

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **RIVER HOUSE SCHOOL**

Henley-in-Arden

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125795

Headteacher: Mr M J Turner

Lead inspector: Charles Hackett

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> July 2004

Inspection number: 265192

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Male
Number on roll;	32
School address:	Stratford Road Henley-in-Arden Warwickshire
Postcode:	B95 6AD
Telephone number:	01564 792514
Fax number:	01564 792179
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Margaret Anderson
Date of previous inspection:	05/06/2000

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

River House is a day school for boys of secondary age with statements of special educational need for emotional and behavioural difficulties. Their attainment on entry is below average as the result of disruptive periods of education, often because of being excluded from mainstream education. A few pupils have additional special needs, such as attention deficit and hyperactive disorders and hearing impairments. There are currently no pupils for whom English is an additional language. Pupils travel into school in taxis, many having journeys of over an hour to and from school. The school was placed in the category of 'Special Measures' following a full inspection in 1999 after a period of considerable disruption. A temporary headteacher was appointed and the school was removed from this category following an HMI inspection in June 2000. The temporary headteacher was made permanent later in 2000. The school has suffered considerable disruption over the past year because of building work, which has taken far longer than anticipated. The building work has reduced the space available for teaching and at times put the health and safety of both staff and pupils at risk. At one stage this caused the school to be closed for a few days by the local education authority. The work is due for completion at the end of the present academic year.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21081	Charles Hackett	Lead inspector	Physical education.
11575	Catherine Fish	Lay inspector	
33710	Denise Fox	Team inspector	Science, information and communication technology, art and design.
17182	Michael Farrell	Team inspector	Mathematics, design and technology, music, geography, history.
18498	Denise Morris	Team inspector	English, personal, social, health and citizenship education.

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

River House works **effectively** with pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Through the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and determination and resilience from the whole staff team River House has developed its expertise, as well as surviving a year when it has experienced considerable disruption as a result of the protracted building work. High quality support is ensuring that pupils' personal development is good and, as a result of good teaching pupils make good progress in their learning. The overall quality of education provided, though, has been reduced because of weaknesses in the curriculum over the past year. The school provides good value for money.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very high quality care and effective support enables pupils to make good improvements in their attitudes and behaviour.
- Overall pupils make good progress in their learning but in religious education their progress is unsatisfactory.
- The curriculum in the core\* subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology is good but in many of the foundation subjects\* it is currently very limited and the teaching day is below the recommended number of hours.
- The overall leadership and management of the school are effective but the leadership and management of the curriculum has weaknesses.
- Links with parents and the very high quality work of the family liaison officers are very good.
- The social and moral development of pupils is good but their spiritual and cultural elements are unsatisfactory.

*\*English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and religious education are known as core subjects and all other subjects are called foundation subjects.*

Many aspects of the school's work have improved since the last inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in 2000. These improvements include the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements. However, the year long building programme has made it difficult for the school to maintain its momentum for improvement and as a result the overall rate of improvement since the inspection has been satisfactory. The new school development plan shows clearly appropriate plans for further improvements now the building work has been completed.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Year 11</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>

*Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

Pupils' overall academic progress is **good**. This is because they achieve well in the core subjects of mathematics, science, and information and communication technology. This is also the case in the development of their skills in speaking and listening, physical education and their personal, social, health and citizenship education. Their achievements in reading and writing are satisfactory but restrictions in the curriculum are reducing pupils' opportunities to achieve in many other subjects. In recent years pupils have passed more external examinations and achieved well in Standard Assessments Tests (SATs) in mathematics and science.

The personal development of pupils is **good**. It is best in their social and moral development where the emphasis the school puts on establishing positive relationships and for pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong are very effective. Less priority has been given to pupils' spiritual and cultural development and overall these aspects are unsatisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour improve considerably whilst at River House and they are now both good. The school does a great deal to encourage attendance and as a result the attendance of most pupils is improving. However, overall attendance figures mean that the attendance has to be judged as unsatisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is **satisfactory**. There is a good emphasis on pupils achieving well in the core subjects but there are significant weakness in other subjects offered. The overall quality of teaching and learning is **good**. Teachers have high expectations for pupils to work hard in lessons and in the majority of groups teaching assistants make valuable contributions to support this. Teachers use ICT, including interactive whiteboards, effectively and this helps maintain pupils' interest in lessons. Their learning, though, at times is reduced because lessons are often too short to allow pupils to complete all their tasks and the teaching day is shorter than that recommended in national guidance. In addition lesson plans do not give sufficient attention to pupils practising their literacy and numeracy skills. Because religious education, music, history, geography and a modern foreign language are not currently being given sufficient attention on the timetable, the overall curriculum the school offers is unsatisfactory. With the completion of the new building, plans have been made to give far more prominence to these subjects at the start of the next academic year. Outdoor education is a very valuable additional activity offered, popular with pupils and contributes significantly to improvements in confidence and self-esteem. Links with parents are very good, those with other schools good and developing, and with the community satisfactory.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall the leadership and management of the school are **good**. The very highly effective leadership skills of the headteacher are ably supported by senior colleagues and have not only brought about the improvement to the school's effectiveness as a whole but have also ensured that the school has survived a full year of disruption. The leadership and management of the curriculum is, though, unsatisfactory and not ensuring that pupils learn about sufficient aspects of the foundation subjects and religious education or that they have sufficient opportunities to extend their literacy and numeracy skills. Governors, under the enthusiastic, committed leadership of the Chair, know the school's strengths and weaknesses and support the school well. However, there are a few minor legally required items of information missing from the prospectus and annual report to parents.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS**

