

INSPECTION REPORT

LONG STRATTON HIGH SCHOOL

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121160

Headteacher: Paul Adams

Lead inspector: Clare Gillies

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 26th September 2003

Inspection number: 261136

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	621
School address:	Manor Road Long Stratton Norfolk
Postcode:	NR15 2XR
Telephone number:	01508 530418
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Alan Boycott
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Long Stratton became a Beacon school in 2001. It was awarded the Sportsmark for the second time in 2002 and has been affiliated to the University of the First Age since 2001. The community uses the school's swimming pool, and local drama and Youth Service groups use other facilities. Pupils come from primary and middle schools serving the village and rural areas, mainly south of Norwich. The socio-economic background of the pupils is average and their attainment on entry is also average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is average, although the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is above average. Less than one per cent of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and English is the mother tongue for all pupils. Apart from those entering the school in Year 8, from middle schools, the school population is stable.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20597	Clare Gillies	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Citizenship
9160	Keith Baker	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
19913	Roger Garrett	<i>Team inspector</i>	English
8756	Pat Hanage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics
21981	Anthony McDermott	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science
25377	Lorna Brown	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art
12328	Margaret Brookes	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and Technology
3930	Roy Pitcher	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography, history and religious education
12721	David Riddle	<i>Team inspector</i>	ICT
4426	Terry Fitchett	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages
4651	Philip Litchfield	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music
4578	Glen Beaumont	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical Education
12641	Pauline Lyseight-Jones	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	1
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	8
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	13
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	15
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	34

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. Standards are above average and achievement is good. Teaching and learning are good. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's ethos is good. With an above average expenditure per pupil, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Above average standards in English, science, mathematics, design and technology, history and drama. Pupils achieve well in these subjects.
- The inspection confirmed what pupils say – that they are taught well in most lessons. Teaching is very good in almost one in five lessons. Teachers and pupils are benefiting from training about ways to improve learning.
- Teachers know the pupils very well and in all years they care for them thoughtfully, providing helpful support and advice whatever their educational or social needs.
- Most pupils are keen to do well and work sensibly. They get on well together and have good relationships with teachers.
- Provision in music is poor so standards are well below average and achievement is poor.
- Below average standards in information and communication technology (ICT) as pupils do not use ICT enough in all subjects they study. An upgraded network was established in September 2003 and pupils now have ICT lessons.
- Underachievement in French, particularly in speaking and listening.
- Apart from sport, the range of activities after school, particularly creative ones, is limited.
- Undermining all the strong features above is a lack of care for the environment. The accommodation is indeed unsatisfactory but no one in the community has successfully tackled the unattractive and unacceptable amount of litter in the school grounds.

Although standards remain above average, the school's effectiveness has not improved significantly since the last inspection. This is because it is only in the last two years, when the present headteacher took over, that key issues such as assessment and long term planning, and other weaknesses such as standards in ICT, French and citizenship, have started to be addressed. The school is now in a better position to move forward.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	B	A	A

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

Overall, standards are above average and achievement is good in all years, especially in English, science, mathematics, design and technology, history and drama. Standards in German, geography, religious education and art are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils do not achieve well enough in music, and middle ability pupils do not in French in Years 10 and 11. In 2002, Year 9 test results in English, mathematics and science were above average and showed very good achievement. The 2003 results were not so high. GCSE results in 2002 were better than those in 2003, and the very good progress made by the 2002 leavers was not repeated. Relative to their performance at the end of Year 9, the 2003 leavers are likely to have made good progress overall.

Pupils' personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Citizenship, personal and social development lessons and many assemblies nurture strong moral and social standards. The school does not plan systematically enough for pupils' spiritual growth nor for expanding their cultural horizons enough, but there is no evidence that pupils are not tolerant of racial and ethnic differences. Pupils' attitudes are good. In many lessons during the inspection they were attentive, interested and responsive. Older pupils enjoy helping younger ones. Their behaviour is satisfactory - apart from their contribution to the litter problem. They give generously to charity. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

The quality of teaching is good. Many teachers have very good knowledge and experience of explaining their subjects. For them and pupils, recent training about research on the different ways people learn has begun to permeate the classroom. Pupils acknowledge that this has made some lessons more lively and helpful. So the quality of learning is good. Teachers encourage pupils to think for themselves, carry out research and articulate their opinions.

The curriculum is unsatisfactory because pupils do not use ICT enough in all subjects; there is only one vocational course and, at present, there are no creative activities after school. Pupils are very well supported in many ways, receiving thoughtful attention to their needs, so care, guidance and support are very good. In terms of pupils' welfare, litter on the grass is a health hazard. Other minor health and safety issues were brought to the school's attention during the inspection. The school's partnership with parents and the community is satisfactory. The headteacher has improved links with the feeder schools and the school's Beacon work has further strengthened these contacts.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. The headteacher has introduced changes which are gradually bearing fruit and his leadership is satisfactory. His well-considered vision for the school's development is not appreciated because he has yet to win the hearts and minds of pupils and the community. Several middle managers are most effective. Management is satisfactory, overseen by two caring and hard-working deputy heads. Despite the hard work and dedication of the Chair, recent changes in its composition mean that the work of the governing body is unsatisfactory. It is not fully aware of the school's weaknesses and does not probe what is going on enough, but it is to be commended for writing its own action plan to address these areas.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are reasonably satisfied with the school, particularly the quality of teaching. They would like communication from the school to improve, for example, to understand more about how teachers set pupils' academic targets. Pupils are more than satisfied with the school. At least four out of five of them acknowledge they feel trusted and that they are taught well and expected to work hard. They are more critical of behaviour than their parents. Despite full consultation, they, and their parents, have mixed feelings about the new school uniform. Many pupils think the food is very good although, understandably, they are frustrated by queuing for lunch. They rightly complain about the toilets. Parents and pupils dislike the amount of litter.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in music by writing up-to-date schemes of work, making the subject more lively and fun, introducing singing and instrumental activities and encouraging more pupils to learn instruments – especially those who learned instruments in their previous schools.
- Introduce a wider range of regular extra-curricular activities, especially in the creative arts.
- Persevere with the plans to use ICT in all subjects and check that pupils in Years 10 and 11 cover the National Curriculum. (Both are statutory requirements).
- Ensure that, in German and particularly French lessons, pupils speak and listen to the languages more.
- Eliminate the serious litter problem and foster greater care and respect for the environment.
- Also, to meet other statutory requirements, introduce a daily act of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Terms used: the term “**capped**” average points score describes the total points pupils attain for their **top eight** GCSE subjects. The average points score relates to the total points pupils attain for **all** their GCSE subjects. **Value-added** describes the amount of progress pupils made, for example between their results at the end of Year 9 and their GCSE results two years later. Statements about **achievement** take these value-added measures into account combined with how well pupils do compared to their ability.

Achievement in all years is good overall.
Standards in all years are above average overall.

Year 9 national test results, for English, mathematics and science combined, have been above average (except in 2001) since the last inspection. In 2002 pupils' achievement was very good overall. In 2003 results were slightly lower in English and science. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results were well above average in 2002, as they have been in most years since the last inspection. The percentage of pupils attaining five GCSE grades A*-C and the capped average points scores dropped in 2003, but the total average points score was almost the same as the year before. The very good achievement of the 2002 leavers was not repeated; relative to their performance at the end of Year 9, the results of the 2003 leavers will probably show good achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Above average standards in English, science, mathematics (the core subjects of the National Curriculum), design and technology (especially textiles), history and drama. Pupils achieve well in these subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve at least as well as expected.
- Pupils' achievement in music is poor. Standards are well below average at the end of Year 9 and below average for GCSE pupils.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are below average and pupils do not use ICT enough in all subjects they study.
- Underachievement in French, particularly in speaking and listening. Pupils do not speak and listen to enough French.

Commentary

1. The table below shows that mathematics is the strongest of the three core subjects; end of Year 9 test results have been well above average in three of the last five years. Pupils' achievement in mathematics in 2002 was very high; this is likely to be the case for 2003 as well. The 2002 English results were above average, representing very good achievement; those in science were average, representing average achievement. Both dropped a little in 2003 and were just under the schools' targets. Girls attain a higher total points score than boys because they do better in English. The headteacher is alert to gender issues in all years and staff have been consulted about ideas to raise boys' achievement – but the picture is not simple and it changes each year.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.3 (34.7)	--- (33.3)
mathematics	36.8 (36.8)	--- (34.7)
science	32.7 (33.3)	--- (33.3)

There were 110 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. 2003 national results are not available.

2. The percentage of pupils attaining five GCSE grades A*-C, which was well above average in 2002 (see below), has yet to match that attained in 1999. It was lower in 2003, and below the school's target, mainly because a number of middle ability pupils attained four GCSE grades A*-C, rather than five. The school is to be commended for analysing its performance in detail, and making sure that it considers carefully any areas where individuals or groups underachieve. There is no evidence that gifted and higher ability pupils do not attain their predicted results, and pupils with special educational needs do well, many attaining commendable GCSEs.

3. The average total points score in 2002 (not shown in the table below) was the school's best ever and it was nearly the same in 2003, exceeding the school's target. The capped average points score was well above average in 2002. It dropped three points in 2003. Achievement in Years 10 and 11, between 2000 and 2002, was very good. The percentage of boys attaining five GCSE grades A*-C went up in 2003 - encouraging as the school is focusing on this - whilst the percentage of girls attaining this measure dropped. Girls still performed better than boys but the gap narrowed. It is likely that achievement between 2001 and 2003 will have been good.

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	58 (67)	--- (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	--- (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (100)	--- (95)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37.2 (40.2)	--- (34.6)

There were 143 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. 2003 national results are not available.

