Computer-assisted learning promotes the progress of these pupils and is available on lap top computers that they take into lessons.

28. Procedures for assessment have improved since the previous inspection and, though their use is inconsistent across subjects, are satisfactory. The newly appointed progress manager and developments sponsored by funding from the Education Action Zone initiative are improving the school's acquisition, use and application of information about pupils' academic and all-round development. Teachers in all departments are making satisfactory and increasingly effective use of the school's detailed records to track pupils' attainment, progress and potential. Pupils know what their targets are, but a few higher attainers say that they would prefer them to be set at the maximum rather than at the minimum level. Teachers review pupils' progress against these targets at suitable intervals and adjust them as necessary. Pupils have record sheets inside their subject books to list their targets and progress towards meeting them. Marking of pupils' work is satisfactory and the current policy is being suitably updated. Marking is often good and encouraging for pupils, but sometimes it contains very little advice for pupils about how well they are doing and how to improve. Very good use of assessment is a positive aid to achievement in subjects such as science, ICT and geography and, suitably, involves pupils in assessing their own work and progress. However, in a few subjects such as English and mathematics, assessment and marking are of inconsistent quality and feedback is not always sufficient to show pupils how to improve.

29. The assessment and recording of the work and progress of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. Records are informative and used adequately to set targets. They provide appropriate information and guidance in pupils' individual education plans. Support is focussed initially on Year 7 and assessment for reading and spelling only happens after referral in any subsequent year. This system is not always sufficiently effective in identifying pupils' learning deficiencies quickly enough or in tracking pupils' progress closely enough. The very good organisation of pupils' files and reviews meets the requirements of the Code of Practice for special educational needs.

The curriculum

The curriculum is of good quality. It meets pupils' needs, ensures continuity in learning and provides very good opportunities for enrichment. Provision of accommodation and resources for learning is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good extra-curricular activities support pupils' learning and personal development.
- The good range of courses in Years 10 and 11 meets the needs of pupils of all capabilities.
- Careers education prepares pupils very well for the next stage in their lives.
- Provision for a daily act of collective worship does not fulfil statutory requirements.

Commentary

30. The curriculum provides a good range of opportunities to meet the needs, interests and capabilities of all pupils. It meets statutory requirements, apart from the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. Access to the curriculum is good for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and the very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds.

31. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Schemes of work for these pupils are innovative. The well-resourced and attractive Enrichment Centre has been in use since the start of this year and helps to provide a good learning environment for pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties. As appropriate to their individual needs, some of these pupils follow a reduced number of subjects in Years 10 and 11. Along with pupils of different levels of attainment, who lack motivation in the main curriculum, they benefit from an alternative curriculum that offers a wide range of courses and activities that suit their interests and careers aspirations. They enjoy the off-site provision and trips out. They value the opportunities to follow work-related courses that are linked with the local further education college.

32. Boys and girls of all backgrounds and capabilities appreciate and participate in good numbers in the very wide range of extra-curricular activities. These experiences enrich and extend pupils' academic, personal, sporting and aesthetic development. The enthusiasm and commitment of staff encourage pupils to take an active part. Teachers frequently adapt the programme of activities and events according to pupils' needs or requests. Good links with outside clubs and the local further education college motivate many pupils to pursue their active interest in sporting activities after they leave school. The Opportunities Club promotes learning and well being through a system of drop-in support for pupils who need help. The good use and availability of ICT facilities outside normal school hours enable pupils to perform homework and to carry out research and investigations to support and extend their work across all subjects.

33. The good programme of personal, social and health education, including courses for sex education and drugs education, assists pupils' all-round and personal development. The good sequencing of topics ensures that pupils receive advice, support and guidance at times most appropriate to their stages of development. Topics such as study skills are particularly helpful in showing pupils how to organise their work and themselves. Teaching of the personal, social and health education modules is effective because form tutors specialise in particular modules, which they teach to all forms in the year group by rotation. Pupils gain an adequate understanding of different cultures through work in subjects such as geography, history, art and design and music. The school's tradition of cultural events of good quality such as exchange links with Europe and visits by Zimbabwean singers and dancers, steel bands, and musicians from Bratislava helps many pupils to learn more about aspects of life in different countries.

34. Very good careers education and guidance, in collaboration with Connexions and further and higher education links, ensure very good preparation for later life and continuity of learning. Pupils value and benefit from the effective preparation and follow up of work experience. The 'Aim Higher' Roadshow and university residentials have helped to raise the aspirations of higher attainers.

35. Initiatives supported by funding from the local Education Action Zone are helping to raise pupils' self-esteem and to enhance learning. For example, many of those pupils in Years 10 and 11, who lack interest and motivation in the normal curriculum, respond positively to the very good opportunities to follow vocational and work-related courses. They value, particularly, the link courses with the local college and the extended work placements. Pupils taking these courses complete

tasks confidently and collaboratively. They understand the value of their new skills in possible future careers. Effective use of additional funding, as a result of the school's status as a technology college, has led to the rapid upgrading of ICT facilities that are having a very positive effect on standards in core ICT, design and technology and science. It has allowed the employment of an ICT systems manager with the result that the equipment stays in good working order. This has led to more practical learning for all pupils and freed teachers to focus on teaching and learning.

36. Improved curricular links between subject departments and the feeder primary schools assist the continuity of learning between Years 6 and 7. The good implementation of Key Stage 3 National Strategies has helped to improve standards of reading and writing across subjects and has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The organisation of the timetable across a two-week cycle is satisfactory overall. However, in many subjects and mathematics in particular, the splitting of classes between two or more teachers sometimes results in a lack of continuity that slows pupils' progress.

37. The number and qualifications of teachers and support staff generally match the needs of the curriculum. However, the use of too many non-specialists for religious education in Years 7 to 9 has an adverse effect on standards. Lack of success in recruiting a suitably qualified coordinator for special educational needs, has been resolved by a suitable temporary arrangement.

38. The accommodation for teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The building currently under construction is intended to replace the unsatisfactory accommodation for mathematics. The facilities for modern foreign languages are good, but insufficient. The teaching of many lessons in non-specialist rooms results in an inconsistent quality of learning in this subject. The very good accommodation for physical education motivates pupils and encourages their active participation in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties respond well to the attractive facilities of the new enrichment centre.

39. Resources for learning are satisfactory. Improvements in the number and range of computers available are helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning across subjects. However, the increased provision for separate ICT lessons restricts ready access to computing facilities in several subjects. Good use of resources for computer-aided design and manufacture is helping to raise achievement in design and technology. Pupils use the library and its good range of books effectively to support learning.

Care, guidance and support

The quality of pupils' care, welfare and health and safety is good. The provision of support and guidance, based on monitoring, is good and use of academic assessment is satisfactory. The school has adequate systems for seeking and acting upon pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good support and care assist pupils' all-round development.
- Inconsistent management of poor behaviour hinders learning at times.
- Very good induction helps pupils joining the school to settle in well.
- Pupils do not always know how targets are determined and how to achieve them.
- Pupils are confident that staff will listen and take action regarding their concerns and opinions.
- Pupils receive good guidance to help them to make informed decisions when they leave.

