

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

Blackpool

LEA area: Blackpool

Unique reference number: 119732

Headteacher: Mr Ian Evans

Lead inspector: Bill Stoneham

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th March 2004

Inspection number: 264898

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

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Terms used in this report

Key Stage 3 refers to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 who have transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. **Key Stage 4** refers to pupils who are in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the **National Curriculum**. A course in religious education is a requirement for pupils of all ages at school.

At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take national tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. At the end of Year 11, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**), or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**).

Inspectors judge the **standards** pupils reach by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' **achievements** reflect whether they have done as well as expected. Such judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

Efforts have been made to minimise the use of shorthand notations, although some have been used. Throughout the report, the notation **ICT** refers to information and communication technology. The term **SENCO** refers to the special educational needs co-ordinator. An **LSA** is a learning support assistant and an **IEP** is an individual education plan. **PHSE** refers to the school's programme for personal, health and social education. Comparisons to national averages are based on data for the academic year 2002/2003 for tests and examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11. The school has a special unit for a cohort of pupils with special educational needs. The title of this unit is the **special educational resource facility**, but it is more commonly referred to as the **SERF** unit.

No reference is made to pupils for whom English is an additional language. At the time of the inspection judgements about the achievement of pupils with English as an additional language did not apply to the school. There have been pupils who received language support in the past, however, and systems are in place should the need arise in the future.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1124
School address:	Highfield Road Blackpool Lancashire
Postcode:	FY4 3JZ
Telephone number:	01253 310925
Fax number:	01253 310929
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Fisher JP
Date of previous inspection:	November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is of average size with marginally more boys than girls attending. The intake is more disadvantaged than the broadly average number of pupils claiming free school meals would suggest; the socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are below average. Almost all pupils are of white British backgrounds and few speak English as an additional language, and none are at an early stage of English acquisition. About 12 per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is below average nationally, although the percentage with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is above average. Those who need the most help with learning have a range of disabilities, the majority with moderate or specific learning difficulties or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, although a small number have physical disabilities. Results of national tests taken in Year 6 show that the pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies widely but, overall, is below average. The school faces some challenges associated with the mobility of pupils with about ten per cent of pupils in Year 11 having joined the school after the beginning of Year 7. When the inspection was undertaken a bid to become a specialist humanities college had just been submitted. The school has received other awards such as a Government Charter Mark and it has Investor in People status.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27407	Bill Stoneham	Lead inspector	
19727	Eric Langford	Lay inspector	
7958	Georgina Lewis	Team inspector	English
4706	Alicia Welsh-Kuligowicz	Team inspector	Mathematics
27050	Valerie Blackburn	Team inspector	Science
8682	Martin Trevor	Team inspector	Design and technology
15465	Terry Parish	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
22046	Josephine Jolliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15971	Michael Pye	Team inspector	History
8672	Michael Roberts	Team inspector	Geography
30072	Joseph Skivington	Team inspector	Citizenship, music
21855	Dennis Carty	Team inspector	Physical education
27803	Joseph Clarke	Team inspector	Religious education, special educational needs
28101	Andrew Lagden	Team inspector	
12271	Ian Thompson	Team inspector	Art and design
31372	Robert Hardwick	Team inspector	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an improving school providing a satisfactory education and satisfactory value for money. Although results in national tests and examinations have been too low, inspection evidence indicates that standards are now rising. Achievement and teaching are satisfactory overall, but staffing difficulties have affected teaching and learning in a number of subjects. The attitudes of pupils are good and staff are working together to ensure that the school's progress is sustained. The leadership and management provided by the headteacher are good, with other senior staff offering sound support.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership of the headteacher is good and is establishing a strong agenda for school improvement; specialist humanities college status is being pursued and provision in this curriculum area is good.
- Although teaching is satisfactory overall, there is too little that is very good or better, and in some lessons staff expectations are not high enough. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by heads of department, senior managers and the governing body needs to be more consistent and robust.
- The quality of care pupils receive in the special educational resource facility (SERF) is very good and the support these pupils receive enables them to achieve very well.
- Standards in French in Years 10 and 11 and in design and technology in all year groups are too low and pupils underachieve in these subjects.
- The consistency of use of assessment data, including the marking of work, is unsatisfactory.
- The school is caring, promoting very good relationships, valuing the views of pupils and offering them a very good level of care and support.
- The behaviour of a minority of pupils is a concern and behaviour management procedures are inconsistently applied by staff.
- The use of information and communication technology in most departments is unsatisfactory and is impeding learning.
- The good range of activities outside the classroom foster well the pupils' social development.
- The management of the library is excellent and makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.

Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The amount of good teaching is similar to the last inspection and monitoring and evaluation procedures are being implemented to encourage further improvements, although these are inconsistently used at present. The important issues from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in all year groups. Although the table above implies that achievement was not good enough last year, standards have risen. Current pupils in Year 11 are reaching below average standards rather than well below average. Pupils with special educational needs who are withdrawn from lessons for extra support from specialist support teachers achieve well against the targets set out for them in their individual education plans. There is an improving picture for Year 9. Last year's results in the national tests were below average, but the current pupils'

standards are at the expected level for their age. Pupils throughout the school tend to do well in the humanities subjects of geography, history and religious education and in Years 7, 8 and 9, standards are rising in science and ICT. There are also improvements in girls' physical education where staffing is now more secure. However, significant numbers of pupils are not doing well enough in design and technology, where there have been particular issues with staffing.

Pupils' personal qualities are good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and their attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is sound. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, there is still some unsatisfactory teaching as well as some very good and excellent lessons. In the latter, staff really challenge pupils and so they are interested. In the weaker lessons, the pace is too slow and pupils become bored. They then sometimes misbehave. Assessment is unsatisfactory because the available data is not always used well by teachers, either to plan work or to guide pupils on how to improve. The curriculum is satisfactory. At the moment, although all the subjects are taught, they do not cover all they should. However, the school offers good extra aspects to its curriculum – pupils benefit well from the wide range of extra-curricular activities and trips offered. Most links outside the school are good and the school works well in not always easy circumstances with its parents. The school is a safe and secure place for learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher, who has been in office for five terms, is leading well, and the leadership of other key staff is sound. Management is satisfactory, as is governance. The effectiveness of the governors is improving and they know where they are not fully complying with statutory requirements. Such non-compliance is, in part, because of staffing problems. Those not met are listed below. The headteacher and leadership team are implementing a range of suitable strategies to secure further improvements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents like the school and they believe it is providing a good education. Although many parents do not readily involve themselves in the work of the school, most are supportive. Parents find the school approachable.

Pupils were generally positive about the school in almost all areas where questioned. There were some adverse comments about bullying and that the staff did not always treat the pupils fairly, but discussion and observation revealed a good quality pastoral system and pupils who were interviewed were confident that they could ask members of staff for help.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the overall quality of teaching and learning.
 - Develop and implement a more effective programme for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning that involves heads of departments, senior managers and the governing body.
 - Ensure that achievement is improved, especially in French and design and technology.
 - Improve the use of assessment data to plan work and guide pupils on how they can improve.
 - Ensure that the school's behaviour management policy is rigidly and consistently applied.
 - Ensure the consistent use of information and communication technology in all departments.
- and, to meet statutory requirements:
- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all.
 - Ensure full National Curriculum coverage in both art and design, and design and technology.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory overall. Standards are at the expected levels in Year 9 and below average in Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2003 showed underachievement; too few pupils gained five A* to C grades.
- Standards are higher in the current Year 9 than they were last year.
- Pupils with special educational needs withdrawn from lessons for extra support achieve well.
- Pupils in the SERF unit achieve very well.

Commentary

1. In national test results in 2003, standards in Year 9 in English, mathematics and science were below average overall, when compared to all schools nationally. They were average in mathematics, but below average in English and science. In comparison to similar schools based on prior attainment, standards were average in English and science, but above average in mathematics. Overall, standards were as expected: these pupils entered the school with below average levels of prior attainment and their overall performance in the tests was as expected, representing satisfactory achievement. In mathematics, however, they performed better than expected; achievement in mathematics was, therefore, good. The results gained in 2003 were similar to those recorded in earlier years.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.9 (32.5)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	34.4 (33.8)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	32.2 (31.7)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 226 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Standards for pupils currently in Year 9 are higher than last year and are, overall, at the levels expected for their age. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with below average standards of attainment. Although this judgement covers a very wide spectrum of ability, their achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 is satisfactory because of the impact of differences in the quality of teaching and learning between subjects and the relatively high levels of pupil mobility and unauthorised absence. However, pupils are achieving well in science, geography, religious education, history, ICT, physical education and French. Inspection evidence demonstrates that where achievement is good there is a higher quality of teaching and learning, together with positive pupil attitudes. Achievement is unsatisfactory in design and technology.
3. In 2003 the GCSE examination results were, overall, a cause for concern. Based on average points scored, standards were well below average when compared to all schools nationally and to similar schools. The main problem is that too few pupils are gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE. If the number of pupils attaining five or more A* to C grades is compared to schools whose pupils were of the same standard when they started Year 10, results were well below average in both 2002 and 2003. Nevertheless, results in some subjects were close to the national average, including art and design (though the entry was small), German and physical

education. In religious education, results were above the national average. However, results were well below the average in English language, mathematics, science, French, design and technology, geography, history and music, and were well below average in ICT. Overall, achievement last year in GCSEs was unsatisfactory.