4. The school has introduced its own value-added measures and for several years has noted and taken action to improve those subjects where pupils underachieve, for example in French and art, where value-added has been negative since 2001. The table of GCSE results on the next page highlights those subjects where pupils' results were above average in 2002, and likely to be in 2003. It is clear that pupils achieve very well in drama and textiles and that drama and history grades are rising. According to the school's data, value-added in 2003 was positive in all the design and technology subjects, and in science and geography, but less than expected in English, mathematics and history.

5. In music, in all years, out-of date schemes of work, uninspiring lessons which focus too much on theory, and no singing or instrumental groups, all explain the well below average standards and poor achievement. The headteacher had concerns about this department but had not appreciated how rapidly it had declined in the last few months. Discrete ICT lessons have started this term, but with so little experience in the past, pupils cannot yet attain average standards. In Years 10 and 11 pupils have too little time in ICT lessons to master the subject in depth. With an unreliable network in the past, pupils did not use ICT enough in all their subjects; this situation is improving slowly. The headteacher highlighted provision for ICT as one of his key priorities on appointment. Modern foreign language lessons do not focus enough on speaking and listening practice; as a result pupils are better at writing French and German.

6. Pupils who have special educational needs make good gains in reading and spelling as a result of working in small groups on special learning programmes. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good

progress in their vocational, life skill course. Gifted and talented pupils achieve as well as other pupils, and on rare occasions, they have entered and passed a GCSE examination early. Pupils' literacy and above average numeracy skills are good enough for them to use effectively in all other subjects (see paragraphs 47 and 57) Their ICT skills, which do not yet match their capabilities, are improving and a significant number of pupils have computers at home which they use well for homework and coursework.

7. Standards of work seen during the inspection were:

- Well above average in mathematics.
- Above average in English, science in Years 10 and 11, geography, history, design and technology (well above average in textiles).
- Average in German, science in Years 7 to 9, religious education, personal and social development (PSD) and physical education.
- Below average in French, ICT and citizenship and well below average in music.

8. Achievement in lessons observed during the inspection was:

- Good in English, mathematics, science, geography, design and technology and PSD.
- Satisfactory in religious education, German, history, art and physical education.
- Unsatisfactory in French, ICT, citizenship and music, where achievement is poor in Year 9 (see paragraph 5).

GCSE RESULTS 2001 – 2003 (percentage with grades A*-C)

Bold shows where performance was above average in 2002 and likely to be in 2003

	2001	2002	National 2002	2003	Comments
English language	62	74	57	66	Fluctuating performance. Upward trend before 2003
English literature	46	67	62	52	
Mathematics	61	62	50	51	At least satisfactory achievement which is often very good
Science (double)	74	84	50	70	Girls' underachieved (staffing problems in 2002-2003)
Science (single)	0		16	8	Reasonable value-added
Art and design	48	46	65	62	Value-added improving
French	39	31	47	29	Unsatisfactory value-added. Pupils do not speak French well enough.
German	64	71	54	60	Taken by higher ability pupils
Geography	58	68	56	53	12 pupils obtained A*/A grades
History	50	61	58	69	Steadily rising performance
Drama	82	78	69	80	Consistently strong results
Music	Very few pupils take this subject. 4/5 pupils attained grade C in 2003.				
Food	63 for all DT	72	52 for all DT subjects	68	Consistently above average. 13 pupils obtained A*/A grades in 2003
Graphics		66		60	Girls attained better results than boys in 2003
Resistant materials		51		52	9 pupils obtained A*/A grades in 2003
Textiles		67		95	Consistently very good value-added
Physical education	50	71	54	42	Fluctuating performance reflecting the ability of the pupils who take the subject.
Religious education (short course)			50	53	Pupils obtained A*/A grades

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal development is good: their attitudes, attendance and punctuality are good and their behaviour is satisfactory.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, enjoy coming to school, attend regularly and are keen to work hard.
- Relationships are positive. Pupils are considerate to one another and there is very little thoughtless behaviour.
- Pupils are aware of being valued and they grow in confidence in the school.
- Pupils' social and moral development is very good.
- A very small minority of pupils show a casual attitude to their work and do not behave well.
- Local, and wider cultural issues are not focused on enough.
- Too many pupils do not take enough pride in the school's environment by keeping it litter free.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-2003 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.8	School data :	0.5
National data (2001-2002):	7.8	National data (2001-2002):	1.2

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

9. The school has worked hard with parents to encourage good attendance. There is an excellent liaison with the education welfare service and there are good procedures for checking on absences. Attendance is above average. Pupils work hard because most are interested in their lessons and apply good working habits. They take pride in achievement. They want to please their teachers, who in turn give them good support, encouragement and praise for success. Relationships are very good because the majority of pupils are prepared to help one another. Pupils of different ages and backgrounds mix freely and learn to respect views different from their own.

10. Pupils with special educational needs are well-motivated - outside of lesson time they readily go to the learning support department, for help with homework, to get advice and support and to socialise. They are kindly and thoughtfully supported by other pupils. The very few pupils of non-White backgrounds are totally assimilated within the school community, and from discussions with pupils it is clear that they consider racial intolerance unacceptable.

Ethnic background of pupils (last school year in brackets)

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
609 (616)	49	0
2 (3)	0	0
5 (6)	0	0
1 (1)	0	0
1 (1)	0	0
1 (1)	0	0
2 (2)	0	0

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

11. Pupils have trust and confidence in their teachers and this plays an important part in helping them to mature whilst at school. In the questionnaire they completed before the inspection, a high percentage agreed that "This is a good school to be at". Many respond readily to opportunities to take responsibility, such as acting as buddies for the younger pupils, or as peer counsellors or bus prefects. Self-development is also promoted well through the popular Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. The school council is in a state of flux; some pupils believe it is very effective, others do not value it at all.

12. A few pupils, particularly boys, have poor attitudes to the school, with irregular attendance; they do not take their learning seriously enough. They become restless and inattentive in class, and can be rude to their teachers and other staff. The less effective and stimulating the teaching, the worse the problem. Fixed period exclusions are likely to be lower this year (see last year's figures above). A small number of pupils, some of whom have left the school, were excluded on several occasions during the last academic year. The school has responded by reviewing its behaviour policy and introducing a behaviour tracking system. Evidence suggests that not all teachers are implementing the agreed procedures consistently though they have the potential to work well.

13. Pupils' pride in their school is spoilt because the grounds are strewn with litter. Because the school community has not addressed the problem effectively, pupils are inclined to throw away paper bags, plastic bottles and cartons carelessly. Many pupils observe how few litter bins there are, without reflecting that they could take their litter home or wait until they meet a bin to get rid of it. In March 2003, the LEA observed "that all the staff were united in their views on the state of litter in the school and the negative impact it has on pupils' attitudes". It is the latter point that deserves serious consideration, remembering that often attitudes acquired at school continue into adult life.

14. The spiritual aspects of subjects are not highlighted in any department papers. It is assumed that teachers will be sensitive to opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual awareness as, when, and if they arise. Even so the school ethos does transmit well certain spiritual qualities such as respect and care for others. The once-a-week assemblies for each year group, mainly addressing moral and social issues securely, do not meet the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and they do not include prayers or quiet reflection,.

15. The school's mission statement has a strong moral and social focus and this is evident in the classroom. The following are all considered carefully: in science the moral implications of genetic engineering, in religious education issues such as abortion and euthanasia, in history aspects of crime and punishment, and in geography worldwide relative wealth and environmental care. Beyond the actual curriculum, moral expectations pervade the school and pupils recognise the value of this and respond well. The personal and social development and citizenship courses usefully draw out many moral aspects of living in modern society. Teachers demand respect for self and others as an integral part of their teaching.

16. Social education is at the heart of school life. Not only do the teachers act as good role models but they give ample opportunities for pupils to develop social awareness, both in the content of their teaching and the way in which teaching is organised. In sports pupils confront moral and social expectations. Pupils develop social skills as buddies, librarians, prefects, school council members and peer counsellors, and by taking part in University of the First Age activities. Pupils are generous, collecting over £3000 each year for charities such as Christian Aid, Fair Trade, Amnesty International and Children in Need. This is very impressive and in some respects reflects the school's ethos. The social support and training given to pupils with special educational needs is especially valuable. Although the school normally undertakes a huge co-operative effort when it stages a pantomime, this is not taking place this year.

17. Despite the range of educational visits, the recent Islam Day and the support for a multicultural day in the local first school, issues relating to race and multicultural education do not have a high enough profile, for example in assemblies, PSD and citizenship. The geography and religious education departments are more aware of such issues than other departments. There is little evidence of the local culture of East Anglia generally and Norfolk in particular being celebrated.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good

Teaching and learning are good and pupils receive very good support, advice and guidance. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for ICT and the accommodation is unsatisfactory. The range of after-school activities is limited.

Teaching and Learning

The quality of teaching is good. The quality of learning is good.
The quality of assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The training that teachers and pupils have received, on modern ideas about teaching and learning, are permeating the classroom and making lessons more interesting.
- In Years 10 and 11 teaching is good in over two-thirds of lessons including close to one-third which is very good.
- During the inspection, teaching was predominantly good or better in English, mathematics, science, ICT, drama, design and technology and history.
- Good teaching and encouragement for pupils with special educational needs although a few class teachers do not adapt work consistently to match these pupils' needs.
- The few lessons when teaching was unsatisfactory were those delivered by non-subject specialists or supply teachers, the latter sometimes coping with difficult situations.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	24 (19%)	52 (41%)	42 (33%)	8 (6.5%)	(0.5%)	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.

18. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, it was striking that over 90 per cent of pupils and 75 per cent of parents agreed that teaching is good. This was confirmed during the inspection – the table above shows that 60 per cent of teaching was at least good. More good lessons and almost twice as many very good lessons were observed in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Teachers are fully aware of GCSE requirements and some work as examiners, so they prepare pupils very well, pacing coursework realistically and offering extra help in the lunch-hour and revision sessions after school as the examinations approach.