The majority of parents are positive about the school. They are pleased with improvements in their children's academic and personal performances. They do though report concern with regards to the use of exclusions. Records show that these are being reduced and were affected by the need to keep pupils safe during the building work. Pupils are very positive about the school, particularly the activities and the way that staff care for them.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

To move on to its next stage of its development the school should:

- Improve the leadership and management of the curriculum and extend the teaching day.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to increase their spiritual and cultural development.

And to meet statutory requirements the school must:

- Teach all required aspects of the subjects that are part of the National Curriculum.
- Ensure that all legally required information is provided for parents in the prospectus and annual report.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Pupils' overall achievement is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils make good progress in the core subjects of mathematics, science and information and communication technology.
- Pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well but make less progress in reading and writing.
- Pupils make good progress in personal, social, health and citizenship education because of the important emphasis given to these aspects in the school.
- As a result of a limited programme in religious education pupils' progress is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' progress in other subjects has been reduced by the limited curriculum offered over the past year.
- Pupils with particular talents and those with additional special needs achieve well because they receive good support.

#### **Commentary**

1. The school's timetable this year is ensuring that pupils have access to English, mathematics, science and ICT lessons each day. This has proved effective in ensuring that overall pupils have made good academic progress. The results of SATs and end of Year 7 progress tests show that many pupils have increased their levels of attainment whilst at the school. In mathematics pupils make good progress in all aspects, particularly in their understanding of basic number skills. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their progress in science referring to their enjoyment in taking part in investigations. Pupils are now confident to use computers independently; they have gained good skills in using different software programs and word-processing. GCSE results have improved each year in maths and science and this year seven pupils have been entered for both subjects. Lower ability pupils have also done well in passing Entry level examinations. Overall pupils' achievements have improved since the previous inspection.
2. Throughout the school an important emphasis is placed on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Each week pupils meet and discuss their progress with the headteacher and in tutor periods staff encourage pupils to think about their progress and contribute to setting new targets for improvement. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are now making good progress with their reading and writing but the progress of older pupils, although satisfactory, is not as good. Much of this is because there are reduced opportunities for them to read and write in other subject areas.
3. Daily citizenship lessons and the school's overall approach to pupils' personal development help ensure that pupils make good progress in personal, social, health and citizenship education. Although there is the need for the work in lessons to have a better overall plan of what will be taught, there is clear evidence that pupils have gained an increased awareness of many aspects of a wide range of topics. Their work shows they have studied a good range of topics and completed projects, which have given them an increased understanding of how they all, as individuals, have responsibilities to the communities where they live.
4. Pupils' achievement in religious education and many other aspects of the curriculum have been affected by the disturbance of the building work over the past year. Their achievement in religious education is unsatisfactory because they have not studied the subject in the required depth that should have been offered. There are examples of good pieces of work in many other



subjects, for example design and technology and art and design, but an insufficient range of work has been completed to make judgements on pupils' overall achievements in each of these subjects.

- The achievements of pupils with additional special educational needs, such as attention deficit hyperactive disorder and hearing impairments, are similar to those of other pupils. This is because they are fully supported by additional arrangements, such as individual literacy and numeracy programmes and by close supportive attention being given to their emotional needs. The school seeks to support pupils with individual talents. This is the case in table tennis. As a result of the support and coaching they have received in the school two pupils reached the national semi-finals of a recent competition. This represents very high standards of achievement. Successes in outdoor education contribute significantly to pupils' good progress in physical education. Many pupils have achieved very well in taking part in a recent 100 mile canoe challenge from Liverpool to London and in a long distance walk covering the full length of Offa's Dyke, in a number of stages spread over several months.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **good**. Provision for their moral and social development is **good** but for spiritual and cultural development it is **unsatisfactory**. Attendance is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils fully understand the expectations for them to work in lessons.
- Relationships are good and contribute greatly to the positive atmosphere in the school.
- Pupils' moral and social development is given considerable attention.
- Insufficient attention is given to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
- Pupils are being given opportunities to take responsibility for the running of the school.
- Although attendance is unsatisfactory, the school's determination to reduce unauthorised absences is showing very good results.