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	31 (32)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	89 (88)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	28.9 (28.8)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 222 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- For pupils currently in Year 11 standards overall are below average. These pupils commenced their courses with below average levels of prior attainment. They are, therefore, mainly doing as well as expected and their achievement is satisfactory overall. Again, as in Years 7, 8 and 9, differences in the quality of teaching and learning between subjects, together with the relatively high levels of pupil mobility and unauthorised absence, have a negative impact on pupils' achievements. Achievement is satisfactory in most subjects, but it is good in geography, religious education and German, but it is unsatisfactory French and poor in all design and technology courses with the exception of food, where it is satisfactory.
- In the past, there have been differences between the attainment of boys and girls. In the 2003 GCSE examination results, for example, boys did better than girls. Whilst a mixed picture emerges in the subject reports, there were no apparent differences in the performance of boys and girls overall during the inspection.
- Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in most subjects. Pupils withdrawn from lessons for extra support from specialist support teachers achieve well against the targets set out for them in their individual education plans. Pupils from the SERF unit are integrated as fully as possible into mainstream teaching. Individual pupils observed were, despite their challenges, undertaking examination courses with every prospect of grades, which would exceed their original estimates. In food technology, pupils were working towards distinctions in their certificate course and in history GCSE a pupil had made excellent progress towards a very high grade. Hearing-impaired pupils achieve very well because the staff are competent users of sign language.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Although there are immature attitudes and behaviour from a minority of pupils, attitudes and behaviour are good overall. Attendance is satisfactory and is improving. Punctuality is satisfactory. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good at all levels and contribute to the positive ethos of respect and care within the school.
- Very good opportunities are provided to help pupils build confidence, raise their self-esteem and develop a sense of personal responsibility.
- The overall good behaviour and attitudes of pupils have a positive impact on the quality of learning.

- A minority of older pupils are less focused on their learning and their lack of self-discipline can have a negative effect on the overall standards achieved by pupils in Year 11.
- The higher than average absence of pupils in Year 11 adversely affects their achievement.

Commentary

7. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school. In general pupils display good attitudes to their learning, with very good attitudes being demonstrated by the younger pupils. However, there is a minority of older pupils, particularly in Year 11, who have less positive attitudes towards their learning and they challenge the teachers' authority in the classroom. Teachers who know their pupils well are able to minimise and overcome such disruptions, but this is not the case with all teachers and sometimes learning for all is impeded. Most pupils listen well, demonstrate good levels of commitment to their work and are motivated and keen to learn. Where good or better teaching takes place, many are able to sustain good levels of concentration during their lessons and collaborate well with each other in both group and paired activities. In most lessons observed pupils worked well together, shared ideas and celebrated the achievements of their peers.
8. Overall, most pupils display good standards of behaviour in and around the school and this serves to enhance the very good relationships that exist between pupils and between pupils and adults. The good, and often very good, behaviour seen in the school is the product of the effective teaching practice in the classroom.
9. Most pupils display a good level of commitment to the school motto of 'working together'. This is well evidenced by the significant reduction in permanent and fixed-term exclusions for misbehaviour in the current school year compared to the previous year. The school's well-structured system of behaviour rewards and sanctions are clearly understood and owned by pupils and are proving to be effective in supporting the ongoing development of the overall good behaviour and self-discipline observed during the inspection. The high level of pupils' respect and regard for others is well exemplified by the marked absence of any graffiti, property vandalism or excessive litter around the school.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1103	187	6
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0

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

10. Relationships in school are very good. Pupils work together constructively, form good friendships and settle their differences amicably. They think teachers are fair, listen to their ideas and are very approachable. Many pupils, in conversations and questionnaire returns, expressed many positive features of the school. The inspection team was particularly careful in investigating the concerns of some pupils and parents about bullying. However, following

checks of records and many observations and discussions with pupils, staff and parents, it was concluded that bullying was not an issue in the school. Such incidents of inappropriate behaviour that do occur are judged by parents and pupils to be swiftly dealt with by staff to the satisfaction of all involved.

11. Some 25 Year 11 pupils volunteered for training as peer mentors and provide Years 7 and 8 pupils with a quality and discrete personal counselling and support service, helping pupils to develop strategies to cope with school life and improve their learning opportunities. Conversations with pupils show this service to be effective, valued and well used enabling trusting relationships to be developed.
12. Very good personal development opportunities are provided for pupils through the four house structures and through the school council structure. These offer pupils regular opportunities to show enterprise and responsibility and to influence and impact on school practice and routines. The wide range of whole-school responsibilities offered to Year 11 pupils enhance their personal relationship experiences and, in the case of Year 7 mentors, significantly enrich the personal development opportunities of these younger pupils. Responsibilities offered are willingly accepted and undertaken by pupils with vigour and obvious pride.
13. Pupils with special educational needs have good relationships with their teachers who are generally supportive and encouraging. Consequently, pupils' attitudes are at least satisfactory and often good. However, a minority of pupils can occasionally be disruptive and prevent other pupils from learning. Pupils, who are withdrawn for extra support from specialist support teachers in life-skills, basic English or mathematics, have very good attitudes. Outside the classroom, pupils with special educational needs mix well with other pupils and are fully integrated into the day-to-day life of the school.
14. Overall, pupils' attendance at school is satisfactory and represents an area of improvement since the last inspection. However, the level of unauthorised absence for the school is above the national average and mainly attributable to Year 11 pupils. Unauthorised absence for pupils in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 is below the national average. The high absence recorded for Year 11 correlates with the negative attitudes to school displayed by a minority of this year group and has an adverse effect on their achievement. The school has a zero tolerance to pupils' lateness and most lessons start on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	91.5
National data	91.7

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.6
National data	1.1

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

15. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall.
16. Pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory, overall, although music and religious education make a good and complementary input. Pupils have time for reflection during collective acts of worship and in religious education they reflect on how religion affects lives, while in music pupils respond sensitively to composition. However, opportunities for spiritual development are not consistently found in other subjects.
17. Pupils' moral development is good. They discuss which charities to support and make rational choices. In physical education girls have a strong sense of fair play and in history pupils demonstrate empathy with victims of the Holocaust. Moral development is also well supported in citizenship and religious education where pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong.

18. Pupils' social development is good. There is a significant amount of good work in pairs and small groups, for instance, developing interpersonal and negotiation skills in mathematics and listening to each other in music and geography. The annual Year 8 camping expedition to the Lake District is an important date in the school's calendar and contributes significantly to the pupils' social development.
19. Cultural development is satisfactory, although it is least strong in preparing pupils for life in a multicultural society because there are only scattered opportunities to look beyond Europe. However, through experiences such as poetry from other cultures, the study of native peoples of America in history and visits to France and the battlefields of Europe, pupils' cultural awareness is heightened.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory. The curriculum is improving and the school is aware of where there are deficiencies. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, although staff expectations are not always high enough. Pupils are looked after very well and links with parents and the community are good and there are very good links with other schools and colleges. Provision in the special education resource facility is very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but the use of assessment is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in English, science, geography, history, music, religious education and physical education, however, it is unsatisfactory in design and technology.
- There is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching. There is insufficient very good and excellent teaching, and eight per cent of teaching is unsatisfactory.
- The good practice that exists is not shared to ensure that all lessons are better planned, offer more challenge and that staff have higher expectations of what the pupils can do.
- The use of assessment data, including the marking of work, as a device to raise pupils' achievement, is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils from the SERF unit learn very well because of the dedication and specialist skills of the staff.

Commentary

20. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 and in Years 10 to 11. Much of the teaching was either satisfactory or good; too few lessons were very good or excellent. The quality of teaching was stronger in Years 7, 8 and 9, often because behaviour in lessons was better. Where teaching was good or better, it was spread fairly evenly across departments, but the proportion of good and better teaching and learning was nearly 50 per cent higher in Years 7, 8 and 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Overall, learning and achievement are both satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, especially the latter, learning can be adversely affected by some unruly behaviour from a minority of pupils and in some subjects, especially design and technology, staffing problems have constrained learning. There also remains an element of unsatisfactory teaching that needs to be eliminated if standards are to rise further. This was mostly concentrated in Years 10 and 11. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is similar to that reported at the last inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 113 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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2 (2%)	22 (19%)	44 (39%)	36 (32%)	9 (8%)	0	0
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The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

21. A major reason for the inconsistencies in the teaching and learning seen during the inspection is that hitherto insufficient attention has been paid to monitoring the quality of classroom activity. Individual staff and departments have often been left to work in a vacuum where there has been no effective or decisive overall monitoring function exercised by either the school's senior managers or its governors. This is now changing and this weakness is addressed in the new school improvement plan. Many staff are competent classroom practitioners, but they have had too few opportunities to share and develop good practice. Assessment data is available to staff, but in some lessons limited use is made of this information. This results in staff having little detailed knowledge of what levels pupils should be working at and this makes lesson planning more difficult. The findings of the inspection team offer a more severe assessment of the quality of teaching and learning than that given by parents and pupils. Overall, they believed that teaching and learning were at least good.
22. Where the quality of teaching is good or better, certain strengths can be identified. In these lessons planning was at least good and expectations of behaviour and standards of work were high. In the better lessons, learning benefited because the staff challenged the pupils and engaged them and it was evident that the pupils were keen to learn, enjoyed the tasks set and were involved. Examples of good and better teaching were found in a number of subjects, but there tended to be consistently good practice in the humanities subjects, especially when subject specialists were used, and in girls' physical education.
23. Overall, however, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching and this depresses learning and the progress pupils make. In part this situation has arisen because of the problems the school has experienced in recruiting and retaining staff. Staff illness has also had a detrimental impact. Another key issue is that where teaching was less good, staff expectations were often insufficiently exacting and some pupils became restless and even disruptive. Although there was no poor teaching, unsatisfactory lessons were scattered across a range of subjects. In the unsatisfactory lessons planning lacked sharpness. This resulted in slow pace and the use of exercises that did not challenge all pupils sufficiently or progress their learning. Again restlessness frequently resulted. Some staff found it difficult to manage the restless pupils and this led to the learning of all suffering. Other inconsistencies were also evident, especially in the setting and marking of homework. Staff need to adhere to homework timetables and ensure that set homework is realistic, challenging and designed to enhance learning. There is a tendency from staff either to set homework irregularly, or simply require pupils to finish off classwork. This does little to further learning.
24. The quality of specialist teaching is very good for pupils in the SERF unit. Teaching strategies are effective and tailored to individual need. In mainstream classes the support of the assistants is crucial and they work very effectively in supportive relationships that raise self-esteem and confidence and lead to good progress overall. Expectations are high. The work of the staff who deal with hearing-impaired pupils is greatly enhanced by the very good sign language skills they have developed and this has a beneficial impact on the learning and achievement of the pupils.
25. The teaching of pupils with other special educational needs is satisfactory overall. When withdrawn for extra help from specialist support teachers, pupils are very well taught. Teachers generally make effective use of teaching assistants, although they rarely involve them in lesson planning. Pupils are well managed and lessons go according to plan. Overall, there is insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning, for example, through the use of an integrated learning system.