Commentary

40. The school has sustained the good quality of care and support for pupils identified in the previous inspection. Staff act sensitively to match the type and level of support to pupils' individual needs to ensure that everyone has the best possible opportunity to benefit from all that the school has to offer. Procedures for health and safety have improved suitably since the previous inspection

and are carried out properly. Good provision for first aid contributes to pupils' well being. Child protection procedures are appropriate and work effectively because staff are experienced, well trained and vigilant. The school maintains well-established links with social and other support services and all relevant external agencies that promote the welfare of pupils.

41. Pupils trust their teachers and the support staff. They say that when they need help or guidance, or have a personal problem, someone is always available to listen to their concerns and to respond appropriately. Staff give good guidance to pupils about their personal development. Pupils value the help that they receive when selecting their curricular options at the end of Year 9. They appreciate the advice that enables them to make informed decisions when it is time for them to leave and proceed to further education or employment. The school holds a target setting day for all pupils, which is well attended by parents or a nominated adult. Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 say that, although they know what their targets for attainment are and how well they are doing, they lack information about how these targets are determined and what they need to do improve their grades. Teachers in all subjects make adequate use of the school's detailed records to monitor pupils' progress and to show them how to improve.

42. Very good arrangements for induction help pupils of all backgrounds to settle in easily and quickly. Individual pupils and their families receive suitable guidance and support throughout the transfer period and during Year 7. Good support and advice help pupils to make reasoned judgements when considering transfer to further education or pursuing career opportunities. The school has satisfactory arrangements for seeking the views and opinions of pupils through the school council but there are no formal routine procedures through which individual pupils can communicate their views and opinions. Staff provide particularly good and sensitive help for pupils who require additional support either with their learning or with personal matters. They encourage these pupils and ensure that they have opportunities to participate in all aspects of school life.

43. Very good arrangements with outside agencies provide valuable support for pupils with very high levels of special educational needs. Pupils benefit from positive and caring relationships with adults in the school. They enhance their personal development through a range of guidance from Connexions staff, learning mentors and family liaison support workers. The school provides good access for wheelchairs and appropriate facilities for the disabled. The very few pupils with physical impairment integrate fully and easily into the life of the school. Although suitable procedures to manage pupils' behaviour are in place, they are not always followed consistently. As a result, the management of pupils who have poor behaviour in class is not always effective enough to prevent an adverse effect on the learning of others.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is good. Links with other schools, colleges and the community are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are happy with the school but there are concerns about the behaviour of a few pupils.
- The school has a good dialogue with parents and keeps them well informed.
- The school shows parents how to assist pupils' academic and personal development.
- Very good partnership with other schools promotes continuity of care and learning.
- Pupils extend their learning experiences through very good community links.

Commentary

44. The good partnership with parents and the well-established links with the community and other schools have been sustained and developed since the previous inspection. Parents indicate much satisfaction with most aspects of the school's provision. They feel consulted and well informed. A few expressed concern about the behaviour of a few pupils and the possible adverse

effect of this on the learning of others. Inspectors support the positive views of parents. They understand the reasons for concerns about behaviour but find that the school has generally good procedures for dealing with behavioural problems as they arise, though these are not always applied consistently. The school works hard to help pupils who have serious behavioural or emotional difficulties to follow the school's appropriate code of conduct.

45. The school and parents work well together to make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. They collaborate well in trying to ensure that pupils attend school. The school contacts parents at an early stage to inform them if a particular problem arises that might inhibit effective learning and to work out ways of dealing with it quickly and effectively. The school provides parents and pupils with very good information about the curriculum. Good written reports inform parents about the progress that pupils make and what parents can do to help their children improve. For example, the school runs 'keeping up with the children' literacy, numeracy and ICT workshops. Parents attend consultation evenings in large numbers. The annual 'family target setting' day is a very popular event. The school is open and welcoming. It has good arrangements for gaining the views of parents and for dealing with specific complaints. The school conducts a family survey every two years that keeps it in touch with parental opinions. The parents, staff and friends association makes a positive contribution to the life and work of the school through good support in social, fundraising and educational events.

46. The school organises and manages a good range of educational programmes to help parents to support pupils' learning. It provides opportunities for parents to join vocational courses, extension programmes to support the gifted and talented pupils, training in positive parenting skills and other parental support programmes. Very good links with the community enhance curricular projects and work experience placements. The programme for citizenship benefits from input from local magistrates, the police and the health authority. Youth and community partnerships develop well through joint work in drama, music and sporting activities.

47. The school communicates effectively with parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs. Parents and pupils contribute fully in setting targets and in annual reviews. Parents value the school's good support and sensitive care of these pupils that enable them to make good progress both academically and personally.

48. Very good links with other schools support continuity of care and progression of learning. The joint curricular planning and pastoral support are of great benefit to pupils before and during the transfer from primary to secondary school. Very effective links with the local colleges of further education and universities based in the West of England enable older pupils to participate in a number of joint initiatives and programmes that extend their awareness of future educational and careers pathways. Links with the community and other schools have developed extensively since the previous inspection and play an important part in pupils' all-round development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher is good. Management is satisfactory. Governance is good but the school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and governance promote the academic and all-round development of pupils.
- Monitoring and evaluation do not consistently ensure the spread of good practice.
- Good professional development of staff helps to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Good financial management and planning support pupils' learning.
- The school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

49. The headteacher and governing body set a very clear educational direction. They have high expectations of staff and pupils that have resulted in higher standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9, improved achievement and a good quality of pastoral care. Governors carry out their responsibilities well and provide good support in their role as critical friends. They know the school well and are aware of what needs to be improved. They are proud of the school's strengths and, particularly, the way it tries to help pupils of all backgrounds and capabilities to raise their aspirations both for academic achievement and for all-round development. Governors are very supportive of curricular initiatives. They justifiably see the increased number of work-related courses and joint provision with the local further education college as important features in tackling the disaffection and low aspirations of a small minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11. The large majority of parents and pupils agree that the school is well managed and that it runs well.

50. The school meets all of its statutory responsibilities apart from the one relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship. Governors work closely and effectively with the headteacher. Frequent meetings of the chair of governors and other key governors with the headteacher help to keep the governing body well informed and up-to-date with the school's developments. These meetings enable a frank and helpful exchange of views. Governors welcome the advice and suitably detailed information that they receive from the headteacher. They monitor and review the school's performance carefully and set suitably challenging targets for improvement, in consultation with the headteacher and senior staff.

51. Financial management is good. The latest available audit of the school's finances indicated that financial monitoring and reporting were good. Budgetary planning is good. The bursar keeps a close and effective watch on the school's spending. Good procedures ensure that spending decisions provide best value for money and are linked to the priorities of the school's improvement plan. These were evident in the planning and building of the new Enrichment Centre and in the review of the school's photocopying and reprographics needs. The spending of funds received for specific purposes such as the standards fund, the capital works associated with the school's development as a technology college, and for special educational needs is in accordance with requirements.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3 262 224	Balance from previous year	103 005
Total expenditure	3 214 903	Balance carried forward to the next	47 321
Expenditure per pupil	3071		

52. The good leadership of the headteacher is a decisive factor in the school's recent good development. She is prepared to be innovative, is consultative and makes it clear to pupils and staff what is expected of them. After the failure of the school's first attempt to gain technology status, she took personal control of preparing the successful bid that has resulted in considerable improvements, particularly in ICT resources and building improvements. Changes in the school's catchment area a few years ago resulted in the school receiving a greater proportion of pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties. The headteacher's determination to make all pupils feel welcome and to provide a suitable curriculum for all pupils is meeting with success, though she recognises that work remains to be done to ensure that there is continued commitment to raising the aspirations of those pupils who have low self-esteem. The recent building of an attractive and well-resourced Enrichment Centre is a positive sign that the school is serious about providing well for pupils with special educational needs and those who have behavioural problems.