19. Most of the good quality teaching is explained by the fact that many staff have years of teaching experience during which they have accumulated expertise and wisdom. They have not lost their enthusiasm, and they work hard to encourage the pupils to achieve their best. They share their experience with younger teachers and appreciate they can learn from them too. A mixture of the Key Stage 3 strategies, combined with the training staff have received on how pupils learn and how the brain works, has meant that lessons often contain one or more of the following characteristics:

- clear opening sessions so pupils understand what they are going to learn;
- regular practical work, for example in science, drama and design and technology;
- a good range of different activities so that pupils stay interested;
- time set for items of work to be completed, particularly in mathematics, so that pupils cannot waste time;
- encouragement for pupils to evaluate their own work, well exemplified in physical education;
- unusual, fun ways of understanding topics, particularly in history and geography; and
- an atmosphere in which pupils feel confident to ask for help or to have an explanation repeated, so their learning is secure.

20. Assessment has been a focus for improvement since the headteacher arrived and all teachers now accept that they must measure value-added and not rely on intuition about whether pupils are doing well enough. Most departments carry out end-of-unit assessments reasonably well and, in subjects such as science and mathematics, they explain fluctuations in results and make alterations to their planning in response. Pupils receive helpful verbal comments on their work but written comments tend not to give advice about specific things they could do to improve, particularly in English and religious education. Assessment is not happening yet in citizenship and ICT (though it is planned), and is non-existent in music. Target setting is at an early stage and parents and pupils have yet to be convinced of its value.

21. Where pupils are taught in mixed ability groups, it is essential to plan work for the full range of abilities. Teachers do not methodically consider gifted and talented pupils' specific needs, as identification of these pupils only started recently. Subjects, such as history, citizenship and religious education, do not prepare enough work to match the full range of abilities. Pupils with special educational needs are very well-catered for in design and technology; support given in art, history and ICT is good. Either pupils receive high quality teaching in small groups or individually or there is good planning and assessment which is closely linked to pupils' needs and interests. In other classes teachers do not consistently take into account the specific needs of pupils requiring extra support.

22. Staff in the learning support department know pupils well. They are good at encouraging pupils to learn and to persevere, hence they achieve well. Teaching assistants, working with small groups or with individual pupils, provide work and guidance which matches pupils' needs well. Lessons are structured carefully to ensure that pupils are given short bursts of a variety of activities.

The curriculum

The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall. Opportunities for enrichment exist but, combined with extra-curricular activities, overall provision is unsatisfactory.

The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- English, mathematics and science cater well for the pupils' interests and abilities.
- The wide range of history activities, the geography curriculum and humanities trips are enjoyable and valuable.
- In Years 10 and 11 pupils do not have enough ICT lessons. Too few subjects use ICT to meet statutory requirements.
- The music curriculum is poor – demotivating and uninspiring. Statutory requirements for Years 7 to 9 and for the content of the GCSE syllabus are not met.
- Pupils do not speak and listen to French and German enough in modern foreign languages.
- Opportunities to follow vocational courses are limited.

Commentary

23. The headteacher identified the need for changes in the curriculum and has begun a process of consultation. The present curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in the key areas noted above. Significant strengths in the planning of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science provide a good basis for learning. These subjects have enough time, staff and resources. The development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is promoted well in most subjects. Pupils with special educational needs receive good individual support and a broad curriculum appropriate to their needs, particularly in the areas of history, design and technology and English. The learning support department provides effective help to improve pupils' basic skills and to help them to become more confident and self-disciplined. A few pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow accredited courses which give them a good grounding in life skills and introduce them to the workplace through well-matched work experience.

24. Although ICT is taught for one lesson every three weeks in Years 10 and 11, this is the equivalent of just 20 minutes a week. There is no planned and audited support through other subjects and limited evidence of cross curricular work. Pupils and parents would like the option of an ICT qualification in Years 10 and 11. Two modern languages are taught in Years 7 and 8, but in Years 10 and 11 practically all pupils opt for only one language at GCSE. Pupils learning modern foreign languages spend too little time on the more practical elements of speaking and listening, particularly in French, and in Years 8 and 9 they have too little time to learn two languages. This limits their achievement. Religious education is just satisfactory at present but lacks adequate staffing. In Years 10 and 11 pupils receive 32 hours of religious education lessons. This is not enough to cover the locally Agreed Syllabus in depth although most pupils take the short course GCSE, which is good. Opportunities for vocational education are limited; one small group of pupils follow a successful and worthwhile life skills course.

25. The school buildings have not kept pace with the increasing number of pupils and the temporary mobiles, in use for too long, are either too hot or too cold, and unattractive. The art and design and technology areas are out-dated and so pupils do not use modern equipment. The school needs more computers, whiteboards and videos, to match the innovative teaching styles evolving well in a few areas, and far more resources for modern foreign languages, citizenship and music, where achievement needs to improve.

26. Through its close links with the leisure centre and its wide expanse of fields, sport is promoted well, both during and after the school day, and opportunities for swimming are good. An issue of inequality of opportunity is that one class in Year 8 does not have swimming lessons. The humanities provide a wide range of activities and experiences, including history holidays, field trips and focused days, such as the Islam Day. Otherwise, the curriculum is too narrow. Although art provision is satisfactory and there is some drama within English lessons, only a minimal amount of time is spent on dance as part of the physical education curriculum. Despite theatre trips, there is little regular enrichment of the curriculum and the promotion of the arts is very limited. Pupils do not have worthwhile experiences of music, either in lessons or after school. The Christmas term pantomime, a major event for several years, has stopped. Pupils do not have enough access to stimulating visual, cultural and aesthetic experiences which would complement their academic studies and help them to become fully rounded individuals.

27. Interesting projects, such as the summer schools run with the University of the First Age, have been very successful. The Duke of Edinburgh Award runs well and is popular. Small groups of pupils have visited the Nottingham courts and a Year 11 pupil last year was elected to represent South East Norfolk on the UK Youth Parliament. The French department organises exchanges. However, opportunities for exploring artistic and cultural links with the community have not been fully developed.

Care, guidance and support

The school ensures pupils' care, welfare, health and safety satisfactorily.

The school provides very good support, advice and guidance for pupils based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development.

The school seeks to involve pupils satisfactorily in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Formal and informal arrangements for caring and supporting pupils work well. Teachers know the pupils well and provide very good academic and pastoral guidance.
- The school works very closely with external agencies to ensure the health, safety and well-being of its pupils.
- Careers work and guidance are very good.
- Induction arrangements for new pupils are very good.
- Pupils do not feel they are involved enough in the school's work and development.
- Health and safety procedures do not deal effectively enough with the litter problem.

Commentary

28. The pastoral system to support pupils throughout the school is a strength because it organised and co-ordinated well. Incidents of oppressive behaviour such as bullying are rare but dealt with effectively. Parents are pleased with the care given to their children and the fairness with which they are treated whatever their background or ability level. Four out of five pupils feel there is an adult in the school they could talk to if they had a problem. They are confident too in consulting their form tutors and heads of year for help. Valuable support comes through the strong links the school has built with the school nurse, and with external agencies such as the Youth Service and the health and education welfare services.

29. Most pupils have a positive relationship with their teachers and consequently they willingly listen to advice and discuss their achievements and progress sensibly. Pupils know what is expected of them. Career guidance, described in paragraphs 106, is very good. The arrangements the school has for handling the transition of new pupils from first and middle schools work smoothly, and are responsive to the needs of individual pupils. This means that pupils settle in remarkably well, a contributory factor to the good achievement. Teachers visit all the feeder schools and particularly help those pupils with special educational needs. This is very good practice (see paragraph 33).

30. Pupils in need of learning support are given close attention by the learning support department, for both their academic and pastoral development. Staff regularly talk with pupils about how they are getting on and how they should deal with any barriers to learning or particular problems. The learning support department provides effective help so these pupils gain confidence and self-discipline. Statements for pupils with special educational needs are properly prepared. Individual education plans (IEPs) set out the general targets for pupils suitably but there is too little detail about targets from individual subjects.

31. Some opportunities, (see paragraph 11), are provided for pupils to play a part in the life of the school but more could be done. Only one in ten strongly agrees that the school is interested in their views. The school council was successful when first launched but its effectiveness has declined and new arrangements are rightly being put in place. It was certainly involved in discussions about the new school uniform but opinions on the outcome vary. Underlying the comments of pupils in Years 10 and 11 on the uniform was concern that they could not wear jumpers with 'hoodies' to school. They claimed the rules had changed during the summer holidays. Whatever basis exists for their concern, it suggests communication between the senior management team and pupils and parents is not always effective. The litter problem affecting the extensive grounds of the school is a potential health and safety hazard which requires urgent attention.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory.

The school's partnership with the community is satisfactory. The school's links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school encourages parents to contribute to their children's learning at school and home.
- Good work is being done as a designated Beacon school.
- Communication to parents is not always effective, for example about the content of interim reports and the value of the Academic Review Days.
- Business links are weak.

Commentary

32. Some useful steps have been taken to improve the contribution parents make to their children's education. The new pupil planner provides parents with a good insight into their children's work and progress at school, and points up ways they can help them. Parents are responding positively. Similarly, the introduction of the Academic Review Day has brought parents and school closer together. The day is well attended and it increases parents' awareness of their children's work and progress, both academic and personal. A few parents did not find the day valuable, feeling that the targets could possibly de-motivate pupils. Several of them find the interim reports, with ticks and letters, confusing. The annual progress reports tend to be rather bland, lacking targets for improvement within subjects. Newsletters are not regular or user-friendly enough.