26. The school's use of assessment data is inconsistent. The school is aware that its assessment procedures are not properly co-ordinated and that, at a whole-school level, the use of pupil targets and monitoring every pupil's progress against such targets, is in its infancy. Across departments the use of assessment data to set targets, to inform teaching and learning and improve standards is far too variable. Although there are good procedures in science and geography, assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory in the SERF unit and in many subjects including English, mathematics, French, ICT, design and technology, art and design and citizenship. Where procedures are better, pupils benefit, but this good practice is not shared. At present departments too frequently work in isolation. For standards to improve the school needs to implement quickly a good quality assessment policy that is used with consistency by all staff. The governing body also needs to be fully involved as part of its own monitoring function.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and it gives equality of access to all pupils. The school provides good opportunities for extra-curricular activities and the quality of the accommodation and available resources is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Enrichment opportunities, such as the Year 8 residential trip, are well developed and offer good opportunities for learning outside of the classroom.
- Year 9 pupils are benefiting from good advice and guidance regarding options, together with the choice of two clear pathways for academic and vocational options.
- Statutory requirements are not fully met in art and design, and design and technology.
- There is limited vocational GCSE provision.
- Opportunities for pupils who are particularly gifted or talented to take public examinations early are limited.
- Some improvements in the provision of specialist furniture for pupils from the SERF unit are still needed.

Commentary

27. Overall, the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Statutory requirements are met, except in design and technology where the systems and control elements of the National Curriculum are not delivered and in art and design where insufficient use is made of ICT. The school is aware of these issues and is addressing them, but staffing problems have hindered progress. The curriculum has been improved since the last inspection; it provides pupils with the full range of National Curriculum subjects, including social and religious education. From Year 8, pupils are able to study two foreign languages.
28. Year 9 pupils benefit from good advice and guidance regarding their options for Year 10. The school has made commendable efforts to move away from a traditional approach to the curriculum and pupils now have the choice of two clear pathways based on academic or vocational routes to qualifications, although in the latter, choice is still limited.
29. In Years 10 and 11 curriculum provision is satisfactory. All pupils, including those with special educational needs take double science and all pursue a GCSE qualification in religious education. However, not all pupils follow an ICT course. Pupils have a limited choice of vocational courses to GCSE examination level in leisure and tourism and health and social care. The school is, however, planning to increase the number of such courses on offer. A good number of pupils have the opportunity to follow work-related courses at a local college, leading to a Level 1 NVQ in areas such as hairdressing. College time demands have resulted this year in some unsatisfactory timetable arrangements. In history and science, for example, some classes have more than one lesson on one particular day, with a long gap, accentuated by a two-week timetable, before their next lesson. This lack of continuity impedes learning.

30. There is satisfactory provision for personal, social and health education, which is taught in pupil support lessons. When possible, good use is made of expert guest speakers to support teachers in teaching topics such as health and sex education. Careers education and guidance are provided well through these lessons, and are complemented by an 'Industry Day', and work experience for all Year 10 pupils.
31. Pupils from the SERF unit have the maximum access possible to the National Curriculum. Pupils with other special educational needs have the same access to the National Curriculum as other pupils. However, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have no opportunity to regularly practise their reading with older pupils or adults. There is good curriculum support for pupils in Years 10 and 11, who as well as studying for a wide range of GCSE subjects, have opportunities to take college link courses and work placements; some pupils also receive life-skills support.
32. The school is endeavouring to improve its provision for its gifted and talented pupils. Positive steps have been taken to identify those pupils who are gifted and/or talented. The progress of all such pupils is monitored and individual departments are being trained in accelerated learning techniques. Two successful summer schools have been run, as well as master classes. However, practice across departments is inconsistent and the scope for the fast-tracking of pupils in some subjects is an area for development. The school recognises the difficulty in ensuring and monitoring the provision for gifted and talented pupils in individual lessons, so that individual teachers are not only aware of these pupils, but meet their learning needs with suitably challenging material and strategies. This is not always the case at present, but the school is making a well-planned effort to address this issue by working more closely with each department as well as with each individual pupil. Overall, provision is good and improving.
33. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities. There are good opportunities for pupils to participate in drama, museum visits, team sports, particularly for girls, and music. There are too few opportunities for all pupils to benefit from fieldwork experiences in geography. Pupils talk animatedly about the very good opportunity they receive in Year 8 to participate in a residential trip to Cumbria. There is satisfactory support for pupils outside lessons through the provision of revision and booster classes. Pupils benefit from open access to the excellent library and computer clubs.
34. Staffing is satisfactory overall. However, in design and technology it is poor because there have been problems in appointing staff and there is currently no head of department. These factors have adversely affected pupils' achievement. Currently there is also too much use of non-specialists to teach history in Years 7, 8 and 9. This is tenable only in the short term as achievement will be affected over time. The significant use of supply teachers from time to time is of concern; evidence suggests learning and achievement suffer as a consequence.
35. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, but with some good features, for example, music rooms are good. The accommodation in the SERF unit is of a very high standard and is very well equipped. Pupils in wheelchairs manage the building well. In art and design and in design and technology inadequate accommodation contributes to depressed standards of pupils' work. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in physical education; the sports hall floor is damaged and too often dirty, shower facilities do not meet requirements and are consequently unused. One room used for ICT is poor; it looks good, but external noise and acoustic problems interfere with teaching and make learning harder than it would be in other computer rooms.
36. Resources are satisfactory overall. They are unsatisfactory in design and technology. The provision of specialist furniture for pupils in wheelchairs in science and design and technology is deficient. Very limited use of ICT within subjects indicates insufficient subject specific software and equipment. The school ICT servers have not been robust and this has hindered teaching and learning; it is too early to say if new equipment is better. There are good facilities for the use of ICT in the special educational needs area and this helps these pupils achieve well. The school library is an excellent facility with a very good supply of books and is very well

used by pupils. This facility is managed by the school's librarian in an exemplary manner for the undoubted benefit of the pupils. The library is accessible at lunchtimes, before and after school. The use of data produced by the library's electronic system is used well to document borrowing trends and use of the library by staff and pupils. This provides clear guidance on the school's needs and enables an effective response to them. There are homework and reading clubs, and visits and visitors are also organised. The reading club provides a very good extension to pupils' reading and has rapidly grown since its introduction.

Care, guidance and support

The school's provision for the pupils' care and welfare is very good. This represents an area of improvement since the last inspection. Very good provision is made for pupils' involvement in all aspects of the school's work and development. The support, advice and guidance offered to pupils is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality child protection and related care procedures ensure pupils' best interests.
- The very effective involvement of pupils in the school's work has resulted in a range of school improvements and enhanced the learning environment.
- The very good quality of pastoral support to pupils has a positive impact on their learning and development opportunities.
- Very good absence management systems help promote good attendance.
- The lack of formal systems to keep check on pupils' personal development inhibits the setting of challenging targets and the reporting of progress achieved.

Commentary

37. Pupils feel safe in school. Very good child protection and care and welfare procedures are in place. Staff have received training in child protection and are aware of, and familiar with, the need for vigilance in monitoring the well-being and welfare of the pupils in their care. Risk assessment techniques are well embedded into school routines and very good health and safety procedures embrace the whole spectrum of the pupils' time in the school. Governors are fully involved in the health and safety audit reporting process. There are a good number of staff trained in first aid; however, there is no suitable provision to accommodate pupils who feel ill during the school day.
38. Teaching staff know the pupils well and provide them with a high level of pastoral support. The level of care for pupils from the SERF unit is very good. The welcoming inclusive approach of the staff maximises the benefit of the resource in special needs work generally. Teachers are kindly and sensitive to pupils' needs throughout the school. The great majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and value highly the advice and guidance they receive from staff. However, a lack of formal whole-school systems to track and report on pupils' personal development hinders the ease with which challenging targets can be agreed and monitored to show progress being achieved. The career guidance, work experience and vocational opportunities provided are good and prepare pupils well for their life after school.
39. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs and how to bring any concerns to the attention of the co-ordinator for special educational needs are good. Good procedures exist to identify pupils with problems in basic skills, especially mathematics, and high quality individual education plans are in place, helping teachers target pupils' needs more effectively. There is insufficient tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress as they move through the school. Individual education plans have improved since the previous inspection and are now of good quality; teaching assistants give effective support in the classroom, but they do not report back, on a lesson-by-lesson basis, on how pupils are achieving against the targets as set out in their individual education plans. Pupils have few opportunities to supplement their learning outside lessons. There is no paired reading provision with older pupils or adults and no

opportunity to use specialist ICT programs, for example, through lunchtime or after-school clubs. Although there is some use of ICT, particularly in developing pupils' arithmetic skills, more could be done to encourage pupils to use new technology to learn more effectively.

40. Very good and effective induction procedures ensure that new pupils and parents are quickly introduced to the routines of school life. Liaison with primary schools is very good and ensures the smooth transfer of pupils into secondary education. The collaborative working between pupils in Years 6 and 7 has a positive impact on the ease with which the young pupils are introduced to a whole range of secondary school experiences.
41. The very good attendance management systems enable daily monitoring of pupils' absence and have contributed to the improved attendance record of the school. The school takes a positive approach to promoting good attendance with first morning phone calls home to follow up pupil absence and a series of merit awards to celebrate improvement trends in pupils' attendance.
42. The school has high expectations for behaviour and recently introduced, whole-school behaviour management procedures are having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. This is reflected in the very good behaviour of younger pupils. However, the inconsistent use of the procedures in managing the less disciplined behaviour of a minority of Year 11 pupils has a negative impact on their learning and achievement.
43. Consultation with pupils is well developed through the school council structure and enables pupils in all year groups to have an influence on improving school routines and their learning environment. The school listens to pupils' suggestions and the council has raised a number of good ideas that have been implemented by the school. Examples include the successful implementation of the healthy food choice bar in the restaurant, inclusion of black trousers to the girls' uniform and an increase in the number of extra-curricular clubs available to pupils. The school is right to celebrate the positive influence made by pupils towards improving the school facilities and their learning environment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are good. An improvement since the last inspection is the very good partnership arrangements developed with other schools and educational establishments. The good community links have been maintained since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good liaison with other educational partners enriches the pupils' learning opportunities.
- Good community links are of great benefit to pupils and the wider community at large.
- Parents are supportive and have confidence in the work of the school.
- The good level of information keeps parents up to date with school activities and pupils' achievements.
- A small minority of parents do not support the school or involve themselves in their child's learning.