53. Recent staff retirements have necessitated a reduction from two deputy heads to one and the creation of a new senior leadership team. At this early stage of its development, this team provides commitment and good support to the headteacher and benefits from the effective work and guidance of the experienced deputy head. Their roles in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are developing but do not yet ensure that the very good practice that exists in the school is spread sufficiently across and within subjects. Responsibilities for the new senior managers are evolving but are clearly defined and carried out conscientiously.

54. The quality of departmental management is satisfactory overall. It ranges from very good in science and geography to unsatisfactory in citizenship and religious education. Effective management by pastoral leaders succeeds in providing a good quality of care for pupils of all backgrounds. Middle managers have clearly defined responsibilities, which they carry out adequately.

55. The school's attempts to recruit a coordinator for special educational needs have been unsuccessful, despite twice advertising the post at a very senior level. Currently, the former inclusion manager is the acting coordinator. This is suitable as a temporary arrangement. Satisfactory leadership and management of special educational needs have resulted in adequate improvements since the previous inspection. These include the building of a new resource base and making pupils' records available on the school's ICT system. The good help that pupils receive is a result of good teamwork, the effective follow up of reviews and transfer of information and appropriate use of outside agencies. Although documentation concerning pupils' needs is in place, it does not specify clearly enough how staff should link work to the targets in pupils' individual education plans or how staff should measure and account for the progress made by these pupils.

56. The school has suitable procedures for checking how well it is doing and planning for improvement. Increasingly effective use of information gained from assessing pupils' performance against national and local comparative standards help to raise achievement. By using information based on pupils' prior attainment, rather than relying too much on comparisons with schools in similar social contexts, the school is now focussing its attention appropriately on improving target setting for GCSE performance.

57. The outcomes of leadership and management indicate satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in 1999. Most of the previous strengths have been sustained, although pupils' attitudes and behaviour are not as good now. Results in Year 9 national tests are rising well. GCSE results are improving at a satisfactory rate. The quality of teaching remains good overall. The school has tackled the key issues from the previous report successfully. As a result, standards in ICT are high by Year 11 and ICT is now used to satisfactory effect to promote learning across the curriculum. Good improvements are evident in standards of literacy, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The quality of teaching in art and design has improved and is satisfactory. The use of assessment to set meaningful targets has improved and is satisfactory.

58. The current improvement plan lists 11 key areas for development during the current school year. They contain suitable pointers for raising achievement and for further improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. However, this large number of priorities does not show departments clearly enough how they should tackle the important issue of raising achievement further in Years 10 and 11.

59. Good procedures for staff development reflect the high priority that the leadership team places on further improvements in teaching. These include research by various teachers into certain aspects of the school's work. Achievement is rising as a result of a good focus on how different styles of teaching and learning have an effect on the way pupils behave. Performance management and review make a good contribution to this process. However, heads of department are inconsistent in the rigour and follow up of reviews and evaluations of the work of staff in their departments. Effective procedures ensure that new staff, and teachers who are newly qualified settle quickly into departmental teams and the school as a whole. The school is a valued partner of a

number of teacher training centres. The same support is afforded to teachers in training as to others new to the school.

60. The main aids to pupils' achievement are good teaching, competency in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, good skills in ICT, effective pastoral care and support, an innovative, flexible curriculum and very good extra-curricular provision, improved use of assessment, suitable support for pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties.

61. The main barriers to raising achievement are staffing difficulties such as long-term absences, use of non specialists and recruitment problems; inadequate leadership and management in religious education and citizenship; the low self-esteem and lack of motivation of a small minority of pupils; a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching.

62. Taking into account the funding received by the school, the social and economic backgrounds of pupils and the current quality of education and achievement, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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 in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The performance of Year 9 pupils in national tests in English is very good.
- GCSE results in English are not high enough, particularly for girls.
- Good teaching and learning are insufficiently widespread in Years 10 and 11.
- Departmental lesson plans do not give pupils effective programmes for learning.

Commentary

63. When pupils join the school their standards of English are clearly below average. When they leave school at the end of Year 11, standards overall are closer to the national average. This indicates satisfactory achievement by the end of Year 11. In the first three years, pupils make good progress to reach above average standards of attainment by Year 9. This rate of progress slows in Years 10 and 11, so that achievement is no better than satisfactory during this period. In tests and examinations, boys' results are closer to those of girls than nationally. Higher attainers achieve well in Year 9 tests but less well in GCSE examinations. Pupils with special educational needs make the same rates of progress as other pupils.

64. Standards in English are above average by Year 9 but slightly below average by Year 11 as measured by GCSE results. Results in the 2003 national tests for pupils in Year 9 were well above the national average. They have been consistently above average in recent years. Results have improved at a much faster rate than nationally and indicate good achievement both for boys and girls. English GCSE results for 2003 were below average overall. However, boys' results matched the national average for boys' performance at grades A*-C and indicated satisfactory achievement. Girls' results at grades A*-C in 2003 were below the national average for girls and indicated unsatisfactory achievement. GCSE English literature results were well below average and lower than those for previous years and indicated underachievement both for boys and girls. In recent years, GCSE results have usually been a little below national averages. The proportion of lower attainers who gain at least GCSE grade G is lower than usual, because nearly one in 10 pupils does not take the GCSE examination.

65. The work seen of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is above average. The work of Year 10 and 11 pupils is broadly average but higher than that indicated in recent GCSE results. Pupils in all years are competent speakers but lack refinement. They seldom have opportunities to develop oral skills through challenging and focused discussion in small groups. Whole-class discussions are usually unstructured and dominated by a few boys, so that many quieter pupils, especially girls, make little progress in speaking. Reading skills in Years 7 to 9 are above average. Pupils readily understand what they read but most read aloud only occasionally. Good use of the library as a base for lessons on reading helps to extend pupils' interest in fiction. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 show good understanding of drama such as Alan Bennett's 'A Cream Cracker under the Settee'. Many pupils struggle fully to grasp the meaning of short stories such as Doris Lessing's 'Flight'. The written work of most pupils in Years 7 to 9 shows a wide range of vocabulary and expression. Levels of accuracy in spelling are generally above average. By Year 11, pupils are writing with greater assurance but levels of accuracy are less consistent. Many girls and boys are casual in their work so that written

pieces are often undeveloped and superficial. The highest attainers, however, write carefully prepared and well-organised assignments.

66. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good. The enthusiasm of teachers often ensures that pupils make rapid progress. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are not so consistently positive in lessons. Teachers are less successful in managing the poor attitudes of a minority of pupils. As a result, they have lower expectations and teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good. The wide gap between the most and least effective teaching arises, in part, because programmes of learning for pupils in each year are not clearly defined and partly because the sharing of good practice is not widespread in the department.

67. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. High standards of achievement in Years 7 to 9 are a positive outcome. However, insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning across the department restricts the sharing of good practice and holds back standards of achievement in Years 10 and 11. Since the previous inspection, improvement is satisfactory. Standards of achievement in Years 7 to 9 have improved. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have remained unchanged.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

68. Standards of literacy are average. Pupils in all years are usually effective speakers in class. Reading is well developed so that pupils cope well with the demands in all subjects. Many pupils use the library to extend their reading. Good support for reading is evident in science, geography, history and ICT, in which teachers encourage pupils to read aloud and provide opportunities for them to develop their reading for research purposes. Pupils' written work shows average levels of accuracy in spelling and punctuation. Teachers mark pupils' work with good attention to errors of English, although in modern foreign languages marking is inconsistent. Opportunities for a variety of writing for different purposes are good in science and geography. Teachers place good emphasis upon the importance of using correct technical words. The school has made suitable progress in its strategy for raising literacy levels but the teaching of literacy, though satisfactory, varies in quality among subjects.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are not high enough and have indicated unsatisfactory achievement recently.
- Improved teaching and effective management are helping to raise standards.
- The sharing of good practice is not yet well established.
- Unsatisfactory behaviour and low expectations of a few pupils hinder the learning of others.
- Visits and exchanges motivate pupils to learn a foreign language.

Commentary

69. In 2003, GCSE results were well below average and indicated unsatisfactory achievement. Girls performed better than boys and the difference was greater than the national picture. Currently, under the direction of new and effective management, standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are average and achievement is satisfactory.

70. By Year 9, higher attainers use a variety of structures in sentences and short accounts to describe past events. Middle attainers are learning to describe past events but use simpler language. Lower attainers need support to produce sentences and simple short accounts. Pupils use models well to produce new language but most have difficulty producing spontaneous language. Pronunciation is satisfactory. Most pupils work hard, but a few pupils behave unsatisfactorily, interrupting their own and others' learning.

71. By Year 11, higher attainers understand and produce complex language in describing past, present and future activities. Middle attainers understand extended language and describe past and future activities, such as work experience or holidays. With careful support from the teacher, lower attainers give short spoken and written accounts.

72. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, the teacher shared the purposes of the work with the class and evaluated the outcomes. The teacher discussed with pupils the best way to learn new techniques and set work of suitable difficulty to encourage and challenge all pupils to think, including the higher attainers. Imaginative and stimulating presentations using ICT led to good learning. Pupils made good progress through quick and effective feedback to answers written on mini-whiteboards. Well-structured lessons enabled pupils to work with pace and enjoyment. Teachers spoke in French, German or Spanish as much as possible, which, together with frequent pair practice, increased pupils' understanding and use of spoken language. Good teaching enabled pupils with special educational needs to access language without reliance on extended reading. Recordings of native speakers helped all pupils to understand and use vocabulary, grammar and sentence structures. In other lessons, expectations were not so high and work was not always matched well to pupils' capabilities, particularly in mixed-ability classes in Years 10 and 11. Unclear instructions or inadequate preparation of tasks occasionally led to unsatisfactory learning. Marking rarely included targets for improvement. Plenary sessions were too brief and did not involve pupils in checking and consolidating what they had learned. Pupils had few opportunities in these lessons to use ICT to enhance their work.

73. Satisfactory leadership and management have resulted in satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Since September 2003, the new and effective leadership and management have led to a well-prioritised action plan, including measures to improve preparation for GCSE and the re-writing of schemes of work. As a result, standards are rising. Although teachers have undertaken suitable in-service training, the sharing of good practice is not effective and does not ensure a consistent quality of teaching. The good programme of visits and exchanges motivates pupils to learn. The department has three good teaching rooms. However, two in five lessons occur in unsatisfactory accommodation away from the department. Pupils in those classes make satisfactory rather than better progress because the climate for learning and the available resources are not as good as in the main language rooms.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well by Year 9 as a result of good teaching.
- GCSE results were unsatisfactory in 2003, but achievement is now satisfactory in Year 11.
- Inconsistent marking and written assessment do not guide pupils sufficiently.
- Teachers enhance pupils' numerical capabilities with good use of starter activities.

Commentary

74. Pupils join Year 7 with below average standards in mathematics. Standards are currently above average by Year 9 and average by Year 11. Achievement is good by Year 9 and satisfactory by Year 11.

75. In 2003, results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above the national average and above the average for similar schools. They represented very good achievement. In work seen in Years 7 to 9, pupils are achieving well in the main aspects of number, shapes and space and data handling. Middle attainers in a Year 9 class showed good skills in manipulating negative numbers when solving equations of increasing complexity. In a Year 9 class of low attainers, including pupils with special educational needs, all pupils showed a good understanding of how to simplify algebraic expressions and, relative to their capabilities, were

competent in the use of number. The department provides work of suitable challenge for pupils of all capabilities in Years 7 to 9. A small group of gifted pupils in Year 9 are entering for the statistics module of the GCSE mathematics this year, with the intention of completing the remaining modules for GCSE mathematics and GCSE statistics in Year 10.

76. In 2003, GCSE results were below average and well below those of similar schools. Achievement was below expectations because it was the first time pupils had been entered for the modular examination and, according to the department, teachers' inexperience of the new examination requirements resulted in pupils gaining low marks in coursework. Teachers have learned quickly from this experience and results for the first three modules for pupils now in Year 11 indicate average standards. High attainers in Year 11 have well above average standards in solving problems using the sine and cosine rules and have a good knowledge and understanding of the circle theorems. Middle attainers have good number skills, as observed in a Year 10 lesson dealing with percentages and recurring decimals. Low attainers do not recall number facts quickly enough as seen in a Year 10 lesson on fractions and decimals. Pupils used their skills in using and applying mathematics techniques during lessons involving circle theorems and interior angles in polygons.

77. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers make effective use of visual aids to support learning. For example, a cardboard thermometer helped pupils to improve their understanding of directed numbers and a square metre of cardboard brought realism to the concept of area for a special educational needs group. Pupils use individual white boards enthusiastically during starter activities to develop and consolidate their problem-solving skills. The successful implementation of the National Key Stage 3 strategy assists learning in Years 7 to 9. Teachers use the three-part lesson and stimulating starter activities to engage pupils' interest and concentration. They help pupils to make connections between different types of numbers and to sharpen their mental capabilities. In a number sequence starter, low attainers moved from integers to decimals to fractions with ease. Effective use of a plenary session occurred when the teacher seized the opportunity to challenge pupils who had been simplifying algebraic expressions to move into the concept of multiplication and division of indices. In a few classes, teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour well so that pupils are distracted and progress slows.

78. Assessment is inconsistent within the department. It does not usually include sufficient feedback to show pupils how to improve. Pupils know their target grades but do not know how to achieve them.

79. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Issues identified in the departmental review of 2002 and performance management interviews have been tackled and led to improvements, such as the focused start to lessons. A positive aspect of management is the good support provided to all teachers. As a result, the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good, despite nearly a third of classes having more than one teacher and the involvement of non-specialists. A few rooms used for mathematics are unsatisfactory. ICT is not used to full advantage because of restricted access to hardware. Both of these shortcomings should be resolved when the new buildings for the department are finished later this year.