### **Commentary**

- Pupils have a good understanding of the behaviour management system and realise that it is in their best interests to behave well in lessons. They usually listen carefully to the staff and settle quickly to the tasks set. Pupils acknowledge that they have targets for improvements and again usually work hard to achieve their points for these. When they are upset and not coping in class they accept the support of staff and this often helps them return to lessons. Pupils are generally very courteous towards staff and visitors. Although, there are a few incidents of bullying, name-calling and rudeness, when they do occur these are dealt with using the sanctions outlined in the behaviour policy. Exclusions have been high but the school is working hard to reduce these and staff use a good range of strategies to manage pupils' behaviour before resorting to exclusion.

### **Exclusions**

#### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

Categories used in the annual school census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	32	60	1

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

- The very good relationships throughout the school help improve pupils' learning and assist with their personal development. Staff know the pupils very well and use this information effectively to offer them frequent words of encouragement. Pupils feel very positive about the school, the headteacher and other staff. They also generally relate positively with each other. Pupils mix

well together at breaks and lunchtimes. These good relationships have helped them be successful, for example, in the very challenging outdoor education programme.

8. Assemblies are used well to promote pupils' moral and social development. Pupils listen attentively to the headteacher at these times and contribute well when invited to do so. Themes are explored on a weekly basis. For example, during this academic year 'trust', 'honesty', 'control' and 'respect' have been assembly themes. Pupils know right from wrong and generally co-operate and work well together. For example, in the practical projects in citizenship pupils are able to work alongside each other and show appreciation for the work of others in the group.
  
9. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is unsatisfactory. There are no opportunities for quiet reflection or a collective act of worship in assemblies or during the school day. The arts are not promoted well either in taught lessons or in extra after school activities. The limited curricular opportunities in religious education, music and drama further restricts the opportunities for pupils to develop in these areas. The school is not preparing pupils well for life in a multicultural society and although other cultures considered in subjects such as English and citizenship overall there is insufficient attention given to this aspect.
  
10. Whilst statistically attendance is below the level expected of similar schools, the school has worked very hard to reduce the level of unauthorised absences. The figures for this year show a reduction of more than seven per cent in the level of these absences, although there has been a three per cent rise in authorised absences. However, these absences include a number of pupils who attend college for some sessions each week. On an individual level, the attendance of many pupils improves during their time at the school. The accuracy with which registers are marked has improved greatly since the appointment of family liaison workers. They are responsible for checking and tackling attendance problems thoroughly with the pupils and their parents; they are well supported by the educational welfare service. This means that both the school and other agencies have an accurate picture of every pupil's attendance patterns.

#### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/3 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	12%	School data :	12.5%
National data:	11.2%	National data:	7.7%

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

#### QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching and learning in all classes and the curriculum for the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology are good. However, because of weaknesses in many of the foundation subjects the current overall curriculum offered to pupils is unsatisfactory. Outdoor education and table tennis provide very good additions to the school timetable but there are limited art, musical and cultural activities. The care and health and safety arrangements are very good and pupils receive good support and guidance. Links with parents are very good, with other schools and colleges they are good and being well developed and there are satisfactory links with the community.

#### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning throughout the school are **good**. The overall quality of assessment is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The consistently good teaching and the impact this has on learning ensures that pupils make good progress in lessons.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge well, strive to make lessons interesting and often use ICT well.
- In the majority of lessons teaching assistants work very effectively alongside teachers.
- Pupils' learning is at times reduced because many lessons are too short.
- The assessment of pupils' literacy skills when they join the school is very good and used well to plan work for them.
- Marking of work in English is very good, however in other subject areas it is unsatisfactory.

## Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 25 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	3	12	10			

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

## Commentary

11. The teaching of all core subjects is good overall. Teachers are consistent in their approach to lessons. They ensure that there is a good pace to learning, use questioning well and deploy effective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour. This often keeps pupils on task throughout lessons. For example, in an art lesson seen during the inspection, because the teacher ensured that there was a good pace to the lesson and challenge in the work set pupils worked hard and were keen to achieve well. In almost all lessons teachers start with an activity that successfully attracts pupils' interest. For example, an exercise on the interactive whiteboard achieved this in a Year 7 ICT lesson and as a result pupils were focussed on their work.
12. Pupils benefit from staff having good knowledge of the subjects they teach. This is a key feature of the teaching of English to Years 7 and 8 pupils and the reason why these pupils make good progress. In a Year 8 lesson the teacher's very good skills enabled her to give very relevant examples of persuasive writing linked carefully to pupils' different abilities. Similarly in ICT the teacher links a range of programs together effectively, such as when combining a data handling program with a presentation program that successfully enables Year 8 pupils to produce high quality work. Teachers seek to make learning interesting. In mathematics the teacher makes effective use of ICT, which she links well with practical activities. Pupils measure the distances they can throw Wellington boots, record these and then use a data handling ICT package to show their results in different forms of graphs. In citizenship education staff use practical activities to engage pupils in discussions. For example, Year 9 pupils are presently engaged in a practical project to improve the environment and whilst doing this are fully involved in discussions on relevant topics with the staff involved.
13. Teaching assistants play a valuable part in the work of the school. In lessons they are very supportive in managing pupils' behaviour and quick to see potential difficulties. In Year 7 science lessons the teaching assistant is very successful at keeping pupils on task when they start to lose concentration and engage in other conversations. Teaching assistants also offer good individual support to pupils who have specific learning difficulties. For example, in mathematics a pupil with significant difficulties in understanding basic number concepts is supported very well in individual sessions with a teaching assistant that take place during maths lessons and tutor time.
14. Pupils' learning is at times restricted because the 30-minute lessons finish before pupils have been able to complete the activities planned. Often the lesson is going well and pupils are beginning to achieve the learning objectives but are unable to complete all the planned tasks.

This occurred in many lessons seen during the inspection. For example, in a Year 7 ICT lesson pupils worked very well at looking at a sequence of photographs to create a story, however the bell went before they were able to move on to the computers to record their work.

15. The school is very careful in finding out pupils' literacy skills when they first arrive. It makes use of the local education authority's learning support unit and 'buys' in specialist time to undertake individual assessments. This information, together with information on their numeracy skills is used to plan pupils' programmes well. The school is also now developing ways in which teachers record pupils' progress over time and current records show many pupils have moved up to higher levels of attainment over the past year. Pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are also based upon a clear assessment of their achievements and pupils have the opportunity to assess how well they are doing through weekly meetings with the headteacher and when setting new targets for their IEPs. However, the quality of marking of pupils' work, with the exception of in English, is unsatisfactory. Most of pupils' work is marked only by ticks and in science and citizenship not all work has been marked. In English, though, work is clearly annotated and comments are made to encourage pupils, as well as to assist them in understanding what they need to do to improve.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **unsatisfactory**. The way in which the curriculum is extended through other activities is **satisfactory**. Accommodation and resources are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school offers a good core curriculum of English, mathematics, science and ICT, which meets pupils' needs well.
- The curriculum for personal, social and health education and citizenship is good.
- Provision for pupils with additional special educational needs is good.
- The school does not presently offer sufficient opportunities for the study of religious education, history, geography, music or a modern foreign language.
- Participation although included in afternoon optional sessions in the arts is limited.
- Opportunities for residential, day trips and outdoor education in the wider community are very good and contribute well to pupils' personal development.

### **Commentary**

16. The core curriculum of English, mathematics, science and ICT has been developed well since the last inspection. Improved accommodation and resources mean that pupils have good opportunities to undertake the practical and academic requirements of these subjects. The school in dealing with the disruption of the building work has had a deliberate policy of ensuring that pupils will receive effective courses in these core subjects and this has enabled pupils to make good progress in each subject. A similar emphasis on the curriculum for personal, social, health and citizenship education has led to good improvements in pupils' personal skills, their behaviour and attitudes. A particular focus on bullying, for example, is helping pupils to maintain awareness and is reducing the incidences within the school.
17. Very good attention is given to meeting the needs of pupils with additional special needs through specific timetabling arrangements. Following assessments clear targets for improvement are set which are agreed by staff and pupils. Individual sessions are timetabled and pupils' progress is carefully monitored. The special needs co-ordinator has a good understanding of programmes for pupils with literacy difficulties and as a result pupils who struggle with their reading and writing are supported well and make good progress.
18. The school timetable gives importance in the morning to core subjects but lessons are too short and too much time is given to the choice activity at the end of the day. The school has recognised this and the timetable for next year is much improved. Lessons each morning will

be longer and there will be less free choice time. Although there is evidence in pupils' books of work in religious education, humanities, music and a modern foreign language these subjects are not currently on the timetable. This is partly because of recent building works which have meant that classroom space has been reduced for long periods and pupils have been unsettled and unable to focus on lessons for as long as they would normally do. Staff have also been fully engaged in maintaining the school as a safe environment. However, there is a lack of overall curriculum plans that show how all of these National Curriculum subjects will be covered. This means that there is insufficient scope within the current school documentation for the study of these subjects. This is also the case in other subjects taught; physical education, art and design and design and technology. In each of these there is inadequate documented detail of what will be taught. Plans are rightly in place to add subjects to the timetable as soon as the building works are finished but there needs to be improvements in the overall planning and monitoring of all foundation subjects to ensure that pupils receive their full entitlement of the National Curriculum.