Commentary

44. The school's good relationship with parents is evidenced from the many examples of partnership working between parents and staff in support of pupils' learning and development. Most parents consider staff very approachable and responsive, however, a number would like to see more emphasis given to promoting higher expectations for behaviour. Discussions with staff and pupils show there are good arrangements for regular contact opportunities with parents. Many parents value the pupils' homework diary system as a means of monitoring how their child is progressing at school and some make good use of this to communicate with teachers about their child.

45. Parents are provided with a wide range of good quality information related to the school and the progress their child is making. The governors' annual report, school prospectus and Internet web site are valuable reference sources and provide a range of useful and informative data about the school and pupils' achievements. End-of-year and termly progress reports provide parents with a good insight to their child's knowledge levels and indicate areas for improvement. Annual consultation meetings, arranged to discuss pupils' progress, are attended by the majority of parents. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about their children's progress and are fully consulted and involved in annual reviews. Most parents are very satisfied with the information they receive.
46. The school recognises the need to formalise strategies for seeking parental views and is pleased at the recent good support of parents in re-establishing the parent, teacher and friends association (PTFA). During the inspection, examples were provided of teachers and parents working together as partners in the development of strategies to help pupils improve their attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning. A minority of parents expressed concerns about the presence of poor behaviour and bullying in the school. The inspection team reviewed this concern fully and found no evidence to support this view.
47. The very good partnership working with other local schools enriches pupils' learning and provides them with high quality social links through a wide range of shared learning and sporting activities. In particular, the planned cross-phase subject links have a significant impact on the ease with which primary pupils are successfully integrated into secondary school routines. Older pupils gain significant benefits from the very good employment 'taster' opportunities, extended work experiences and careers advice offered as a result of the school's close partnership working with the local FE college and connexions service.
48. The close and productive working relationships developing through the Highfield PTFA links have extended the existing good community links enjoyed by the school and secured additional support and sponsorship for the school's bid for humanities college status. The school is a community resource and well used to benefit adult learning groups and a wide range of local social and sporting associations. The school makes good use of its wide range of community and business contacts to enrich, and contribute to, the pupils' PSE support programme of studies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is well led, and management is satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership and is endeavouring to establish a clear ethos for the school, with an overwhelming desire to raise standards. The leadership of other key staff is satisfactory. The quality of governance is satisfactory, but some statutory requirements are not met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision of how pupils can achieve and what improvements are needed.
- The school's finances are managed well.
- The school needs to develop effective systems for self-evaluation, including reviewing performance data of individual and groups of pupils.
- The governing body is very supportive of the school, but it needs to develop further its function of being an effective 'critical friend'.
- Issues relating to the recruitment and retention of staff have caused the school many difficulties and have resulted in far too much inconsistency in the quality of leadership and management at departmental level.
- There is a strong commitment to inclusion; pupils from the SERF unit are successfully taught in mainstream classes as much as possible.

Commentary

49. The headteacher has been in post for less than two years. Many of the structures inherited, including the way the governing body conducted its business have been gradually, but systematically, revised to secure improvements. The governing body now has a clear sub-committee structure, which the governors acknowledge leads to more efficient meetings and decision taking. An improved system of financial management has been established and, despite some deep-seated issues relating to the recruitment and retention of staff, management structures in the school are evolving. There is a clear and unequivocal commitment to improving standards, with a clear vision of how the school will develop over the next few years. Development planning is good and there are clear signs that staffing should become more stable. Some key appointments had been made shortly before the inspection, although the posts became effective after the inspection had finished.
50. Much work remains to be done. The school needs to improve how it evaluates its own performance. Work is already being done in this regard and the new committee structure adopted by the governing body is helpful as each sub-committee has a well-defined responsibility and the governors are gradually developing their roles as 'critical friends'. Part of the improvement will include the continued development of a comprehensive system to monitor pupils' performance.
51. The leadership and management of the SERF unit are good and have created a working climate in which support staff work very effectively with the pupils and their mainstream teaching colleagues in a harmonious atmosphere. Relationships with the various agencies who support the work are very good; communication with feeder schools is good. However, the processes associated with statements, IEPs and reviews, without designated clerical support consume valuable management time. Other areas of management are underdeveloped including a clear overview of pupils' progress over time, monitoring and evaluation of pupils' classroom experience and opportunities for the departmental staff to meet to consider and develop their work corporately. There is a need for clearly enunciated development planning, with costs and success criteria to give focus to the work of the unit for the future.
52. The leadership and management of subject and pastoral teams are satisfactory overall. Leadership and management are good in science, all the humanities subjects, physical education and music. In other areas, leadership and management are satisfactory, but in English, French and art and design, leadership and management are unsatisfactory, and in design and technology they are poor. Often where the quality of leadership and management is not of an acceptable standard, it is because of instability in staffing. There are also weaknesses in the management of ICT across the curriculum. Pupils do not have the opportunities they should have to develop their ICT skills and use them in other subjects. In too many subjects, teachers have neither identified what skills will be taught or used in specific subjects, nor how much time will be given to the ICT work.
53. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body comprises an eclectic group of local people, some of whom attended the school. Governors are very supportive of the school's work and are very keen to help the school and see it improve. Their organisation is improving and they are becoming better informed about the work of the school through regular reports they now receive. They now need to complement the strong support they offer to the school by being prepared to challenge and by being more constructively critical of the school, particularly its senior and middle managers. Plans and documentation are improving and where statutory requirements are not met, governors know the reasons why and, wherever possible, are taking steps to ensure that these shortcomings are overcome. Financial management is good and is improving, something that was recognised in a recent auditor's report. Financial procedures have been improved following the recent appointment of a business manager and the high budget surplus reported at the end of the last financial year has been reviewed; the outcome for the present financial year is predicted to be far lower. The school is rigorous in its use of best

value principles and prudent in budget management so that there are satisfactory reserves, earmarked for refurbishment and curriculum development.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,028,129	Balance from previous year	246,276
Total expenditure	2,995,740	Balance carried forward to the next	278,665
Expenditure per pupil	2,665		

The reason for the high carry forward figure is mainly associated with staffing. The school's budget for 2001/02 included a significant amount of funding for new staff, but because of recruitment problems the planned appointments were not made. This had an impact on the 2002/03 budget. The predicted carry forward for the present financial year (2003/04) is £149,000, which is approximately five per cent of the budget, falling to £100,000, or three per cent, the following year.

54. The leadership and management of the special educational needs provision are satisfactory. The school's two specialist support teachers provide very effective support to the co-ordinator and are responsible for the high quality individual education plans of pupils not attached to the special education resource facility. There is a strong focus on helping pupils achieve their potential. However, GCSE results are not analysed to see how well pupils with special educational needs have achieved. Links with external agencies are effective in helping support pupils' learning. Liaison with teaching assistants would be improved with regular timetabled meetings. There is no development plan indicating how it is intended to sustain the present or improve future provision.
55. Staffing numbers and qualifications match curriculum requirements, except in design and technology. Good provision is made to support newly qualified teachers in their induction year, teachers qualifying through the Graduate Teaching Programme and pupils in initial teacher training. One significant factor that hitherto has hindered improvements in achievement has been problems with staff recruitment and retention. Evidence offered during the inspection indicated that staffing for the forthcoming academic year should be more stable. Vacancies that currently exist at a senior level in English and mathematics, for example, have recently been filled.
56. Staff performance management and its effectiveness in bringing about improvement is satisfactory. The school complies with statutory requirements and ensures that individual teacher performance management is related to pupils' performance, department improvement plans and school improvement plans. There is a long-standing induction programme for all new staff. The programme is comprehensive and includes the contributions of governors and LEA personnel with several modules being compulsory for all new teachers, such as classroom management and behaviour management. Several newly qualified teachers commented on how valuable they found the sessions.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The inspection focus was on English and French, but two lessons in German were sampled. The evidence indicates that standards in German are average, but with some pupils working at above average levels in Year 11. Pupils start German in Year 8 with just one hour each week. Achievement over time is good.

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' planning and preparation for most lessons are at least good.
- Learning is enhanced because relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are good.
- Provision for pupils with specific learning difficulties in literacy is good.
- Target setting is underdeveloped; assessment does not always inform future learning and the marking of pupils' books is inconsistent.
- The departmental handbook is insufficient as an induction tool for new members of staff.