Mathematics across the curriculum

80. Pupils improve their skills in numeracy so that they are average by Year 11 and sufficient to meet the mathematical requirements of all subjects. They make good use of these skills to support their work in other subjects. In mathematics, boys and girls of all levels of attainment develop their mental reasoning skills well in starter activities and acquire competence in working with number and handling data. Different subjects use the same methods for teaching mathematical skills and, therefore, ensure that pupils do not become confused. A particular example of this is the consistent method of teaching bar charts in mathematics and geography. In Years 7 to 11, pupils support their learning in design and technology through confident and competent use of their skills in measuring, weighing, estimating and performing calculations. In art and design, pupils use their knowledge of

spatial awareness to produce symmetrical patterns. Pupils plot graphs and carry out statistical analysis that aids their achievement in subjects such as science and geography. They show good skills in mathematical modelling in ICT.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations are improving rapidly.
- Very good leadership has led to good improvements recently.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve well as a result of consistently good teaching.
- Girls do not achieve as well as the boys in science.

Commentary

81. In 2003, results in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 were average. They indicated satisfactory achievement overall. Although results in science were not as high as in English and mathematics, they are improving faster than the national rate of improvement. In 2003, GCSE science results were above average for grades A*-C. They were much higher than results in English and mathematics. Results improved compared with those in 2002 and were above what would be expected from pupils' National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9.

82. Standards of work in Year 9 are average. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment that initially acts as a barrier to their learning. However, as a result of consistently good teaching they make good progress so that, by Year 9, their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and theories are average. Achievement is good through Years 7 to 9. High attainers in Year 9 showed good numeracy skills when successfully carrying out experiments involving speed, distance and time. Middle and lower attainers have a basic knowledge of leaf function in photosynthesis but do not understand the concept of biomass. Scrutiny of work shows that pupils of all capabilities develop good investigative skills.

83. Standards in Year 11 are above average and represent good achievement for boys and girls. Pupils continue to develop their enquiry and numeracy skills because of the emphasis placed on investigational work in lessons. These good skills make a major contribution to pupils' good GCSE results. In Years 7 to 11, pupils with special educational needs make the same good progress as other pupils. They benefit from the good individual support provided by teachers and learning assistants who ensure that work matches their capabilities well.

84. Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 11. The effective planning of lessons to a consistent format enables all pupils to experience a positive learning environment. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject specialisms are very good. As a result, teachers explain complex ideas in science with clarity so that pupils learn quickly. The insistence on high standards of behaviour ensures that time spent in lessons is productive. Very good relationships between pupils and teachers help to build confidence so that pupils are motivated to learn. Appropriate developments in teaching promote good learning. For example, in Years 7 to 9, the introduction of the three-part lesson has given a sharper focus on teaching pupils to acquire a range of learning skills that have helped to raise their achievement. Pupils' good behaviour and active cooperation lead to good progress in lessons. Improved resources such as computers, as a result of technology college status, are helping to improve teaching and learning. For example, lower-attaining Year 10 pupils made very good progress in their understanding of electric motors as a result of a 'hands on' approach supplemented by computer modelling of the concepts involved.

85. Very good leadership sets a clear direction for further improvement and has created very effective teamwork among teachers and support staff. Very effective management has helped to

raise GCSE standards considerably. A review of schemes of work has led to a science curriculum that relates more closely to pupils' interests and has more practical aspects than previously. Good support for new teachers ensures they settle in quickly and provide continuity of learning. Very good assessment of pupils' work helps to raise achievement because pupils gain a clear idea of the standard of their work and what they need to do to improve. The department has tried novel approaches to address girls' relatively inferior performance in science in National Curriculum tests and this is leading to improvements in girls' motivation and interest in science. Since the previous inspection improvement is good. In spite of staffing problems that hindered achievement in the recent past, standards are now improving rapidly. The department is in a very good position to move forward.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE and GNVQ results were significantly above average in 2003.
- Very good teaching helps pupils to achieve very well in Years 10 and 11.
- Good leadership and management promote achievement.
- There is a lack of rigour in assessment in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

86. Standards are above average by Year 9. They represent good achievement given pupils' average standards in the subject when they entered the school. Pupils in Year 7 use a presentation programme to produce good slides with animations. The higher attainers add suitable sound effects. By Year 9, pupils have developed good skills in using a wide range of applications to present their work. They show good skills in using a spreadsheet to analyse and to model statistical data. Girls and boys achieve equally well. Pupils with special educational make the same rates of progress as other pupils.

87. In 2003, GCSE results for the large number of pupils entered were significantly above the national average. Standards observed in Year 11 reflect these high results. Standards have risen considerably year-on-year since the previous inspection. The achievement of all pupils is very good because the teaching is very good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 show high levels of competence and confidence in using a very broad range of computer applications. Pupils are enthusiastic and show very good skills of working independently.

88. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The use of the network support facility as a teaching aid enables all pupils to follow instructions on the computer screen in front of them. This has a positive influence on pupils' learning because basic skills are taught quickly and efficiently to the whole class. In all lessons, teachers provide very good support and guidance to individual pupils and deploy learning and support staff very effectively. As a result, boys and girls of all capabilities learn well and work continuously and productively on task. Good whole-class discussions, often at the end of lessons, broaden and consolidate pupils' knowledge and extend their understanding through the sharing of ideas. Teaching provides good challenges that cause pupils to think carefully about the work. Teachers are quick to praise and to inform pupils verbally about how well they are doing. However, in Years 7 to 9, the assessment of pupils' work is insufficiently rigorous and does not show pupils clearly enough how their work relates to National Curriculum levels. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were unrealistically high. Assessment practice in Years 10 and 11 is good and enables pupils to know accurately how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.

89. Good leadership and management are responsible for the very good standards achieved and the considerable improvement in the level of ICT provision since the previous inspection. The recent

introduction of a GNVQ course in ICT provides well for pupils' capabilities and career aspirations. Although teaching is good overall the monitoring of teaching lacks structure to enable effective sharing of very good practice and the identification of training needs. The substantial increase in the number of computers in the school enables all pupils to experience one taught ICT lesson a week throughout all years, resulting in the high levels of ICT competence by the end of Year 11.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

90. Boys and girls make satisfactory and increasing use of their very good computing skills to support their work across the curriculum. Subjects include ICT in their schemes of work but a few, such as mathematics, are unable to teach their programmes fully because of lack of access to the specialist rooms and resources when required. This is despite the school's good level of computing resources. The computer suites are almost fully utilised in the teaching of timetabled ICT lessons and in meeting the heavy demands of very successful examination courses. As a result, there is varied but satisfactory use across the curriculum with some very good practice in design and technology, physical education and science. Pupils of all levels of attainment use the computer for research and to present some aspects of their coursework, although they have few opportunities to use the computer in art and design. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to use computers at lunchtime and after school. Pupils make good use of the computing facilities to improve their skills and confidence in applying them.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching helps pupils to achieve very well by Year 11.
- Very good leadership and management are effective in improving standards.
- Pupils achieve very well because they have very good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils do not always have enough access to computing facilities to enrich learning.

Commentary

91. GCSE results have improved and were above average in 2003. They indicated very good achievement for boys and girls. Pupils generally do better in geography than they do in other subjects. Geography is popular as a GCSE option with two thirds of pupils studying it in Year 10.