33. As a Beacon school, Long Stratton is working closely and successfully to improve learning and resources for its partner schools. Good practice has been shared with other schools and training provided for them, for example in science and design and technology. These curricular links have strengthened teachers' awareness of the work and style of learning pupils experience before they come to Long Stratton. The head of learning support has strong links with local primary schools. She visits the schools, collects pupils with special educational needs who will be joining the school, and brings them to Long Stratton to help them to feel familiar with the new setting. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in discussions about their children's progress and are invited to attend and contribute to review meetings. A clear and welcoming department booklet introduces learning support to parents and pupils.

34. The school is intent on developing more vocationally linked courses but has difficulty establishing a network of business links in its locality. Learning mentors come from a variety of local firms and some of these contacts are valuable.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Leadership is satisfactory. Management is satisfactory. The work of the governing body is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The headteacher has successfully introduced changes which are gradually bearing fruit. These changes were needed to bring the school up-to-date with developments in education.
- Leadership of pastoral care, most departments and special educational needs is effective, although the deployment of teachers in the latter needs tightening up.
- Despite a hard working and dedicated Chair, the governing body lacks insight into the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Statutory issues: no daily act of collective worship, and too little ICT within subjects and in Years 10 and 11.
- Communication, both verbal and written, between the headteacher and parents and pupils has not yet been able to gain their full support and appreciation of school life.

Commentary

35. Before the present headteacher was appointed, the governing body accepted the limited information it was given about results and data, without probing what was happening in each subject and area of school life. Nevertheless, it knew two years ago that the school was not keeping up with developments in education and so it appointed a headteacher who would introduce the necessary changes. These are happening and so it is important that the governors probe how the school is doing now and question its future direction. It is commendable that the governors have an action plan to address these areas. Two experienced governors, one of whom was the chair of the finance committee, have recently retired and the conscientious chair of governors struggles to attract new members who will attend meetings regularly.

36. The headteacher has successfully encouraged teachers to use data to analyse pupils' performance and make their teaching match pupils' needs. Departments are at different stages but they have all moved forward. It is too early to see the benefits of this because GCSE results in 2003, as predicted, did not match the exceptionally strong ones in 2002. Performance management is now established and accepted by teachers, which was not the case under the previous headteacher. A few teachers acknowledge it has helped them to consider their training needs and to be more accountable for standards.

37. The headteacher has successfully broadened the management structure and given more teachers responsibilities, for example for assessment. He is ably supported by the caring and hard-working deputy heads. The headteacher's vision of a "learning community" is already apparent because most teachers consider learning first and have taken on board the training they received on learning styles and improving boys' performance. The headteacher should be encouraged by the fact that the most innovative teaching is in history, where results are rising.

38. Despite this considerable progress, the headteacher does not have a high enough profile within the school and the community. He has not yet gained pupils' and parents' full support for, and appreciation of school life. Despite consultation over both the new school uniform and changes to the timings of the school day, a significant number of parents and pupils do not feel fully involved. Either in school or through letters home, they do not receive enough explanations of changes and information, for example celebrating achievements or conveying the headteacher's well-considered vision for the future. The headteacher is sensitive to his predecessor's strong reputation but, after two years in post, he must now move forward with confidence and determination. Winning the respect of parents and pupils by solving the litter problem is an obvious first step. This unresolved issue is a weakness within the leadership and management of the school.

39. Leadership of several departments, particularly science, design and technology and history, is most effective, and one deputy head keeps a sensitive eye on pupils' pastoral care and on teachers' work/life balance and training needs. The administration and technical staff are an asset to the school. The special educational needs is well led and managed. The head of department is a skilled specialist who has a clear vision for developing learning support in the school. She

deploys learning support assistants very well, but the current system of organising and deciding support teachers' timetables lacks rigour. The co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils, who changed this term, has much ground to make-up to bring the school in line with provision for such pupils in most other schools.

40. One deputy head and the finance officer manage the school's finances very effectively. Day to day organisation is efficient, and the senior management team and the governors receive regular reports. Currently the full governing body deal with financial affairs. The school's accounts have not been audited since before the last inspection in 1998. The School Fund has not been audited since the 2000-2001 financial year. The governors know that a higher than average proportion of expenditure is spent on staffing. They have always tried to keep the pupil-teacher ratio as low as possible but recognise this will have to rise in a planned way, to release more for resources and maintenance. Progress in linking the budget to the priorities in the school development plan has been made since the last inspection but more remains to be done. The school is in the process of negotiating a Private Funding Initiative, which has taken up much of the governor's time in recent months.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	210,6558.00	Balance from previous year	23,515.00
Total expenditure	205,1139.00	Balance carried forward to the next	55,419.00
Expenditure per pupil	3220.00		

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Standards of work seen were above average	Pupils' achievement is good
Teaching is good	Leadership is good
Learning is good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been good	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good and pupils learn well as a result.
- Teachers are aware of different ways of learning and use them effectively to meet pupils', particularly boys' needs.
- Good leadership promotes innovative strategies; good management ensures that above average standards are maintained and that pupils achieve well.
- In some lessons too much explanation or prolonged activities cause a drop in the pace of learning and prevent a solid conclusion being reached.
- Marking does not make sufficiently clear to pupils what they are expected to achieve and what they should do to improve.
- The department does not have sufficient control over how pupils are grouped because of current setting arrangements. There are still problems of split classes and single lessons affecting continuity of learning.

Commentary

41. Since the last inspection test results at the end of Year 9 have been above average except in 2001. In 2003 the proportion reaching Level 5 or higher was very close to the school's target and likely to be above average. Given that pupils enter the school with average standards of attainment, they are clearly achieving well. Over the same period GCSE results have also been above average. Although they were not so high in 2003 as they had been in 2002, they still represented good achievement given pupils' standards at the end of Year 9. As seen nationally, girls attain higher standards than boys.

42. In Years 7 to 9 pupils make good gains in knowledge of literature, understanding of grammar and competence in tackling writing in a variety of styles. Many pupils write imaginatively and enthusiastically at length in response to stimulating units of work. These schemes are underpinned by the teachers' intelligent awareness of how to cater for pupils' varied learning needs, and boys particularly benefit from teachers' conscious application of initiatives to improve literacy. Some lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 have persistent problems with spelling and sentence punctuation though they achieve well in speaking, reading and extended writing. In Years 10 and 11 pupils undertake coursework conscientiously and well. Their examination skills are honed effectively.

43. Teachers are knowledgeable and confidently help pupils to develop the skills they need, particularly for examination work. They are aware of the different ways children learn and use a variety of teaching approaches accordingly. Some very good teaching takes place where pupils are learning by being fully involved because the teacher asks probing questions that make them think, or because the activities they do demand participation and a definite outcome. At times teachers

spend too long on an activity, especially in the middle of hour-long lessons. The pace of learning then slows, and timing goes awry so too little time remains at the end of lessons to reach a definite conclusion or review what pupils have learned. In one lesson the teacher did not manage the pupils' behaviour strongly enough and their learning suffered. Though teachers are conscientious about marking, they do not make clear whether pupils are meeting expectations and what they should do to improve.

44. Leadership of the department is good because of the head of department's intelligent and thoughtful approach, her innovative curriculum developments and effective dissemination within the department of the school's work on learning styles. She has made good use of local authority advice and support. Management has not been quite as strong because of her inexperience when faced with the legacy of problems that arose before her appointment. Now, however, she is managing a professional and committed team effectively.

45. Drama makes a strong contribution to the work of the English department. Drama lessons in Years 7 to 9 and a GCSE course help pupils develop very well skills in speaking, performance and understanding others' experiences. Pupils significantly gain confidence, self-esteem, maturity, responsibility and independence. In sampled lessons in Years 7, 8 and 11, teaching was very good because of the involvement of all pupils in their work and the rapid progress they made towards achieving a successful outcome, whether it be a rehearsed presentation of a poem or representing different views at a 'formal meeting'. Drama results are high and in 2003 all the boys who took the course attained A*-C grades.

46. Improvement has been good because the department has managed to maintain an upward trend in results; continues to provide good teaching, and is tackling change with energy and imagination. Because of current setting arrangements, the department does not have enough control over how pupils are grouped, and problems of split classes and single lessons still affect continuity of learning, but teachers manage these difficulties well.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

47. Other subjects contribute satisfactorily to the development of pupils' language and literacy skills. It is not better than that because the quality of their contributions is inconsistent. Mathematics, science, ICT and the special educational needs department all emphasise more than one key aspect of literacy, for example focusing strongly on important subject vocabulary, creating opportunities for speaking and reading aloud, and helping pupils to write in a variety of ways. In other subjects, such as art, however, key words may be displayed but they are not sufficiently referred to explicitly in lessons or consistently emphasised by all teachers. As a result pupils are not confident in using these words in their replies or written work. In modern foreign languages, pupils have limited opportunities to speak, read aloud or write in an extended or varied way. Teachers' training includes work on different types of text and on ensuring that schemes of work embrace literacy development. The literacy co-ordinator is an enthusiastic professional. Nevertheless, she has other responsibilities and limited time to monitor how well subjects contribute to the development of pupils' skills.

Modern Foreign Languages (French and German)

Provision in German is **satisfactory**.

Standards of work seen were average	Pupils' achievement is satisfactory
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is satisfactory	Management is satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory	

Provision in French is **unsatisfactory**.

Standards of work seen were below average	Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is satisfactory	Management is satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Lessons where interesting materials stimulate pupils to debate in the foreign languages.
- Pupils' secure grasp of grammar because teachers focus on this in lessons.
- Most pupils are receptive to learning a foreign language.
- Pupils do not speak and listen to the foreign languages enough so their spoken German, and French particularly, is not as good as their writing in these languages.
- Too little time for French and German lessons in Years 8 to 9, so achievement is held back.
- A limited range of teaching and learning styles partly because there are too few resources.