Commentary

57. Pupils join the school with below average results in national tests. By the end of Year 9 test results are still below average, representing satisfactory achievement. The 2003 GCSE results were also below average. Given the pupils' prior levels of attainment at the end of Year 9 two years earlier, this outcome represents satisfactory achievement. This can be accounted for by a number of factors, including staff turnover and pupil mobility.
58. For present pupils, standards in Year 7 are below average on entry and are below average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Despite this context, pupils are achieving satisfactorily as they are reaching the standards expected of them. Pupils in all years are confident speakers and most are attentive listeners. There is a minority of pupils whose listening skills are unsatisfactory; sometimes their behaviour requires intervention, which is distracting for the rest of the class. Reading skills in Years 7, 8 and 9 vary in competence. There are a number of pupils with well below average reading ages who need support and frequent prompting when reading. Some pupils do use phonic strategies to assist in reading unfamiliar words, but more often they rely on the teacher for prompts. By Year 11 many pupils are fluent readers. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 respond to literature texts with sensitivity and maturity. In a Year 10 class discussing poetry from other cultures, pupils demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the poet's feelings. They were able to express these using examples from their own experience of times when they had felt alienated and lost in another culture. Interest in books is growing as a result of the very good library provision. The writing of higher attaining pupils is fluent and confident and a wide variety of writing forms and styles is effectively displayed in classrooms. For average and lower attaining pupils, their writing skills show less fluency. Written work tends to be shorter and contains more errors; the range of vocabulary used is less extensive.
59. The quality of teaching and learning is good, but as some of the staff are new to post, this quality of teaching has not yet impacted fully on the pupils' levels of achievement. Teaching is well planned and preparation is thorough. Starter activities are successful in settling pupils to work, but the concluding plenary session is not developed. Learning is good in lessons where teaching is good or better. Teachers' expectations are high and pupils respond positively; they

use a variety of tasks and groupings. In classes with larger numbers of pupils with less competence in English, teachers provide a variety of short tasks linked to a topic, which ensures that pupils are actively engaged and enthusiastic learners. Progress in these lessons is good and sometimes very good. In some lessons more competent pupils do not always have a high level of challenge. The recently introduced target setting has resulted in some pupils being satisfied with the minimum target set. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are content to be passive learners. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and ensures that pupils are fully included in all lessons. Pupils with hearing impairment have support assistants who use British Sign Language to supplement the teachers' use of microphones. Although most pupils respond well to their English lessons, achievement is not as strong as the teaching because of pupil mobility, pupil absence and the misbehaviour of some pupils, which occasionally disrupts the learning for all. The attendance of a number of Years 10 and 11 pupils is poor and leads to discontinuity in learning, which is affecting results.

60. Unsettled staffing has resulted in there being no head of department since January 2004 . Although an appointment has now been made, leadership and management are at present unsatisfactory. The teachers in the department work well together, but have lacked the overall strategic leadership given by a head of department. The departmental handbook is in need of revision because it gives scant help to staff new to the department. Teachers have a professional approach to their teaching responsibilities, but lesson observation, the evaluation of teaching and learning, the monitoring of pupils' work and teachers' marking have not been regularly undertaken. Marking is inconsistent and does not always follow the guidance outlined in the school's literacy policy. There are, however, some examples of very good marking, which informs and advises. The use of target setting is underdeveloped and has not yet had an impact on raising standards. The intervention strategies used to improve literacy skills are good and make a positive impact on pupils' learning. There are also some good extra-curricular activities, including the production of a school magazine, visits and visitors, and opportunities for public speaking; these all add to pupils' experiences and learning.
61. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning remains good overall; planning and preparation of lessons continues to be good overall. However, marking is less consistent than it was. Leadership and management were judged to be very good. The department has been through a period of upheaval and instability without a designated head of department providing leadership. Leadership and management are now unsatisfactory and, at present, there is little monitoring of teaching, assessment or evaluation of learning.

Language and Literacy across the curriculum

62. Standards of literacy are satisfactory. The school has developed literacy across the curriculum using whole-school training. There is a policy, which includes a whole-school marking policy. All subject co-ordinators have received training on how to develop literacy within their subject areas. The advice provided to teachers is very accessible. The monitoring and evaluation of the strategy, which is not the responsibility of the literacy co-ordinator, have not been carried out and have resulted in uneven progress throughout the school. In some areas, notably music, history, physical education, geography and religious education, good development has provided a variety of opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy skills. In mathematics and science development is less satisfactory.

French

Provision in French is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 are good.
- Extra-curricular provision is good.
- Teaching in Year 11 is unsatisfactory; it lacks pace and challenge, thereby restricting achievement.
- Management is not rigorous enough in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning or using assessment data to drive up standards.

Commentary

63. The 2003 examination results show that standards in the GCSE examination were well below the national average with very few pupils attaining higher grades. This represents unsatisfactory achievement. Test results in Year 9 show that standards in 2003 were broadly in line with the national average and that the pupils' achievement in relation to their prior learning was good. Overall, the girls' results were higher than boys.
64. The standard of work seen during the inspection was average in Year 9 and taking account of pupils' starting point, achievement is good. As a result of being extremely well taught, higher attaining pupils in Year 8 speak confidently with a good accent, use the past tense and can state preferences. Lower attaining pupils in Year 9 can give short answers to what is seen and heard. Average and higher attaining pupils can take part in simple structured conversation supported by prompts. However, in Year 11 standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory; this is more marked amongst boys than girls. Most pupils in Year 11 are not confident speakers and there is limited use of extended, independent writing at the level expected at GCSE.
65. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but varies from excellent to unsatisfactory. In Year 11 it is unsatisfactory because it is pitched at a level below that expected of GCSE candidates and lacks the relevant pace or challenge. This limits opportunities and, consequently, pupils' achievement. Teaching is good overall in Years 7, 8 and 9. The Key Stage 3 Strategy is being well used, resulting in purposeful teaching and learning, except in those lessons when disinterest or poor concentration impede learning. In one excellent Year 8 lesson, the demand on pupils to produce independent French was high, leading to excellent achievement and confident speaking skills. In some lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11, too little independent oral and written French is required of pupils, limiting opportunities and achievement. There is good extra-curricular provision, but the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is not suitably challenging or appropriate for GCSE candidates.
66. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation do not underpin departmental practice and strengths are not identified and shared, resulting in low standards. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have been successfully maintained during a period of staffing upheaval.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of well-prepared work and the level of support they receive.
- GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average and assessment data is not used regularly to inform pupils on how they can improve.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching result in some unsatisfactory attitudes to learning and lower standards in some lessons.
- The medium-term plans are inadequate as schemes of work.

Commentary

67. Results gained in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 indicated that standards were average. In relation to their prior attainment, the achievement of these pupils was satisfactory. The 2003 GCSE results were below average overall, but the results for boys, based on average points score were close to the national average, whereas results for girls were well below average based on the same measure. Overall achievement in relation to prior attainment was satisfactory. For present pupils in Year 9, standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory; most pupils are attaining standards that are consistent with their prior learning. Standards in Year 11 GCSE classes are also broadly average overall, with pupils again achieving satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 7, 8 and 9 and in Years 10 and 11, achieve well because of the dedication of a particular teacher who specialises in supporting them and has high expectations of behaviour and progress. A clearly defined programme of support means that activities are closely matched to need.
68. Teaching and learning are overall satisfactory, but there is significant variation across the department. In the best lessons teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use clear exposition and explanation to teach the key concepts. They explain to pupils what they are learning and why. There is a good balance between consolidating prior knowledge and developing new skills. Teachers have high expectations of both work and behaviour and there is a sense of urgency. Good questioning skills challenge pupils' understanding and allow pupils to discuss their learning. Lessons are well structured to build up learning, starting with a brisk activity that develops pupils' mental numeric skills and followed by well-selected activities that develop concepts. Pupils respond well to opportunities to work together or to come to the board to demonstrate their understanding. Pupils are supported in their learning by additional sessions provided by staff after school and during the Easter holiday.
69. Occasionally activities do not adequately match pupils' needs. Either the activities are too difficult for pupils to undertake independently, or they fail to capture their interest. Consequently, pupils' motivation and learning deteriorate. In some lessons, effective behaviour management is not sustained and this limits the amount of learning taking place. Often beginnings of lessons are better than the end. Most lessons begin with appropriate numeric activities that set a positive tone to the lesson. Occasionally lessons conclude abruptly and too often the concluding session does not capitalise on consolidating learning. While work is marked regularly it does not always inform pupils about their standards, or what they need to do to improve. Homework is set weekly and helps pupils to consolidate what they have learnt in lessons. Very few opportunities exist to use ICT to develop and reinforce skills and understanding
70. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting head of department has managed to sustain a good team approach despite staffing turbulence. She has co-ordinated the work of a number of regular supply teachers ensuring that provision for the pupils is maintained. Regular team meetings allow opportunities to discuss teaching and learning, review pupils' progress and examine setting arrangements. The development plan has clearly identified priorities and concentrates appropriately on raising standards and higher aspirations. The predicted levels of attainment in both Years 9 and 11 have been adjusted upwards and strategies for obtaining

higher levels of attainment identified. Assessments of pupils' work provide teachers with attainment data. This information needs to be regularly used to inform pupils of their progress towards the end of each topic. Pupils also need specific targets that will help them realise their expected levels. Recently developed medium-term plans provide a teaching programme for all year groups. However, these are taken from a commercial package and require development into a scheme of work that is directly linked to pupils' needs. There are limited opportunities to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and opportunities to observe and share good practice within the department. Overall, however, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

71. All teachers have taken part in a training day on the National Numeracy Strategy and there are good written guidelines on how mathematics is to be applied in other subjects. Some departments have identified how they develop mathematical skills. Standards are satisfactory with the majority of pupils demonstrating capability in measurement, spreadsheets, databases and graphical presentation in ICT, science, history, physical education, French and music. However, there is no overall co-ordinated approach in tracking mathematical competence across the curriculum and no designated person to oversee and support the development of the use of mathematics across the school.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and the majority of pupils learn well.
- The department is well led and managed, staff work well together and are mutually supportive.
- There are good systems for tracking pupils' progress over the year.
- The marking of pupils' work lacks consistency and does not always give pupils help on how to improve.
- Teachers do not always give sufficient emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills.

Commentary

72. In 2003, standards in the national tests and examinations were below the national average as they had been the previous year. The proportion of pupils attaining average levels in the national tests at the end of Year 9 was in line with the national average, but below the average at higher levels. However, in relation to pupils' prior attainment at age 11, standards matched those in similar schools. There was little difference between the standards of boys and girls. GCSE results in 2003 were also below national figures and have fallen over the last two years. The proportion of girls attaining the higher grades was significantly below the national average, a change from 2002 when they were significantly above. In both years, GCSE results in science were significantly below the results of other subjects in the school.
73. Standards seen in lessons are better than the test results; many pupils at the end of Year 9 are working at above average levels, but their limited literacy and writing skills reduce overall standards to an average level. Pupils enter school with below average attainment; many make good progress and achieve well. In the mixed ability groups up to the end of Year 9 pupils are set different tasks related to their ability, so that all achieve at least satisfactorily and many achieve well. There is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls, and those with special educational needs make the same progress particularly when supported by learning assistants.