19. Participation in arts activities is unsatisfactory. The lack of music in the school is a weakness that impacts on pupils' opportunities to express themselves or develop any particular talents. Although pupils read plays drama is not offered and there are too few opportunities for pupils to work with visiting artists. Although pupils produce good examples of art work the art curriculum does not cover all the expected aspects of the National Curriculum.
20. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 gives pupils the chance to take a good range of courses at local colleges. For a few individuals these courses form part of 'packages', designed to keep them in education because they have experienced difficulties in attending school. There are, though, limited opportunities for pupils to undertake work experience.
21. There are very many valuable experiences offered for pupils of all ages to take part in residential experiences, day trips and outdoor education. Pupils often earn these opportunities through collecting points for good behaviour and good work. They value these trips and work hard to achieve them. Their personal development is enhanced through this programme and it provides pupils with a positive reward for their efforts.
22. Teachers and learning support assistants are well matched to the curriculum and subject specialists are deployed effectively. As the building work nears completion the accommodation is now good. Classrooms are large and bright and there are sufficient rooms for individual work with pupils. Resources for learning are good overall, although there is a need for a library to support pupils' progress in reading and more up-to-date textbooks for science.

### Care, guidance and support

The policies and procedures for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are **very good**. The support and guidance provided for pupils are **good**. Pupils' views are valued and they are fully involved in their learning.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are given very good support to help with their personal development and improve their behaviour.
- Arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe are very well planned.
- Pupils are given effective individual support for both their learning and emotional difficulties.
- Pupils are very positive about the support they receive and the respect staff show towards them.

### Commentary

23. Ensuring that pupils improve their behaviour is appropriately given a high priority in the school. Teachers' expectations for standards of behaviour in lessons are consistently high and support is always readily available for pupils experiencing difficulties. Behaving well means pupils score

points on the behaviour monitoring system and gain the right to choose activities for the last lesson and Friday afternoons. As a measure of how effective this has been the 'threshold' for the points needed to access these options has been increased to over 80% of the total available. When problems occur daily detentions are issued; these are well managed by the deputy head, which ensures that pupils fully acknowledge their mistakes. More serious incidents are recorded appropriately and all staff are trained in an approved scheme should pupils need to be restrained for their own or others' safety. The effectiveness of all of these care procedures has been fully tested during the school's year long 'survival' whilst the building work has been undertaken and its success reflects the commitment and determination of all staff to support pupils.

24. Health and safety is given considerable importance in the school. The deputy head monitors the site regularly and the governor with responsibility for this aspect frequently joins him. Staff are well trained in first aid and any accidents that do occur are carefully recorded. Detailed risk assessments are carried out on the building, activities and individual pupils. A particularly impressive feature is the detailed risk assessment made for each outdoor education activity.
25. Pupils receive considerable individual attention. If they have difficulties with literacy or numeracy individual teaching sessions are organised. When pupils seem distressed staff are quick to offer support. The use of a quiet room to help pupils talk through their problems is particularly effective. The member of staff with special responsibility for special needs (SENCO) is very well organised and maintains detailed records of interventions necessary. She acts as the school's Child Protection Officer and liaises effectively with other agencies. All staff are trained in this aspect and again appropriate written records are well maintained.
26. Pupils feel fully involved in the life of the school. They report very positively about how the school has supported them. 'You keep learning different things' reported one senior pupil. Pupils are being given opportunities to take responsibility for the running of the school through the recently formed school council. The council meets weekly with a member of staff and has a budget to spend. The boys have good ideas for improving and developing the school and feel that the council will be effective. At other times during each school day it is clear that staff listen to the views of pupils and show respect and give value to their comments. The one aspect that pupils report as a difficulty is bullying but all pupils spoken to report that they feel the school is doing everything it can to help. A scrutiny of records of incidents and the action taken by staff to deal with them supports this view.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school develops **very good links** with its parents. Links with other schools and colleges are **good** overall; links with the local community are **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The appointment of family liaison workers has been very successful in helping to build links with parents to the benefit of the pupils and the school.
- The good links with local colleges benefit the pupils both whilst they are at school and where required, when they leave.