Commentary

48. At the end of Year 9, standards in both languages are average overall but not enough pupils achieve above this. Pupils write well but do not speak fluently. They also find it hard to understand the foreign languages spoken at speed. As few higher ability pupils take French, so the consistently below average GCSE results are better than the percentage attaining A*-C grades might suggest, although they have declined since 2001. The percentage of D and E grades shows that some middle ability pupils, particularly boys in 2003, underachieve. GCSE results in German are consistently above average, which represents satisfactory achievement for the mainly higher ability pupils who study this language.

49. The emphasis on understanding and application of grammar means that pupils have a solid grasp of structures and generally write accurately. However, pupils' speaking and listening are often below average because teachers do not consistently use French or German for all instructions and activities, and do not insist that pupils talk to them and ask questions in the languages. With too few technical resources, such as videos or cassette-recorders, and very limited use of computers, pupils do not hear French or German in a variety of contexts or work individually.

50. Pupils respond well to lessons where teaching is conducted at a brisk pace and is challenging. Given stimulating prompt cards, they can debate with enthusiasm and work sensibly together to prepare their views. They sit passively when the teaching is less imaginative. They make reasonable progress in most lessons and the majority of teaching seen was good. However, in Years 8 particularly and 9, they have too few lessons in both French and German to achieve any better, especially as pupils who enter the school in Year 8 have not studied French in as much depth as those who came in Year 7.

51. In all years too many pupils underachieve in their speaking because they lack confidence to use the languages unprompted and have difficulty understanding meaning from spoken text. Pupils rarely use the languages to question or ask for help and when they do, teachers do not correct their pronunciation. In Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve well in their understanding of grammar and usually write accurately, but higher ability pupils do not practise enough extended or imaginative writing.

52. The department needs a higher profile through more extra-curricular activities and more imaginative displays in classrooms and around the school. The head of department teaches well and is a good role model for his colleagues, but he monitors their work on a largely informal basis. There is not enough sharing of good practice and consideration of which teaching is most effective. In September 2002 a modular programme was introduced. This has a good, structured scheme of work which sets short term goals for pupils and creates a more regular and detailed assessment of

their progress. After one year of this new course the signs are that it is contributing to better standards and achievement. However, since the last inspection the overall picture is of no improvement in the attainment of middle ability pupils in French, in the use of ICT and in pupils' spontaneous use of the foreign languages.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is very **good**.

Standards of work seen were well above average	Pupils' achievement is good
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is good	Management is satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection has been good	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards are well above average and pupils' achievement is better than expected.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to mathematics and work hard.
- There is consistently good, sometimes very good, teaching from a strong team which has very high expectations for pupils' learning.
- Improvement since the last inspection has been good.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used often enough in lessons.
- Some lessons are in unsatisfactory accommodation in mobiles.

Commentary

53. Standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are generally slightly above average, but they vary from year to year. By Year 9 standards are well above average, as test results confirm, and pupils have achieved very well. GCSE results in 2001 and 2002 were well above average, and also showed that pupils achieved much better than expected. GCSE results in 2003 were not as good as this. The department feels that there are several reasons. The year group did not have such good Year 9 results as in previous years and new syllabus requirements were introduced. Present pupils are achieving well compared to prior attainment. In lessons there is little difference between girls' and boys' performance. In tests and examinations, sometimes boys do slightly better than girls and sometimes the reverse is true.

54. Pupils develop their skills equally in all areas of mathematics. Frequent practice and reinforcement of previous learning has led to the development of very good numeracy skills, which are used well in other subjects. Pupils' oral and written skills are both well developed. A key emphasis in teaching to get pupils to explain their ideas and to justify their answers has led to a good understanding of mathematics. In Year 11 higher ability pupils have developed a sophisticated use of algebra and they apply these skills to the solution of a wide range of problems. Many of them go on to study mathematics at A Level. Lower ability pupils receive considerable individual support and are encouraged to aim high. Virtually all pupils take GCSE and receive a pass grade, with only a small number at the lowest two grades. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils and achieve well.

55. In the large majority of lessons seen teaching was at least good, in a third it was very good. Strong class management and well-established and clear classroom routines are an important factor in this good teaching and learning. Pupils learn effectively because they know they come to mathematics lessons to work and most of them participate actively. Teachers ask questions skilfully, finding out what pupils already know and identifying any misconceptions that need to be dealt with. The atmosphere in the classroom is such that pupils are not afraid to say they do not

understand. Pupils work co-operatively and help each other with problems. They feel teachers encourage and support them well. Teachers use clear examples to help pupils understand new ideas. There is still some variation in the way in which teachers mark written work, but any problems are always dealt with effectively in class, either for groups or individuals. This feedback after assessment, often oral, is a key factor in pupils' progress.

56. Despite planned ICT activities for each year group, limited access to computers and technical difficulties mean that ICT is not used enough. Mathematics classrooms are not arranged together, and some are in mobiles where at times it is too cold or too hot. This is unsatisfactory. The head of department leads effectively and several members of the team are very experienced. They share his high expectations for all pupils. The change since the last inspection, in the way pupils are grouped, has helped teachers to tailor work more closely to pupils' different needs. The head of department has a wealth of assessment data, which he and other teachers use to track the progress of individuals and groups. However, they could use this data more systematically, to monitor performance more closely and to link this with forward planning.

Numeracy across the curriculum

57. Pupils' numeracy skills are well above average and make a strong contribution to their achievement in other subjects. Opportunities to use and develop these skills are systematically planned in some subject areas, especially in science; here pupils' skills in representing data, and interpreting graphs improve their learning. In design and technology close attention is paid to weighing and measuring accurately. Pupils in ICT understand the difference between data and information and can use spreadsheets sensibly to present data graphically.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is very **good**.

Standards of work seen were above average overall (average in Years 7 to 9)	Pupils' achievement is good
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is very good	Management is very good
Improvement since the last inspection has been very good	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Very good relationships between staff and pupils promote high standards of work by all pupils.
- Pupils learn well and make good progress in most lessons because teachers give them interesting tasks which are put into context and made relevant to their experiences.
- The highly structured lessons, most of which include a practical activity, stimulate good learning, as does the high level of work ethic shown by most pupils.
- Provision for the use of ICT in science lessons is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

58. Between 1999 and 2001 end of Year 9 test results were above average. They dropped slightly in the next two years although in 2003 the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level, Level 6, went up. Except in 2002 boys have done slightly better than girls. Achievement in 2002 was well above average. GCSE double award results in 2002 were impressive and better than in any other subject, with boys performing better than girls. These results are likely to be well above average in 2003. Underachievement in 2003 occurred in groups affected by staff absence, which has now been resolved.

59. Higher ability pupils in Years 7 to 9 produce work of an above average standard. For example, applying information they have learned in a difficult exercise on enzymes. Lower ability pupils name metals and non-metals confidently and make simple observations when testing metals; they find it harder to apply their knowledge in unfamiliar contexts. A middle ability pupil, heating substances, made many sensible observations that showed good understanding of chemical reactions and some of their characteristics. Higher ability GCSE pupils work very confidently through well-chosen tests, discuss their findings with each other and contribute to the summary of findings as lessons end. A group of middle ability pupils successfully followed directions to build a simple motor, and derived great pleasure from making it work, but they found it harder to explain how it worked. This type of investigation work has been introduced to help progress to more open-ended work – an improvement suggested in the last report. Many pupils willingly volunteer to answer questions, for example whilst teachers skilfully guide them to explain how an experiment should be set up as a fair test.

60. Pupils' self confidence and achievement are bolstered when teachers help them all to reach the objectives of investigation. Teachers do this by carefully assessing which pupils need more explanation or further guidance, often on a one-to-one basis. Levels of achievement are so good because pupils want to learn, enjoy the lessons and experience collaborative and individual styles of working. A very small number of pupils do misbehave but they are dealt with firmly. Teachers use scientific language in all lessons, expect pupils to use it and to tackle measurements and calculations accurately – which most of them do. Pupils are inspired by links between famous scientists and their work – for example their understanding of ionic compounds was enhanced by the teacher describing the work of the crystallographer Dorothy Hodgkin.

61. In Years 10 and 11 almost half the teaching is very good. Time and pace are varied and pupils know how long they have for all activities and objectives. In many lessons there is an atmosphere of academic thinking; pupils confidently read aloud, concentrate for a long time and are used to applying knowledge to new issues. Teachers provide very explicit directions about safe working and prepare very good frames for pupils to record findings. The best lessons were where teachers kept the lesson on track by quick assessment of pupils' understanding. In satisfactory ones, lulls between activities interrupt the flow and pupils chat too much or teachers do most of the work and pupils become restless copying from the board.

62. Formal assessments are carried out at the end of each module, with different levels of questions to match pupils' abilities. A long serving and knowledgeable technician supports lessons in the four laboratories. Lessons develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills well. The head of department has successfully introduced the development of pupils' thinking skills into the department's teaching. With clarity and single mindedness he focuses on issues which improve the quality of teaching and learning. This is why pupils achieve well in this subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Standards of work seen were below average	Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory	
Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is unsatisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Since September 2003 all pupils now have timetabled lessons and the school has a good quality computer network and technical support in place.
- The co-ordinator has good knowledge of computing and teaches well. He has a clear vision of what is required to improve the subject.
- Pupils work hard, are keen to do well and make good progress in lessons. The work they do cannot yet match their capabilities because they have studied ICT so little in the past.
- Standards have declined since the last inspection and ICT is not used enough in all subjects - an issue raised in the previous report.
- There is no system to check that pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive their full entitlement to ICT.

Commentary

63. No pupils achieve as well as they should, as they have had inadequate access to ICT in recent years. Year 9 pupils can collect data about temperature, represent these data in graph form and interpret the information derived, but this work is at a lower standard than expected at this age. Pupils have limited skills extracting information from a database or presenting work; no PowerPoint or digital image work was seen during the inspection. Years 10 and 11 pupils can combine text with graphics, producing stationery for a small company, and are beginning to use e-mail to support their work, for example by sending it to the teacher for marking. However, all of this work is at a relatively low level. Years 10 and 11 pupils lack skills to produce programs of instructions for devices such as computer controlled machines. All pupils have a good understanding of the need for security when using computers.