74. At GCSE, overall standards in lessons are below average and reflect examination results. However, in some groups pupils achieve well and reach average standards. Pupils in a Year 11 lower set achieved well and could talk about the factors that would affect the amount of electricity passing through different circuits. Year 10 pupils could use their understanding of the structure of an atom to explain about static electricity. In other sets, pupils' standards are below average as they are unable to recall knowledge learnt previously and apply it to new situations. Year 11 could not use their understanding of atomic structure to explain what happens to a chemical compound when electricity was passed through it. In the groups where pupils are underachieving this is often due to a variety of factors: the department relies on temporary staff to fill teachers' long-term absence due to sickness and within some groups there are pupils whose behaviour is quite challenging. These factors, together with the poor attendance of some pupils, can prevent achievement.
75. Teaching is good overall and results in good learning by the majority of pupils. In over half the lessons seen the teaching was good or very good, resulting in good or very good learning. There was more very good teaching in GCSE classes, but also one unsatisfactory lesson. In the best lessons teachers set high expectations of behaviour, application to work and pupils' achievement. Lessons are well planned with a range of activities designed to keep pupils interested and challenged to think. Often pupils are given tasks to develop their independent research skills and then present their findings to the class, such as Year 11 explaining about different inherited diseases. Up to the end of Year 9 all teaching groups contain a wide range of ability and good planning means every pupil is given the opportunity to learn well. Different levels of tasks are set on the same subject allowing all pupils to make good progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In the less successful lessons, teachers have lower expectations of the standards pupils can achieve and also incidences of pupils' poor behaviour get in the way of pupils' learning. Sometimes if teachers plan to cover too much in the lesson this does not allow the opportunity to consolidate learning of one section before moving on to the next.
76. The department makes good use of data on pupils' prior attainment and uses this to track progress and set targets, which are shared with pupils. However, day-to-day marking lacks consistency in its detail, grading and frequency and does not give pupils sufficient points on how to improve from one piece of work to the next. This was mentioned at the last inspection. There is inconsistency too in the approach to developing pupils' literacy skills. Whilst there is evidence of pupils writing at length and speaking about their work in science there is not a consistent approach to the use and reinforcement of key scientific terms.
77. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and a plan for the way forward. Staff work well together, support each other and share good practice. However, both historically and currently, the department is experiencing long-term staff absence and the use of many temporary teachers. This is having an effect on the work of the department and the achievement of some pupils, although staff work hard to compensate for this by changing over teaching groups. Some pupils, particularly in GCSE classes, demonstrate quite challenging behaviour, but the majority of pupils' attitude to work is good.
78. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Since then the science accommodation has improved considerably with existing laboratories being upgraded and two new ones being built. The range of storage and preparation areas is now adequate, but some are too small. There has also been an improvement in the resources available for supporting teaching including interactive whiteboards and data projectors. The quality of support offered by the science technicians is good and is helping the quality of learning. These improvements enable staff to be more adventurous in their teaching and this benefits learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 are good and pupils achieve well.
- Curriculum provision in Years 7, 8 and 9 has recently improved and improvements have begun in Year 10.
- Class organisation in Year 11 is unsatisfactory and hinders teaching and learning.
- ICT staffing provision is good; teachers work well together as a team and provide good extra-curricular opportunities to pupils.
- Strategic management of ICT is unsatisfactory, although plans are underway to improve it.
- The use of assessment data and target setting is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

79. Standards in GCSE examinations in 2003 were well below average. Just over a fifth of the 109 candidates in the full course failed, as did just under a third of the 13 short course candidates. There are several reasons for this poor performance including unsatisfactory management of the curriculum, which began to be addressed in September 2003.
80. Standards in Year 9 are broadly average and pupils achieve well. Statutory targets set by the school for pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2004 are appropriate and challenging. Teacher assessments for 2003 indicate standards were above average overall, although most pupils reached their expected standard. This is not at odds with what is seen in the classroom; unusually, most pupils' work is of average standard, very few struggle with work expected of them and fewer are stretched to reach above and well above average standards. In Year 11 a complex pattern of provision exists, but standards are below average, with pupils achieving satisfactorily in relation to their prior learning.
81. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and are satisfactory overall. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils are following national units of work and can word-process, publish and present work appropriately. Database work is beginning well and pupils are particularly well practised in using spreadsheets. Control through mathematical and modelling software is developing satisfactorily and leads logically into control of models and simulations. Pupils are good at basic ICT skills such as using the keyboard, mouse and drop-down menus. The school gives full credit to the good ICT work done in feeder primary schools; pupils arrive in Year 7 well skilled. Pupils only began weekly ICT lessons in September 2003 so Years 8 and 9 are working at a similar standard; Year 9 did not do all the work that is now a feature of younger pupils' lessons. Teachers are experimenting with and modifying and refining units of work and provide some support for the least and most able through different examples of, for example, spreadsheets.
82. Years 10 and 11 are operating differently to each other and teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Year 11 organisation is still a hangover from the curriculum offered prior to September 2003. Some classes contain a few pupils who are following a full GCSE course, more following a short course and a similar number using the time to do other subject work; they have decided that they do not want to do ICT. This mixture of pupils' needs and expectations is not satisfactory and hinders teaching and learning. Teachers perform satisfactorily in the circumstances; they are quite versatile, providing entirely different support to individuals, but the learning of ICT could certainly be better if that was all that was done. In other Year 11 lessons, with all pupils following ICT courses, time is used more efficiently and pupils are more on task. Teachers have prepared good revision guides to help pupils take some control over their own learning and the most determined pupils do so. In Year 10, all pupils follow a short course GCSE. Standards in Years 10 and 11 vary from above to below average overall, reflecting the unsatisfactory provision for ICT when pupils were younger. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, following ICT courses, are now achieving broadly satisfactorily. Both weak and able candidates would benefit from more support, greater challenge, or both, within lessons. Teachers do provide additional support and opportunities after school and a significant number of pupils, mainly those taking the full GCSE course, take this up.

83. Current leadership is satisfactory and there are good features such as team building; staff are relatively new, but working together well and, for example, sharing the work of keeping ICT rooms open from 8am until 5pm. Day-to-day management such as marking is satisfactory, but overall management is unsatisfactory. Timetabling means the head of department teaches little ICT and is not in a secure position to monitor the work of the department. Assessment is not used satisfactorily to set academic targets and pupils are not clear about what they need to do to get better, other than complete coursework, and sometimes are unsure about what course they are on. Staffing is good, resources and accommodation satisfactory overall. However, the location of a room, developed as part of the City Learning Centre, in the dining room is far from ideal for effective teaching and learning to take place.
84. In the last inspection report standards, achievement, teaching, learning and the curriculum are all described as better than now. Consequently, improvement is unsatisfactory. The school does have clear intentions to improve provision, including management.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. Very little use is made of ICT to help pupils learn in subjects across the curriculum. There is no school co-ordination of the use of ICT. Computer rooms are found at one end of the school and are mostly used for ICT lessons, although on occasions several are empty. The school networks, the way in which computers are connected together, stop working from time to time and were down for several weeks not long before the inspection. A network manager is now in place to help minimise such disruptions. The school reports that some teachers have good ICT skills, many have inadequate skills; training provided from the New Opportunities Fund was poor and has not resulted in any significant improvement to teacher capabilities in the use of computers. Because too many pupils take advantage of Internet connections to play games, even when in lessons according to the school, Internet access has to be restricted in rooms when computers are in use. All in all, poor provision is made for using computers across the subjects of the curriculum.
86. There are some examples of better provision. Design and technology (graphic products) makes good use of limited software to design such things as invitation cards, computer slide presentations and packaging. Science does some data capture work, but there is too little equipment to follow best practice in this area. Science also makes good use of the school website to place digital images of experiments; pupils can download such images and incorporate them into their work. Modern languages benefits from a small computer suite and uses software to help learning, but does not use e-mail to communicate with pupils in other schools in, for example, France. The school is using the City Learning College as an ICT resource, taking coaches of Years 10 and 11 pupils to visit and use modern facilities. However, during the inspection, 24 Year 10 pupils out of 80 failed to attend the arranged visit.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good because of good relationships and very good class management.
- Achievement by pupils with special educational needs is good, because of the high level of individual support given to them during lessons.
- Good assessment procedures inform pupils of their level of attainment and how to improve it.
- Homework is used effectively to extend the work of lessons to develop independent learning.
- The use of fieldwork to stimulate interest and enthusiasm for geography is limited.
- More rigorous use of ICT in teaching and learning is hindered by difficulties of access to the ICT rooms
- The monitoring of teaching and learning lacks rigour.

Commentary

87. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, standards were below average overall; the proportion gaining A* to C grades was well below average, but the proportion passing at A* to G was above average.
88. For present pupils, standards at the end of Year 9 are average; at the end of Y11 they are below average. Bearing in mind that standards on entry for geography are well below average, achievement at the end of Years 9 and 11 is good. Generally, achievement by higher and lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good. This is the result of the high degree of individual support offered to pupils during lessons by both teachers and support assistants.
89. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have established very good relationships with their pupils, which are used to build confidence and encourage involvement. As a result, pupils' attitudes are very positive and their behaviour in lessons very good. They also respond very well to effective and stimulating teaching. In a Year 7 class of lower attaining pupils, who had just learned about different types of settlement, the teacher used role play very effectively to reinforce their learning. Volunteer pupils grouped themselves appropriately to represent nucleated, linear or scattered groups. Every student was fully involved. In this and in the follow-up exercise, locating sites on an ordnance survey map using four-figure references and identifying the settlement type at each location, the teacher was very strongly assisted by the extremely well co-ordinated support work of two teaching assistants. As a result, the level of pupils' achievement was very high including the several pupils in the class with special educational needs. Homework is set to develop independent learning or to reinforce learning. Much of the work is challenging and pacy, with extension work set for higher attaining pupils and specially structured resources for pupils with special educational needs. This reflects the high expectations of teachers generally, although the more average pupils are not so strongly challenged. Teachers offer considerable personal time to support their pupils before and after school each week and in Easter and summer holiday revision programmes. Pupils' written work is structured well to support revision for examinations and marked thoroughly, although there is inconsistency in the use of formative comment. Nonetheless, pupils generally know their level of performance and what they have to do to improve.
90. The quality of leadership and management is good. Pupils' work is assessed well. Pupils' targets are set initially by the school but, because they are not geography specific, they are not then adjusted according to each pupil's actual progress in geography. Because the monitoring of teaching is not as rigorous as it ought to be, opportunities are missed both to share very good practice and to provide appropriate developmental support. The use of fieldwork to develop pupils' interest and enthusiasm for geography and give a realistic perspective to their knowledge and understanding is limited. The use of ICT in teaching and learning is only modest, partly because of difficulties of access to the ICT rooms. Pupils use their own home facilities very well, however, for Internet research and very effectively to display calculated data graphically in their GCSE coursework. Recent planning for future developments is very detailed and thorough and is based on the requirements of the bid for specialist school status. Literacy

is a problem that affects the standard of many pupils' written work. The department has a good programme to support the whole-school policy. The level of improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make good use of active teaching methods to motivate pupils.
- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Pupils enjoy the subject and many go on to take GCSE.
- There is insufficient data available at the start of Year 7 about the skill levels of pupils.
- Leadership and management of the subject have resulted in a team committed to improvement.