### **Commentary**

27. It is not easy for the school to build relationships with the parents as, amongst other problems, the pupils are drawn from a wide area. However, the school has worked hard on this and the appointment of family liaison workers is a very commendable and purposeful initiative. They have been instrumental in building very good relationships through home visits, initially to establish contact and to explain the school's approach and procedures, but later to tackle any issues that may arise, such as behaviour and attendance. This means that the parents are dealing with the same staff as their child moves through the school, building mutually supportive relationships. The school also expects that the class tutor will be in contact with

parents, most importantly to discuss the good things that happen, as well as if a problem occurs.

28. The school is very welcoming to parents; the headteacher is always willing to see them if he is available and staff are always ready to contact them if they are unable to see them. The school provides regular information for parents in a clear and straightforward fashion. There are, however, a few minor omissions from the school brochure and the governors' annual report to parents. The annual report on their child's progress, received in July, does not meet statutory requirements in a number of areas, including the absence of exact attendance data, details on academic targets and the separate reporting of religious education.
29. The school is beginning to develop useful links with colleges, both to provide additional courses for the pupils in Years 10 and 11 and to help smooth the transfer of the pupils who want to continue their education. In both cases the school works hard to find suitable courses in the right places, thus giving the pupils the best chance of continuing their education. The school is on the same site as a high school. Although in the past there has been some friction, the current headteachers are working well together to ensure the safe management of the site. Links with schools are being developed. For example, expertise is being sought from a local grammar school to help in the teaching of a modern foreign language.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are **good**. The governance of the school is also **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good leadership skills of the headteacher have ensured that the school has remained effective during very difficult circumstances.
- The school is ambitious and actively seeking to develop the quality of its work.
- The chair of governors leads her fellow governors very well but governors have not ensured that all statutory requirements have been met.
- The curriculum as a whole, including the planning of work to be undertaken in foundation subjects, is not managed well.
- The financial allocation to the school is well maintained and money is being used effectively for the school's priorities for development.

### **Commentary**

30. The headteacher has not only ensured that the school has stayed open during the last 12 months of disruption but he has also ensured that pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning have all improved. Throughout this period he has maintained high standards with regard to the health and safety and care of both staff and pupils. It is testament to the high quality of his work that the school is able to operate as it is now. As a headteacher he listens and supports both staff and pupils very well. Staff express considerable praise and respect for his work and pupils stress the high regard they have for him.
31. The school has moved forward considerably from its difficult past but is still ambitious to improve further the quality of its work. Pupils now take more examinations and strategies to reduce their behaviour difficulties have improved. The resources for information and communication technology have been improved and are now very impressive and the school development plan has been put together following a clear evaluation of current strengths and weaknesses. Suitable plans to extend the curriculum are in place for the next academic year.
32. Minutes of meetings and documentation show clearly that the governors have been actively involved in the work of the school. They are very well led by the committed chair, who visits the school regularly. She has seen the school come through a very difficult period and is very determined to ensure that the school is now operating as effectively as possible. In seeking to

achieve this she has led governors in training sessions where they have analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Records show she is well supported by a small number of other governors but it is not clear whether the full governing body is as active and supportive as this smaller group. As a body the governors, though, have not ensured that the school meets all statutory requirements; there are significant parts of the National Curriculum that are not currently offered and there are a few minor points of information that have not been included in the school prospectus and annual reports to parents.

33. The current curriculum places an appropriate emphasis on the core subjects. With the exception of religious education these subjects are led and managed well. However, the planning and the management of the curriculum as a whole, including the foundation subjects and the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in the teaching of all subjects is weak. There is not an effective system whereby senior staff are monitoring what is being taught in the foundation subjects. As a result there are large gaps in what should be taught to pupils in these subjects and opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills are limited.
34. A recent audit of the school shows that the management of finance is good; there were only a few minor recommendations made for improvements. Resources are linked well to school development priorities, for example, last year the school appointed joint part-time family liaison officers, whose work has proved highly effective. Additionally, considerable amounts have been spent on improving ICT facilities and again this has proved effective. The large underspend on the school's allocation for the last two years is a direct result of the school having been in special measures, the financial allocation being managed by the LEA and the numbers of pupils in the school being halved for a period of time. Governors and the senior management team now have clear plans for the expenditure of this additional money, making carefully thought-out decisions for the benefit of pupils in the school.