64. Teaching and learning are good, but they have not yet had an impact on pupils' standards and achievement, because pupils have only just begun to have ICT lessons. The co-ordinator uses his good knowledge of computing very effectively, with both whole classes and with individuals, leading to good levels of learning. Teachers ask very good questions, for example about why some letters would be printed in colour and some in monochrome, that make pupils think and consolidate and extend their knowledge and understanding. Pupils with special educational needs make progress similar to that of others, due to the good support teachers give them. Pupils are very keen to learn and they work hard in lessons. Occasionally teachers do not check that all pupils are paying attention when they are talking to the whole class, or they give information to pupils rather than involving them in discussion. Assessment is not yet playing a part in raising pupils' standards of work.

65. The recently appointed ICT co-ordinator has a clear vision of what is needed to improve standards. In just a few weeks, he has established good leadership and management. He has the basis of robust systems which are ready to be implemented, for example, to assess work in Years 7 to 9. Since the previous inspection too little has been done to move this subject forward, with lack of leadership at all levels combined with too little equipment. The school has not kept up to date with developments in ICT, but the department is now well poised to improve. The new network and newly appointed network manager are significant factors in helping pupils to make better progress. However, although all Years 10 and 11 pupils now have some ICT lessons, no means are in place to check that they are taught all of the required elements, nor any systems to assess their progress. No ICT examination course is offered, a point raised by parents and pupils. Parents did not receive a report on pupils' progress in ICT last year, though this is a statutory requirement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. Pupils do produce ICT work of a satisfactory standard when using a computer controlled embroidery machine in design and technology. Years 10 and 11 pupils use the Internet for research; very well, for example in history, when studying the Second World War. Use of ICT is satisfactory in English and geography and for pupils with special educational needs, but in all other subjects the required elements of ICT are not met. In science there is no work using sensors to capture data and

in mathematics little use of spreadsheets for numeric calculations. This is partly explained by the lack of dependable computer systems in recent years. Practically all the teachers have attended training on how to get the most out of ICT in their subjects, and the history department is leading the way with an interactive whiteboard which it uses well. The fact that the modern foreign language department does not have a video that works and the music department makes negligible use of software to write music, epitomises the parlous state of the school's approach to and use of modern technology in recent years.

HUMANITIES

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Standards of work seen were average	Pupils' achievement is satisfactory
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is good	Management is satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The teacher's depth of knowledge about religious education and commitment to the school.
- The curriculum is thought provoking and includes a range of valuable events.
- The detailed analysis of assessments.
- Lack of staff with one teacher responsible for the every class in the school.
- Too little teaching time in Years 10 and 11.
- Lack of work designed for different ability levels.

Commentary

67. Standards over the past three years have consistently met the basic requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus in all years. Present standards throughout the school are consistently average but they primarily reflect pupils' good literacy skills rather than their insights into religious concepts and issues. Pupils study an impressive array of over 50 topics in world faiths in Years 7 to 9. However, the teaching of these topics takes too little account of the distinct needs of the most capable pupils and of those with special educational needs. This is because there is one, thoroughly competent, religious education teacher who teaches every pupil in the school.

68. After pupils have watched a video they can talk about the issues involved and write a paragraph about their views, all of which indicate their sound knowledge and oral and writing skills. They do what is required of them to a satisfactory standard. Pupils competently read the textbooks and summarise discussions on a wide range of topics, but marking and preparation have to be simplified for the teacher to cope. Although in Years 10 and 11 between 50 and 60 per cent of pupils, boys and girls, attain short course GCSE grades A*-C, the depth of content is severely curtailed by the fact that pupils only receive 32 hours of lessons during the whole two-year period. The division of this time into six week blocks prevents continuity. The pupils' workbooks reflect these shortcomings in provision.

69. The teacher is very knowledgeable and keen to provide the best teaching and learning that he can. He has a wide range of videos and text books and is now developing the use of ICT by using religious and social web sites. Lack of access to computers, however, limits this. His calm approach encourages pupils to be involved in discussions, but there is a tendency for them not to think through the logic of their stance and to be satisfied with a gut response. There was no evidence of pupils having the time and technique for creative reflective thought. Pupils' work is clearly well-organised but there appears to be a ceiling on their likely attainment.

70. The teacher, who is also a head of year, organises the subject so that the problems which arise from lack of adequate staffing are minimised. The forward planning and detailed analyses of assessments are good. So too is the range of events which he organizes such as an Islam Day, a visit to a Hindu temple, and visits to such places as the Vatican in Rome. He is, however, expected to lead, manage and teach the subject to a degree equivalent to such subjects as history and geography, where there are more staff. His detailed departmental portfolio indicates that he has approached the subject sensitively to produce a thought-provoking course, but he has nobody with whom to share ideas and the work load. Hence he has not fully addressed numerous issues such as the requirements of gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs, or the possibilities of more imaginative learning styles. It is only the teacher's commitment to the school and the subject which has enabled satisfactory progress to be made in recent years but until the staffing is improved it is unlikely that the level of overall provision can be raised.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Standards of work seen were above average	Pupils' achievement is good
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- A consistently good quality of leadership and strong teamwork in the department.
- An active developmental approach.
- Imaginative teaching methods.
- Some very good, but not enough, human geography topics with which pupils can identify.
- Lack of work specifically designed for the highest ability pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Limited display work, especially following field trips.
- A limited range of detailed written work.

Commentary

71. In recent years, overall standards have been at least average at the end of Year 9, but more inconsistent at GCSE with the percentage of pupils attaining A*-C fluctuating above and below average. The careful teaching this year and the acting head of department's good leadership mean that standards are improving. In 2003 boys attained better GCSE grades than girls, but in 2002 the reverse was the case.

72. On the highly structured courses which have materials designed for particular ability levels, pupils consistently work hard and produce above average work. There are, however, very few examples of the best quality work typical of the highest ability levels. There were instead many examples of very short topics, such as Kenya and Egypt, which had been carefully taught and recorded. Information and communication technology (ICT) is being used increasingly; when powerful information is taken from web sites on topics such as the population explosion, earthquakes and volcanoes, pupils achieve well. The major problems, however, are the unavailability of the computer suite and the unreliability of the network. Hence teachers need to have a backup lesson ready. Formal written work often indicates a pattern of achievement which reflects the literacy levels of pupils. Although all pupils benefit from the range of work taught, there is little indication of it being designed for either the gifted or those with special educational needs.

73. The quality of teaching and learning is undoubtedly developing well. This was seen when Year 7 pupils had practical experience of orienteering using photographs on the school playing fields. Tactile exercises involving sorting and sequencing information about earthquakes were also successful. It was particularly notable that teachers evaluated their lessons and subsequently tried to improve them. This was seen clearly in lessons about environmental changes caused by open cast mining and quarrying. Most of the teaching was done with pupils working in pairs and small groups on whole-class topics. This proved to be productive with the pupils remaining on task for quite long periods. The geography teachers also teach history, and therefore the developments in teaching through visual, and other sensory approaches are shared and pupils' responses are proving positive.

74. The major topics taught, such as globalisation and the population explosion, are clearly relevant to pupils, and so their motivation is enhanced. This is also true of field exercises shared with history at Castle Acre. The use of field work is notable with at least one visit taking place in each of Years 7 to 10. Pupils generally work well but far better use could be made of various forms of display. At times written work is reduced to copying answers from text books, which restricts the range of written activities. Independent learning by pupils is very limited. Often the geographical concepts are explained clearly, but not in everyday human contexts to which the pupils can readily relate.

75. The leadership and management of the acting head of department are good; he is providing very effective leadership. His support for his colleagues, including a newly qualified teacher, is valuable and appreciated. He is systematically reviewing the department to ensure that every aspect is moving forward to raise standards; his consistency and pertinacity are commendable. He is developing the school's Beacon responsibilities by establishing a weather station which local feeder schools can use. There have been prolonged hitches in achieving this because the computer network has not been completed. The subject is now developing rapidly because the range of teaching methods is being built up purposefully. In particular this is seen in the use of ICT and field work, and in group work in the classroom.

History

Provision in history is very **good**.

Standards of work seen were above average	Pupils' achievement is good
Teaching is very good	Learning is good
Leadership is excellent	Management is very good
Improvement since the last inspection has been good	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Visionary leadership.
- Rising standards and GCSE results.
- Use of modern teaching methods and ICT.
- History holidays and field trips.
- Unimaginative displays which do not celebrate pupils' achievements enough.
- Not enough work designed specifically for pupils' different abilities.
- The ending of lessons is not always sharp.
- Forms and styles of creative writing are not varied enough.

Commentary

76. Overall there has been a rising trend in standards in all years. From being below average, results are now above average and the target of 71 per cent of pupils achieving GCSE grades A*-C in 2004 is likely to be achieved. Girls normally achieve better results than boys, as is the case

nationally. The notable feature is that this significant upward trend has continued across the whole ability range in each year over the past three years.

77. Standards of work show that the pupils take a pride in their work and this reflects their positive attitude to the subject. They enjoy such activities as historical detection work and a wide range of imaginative tasks, many of which are physical and experiential. Through a good range of written work, pupils show that they can grapple with historical ideas such as changing attitudes to crime and punishment across the centuries and reasons for the Romans' success. The field work at Castle Acre, for example, results in many worthwhile pieces of work which indicate pupils' enthusiasm. The full ability range of pupils is included in all the activities taught, and pupils with special educational needs benefit significantly from them.