Commentary

91. GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average with boys doing less well than girls. Pupils enter the school with standards that are below national expectations, however, by the end of Year 9 they are in line. This constitutes good achievement for pupils, including those with special educational needs. The subject is popular with pupils and uptake for GCSE is good. Overall attitudes are positive, although in Years 10 and 11 there is evidence of less secure attitudes with, for example, homework not being consistently completed. Present standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average, but given pupils' levels of prior learning, their achievement is satisfactory.
92. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 satisfactorily increase their knowledge of such topics as Nazi Germany. Less secure is the development of history skills such as the consideration of the usefulness of sources, and the pupils' ability to raise questions of their work. In Years 10 and 11 pupils describe in some detail the medical discoveries of Galen and Fleming. More competent learners handle sources well, and are able to critically evaluate them. However, less competent learners tend to describe rather than evaluate, and find it difficult to balance their own knowledge input with the source material. Pupils have good extended writing opportunities, but a significant number demonstrate literacy difficulties. Drafting and redrafting improves the standards of literacy, but under exam conditions the weaknesses are apparent. Pupils' learning is well supported by a range of good trips and visits, together with some very good displays in classrooms. However, their understanding of levels of work and how to improve is unsatisfactory.
93. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with some very good practice. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge well to plan imaginative lessons in which, for example, pupils' attention is gained by interesting starter sessions. Pupils' concentration is held by the teachers' use of short periods of activity, reinforced by good consolidation of the main learning points. Pupils are also motivated by the good resources that are used. Achievement is supported by very good relationships in lessons that lead to an atmosphere that allows pupils to concentrate on their work. The quick pace of lessons maintains pupils' interest, although insufficient time is given at the end of some lessons for reflection on what has been learnt. On occasions the work set for pupils is insufficiently challenging.
94. Good leadership and very good management have overseen good improvement since the last inspection. The standards of teaching and pupils' work are maintained through rigorous monitoring and evaluation of performance. A detailed audit for the humanities specialist school bid has produced a comprehensive development plan. The non-specialist teachers benefit from the good clear guidance contained in the subject handbook as well as the support of the

specialist staff. More guidance regarding levels of work in the long-term planning documents would help staff to more easily identify expected progression. The subject does not have sufficient assessment data at the start of Year 7 to effectively track the levels of pupils' history skills. A close-knit team of committed teachers identify strongly with the commitment to improve, and are unafraid to consider new ideas.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2003 were above average.
- Good teaching and learning result in pupils achieving well.
- Learning is insufficiently enhanced by visits to places of worship or prayer.
- A well-led team of specialist staff is a decisive factor in raising standards.
- There is not enough use of ICT to support pupils' learning.

Commentary

95. The 2003 GCSE results were above average and pupils did significantly better in religious education than in their other subjects. The proportion of pupils entered for the full examination was twice the national average, as was the proportion gaining the higher A* and A grades. Although boys and girls did equally well, boys' results were significantly higher than boys nationally. The majority of pupils entered for the short course in 2003 gained a pass at grades A* to C, as they did in the previous four years.
96. By Year 9, because of good teaching and good attitudes, standards are just below average and pupils have achieved well given their starting point in Year 7. Pupils know about the principal religious beliefs and practices of the main world religions, particularly Christianity and Judaism. They have good insights into why people worship different Gods and know about the sacred books used in teaching and worship such as the Muslim Qur'an and the Sikh Guru Granth Sahib. One impediment to higher standards, however, is that few pupils are able to express themselves by writing at length about what they know and understand. By Year 11 standards are average overall and pupils continue to achieve well, but standards on the GCSE full course are above average. Pupils have a secure knowledge of religious beliefs and concepts and show a mature understanding of diversity of views. Standards overall have been adversely affected by last term's staff absence when a number of non-qualified supply teachers had to be employed.
97. The quality of teaching is good. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, those who are gifted and talented and the small number of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, achieve well and learn well. This is not only because their teachers make the subject interesting and teach pupils effectively, but because of the good attitudes pupils bring to their work. Teachers know their subject well and are able to explain concepts and teachings, for example, the Five Pillars of Islam, in ways that pupils can understand. Thorough planning and preparation ensure that lessons go according to plan and time is rarely wasted through pupils' inactivity. Relationships with pupils are positive and encouraging and ensure that classroom management is effective. There are not enough opportunities to enhance pupils' learning through visits to places of worship or prayer, particularly mosques and temples, and non-Christian faith leaders are rarely invited to come to school and talk to pupils. There is insufficient use of ICT by pupils in presenting their work or in using the Internet for research.
98. This is a good department. It is well led and managed with a strong focus on pupils achieving the highest possible standards and results. A good team ethos has been established among a strong, experienced team of specialist teachers. The subject makes a good contribution to

pupils' personal development particularly through the promotion of pupils' spiritual and moral values. Improvement since the previous inspection in teaching, pupils' achievement, GCSE results and assessment has been good. Regular monitoring of the work of the department, whilst having improved, is still not rigorous enough.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE in graphics (product design) and electronics are very low by the end of Year 11.
- The overall standard of graphics used when designing is low and needs significant improvement.
- Departmental management has been ineffective over a sustained period, resulting in a disorganised curriculum area.

Commentary

99. Pupils have below average skills in design and technology when entering the school in Year 7. By the end of Year 9, with the exception of food technology, standards have regressed relative to national levels. This represents unsatisfactory achievement. GCSE results were below average overall and well below average for the acquisition of A* to C grades; only 18 per cent of pupils studying electronics to GCSE achieved an A* to C pass and 17 per cent succeeded in graphics (product design). Achievement is poor in electronics and graphics at GCSE, unsatisfactory in resistant materials, but satisfactory in food technology. Results at GCSE for design and technology as a whole are significantly below those of many other departments in the school. No pupil achieved an A* pass in any design and technology examination last year. The GCSE results in food technology have improved since the last inspection, whilst those in other strands of the subject have regressed.
100. At the time of this inspection, some specialist teachers of the subject were unavailable for teaching duties owing to illness and long-term absence. Specialist teaching of resistant materials has not been available or consistent for some time. Electronics is affected to a lesser extent, but was still not being taught on the examination-based course. No teaching of classes for resistant materials or electronics could be observed and no work was available for scrutiny other than a few half-completed GCSE projects made from wood. The lack of specialist teaching for pupils in Year 11 at this critical time will adversely affect forthcoming examination results in these areas in the 2004 examinations. The standards seen in a Year 7 food technology class were below average. Pupils in this class showed little motivation to contribute and insufficient progress was made. Evidence from a Year 9 textiles lesson showed that there was good progress being made in a well-taught lesson. Standards in this class were seen to be average. Some pupils in a Year 11 graphics class demonstrated satisfactory achievement, but there were instances of pupils not applying themselves fully to the task; this restricted their learning and achievement. Standards in this class were below average overall and some individuals were weak in the subject. No computer-aided design was seen during the inspection and there were no instances of thoughtfully completed design sheets with high quality rendering and other suitable techniques being applied. Some use of computers was seen in work folders, but mainly for low-level functions.
101. Teaching overall is unsatisfactory in all years. There is a shortfall in the number of experienced and specialist teachers of the subject within the school. This helps explain why there are too few passes at the higher grades of GCSE in all strands of the subject and why design methodology is weak. Work folders of pupils reveal much evidence of uncritical use of research

and inconsistent design methodologies. Learning is sometimes affected by pupils showing a limited interest in the subjects being covered and unsatisfactory approaches to their work.

102. Leadership and management of the department have been weak for some considerable time. The department has no coherent scheme of work for Years 7, 8 and 9, or a staff handbook to identify clear and consistent working practices. The curriculum falls short of statutory requirements in Years 7, 8 and 9 by not including systems and control, or the teaching of structures. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory and, in addition, there has been a failure to draw together all the strands of the subject so that it is taught in a holistic way, and subject-orientated staff are working too independently of each other.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus was on art and design and music, but two drama lessons, a Year 7 and a Year 11 class, were sampled. At present there is no discrete course of drama for pupils. The Year 7 class understood stage directions and their purpose and in their play reading were developing their understanding of character. The Year 11 class displayed good knowledge of dramatic terms and conventions. In preparation for their GCSE performance, pupils were aware of the grade criteria and showed a mature understanding of how to achieve their target grades.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good knowledge of their subject.
- Relationships are good and support good classroom management.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory; teaching is not monitored or supported well enough.
- National Curriculum requirements are not met in relation to the use of ICT to support learning.