92. By Year 9, standards are average. Achievement over Years 7 to 9 is good. This is the result of good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils have a good grounding in geographical skills. They use and interpret maps well. They have good skills in plotting and analysis of statistical data graphically. Knowledge of place is very good, but the understanding that similar environments worldwide usually have similar characteristics is less well developed. Gifted pupils achieve satisfactorily but do not always receive work that stretches them fully. Average attainers work well to produce work above expectations based on their earlier standards. Lower attainers, including pupils with special learning difficulties, usually make very good progress in class as tasks are simplified appropriately for their needs.

93. By Year 11, standards are above average. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good. This is due to consistently very good teaching, precisely focused on GCSE examination requirements and well-motivated pupils who work hard. The best independent study GCSE projects are of exceptionally high quality. The good revision material and regular testing of pupils' learning contribute noticeably to pupils' progress. Pupils develop very good analytical skills. At times, pupils do not have ready access to computing facilities to extend and enhance their work.

94. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of pupils. Classroom management and control are very good. The relaxed yet purposeful air in lessons creates a good learning environment. Teachers' detailed knowledge of the topics taught and their very good rapport with pupils ensure that learning is productive and proceeds at pace. The best teaching is enthusiastic, stimulating and has high expectations. A teaching strength is the emphasis placed on investigatory skills and the frequent provision of enquiry project work that challenges pupils to think hard. Learning benefits significantly from the consistently very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons. Fieldwork undertaken provides most effective learning and greatly stimulates pupils' interest in the subject.

95. Very competent leadership and very effective management ensure that staff work together very well. Very good curricular planning and assessment of work motivate pupils to do their best. Closer monitoring of pupils' progress has helped to improve GCSE results. There is very good improvement in the raising of standards since the previous inspection and very good capacity to make further improvements.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results have not been high enough.
- Good teaching results in good achievement in Years 7 to 9.
- Effective fieldwork and a pupil-run web site stimulate interest in the subject.
- Assessment books provide a valuable record of work and aids pupils' progress.
- Low motivation and aspirations cause a few pupils to underachieve.

Commentary

96. Recent GCSE results at grades A*-C have been below the national average and have indicated underachievement. In most years, girls performed much better than boys. In 2003, pupils' results in history matched their grades in other subjects.

97. By Year 9, standards are average. Pupils achieve well over Years 7 to 9, as standards on entry were below average. They do so because teaching is good and they respond appropriately to work of suitable challenge and difficulty. Pupils have a suitable grounding in historical skills. They have an adequate knowledge and understanding of the main events and the people studied. Knowledge of chronology is good. However, pupils do not analyse and use documentation and pictorial sources well enough. Gifted pupils achieve satisfactorily but the work does not always provide enough challenge to stretch them fully. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons when specialist support is provided and satisfactory progress otherwise. Boys' written work is not developed as well as that of girls.

98. By Year 11, standards are below average. Achievement over Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall, when compared with these pupils' standards at the end of Year 9. Progress is not good because a few boys and girls are poorly motivated and have low aspirations. Pupils have developed further their skills in using historical sources. The best independent GCSE coursework projects indicate above average standards. The lack of effort of a few lower attainers means that they underachieve.

99. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In lessons in which learning is effective, good planning builds on pupils' competent knowledge base. Good classroom management and control and good relationships encourage pupils to work productively, actively and at pace. In a few lessons, the teacher tends to

dominate and direct too much of the work. However, teachers usually provide good opportunities for pupils to investigate situations and raise issues. Best learning occurs in lessons that have a variety of well-organised practical activities such as video extracts, photographs and documentary source materials. Occasionally, in Years 10 and 11, learning suffers from insufficient challenge, slow pace and low productivity because a few pupils lack motivation and are not managed well by the teacher. Teachers do not make enough use of the board to consolidate and check pupils' progress throughout lessons and, particularly, at the end. Effective use of assessment books tracks pupils' progress clearly and ensures that pupils know how to improve standards further.

100. Satisfactory leadership and management have resulted in adequate improvement since the previous inspection. Curricular planning is good. Lack of access and availability of resources and a coherent programme have hampered progress in using ICT to extend learning. Fieldwork provides very good enrichment and stimulates interest in the subject. The excellent website run by pupils has developed a virtual tour of Chepstow Castle that is used by schools in Canada and the USA. This is a good example of pupils' using their skills in independent learning to good effect.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is unsatisfactory by Year 9.
- Achievement improves in Years 10 and 11 standards rise to average.
- Inadequate leadership results in an unsatisfactory quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- The positive attitudes of most pupils are reflected in good personal development.

Commentary

101. By Year 9, standards are below average. Pupils make links between the actions, values and beliefs of individuals. They have a weak knowledge of religions today and their changing moral codes. They do not draw readily on diverse views within religious communities in the United Kingdom. This limits their cultural development. In Years 7 to 9, achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is unsatisfactory. They cannot use the beliefs and teachings of one religion to investigate another. They research the Internet well for homework tasks. Boys and girls have not acquired the skills of posing relevant questions when considering moral and religious choices. They lack practice in identifying a range of possible interpretations of religious sources when elaborating arguments to support their own views.

102. GCSE results in 2003 were average and represented satisfactory achievement. Overall, standards in Years 10 and 11 are average for pupils studying the short course GCSE. Pupils demonstrate average knowledge and understanding of social issues and the current views of religions. Their understanding is limited by lack of an earlier overview of each religion. In Years 10 and 11, boys and girls achieve satisfactorily. Higher attainers produce clearly argued coursework. The gifted pupils complete the full GCSE course. Pupils understand ethical choices and explain in a mature manner why believers argue over fertility treatments. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress, although the change of teachers for each topic results in inconsistent attention to their individual needs.

103. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, much non-specialist teaching occurs and, because of inadequate management, leads to an inconstant quality of learning. Good teaching uses visual evidence of religions today and matches learning to pupils' needs and capabilities. However, in several classes, teachers have low expectations and do not encourage pupils to interpret moral attitudes with respect to different religions. Teachers do not often share the purpose and relevance of the work with pupils or show them how to reach appropriate standards. Generally, teachers rely too much on whole class

teaching. Often, they talk for too long, explain too much for pupils and accept short answers rather than encourage pupils to extend their own ideas. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory. Teachers ensure that pupils acquire a balance of religious perspectives. However, teachers do not show pupils clearly enough how their work relates to potential GCSE performance.

104. Inadequate leadership and management have resulted in unsatisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9. Improvement is unsatisfactory since the previous inspection, when achievement was satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, the inadequate coordination of the work of non-specialist teachers means that pupils do not acquire a suitable knowledge and understanding of religious ideas or adequate skills in analysing and interpreting religious views. Nevertheless, most pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and, by Year 11, the subject assists their spiritual, social and moral development suitably.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and gain above average GCSE results.
- Good teaching and learning promote good achievement.
- Improved ICT resources help pupils to develop their work well.
- There is insufficient coordination of the curriculum and assessment for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

105. In 2003, GCSE results were well above average and indicated very good achievement. Girls did better than boys but the gap is not as wide as that seen nationally. Teachers' very good understanding of the requirements of the GCSE courses is an important factor in raising standards. Entering the school with below average standards in design and technology, pupils make good progress and reach average standard by Year 9. Pupils of all capabilities, including those with special learning difficulties, achieve well because teaching and learning are good. The good teaching of skills and processes in all areas of the subject results in good learning about how tools are used and the working characteristics of materials. When pupils present their ideas graphically, standards are below average because they often use a narrow range of drawing skills. Pupils rarely use drawings and diagrams to speculate about how an idea might work.