78. The quality of both teaching and learning is more effective because of the new emphasis given to visual, kinaesthetic and tactile experiences and the growing use of ICT. Many pupils are confident that history is popular because of the teaching methods used. These include historical holidays such as visits to Russia, Rome and Germany. The field work and issues discussed are well exemplified by authentic human stories and incidents. Therefore, although the teaching is strictly led by the teachers, it is enjoyable and results in a high degree of learning in every year. The teaching also contains a clear assessment schedule which pupils understand and work to, thereby further raising their standards. Some lessons have very good starters and central content but little by way of a closure to draw all the key learning points together.

Successful history teaching incorporating visual and kinaesthetic activities
The local university has links with the University of the First Age. All teachers in the school, and some pupils, participated in training on multiple intelligences and brain based learning, particularly developed through visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile senses. After considering differences between barbarian and Roman soldiers as an introduction to why the Roman army was successful, Year 8 pupils went outside and acted out the drill and adaptable organisation of legionnaires. In a lesson on crime and punishment the teacher gave each pupil a label with a different type of punishment. The pupils moved around the room as they debated and negotiated with each other how they should stand, so that the punishments were in chronological order. In other lessons an interactive whiteboard was used to display web sites to stimulate pupils' research skills, for example into the links between the Wall Street crash and Hitler's rise to power in 1933. The teacher could fire questions at the pupils as he changed the whiteboard images. Pupils were enthusiastic in all these lessons and commented on how much they enjoy lessons where they do not sit still for a whole hour.

79. The head of department, who has taught at the school for over 30 years, enthusiastically grasped the implications of modern teaching methods and translated them into practice. This experiential, problem solving approach has been adopted by his colleagues, several of whom also teach geography. The high quality leadership and management of the subject underpin the rising standards. The head of department has a bright vision for developing the subject in a learner-effective manner. It is not surprising that he is leading the way in cross-curricular ICT with the use of an interactive whiteboard, web sites, digital cameras and PowerPoint presentations, as was seen in the pupils' reports of their visit to Caister Roman fort. His colleagues all know that they can share their ideas with him and expect them to be discussed and implemented if they prove to be valuable. Also, the underlying structure within the department provides everybody with a sense of organisational security.

80. The improvement of the subject is also due to such factors as a thoroughly competent team of teachers, a good supply of text books, a healthy attitude by pupils who know that they can be genuine contributors to the lessons and to the subject itself. Displays of pupils' work are not imaginative and exciting. On occasions, too little work is designed for pupils' different abilities and all pupils need to be encouraged to learn independently. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the department is making very good progress.

TECHNOLOGY

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

Standards of work seen were above average	Pupils' achievement is good.
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is very good	Management is very good
Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Above average GCSE results overall because pupils make very good progress over the five years.
- Pupils become confident, learn independently, and enjoy developing and making their ideas and creating products which they are proud of.
- Teachers' depth of knowledge, high expectations and well-planned lessons help pupils of all abilities to get the most out of lessons.
- Purposeful leadership and strong teamwork generate a consistent commitment to help all pupils to achieve the highest possible standards.
- Cramped, unsatisfactory rooms and the limited range of computer-aided manufacturing equipment limit the products pupils can make.
- There are no vocational courses in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

81. Of the four specialisms studied, textiles is particularly strong in terms of the progress pupils make; the 2003 GCSE results were impressive. GCSE food results are at least above average and those in graphics and resistant materials are close to average. Except in graphics, in 2003 boys did well compared to provisional boys' results nationally.

82. Standards of current work are above average in Years 9 and 11: in textiles and graphics Year 11 standards are well above average. In all years pupils develop a good range of ideas and use tools and equipment safely to make products of a high quality. In a Year 11 graphics lesson, pupils' very good communication skills were reflected in the presentation and accuracy of their isometric drawings of a tumble cube. An example of pupils' very good understanding of the quality assurance processes in industry was seen in a Year 11 textiles lesson in which pupils investigated the concept of tolerance in garment manufacture.

83. Boys and girls of all abilities make very good progress in combining their designing and making skills with knowledge about the materials and equipment needed to produce attractive and functional products. Pupils' determination and the teachers' very good understanding of the different ways in which pupils learn are the key to this success. Higher ability pupils produce in-depth evaluations about the effectiveness of their research. Pupils with special educational needs avoid the pitfalls in practical work as they have very good individual support. At GCSE, a significant proportion achieve very well in relation to their performance in other subjects. In 2003, almost two thirds of pupils attained their highest or equal highest GCSE grade in design and technology. Pupils achieve well because three of the four teachers are national examiners and moderators, which gives them insight into the criteria for high quality answers.

84. In almost half the lessons seen in Years 10 and 11, teaching was very good; it was unsatisfactory in one lesson. Pupils learn well because they are enthusiastic and the teachers' breadth of knowledge generates pupils' mature approach to making decisions for themselves. Pupils' motivation is sustained by rewards and encouragement and by the satisfaction they derive from achieving the high standards set for them. Very well-planned lessons introduce pupils methodically to more complex tasks, so they progress well. Teaching, characterised by close attention to individual abilities and needs, combined with both challenge and support, helps pupils to

reach their potential. In just one lesson during the inspection, a number of boys wasted their time and disrupted other pupils from learning. In interesting and efficiently organised lessons, supported very well by technical staff, pupils have ready access to resources and move quickly from one activity to another. The thoroughness of teachers' assessment, and their encouragement for pupils to be reflective about their work, help pupils to understand how well they are doing. Written comments on pupils' work do not always indicate how pupils could develop their work further.

85. The department has overcome its recent staffing problems by determined leadership and the strong support of all teachers. The department identifies its strengths and weaknesses by good monitoring and evaluation of performance. The introduction of vocational courses in catering and manufacture for Years 10 and 11 pupils and improvements in accommodation and resources are, quite rightly, current priorities.

86. The department has bought more textbooks but there are still too few resources, especially for manufacturing. The health and safety issues, mentioned in the last report, related to food storage and heat treatment have been put right. Some minor improvements have been made to the workshops but they still limit the breadth of teaching and learning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art

Provision in art is **satisfactory**.

Standards of work seen were average overall but below average in Years 10 and 11	Pupils' achievement is satisfactory
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is satisfactory	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teachers' good subject knowledge helps pupils to explore their ideas.
- Good relationships encourage pupils to behave well and make them appreciate that art is a pleasure. Teachers have a good rapport with pupils with special educational needs and those who find art difficult.
- On occasions, pupils do not work with a sense of urgency or focus, partly because teachers do not give them regular, short-term targets.
- Teachers do not use homework as preparation for what follows in lessons often enough.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used enough.

Commentary

87. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results have fluctuated widely since the last inspection. Having been above average in 2000, they dropped to below average in 2001 and 2002, but climbed back up in 2003. The school's data analysis shows that a minority of pupils do not do as well as expected. Teachers welcome and encourage all pupils, whatever their ability, into the GCSE art groups. Pupils with special educational needs do particularly well but all pupils benefit from studying this subject as they learn to work independently and collaboratively. Girls attain higher GCSE grades than boys.

88. Teaching and learning are better in Years 10 and 11, where all teaching seen during the inspection was good. In Year 11 pupils explore and develop ideas based upon Cubism, stimulated by the teachers' expert knowledge. All pupils enjoy art from Year 7, where they create tonal ranges in pencils, pastels and paint, through to Year 11, where they experiment with diverse materials and

processes. They are encouraged to be creative and expected to behave maturely. Pupils discuss their work and artistic ideas well; one Year 11 one girl, debating the best way to mount and display a heavy plaster of Paris sphere she had made, sensibly considered the pros and cons of using a metal stand fixed into a wooden base.

89. However, the right balance between enjoyment and work is not always maintained, and in several lessons work is slower than it might be. There are not enough pace and challenge to help pupils extend their range of artistic experiences in the time available. Teachers assess pupils' work well during lessons, but do not set them regular, individual targets to push them forward. Teachers too seldom set homework for pupils to prepare ideas and carry out research in advance of lessons. Records of pupils' progress are not detailed, so that when pupils change teachers the transition is not smooth. Teachers use ICT more than at the time of the last inspection, but there are still areas where it is not used to raise standards. For example, research and consideration and evaluation of presentation techniques are not exploited through ICT. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) pupils do not have a wide vocabulary of art words, which they could rectify by wider reading, in books and on the Internet.

90. The leadership of the department is satisfactory and resources are managed well. However, the department has not reflected enough, nor considered ways of generating innovation in its work. It has not set a lead in creating an exciting, visually aware culture within the school, with art becoming a force for creative stimulus within the community. No opportunities for enriching pupils' experience of art exist as there are no art clubs. These would be valuable, particularly for those pupils who give up art at the end of Year 9. Art work is not displayed enough around the school to celebrate pupils' achievement and raise the profile of the subject.

Music

During the inspection, music lessons were taught by a supply teacher who coped admirably in a very difficult situation. Pupils responded well to him. At the heart of his teaching was humour, a determination to make lessons interesting and a clear and caring approach. However, during the inspection it became clear, from scrutiny of work and documentation and interviews with pupils, that pupils are not receiving their entitlement to a worthwhile musical education.

Provision in music is **poor**.

Standards of work seen were well below average	Pupils' achievement is poor in Year 9 and unsatisfactory in other years
Teaching is unsatisfactory but was satisfactory during the inspection	Learning is unsatisfactory but was satisfactory during the inspection
Leadership is very poor	Management is very poor
Standards in all areas have declined since the last inspection	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Most pupils are keen and enthusiastic when they first come to the school.
- The curriculum is arid and uninspiring with an overemphasis on learning about music notation, writing about pieces of music and about composers. The result is that pupils' enjoyment of music is lost.
- Assessment is very poor.
- Planning and documentation are very poor.
- There are virtually no extra-curricular musical activities.
- The potential of visiting instrumental teachers is under-developed.