## Financial information

### Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	17,508	Balance from previous year	212,820
Total expenditure	768,957	Balance carried forward to the next	203,751
Expenditure per pupil	20,235		



## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

*Throughout this section of the report, overall judgements about **provision** relate to pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership and management and any other significant aspects. It is not possible to comment on improvement since the previous report in all subject areas because as part of the HMI inspection not all subjects were inspected.*

### **ENGLISH AND A MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

#### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

During the last school year the school has not taught a modern foreign language. Previously French had been offered to pupils. There are plans to re-introduce the subject to the timetable at the start of the next school year.

#### **ENGLISH**

*Lessons were observed, pupils' work and planning documents were scrutinised and a discussion was held with the subject leader.*

Provision for English is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good and gives careful attention to relevant texts and activities.
- The development of pupils' speaking and listening skills is given a high priority in English lessons and in other curriculum areas.
- The high quality marking of pupils' English work ensures that their efforts are recognised and praised.
- Leadership and management of English are good, but too little time is allocated to the subject to enable standards to rise further.
- The lack of a library reduces pupils opportunities to develop their skills in independent research.
- Pupils' literacy skills are not given sufficient attention in the teaching of other subjects.

#### **Commentary**

35. Provision in English has improved since the last inspection. Lessons are well planned and there are clear objectives for what pupils will learn. Relationships in lessons are good and pupils show respect for staff. Texts are chosen carefully so that they appeal to pupils' interests. This encourages them to read or browse through the books to find information. For example, pupils in Year 10 have studied short stories from an examination text called 'Opening Worlds', which contains literature from different countries. They used the texts well to illustrate examples of persuasive writing, recalling, scanning and re-telling aspects of the two particular stories they had read. The teacher makes good use of ICT to enable pupils to present their work and to encourage good use of speaking and listening skills. In Year 9, pupils produced a presentation on the interactive whiteboard to show the information they had gathered during a project about fossils. They developed good confidence in speaking as they talked to their peers about their findings, supporting their talks well with the presentation.
36. Because there is an important focus placed on speaking and listening in lessons, pupils develop good skills and achieve well. In many subjects, particularly PSHCE, language skills are fostered and promoted well. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their feelings and their work, both to adults and their peers. This constant practise is beginning to have a positive impact, both on pupils' confidence and achievement in speaking and listening.
37. Achievement in reading and writing is not as good as it is in speaking and listening. It is good in Years 7 and 8 where because these pupils respond positively to the teacher more work is

completed. Progress is satisfactory for older pupils, despite good provision and teaching. Their response is not as positive and the time allocation for English is too small. This has an impact on the amount of work that pupils do. The short lessons do not provide sufficient time to extend writing and reading skills, and when lessons start late, not all of the planned tasks are completed.

38. Assessment is good and ensures that pupils are aware of their achievements. Records show clearly the progress pupils have made. Marking of pupils' work is very good. Comments are made that praise pupils' efforts and helpful advice is provided to tell pupils what they need to do to improve. This provides a good model for other subjects.
39. The subject leader has been in post for almost two years and in that time provision overall has improved. There is a clear commitment to improve standards and a good range of accreditation has been introduced. Pupils' progress is monitored well as they move through the school. Resources for reading have improved, but the lack of a library is a major weakness because it impacts on pupils' abilities to undertake research or to learn how to use a library appropriately. With the vast majority of pupils in Year 11 taking Certificates of Achievement in GCSEs the need for research is crucial to their success. ICT is used well for this, but there is little evidence of pupils looking things up in books or finding information out for themselves.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

40. Literacy skills across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. There are too few examples of pupils using their writing skills in other subjects, or of using books to search for information. The lack of a library impacts on the development of literacy skills, and the lack of provision for many foundation subjects means that opportunities to practise and improve these skills are very limited.

### **MATHEMATICS**

*Five lessons were observed, pupils' work and planning documents were scrutinised and a discussion was held with the mathematics co-ordinator.*

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Careful questioning of pupils helps establish what they know and enables them to make good progress.
- The subject leader uses her good subject knowledge well to plan teaching arrangements.
- Learning support assistants provide effective assistance for pupils who find mathematics difficult.
- The skills pupils learn in mathematics are not sufficiently reinforced in other lessons.

#### **Commentary**

41. Pupils achieve well because of good teaching. Lessons are well planned, questioning is used effectively and careful attention is given to involving pupils actively in their learning. In a good lesson for Year 7, pupils practised and reinforced the skills involved in using a calculator, recording their results in a 'salaries crossword'. The patient and careful questioning of the teacher and the learning support assistant enable them to establish what pupils understand and provide them with support accordingly. Staff's effective use of praise and encouragement helps pupils gain in confidence and supports their good attitude to learning. Older pupils achieve well in taking GCSE, appreciating the atmosphere of trust created in the classroom by the teacher.
42. The subject leader teaches mathematics to all classes and other staff, including the teacher responsible for art, take small groups or individual pupils and work with them in separate areas.