Commentary

103. GCSE examination results in 2003, from a small entry, were above average for the award of grades A* to C, but below average for the award of grades A* to G. Pupils following the full course did better than in most of their other subjects.
104. In work seen, standards are below average at the end of Years 9 and 11. These standards represent satisfactory achievement in relation to the pupils' standards when they join the school and when they start their GCSE course in Year 10. Pupils following the full GCSE course in restricted time achieve well. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls in Years 7, 8 and 9, but in Years 10 and 11 girls achieve better because they complete more of their work, experiment with effects to develop it more diligently and research more widely.
105. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with a small proportion of good teaching. Learning is satisfactory. Teachers plan lessons well to capture pupils' interest. Because teachers show their enthusiasm for the subject, pupils are generally keen to explore the tasks that are presented to them. Pupils are introduced to a good variety of media and given confidence in their ideas, which they discuss willingly. The aims of lessons are clearly expressed so that pupils know what is required of them. Teachers manage their classes well, building on good relationships and the greater majority of pupils bring good attitudes to learning. Good support is provided for pupils with special educational needs so that they learn as well as their classmates. Particularly sensitive support is provided for pupils in care. The relaxed atmosphere and pace of many lessons mean that pupils enjoy their work, but too often they are

not challenged or stretched enough to do as well as they could. This is particularly the case for gifted and talented pupils, a few of whom, particularly boys, are not doing as well as they should. Overall, marking is supportive, but does not give sufficient guidance as to how work might be improved and too much work in sketchbooks is allowed to remain unfinished. ICT is not used well enough to support learning.

106. Leadership is unsatisfactory because issues raised in the previous report have not been tackled well enough and improvement has been unsatisfactory. Management is unsatisfactory because teaching is not monitored or supported and the use of ICT to support learning does not meet National Curriculum requirements.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' good subject knowledge and delivery contribute to better learning.
- Teachers' high expectation of learning outcomes leads to positive effort from pupils.
- The good development of basic skills promotes achievement.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to foster learning, in part because of a lack of technical assistance.
- Not all pupils are well matched to the demands of the GCSE course.

Commentary

107. Results at GCSE in 2003 were below average, an exception to the trend over recent years. Teaching and learning were significantly disrupted because of long-term staffing problems in the department.
108. Present standards in Year 9 are in line with national averages. Pupils are able to compose and perform their own work, and play in ensemble, because teachers pay great attention to developing basic skills such as reading notation and listening to others. Most are able to play in time, but there are a significant number who find this difficult. Pupils with special educational needs do well because they receive extra help and the tasks are of a practical nature. Relative to their prior learning, pupils achieve well. At the end of Year 11, standards are in line with the national average. Pupils are able to compose in a variety of styles and the few who are competent instrumentalists produce some very pleasing and well-structured pieces. Those who do not play an instrument struggle because their sight-reading is weak and they are not confident in using the keyboard. The recent disruption in their learning has made it more difficult for them to meet the demands of the course. Also, they have been denied the support of music technology. Nevertheless, all pupils achieve satisfactorily.
109. Teaching and learning are both good. The teachers' good subject knowledge supports learning because their explanations are clear and they provide examples that are very helpful and inspire pupils to try to do the same. Basic skills are given due attention from the start so that pupils have the means to compose and perform their own and others' music with growing confidence. There is a high expectation of behaviour and effort, to which most pupils respond well. The behaviour of a minority of disengaged pupils on occasion slows down the lesson, but does not disrupt learning significantly. A good variety of tasks sustain pupils' interest, and group and self-evaluation after performance encourages independent learning. The more competent pupils are encouraged to extend their learning with challenging extension work, but on occasions the lesson content does not stretch them sufficiently. The growing numbers of pupils who are learning to play a musical instrument are very well supported by their peripatetic teachers. Assessment is effective in raising standards, because the pupils know what level they are aiming for and what they must do to improve.

110. The subject has entered a stable period after recent upheaval. Leadership and management are good. There is a new vision, enthusiasm and commitment to improvement. Self-evaluation is used well to identify areas of weakness and inform teaching strategies. Access to ICT is identified as a serious barrier to learning and raising achievement, because there is no technical assistance available, and programs such as Sibelius and Cubasis, which would help enormously in developing musical literacy and composition, lie unused. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development, especially their social skills. Extra-curricular enrichment includes workshops held by outside contacts, for example, a professional saxophonist and members of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, as well as concerts, bands and choirs.
111. Improvement since the last inspection is good, particularly the higher standards across all years and the improved assessment procedures. Teaching and learning are now good and the department is well resourced, apart from the still unsatisfactory access to and use of ICT.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The expertise of teachers and their commitment to raising achievement are strong features.
- The expectation and challenge of girls are strong and result in high levels of both individual and team achievement.
- There is an unacceptably high non-participation rate amongst boys in Year 11.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity is strong, as demonstrated by the very good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and residential experiences.
- The head of department sets a very good role model to staff and pupils through her commitment to a very high quality of physical education for every pupil.
- There are too few opportunities for independent learning using ICT.
- Recording of risk assessment is inadequate.

Commentary

112. Results in 2003 GCSE examinations were close to the national average overall. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was below average, but above average for grades A* to G. Trends in results show that these standards are being maintained and girls and boys are attaining comparably. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 were average, both in the GCSE course and in the course followed by non-examination candidates. Standards of work in GCSE dance are above average. The standard of girls' work is well above average, but boys' work is below average. Therefore, girls' achievement is good; boys' achievement is unsatisfactory, with achievement overall being satisfactory. In Years 7, 8 and 9 standards of work are average overall, with the standard of girls' work being above average and that of boys below average. Therefore, given levels of attainment on entry to the school, girls' achievement is good; boys' achievement is satisfactory, with overall achievement being good.
113. Teaching and learning are good. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are satisfactory, with girls' learning being good. Boys' learning is satisfactory for those taking part, however, there is a 50 per cent non-participation rate in Year 11. In Years 7, 8 and 9, teaching and learning are good, with girls' learning being very good. Boys' learning is satisfactory, with non-participation rates slightly higher for boys than girls, although low overall. All teaching seen was satisfactory or better, with the significant majority of teaching being good, with some very good examples. Teachers' subject knowledge is at least good. They have made full use of expertise from specialist schools and the local schools sports partnership and community sports links. Planning is very effective in Years 7 to 9, with good clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils and invariably well reviewed at the end of lessons so that pupils may recognise their

learning gains. The insistence of high standards of behaviour, dress and performance is a strong feature of Years 7, 8 and 9 and of girls in Years 10 and 11.

114. The promotion of equality of opportunity is a strong feature of the department demonstrated by the very good range of activities in the taught curriculum and the very good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and residential experiences. The school enjoys a good reputation for the achievements of its teams, both locally and regionally, in netball, athletics, rugby, cricket, football and badminton. This year, the school has provided county representatives in athletics, rugby league, girls' rugby, netball, football as well as England under-17 ice hockey, European roller hockey, academy players in football and rugby league, and the world junior line dancing champion. In general, there are too few opportunities for independent learning, with teaching and learning strategies limited by a lack of adequate and consistent access to ICT. Consequently, the use of homework to reinforce and extend work in lessons is generally unsatisfactory for GCSE courses.
115. Curriculum leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The head of department demonstrates clarity of vision with a sense of purpose, and has high aspirations and expectations both of herself and others. She sets a very good role model to staff and pupils through her commitment to a full range of activities and her determination to offer a very high quality of physical education to every pupil. Three of the five full-time physical education staff have only been in the school since September 2003, as has one member of staff with a part-time contribution. Already, this group of staff are becoming an increasingly effective team. Management is satisfactory because some issues have yet to be resolved. The unsatisfactory achievement of older boys is a legacy of previous unsatisfactory teaching, an issue that has been addressed, but not solved. Self-evaluation by the department is embryonic, but with some examples of good practice emerging, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. Support for newly qualified teachers and supply teachers is a strength of the department.
116. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, largely because of the low number of suitable indoor areas. The corridor has to be utilised as a fitness area, which is far from ideal. The sports hall floor has been criticised by pupils for lack of cleanliness and for causing minor cuts to feet and there are often problems with the state of the main playing field. Other factors having a negative impact on pupils' achievement are the inadequate provision for and access to ICT, the inadequate time allocation to the Year 11 GCSE course and the fact that pupils with a history of non-participation in Years 7, 8 and 9 are allowed to take up the subject at GCSE. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have improved. There has been improvement in pupils' skills of analysis and evaluation and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Leadership and management of the department have improved. There was no evidence of the recording of risk assessments on a formal basis, although there is a policy and reference to risk assessment in lesson plans. This is a fast improving department with excellent potential to optimise pupils' achievement within the subject and enhance the school's reputation. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

No subjects were inspected in this curriculum area.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The schemes of work and teaching of the subject are well planned.
- Provision for discrete lessons in citizenship in Year 7 is good.
- Improved training for staff is required.
- The use of assessment is not well understood or monitored by teachers.

Commentary

117. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with expected levels. Pupils' written work indicates a growing understanding of the topics covered, for example, the role of the media. Pupils are able to discuss the importance of rules in society and show a good understanding of the work of the school council because they were themselves involved in the election process. The less competent pupils do not always finish their work because the material is not sufficiently tailored to their learning needs. There was some very thoughtful and empathetic writing on justice and wrongful imprisonment, including several well-written poems. All pupils achieve satisfactorily. At the end of Year 11 standards are in line with expected levels. Some reflective writing on immigration issues shows that pupils are beginning to find a balance between conflicting opinions and an awareness of prejudice. Pupils are involved in a practical way in the running of the school as well as outside activities, but it is unclear how many are involved and if the extent of that involvement is monitored and assessed for every individual. The achievement of all pupils is satisfactory.
118. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory. Some good challenging teaching was observed, which raised pupils' awareness of their own prejudices. Teachers have received little specific training in the delivery of this subject so that lessons tend to be teacher dominated and reliant on text and worksheets. The essentially practical outcomes of each lesson are not always evident in the otherwise well-prepared lesson plans. Pupils find the topics interesting and relevant and generally work hard in lessons. Assessment procedures are not fully in place in this emergent subject and work has still to be done to identify clearly learning objectives and how progress is to be monitored and recorded in order to meet National Curriculum requirements.
119. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new teacher in charge is well supported by the good preparation work that went before. There is an awareness of the need for training for all teachers who are expected to deliver the subject, but this is not yet at the planning stage, so they remain largely unsupported. Opportunities for pupils to become active citizens have been identified, including the work of the school council, prefects, charity work, library monitors, peer mentoring, residential camps and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Assessment of the level of participation of every pupil, however, has yet to be put in place.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Cost effectiveness / value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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