106. Because teaching and learning remain good in Years 10 and 11, standards are above average and pupils achieve well. The well above average standards in graphics products raises overall attainment considerably. The work seen in Year 10 shows the improving trend of recent years is being maintained. A few pupils in Year 11 are only making satisfactory progress because they are poorly motivated and have low expectations. Their design folders contain minimal evidence of a breadth of ideas and limited research into chosen themes. However, the vast majority of design folders reflect teachers' high expectations, with higher attainers presenting ideas confidently and very competently in written and visual form. Assessment is thorough and effective and plays an important part in raising standards. Pupils receive frequent updates on their progress and clear guidance about how they can improve. When pupils make things, they select and use tools and materials appropriately and take pride in their work. They understand the importance of a high quality of finish and respond positively to teachers' high expectations and good subject knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs do well in design and technology. Finding the curriculum accessible, their progress is as good as that of their peers.

107. As a result of gaining technology college status, resources for ICT have improved in design and technology. Effective use of these resources promotes learning. Pupils use computers well both

in designing and making, as seen in Year 9 pupils' clock projects. Pupils' increasing familiarity with these facilities develops their confidence and encourages them to work independently. Boys find this motivating, as they do the short-term targets set in the graphics products GCSE course.

108. Good leadership and management ensure that GCSE results are higher than expected from pupils' earlier attainment and that teaching is good throughout the department. However, there is no clear overview of the curriculum for younger pupils and no common approach across all areas to ensure an accurate moderation of assessment in Year 9. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards have been maintained. The use and effect of ICT on learning has improved considerably. Pupils now receive improved and good feedback about their progress. The lack of co-ordination of the curriculum for younger pupils is still a shortcoming.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Lessons in **drama** were sampled. All pupils have drama lessons in Years 7 to 9. Around fifty pupils choose to continue drama through GCSE courses in drama and in performing arts. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. They are good in Years 10 and 11 classes. Pupils are often enthusiastic and involve themselves readily in regular dramatic productions and drama clubs both in school and in the wider community. By Year 9, standards of performance and knowledge are average. By Year 11, pupils taking the GCSE course are working at above average levels. They build well on their standards at the beginning of Year 10. GCSE results in recent years have usually been above average but, in 2003, were below average. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 enjoy lessons and work well together, although a small number of boys are inclined to misbehave. Pupils follow a clear programme that emphasises the development of practical skills. Through improvised work, pupils gain a better understanding of themselves and of important social issues. Teachers have high expectations but do not always show pupils clearly how to produce work of high quality. In Years 10 and 11, very positive relationships between teachers and pupils create a purposeful and pleasant environment for learning. Pupils respond positively to encouragement to work independently. They enjoy making decisions about their learning and, accordingly, make good progress in lessons. Written work shows detailed and perceptive analysis of performances, for example of dance drama, and a good understanding of dramatic techniques. Outside the classroom, pupils have very good opportunities to enhance their drama skills and their all-round development through regular productions for both upper and lower school pupils. Large numbers of teachers and pupils are involved and standards are high. Drama is a valuable enrichment of the curriculum and enhances the social and cultural experiences of pupils of all backgrounds.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and achievement have improved since the previous inspection.
- Drawing and painting skills are below average.
- Talented pupils achieve well and reach above average standards.
- Monitoring is ineffective in spreading good practice.

Commentary

109. GCSE results for 2003 were below the national average and represented satisfactory achievement. The number of boys achieving higher grades has increased over the past four years, so that the difference in performance between girls and boys now matches that found nationally.

110. In 2003, teachers' assessments showed that pupils' work by Year 9 was below average and indicated satisfactory achievement. Current standards in Year 9 are below average and show that pupils are making adequate progress. Drawing and painting skills are below average for all pupils apart from the highest attainers. Talented pupils have above average standards in all aspects of the syllabus and achieve well. However, most pupils lack a competent knowledge and understanding of artists and their work. A few boys have weak independent learning skills that limit their achievement.

111. Current standards in Year 11 are below average overall, though the work of the talented pupils is above average. Pupils carry out good research about artists and different cultures, but they often do not link this sufficiently with their own ideas. Drawing skills are below average because observation is inaccurate and use of shading lacks subtlety. Most pupils, including those with learning or behavioural difficulties, achieve satisfactorily. Pupils use computers competently for research. In lessons, they do not have ready access to computers to use programs to alter and manipulate images. The talented pupils achieve well because they develop their ideas alongside their research, as observed in a painting that incorporated ideas from Dali and Picasso. Effective use was made of symbols and vibrant colours to represent dreams.

112. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 11. When teaching is good, lessons are well structured to ensure progression and continuity. In most lessons, teachers use exemplars well and give clear demonstrations of techniques, such as reduction printing. They use their good expertise in art and design to provide good individual support. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils made good progress on their individual projects because the teacher explained clearly how to link ideas and research together. Usually, teaching is only satisfactory because teachers do not structure pupils' learning into manageable steps. Teachers manage behaviour adequately but, occasionally, they tolerate too much chattering off task that reduces the levels of concentration. Pupils learn about art and design from a good range of cultures and this contributes well to their cultural development.

113. Leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory. The development plan identifies appropriate priorities. The newly created team of specialists is having a positive effect in raising achievement. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough to share the good practice in teaching and learning effectively. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Below average GCSE results have been partly due to many changes of staff in recent times.
- Teachers plan well and use their good subject expertise to motivate pupils.
- Extra-curricular provision encourages large numbers of pupils to extend their music making.
- The use of assessment and marking lacks consistency.

Commentary

114. Standards are average by Year 9 and indicate satisfactory achievement for pupils of all capabilities, including those with special musical talent and those with special educational needs. Pupils have average skills when performing and composing. They are below average in their understanding and use of musical vocabulary and musical processes.

115. GCSE results were well below average for the few boys and girls who sat the examination in 2003. Standards are currently average by Year 11 and show that pupils are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. In Year 10, pupils show average skills in practical music making but their standards are below average when they are listening to and appraising musical extracts. Pupils' standards in Year 11 are close to average in all areas of the music curriculum.

116. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers use their good subject expertise to motivate pupils. Suitable schemes of work and good lesson planning ensure adequate coverage of the music curriculum and that lessons proceed at a good pace. Boys and girls, with the exception of a few pupils of low motivation, respond well to practical music-making activities, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and make useful progress. Occasionally in Years 7 to 9, the expectations are not high enough and the work is too easy. Assessment at the end of each half term, or at the end of a

unit of work, helps to keep pupils well informed about progress and shows them clearly how their work relates to National Curriculum levels. Pupils improve their understanding of musical topics through involvement in self-assessment and by evaluating the work of others during lessons. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work against National Curriculum levels are, however, overgenerous, particularly in the listening and appraising area of the music curriculum. As a result, pupils sometimes think that they are doing better than they actually are.