Commentary

91. The teacher assessed end of Year 9 standards as below average with less than half the pupils reaching the expected level. During the inspection pupils in Year 9 produced work at the same level as pupils in Year 7, playing from the same keyboard book. Most pupils underachieve because of poor lesson planning and no clear guidance on what to concentrate on next to improve their work. In 2003 four out of five pupils attained GCSE grade C; too few to make statistical comparisons with national averages. Only four pupils have chosen GCSE music in Year 10. This number is so small that they are taught during the lunch hour. Ten pupils study music in Year 11. None of them know their predicted grades or are even able to correctly name the four areas of study that make up the exam syllabus.

92. Too many lessons are boring. Pupils often spend long periods in silence learning about how music is written or writing about pieces of music and their composers. The result is that pupils' enjoyment of music is lost. Assessment does not happen regularly, so the supply teacher has no idea about pupils' past performance or potential.

93. Achievement on entry to the school is good with some evidence of an improving trend. A significant number of pupils learn to play a musical instrument in their previous school and take part in a range of musical activities there. These achievements are not systematically built upon. One very able Year 8 jazz pianist was playing the same piece of simple music as a pupil who had never played a keyboard before. All pupils learn to play the keyboard, even those who have better skills in playing instruments such as the flute or trumpet.

94. Teaching is hampered by very poor schemes of work that do not cover the National Curriculum for music, which was altered in 2000. They, and other departmental documentation, appear to have been written before the 1998 inspection and never changed. Lessons include too much written work and far too few practical activities. Where practical sessions have taken place, pupils remember these with pleasure.

95. Leadership and management of music are very poor. There is no coherent vision for music as an exciting and dynamic modern subject in which pupils develop their musical skills, knowledge and understanding through integrated, motivating yet challenging practical music tasks. The music department has contributed to the school's pantomime but this is not happening this year. Accommodation and resources are poor, as they were at the time of the last inspection.

96. Pupils can learn to play a musical instrument with a small team of visiting peripatetic teachers. However, this is under-developed and not cost effective. Virtually all lessons are individual. Larger groups would bring down the cost of tuition and mean more pupils could afford it. Many pupils in Year 7 choose to stop learning to play an instrument so only about 5 per cent of the whole school population learn instruments. This is a significant reduction since the last inspection and compares poorly with national figures. Teaching in these lessons is satisfactory, but progress limited because there are no extra-curricular musical activities for pupils to use their skills in. There is no evident improvement since the last inspection; instead music would appear to be worse.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Standards of work seen were average	Pupils' achievement is satisfactory
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is satisfactory	Management is satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- High quality, knowledgeable teaching in swimming and for the GCSE course.
- Pupils who are unable to participate physically are given meaningful tasks so they are fully involved in lessons.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 very effectively evaluate each other's work, which helps them to learn and perform well in games.
- The range of after-school activities contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of this subject. Parents and pupils appreciate this area of school life.
- Pupils are often responsible for the warm-ups at the start of lessons. They do them well.
- Standards in gymnastics and games in Years 7 to 9 are not high enough.
- Too few opportunities to develop the expressive and creative elements of the subject.
- Timetabling and resourcing arrangements mean that not all classes in Year 8 have swimming lessons and some have more games than others.

Commentary

97. In 2003, the results obtained by pupils following GCSE physical education fell below average. In the longer term, standards in GCSE physical education show an upward trend since the school was last inspected in 1998. GCSE physical education attracts approximately one sixth of pupils of mixed ability in any one year. The relatively few girls tend to do less well than the boys.

98. In Years 7 to 9 the quality of teaching and pupils' response varies between the different activities. High quality teaching in swimming results in the majority of pupils demonstrating consistently advanced levels of performance, particularly in their efficient breathing technique in front crawl. In gymnastics, pupils are not consistently challenged to develop variety and quality of movement to improve their skills, so standards in this activity are not high enough.

99. In Years 10 and 11 pupils effectively evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of their peers to bring about improvement. In netball and basketball, they learn well about attacking strategies and accurate shooting because pupils observing each other provide helpful analysis of their efforts. In the theoretical aspects of GCSE, the teacher used recent media coverage of controversial sporting events well. This strongly stimulated pupils' discussion towards a clear and balanced understanding.

100. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons because teaching throughout the department is supportive and encourages their efforts. Pupils generally apply the feedback and guidance which teachers give them to help them improve. They generally respond well when given responsibility for leading and regulating their own activities, as when warming-up for lessons and officiating a game. They support each other's efforts, including those with special educational needs. On occasion a minority of pupils in gymnastics did not concentrate enough on improving their learning because the teachers' expectations relating to performance of tasks was too low.

101. The use of national schemes of work gives continuity and progression and helps pupils to learn in planned stages. Assessment procedures linking attainment in discrete activities to National Curriculum Levels give a clear indication of how well pupils are moving forward, but this information

is not always used effectively to set work at different levels, as in gymnastics and games. Safe practice is encouraged but teachers need to be even more consistent to comprehensively ensure pupils' health and well being. Systems to ensure the playing fields remain hazard free merit urgent review and action.

102. The provision made for extra-curricular sport remains a strength because the department, well-supported by contributions from non-specialist colleagues in table tennis and games, gives considerable time and energy to this aspect of its work. Pupils' learning is enriched, particularly across a range of indoor and outdoor games. A productive relationship with the on-site leisure centre contributes to the quality of opportunities and provides a helpful link between the school and the community. Older pupils, particularly those taking the GCSE course, mentor younger ones in games and swimming. This good practice develops responsibility and leadership.

103. The quality of provision in many ways reflects that seen during the previous inspection, although a larger proportion of pupils now attain average, rather than well above average standards. Longer term trends in GCSE performance, despite the disappointing results in 2003, are positive. Elements of teaching are of high quality but teaching and achievement in gymnastics have not changed.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school does not offer any of these subjects or courses.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (Called personal and social development. Careers is part of this course)

One teacher has responsibility for both these important subjects. He has inherited a well-established PSD programme but has started from scratch to set up citizenship. The latter he has done very competently, as well as selecting good textbooks for Years 7 to 9. It will take time for other resources, such as videos and games, to match the quality and quantity of those for PSD. The co-ordinator has other management roles and does not have enough time to monitor how lessons are going and how much other subjects contribute to citizenship, so that good practice can be shared. Both subjects embrace topics which can have an impact on pupils' spirituality and cultural awareness but not with enough depth of focus and emphasis. During the inspection, the innovative teaching styles seen in several other subjects were not evident in PSD and citizenship.

Personal and social development

Provision in personal and social development is **good**.

Standards of work seen were average	Pupils' achievement is good
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been good	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- A well-established course covers all statutory topics well: sex, drugs and health education.
- Experienced and confident teachers in Years 10 and 11 deal with topics such as sex education in a sensitive way, mindful of pupils' different levels of maturity.
- A few form tutors in Years 7 to 9 do not prepare these lessons thoroughly enough to get the maximum value out of the half hour sessions.

Commentary

104. For practically all forms in Years 7 to 9, it is their tutors who deliver the PSD programme. Six lessons were observed during the inspection. Successful lessons were those where the tutors had clearly prepared their thoughts related to the topics so that every minute of the half hour was used productively. Where teachers referred to recent articles from the national or local press, or television soaps, pupils responded with interest. Where teachers stressed the relevance of topics to pupils' lives, debates came alive. If tutors do not have a good rapport with their pupils and expend energy controlling their behaviour, then lessons are not worth while. The experienced teachers who deliver the course in Years 10 and 11 teach well and confidently.

105. The careers element of PSD, organised by the experienced head of history, is well-planned and well-structured. Teaching is satisfactory and between Years 9 and 11 pupils receive much helpful advice and guidance. In Year 9 pupils attend an "Aiming for College" day which is successful because a high percentage of pupils continue into further education. This is complemented by Year 11 pupils taking part in two-weeks work experience for which they are prepared thoroughly. The library has a dedicated careers area and Internet sites are used well.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Standards of work seen were below average	Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is good	Management is satisfactory
The subject was not taught at the time of the previous inspection	

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- A well-planned and comprehensive course was introduced in September 2003.
- In Years 7 to 9 pupils have discrete citizenship lessons but they are only half an hour long in Years 7 and 9. In Years 10 and 11 the subject is delivered within the PSD programme.
- Older pupils take on roles such as buddies or prefects, which contribute well to their responsibilities to the school community. It is important to check that all pupils contribute in some way, ideally within the wider community as well.
- Assessment has not got going yet although systems are in place.
- Monitoring how subjects contribute to citizenship is not yet well developed.

Commentary

106. A year after schools had to introduce citizenship as a compulsory subject of the National Curriculum, lessons started at Long Stratton. Standards are below average because pupils have only had lessons for a few weeks. Although some significant progress was made in a few lessons, pupils are not yet achieving the levels expected for their age overall. In Year 10, pupils' political awareness lacks depth. The school acknowledges the equal importance of the three key strands of the course. Consequently, the co-ordinator appreciates that developments must include the relevance of topics to local issues, and opportunities for pupils to make contributions and to take responsibilities within the community. Although older pupils take on responsibilities, it is important to monitor that all pupils contribute in some way, ideally within the wider community as well.

107. The success of lessons is directly related to how well teachers plan them and how well they take into account the range of pupils' abilities. In a very good Year 8 lesson examining tabloids and broadsheets, the teacher's well-directed debate on the recent newspapers handed out culminated in pupils' disagreeing with some statements in the textbook, which they had only referred to briefly. In contrast a Year 8 textbook based lesson was unsuccessful as high ability pupils found the work too easy and wasted time and lower ability pupils did not get to grips with the complex voting issues being considered. The planning before this lesson was poor. An effective Year 10 lesson on racism was delivered with drive, in a business-like atmosphere. As the course evolves, teachers must mark pupils' books regularly and encourage them to write a few sentences summarising lessons where debates and discussions have dominated.

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	5
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	5
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	3
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).