117. Pupils extend their musical skills through a range of musical activities out of lesson time. They practise and develop their skills in performance in small vocal and instrumental groups. They improve their singing and playing through active participation in two musical productions every year that involve large numbers of pupils from all years. Only a few pupils take instrumental lessons but class teachers have sufficient expertise to develop the instrumental skills of those interested in guitar and keyboard playing. These experiences enable pupils to develop social and personal confidence and encourage them to work collaboratively in whole-school activities.

118. Leadership and management of the department are the shared responsibilities of two newly qualified teachers and are satisfactory. In recent years, many changes of staff have hindered achievement in music. Schemes of work have already and suitably been revised and are appropriate to current needs. Accommodation is self-contained and includes small and large spaces to encompass the range of departmental activity. Keyboards and classroom percussion instruments are in good supply, but access to other ICT equipment is limited. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Pupils' standards are now higher in Years 7 to 9 and the department's accommodation and resources have improved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2003 were above average and indicated good achievement.
- Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to promote high standards.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning does not ensure the spread of very good practice.
- Extra-curricular activities provide very good enhancement to pupils' sporting achievements.

Commentary

119. Standards are average by Year 9 and by Year 11. They represent good achievement by Year 11 as standards are generally below average when pupils enter the school. GCSE results are consistently above average and pupils achieve well.

120. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 across all aspects of the curriculum. In Year 8, girls use performance analysis software effectively to refine and improve their dance. In Year 9, girls improve their footwork and ability to change direction at pace to receive the ball in netball. In Year 8, higher-attaining boys dribble, send and receive the ball accurately and at pace in hockey. Average and lower-attaining boys develop these skills at a slower pace. All pupils worked well in small groups and in games situations. Pupils with special educational needs receive good and sensitive support that encourages them to participate actively and to make good progress.

121. Pupils sustain their good progress in Years 10 and 11 both in core physical education lessons and on the GCSE course. Standards are currently average in core physical education and above average on the GCSE course. GCSE pupils use ICT effectively to assist work on their personal, individual training programmes. Their very competent use of spreadsheets helps them to track their progress closely and to determine work and recovery rates. Year 11 boys, of all

capabilities, learn to use advanced training systems safely in the fitness room. GCSE coursework is of above average standard. In a badminton class, higher-attaining boys and girls on the general course displayed average standards. They selected and used long and short shots competently to move their opponents around the court. Standards were below average in a Year 10 volleyball lesson in which pupils lacked sufficient skills to control and serve the ball consistently. The introduction of the Junior Sports Leaders award and a national governing body award in life saving has increased opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to gain accreditation in physical education.

122. Very good provision for extra-curricular activities helps pupils in all years to practise and develop their skills across a wide range of sports. Departmental staff and teachers from other subjects show good commitment in running and supporting these activities for pupils. Strong and effective links with local sports clubs, especially in table tennis, hockey, rugby, cricket and basketball, help pupils to progress from school to community sport. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 taking the Junior Sports Leaders Award enhance their all-round development by assisting in sports activities provided for partner primary schools.

123. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers use their expertise in the subject to increase pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. In the best lessons, they set work of suitable challenge to enable all pupils to work to their full potential. They provide a wide range of interesting and carefully timed activities that encourage pupils to work hard and productively. In the few less effective lessons, pupils are not always fully aware of the purpose and expected outcomes of the work. In the few less effective lessons, pupils are not always aware of what they should be learning. Teachers are occasionally unaware of the immature behaviour of a few pupils who disrupt learning. At times, activities lack structure and are too difficult for lower attainers.

124. Good leadership and management ensure a clear vision and a strong work ethic throughout the department. Clearly understood working procedures assist good progress. Teachers' records of pupils' work and progress are effective and consistent. Teachers use these assessments to provide pupils with clear guidance and progressive tasks covering all areas of the activity taught. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Achievement and teaching remain good. Procedures for monitoring and self-evaluation are in place but are not used often enough for teachers to observe each other and to share best practice effectively across the department.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Work was sampled on the vocational courses in **engineering, health and social care** and **leisure and tourism** taught to pupils in Years 10 and 11 at the local college. Pupils have good access to a range of work-related courses and receive good guidance from college and school staff. They enjoy working in an adult environment. Standards of work seen reflected the capabilities of pupils on the courses. In the few lessons observed, teaching was good. Pupils showed good attitudes to the work and made good progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The focus was on citizenship within the personal, social and health education programme.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn about citizenship through a wide range of opportunities across subjects.
- Achievement is satisfactory but unsatisfactory coordination hinders faster progress.
- Pupils are not always aware of when they are learning about citizenship and have no criteria against which to measure their progress in the subject.

Commentary

125. Standards are average by Year 9 and by Year 11. They indicate satisfactory achievement throughout Years 7 to 11 for pupils of all capabilities, including those with special educational needs.

126. By Year 9, through their work in personal, social and health education lessons and in many other subjects, pupils have acquired average knowledge and understanding of the effects of racism and discrimination. They are aware of how the country is governed. They show an adequate understanding of the role of the media and how to look for bias. Pupils list the advantages and disadvantages of recycling.

127. By Year 11, pupils increase their knowledge and understanding of: the criminal justice system. Pupils of all capabilities develop their awareness of the work of charities. They show maturity in discussing and considering controversial and ethical issues such as genetic engineering. They express their own views on different issues orally and in writing. High attainers justify their views logically. Many pupils of average and below average attainment are more inclined to rush to a judgement.

128. Most pupils participate actively in the work of the school, through the many opportunities on offer. These include: school productions and mentoring other pupils. They gain insight to the democratic process through the work of the school council. They feel that their views result in action, such as their recent involvement in reviewing the code of conduct.

129. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers in different subjects do not make the idea of citizenship explicit to pupils during lessons. They do not assess pupils' work and progress against set criteria, so that pupils do not know how well they are doing in learning about citizenship. When teaching is good, learning is active and leads to good achievement. In a Year 10 lesson, in which pupils developed a good understanding of the issues surrounding punishment, the teacher used a thought-provoking video clip. This captured pupils' interest and they worked hard on the good range of learning activities provided. When learning is not so successful, teachers do not tell pupils what they should expect to learn. Activities in these lessons are uninteresting and teachers often talk for too long.

130. In Year 7, pupils have separate lessons in citizenship taught by a team of teachers. They have a change of teacher every four weeks. The course is well planned and makes good use of teachers' knowledge of the topics taught but the frequent changes of teacher hinder the continuity of learning for pupils. In particular, they slow the progress of pupils with special educational needs, who often take time to adjust to teachers' different approaches. In Years 8 to 11, pupils increase their knowledge and understanding of citizenship in personal, social and health education lessons, as well as across subjects. In Years 10 and 11, the GCSE Education for Life course makes important contributions to the teaching of citizenship.

131. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Although an audit of how citizenship is provided across subjects was completed and evaluated last year, no strategic plan has yet been drawn up to set out priorities and action for developing the subject. No assessment of pupils' learning is in place. The contributions from other subjects to the teaching of citizenship lack co-ordination. As a result, pupils make only satisfactory progress when the potential exists for good or better achievement in the subject.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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