The subject leader and the art teacher plan this carefully and work is well matched to pupils' ability levels. As a result of this pupils make good progress no matter what their starting levels when they first arrive at the school.

43. Learning support assistants play a key role in helping pupils progress in mathematics. They are supportive in lessons being quick to pick up individuals who are starting to become unsettled. Together with the school's art teacher they also play an important part in working with individual pupils who find mathematics difficult. Partly through the good relationships they establish with pupils they manage to increase pupils' confidence and as a result pupils are willing to tackle work that they have previously been unable to complete. The subject leader keeps a careful eye on pupils' progress in these sessions and ensures that resources are available and appropriate.
44. Leadership and management of the subject are good and as a result progress since the previous inspection has been good. Assessment arrangements have been improved and there is a good subject development plan. A good range of resources, including very good practical equipment for pupils with a poor understanding of number, have been acquired.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

45. The teaching of mathematics across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. This is because there are no formal plans for teachers to give pupils the chance to practise their mathematical skills in other subjects. However, in ICT the teacher links work with projects in other subjects and these have included pupils completing data handling and GCSE coursework. The subject leader though has run numeracy training sessions for her colleagues.

### **SCIENCE**

*During the inspection four science lessons were seen. Inspectors looked at samples of work across all year groups and discussions were held with the subject leader.*

Provision for science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teacher's good subject knowledge and enthusiasm contribute well to the quality of teaching.
- Work is well planned and ensures that pupils develop skills and knowledge as they move through the school.
- The short length of lessons reduces pupils' learning opportunities.
- The lack of an appropriate marking scheme does not ensure that pupils know how they can improve.

### **Commentary**

46. Pupils are keen to do well in lessons. They enthusiastically answer questions directly or join in discussions about possible answers amongst themselves. Pupils show increasing awareness of scientific concepts. By the end of Year 11 they are able to calculate the percentage element in a compound and know the difference between endothermic and exothermic reactions. Pupils are entered for double award GCSE. This year seven pupils have been entered but the results are not available at the time of writing. This is a significant improvement on the previous year when only two pupils were entered with only one gaining a pass. Similarly, Year 9 SATs results show a marked improvement on the previous year.
47. Teaching is consistently good for all year groups. Interesting experiments are undertaken and the teacher's good subject knowledge and enthusiasm means that he is able to engage pupils well in lessons. He frequently uses appropriate and relevant examples from the pupils' everyday experiences to introduce or expand on new scientific concepts. For example, in a Year 9 lesson the concept of pressure was related to what happens in a car's engine with the

result that all pupils were interested and engaged in the topic. However, because lesson time is short there are occasions when there is little time available for expansion of learning points. This means that there is insufficient challenge for the more able pupils and lessons can lose pace and momentum towards the end.

48. Marking in science is inadequate. It does not indicate what pupils have achieved or what they could do to improve. Although, pupils' work shows clear progress over time this is not indicated by the marking available in evidence.
49. The subject is well led by an experienced science specialist. Planning is good and shows how concepts are introduced, developed and consolidated across the five school years. All pupils have the chance to follow an examination syllabus in Years 10 and 11. A recent audit of the subject carried out by the co-ordinator outlines his plans for further improvements which are very appropriate.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

*During the inspection week three lessons were observed. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and discussions were held with the subject leader. The use of ICT in the teaching of other subjects was considered.*

Provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Consistently good teaching and good quality resources enable pupils to develop a good range of skills.
- Good leadership in the subject and the teacher's very good subject knowledge contribute well to pupils' achievements.
- Short lesson times often reduce the opportunities pupils have to consolidate what they have learnt in the lesson.
- An internal assessment system is very effective but pupils in Years 10 and 11 have limited chances to take external examinations.
- ICT is used well in the teaching of other subjects.

### **Commentary**

50. Pupils achieve well in ICT. They are developing a range of skills and becoming familiar with a variety of applications. For example, most pupils can produce competent presentations using a commercial software package. Year 9 pupils have developed their individual presentations accompanying them with music and are proud of their achievements. Year 8 pupils are familiar with a data-handling program and are able to record, compare and interrogate data. The recently established computer suite is very well resourced which means that pupils are able to access and use a good range of ICT equipment. For example, when Year 9 demonstrated their presentations they were able to video their achievements.
51. Teaching is consistently good. The ICT co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and his competent and confident use of equipment and programs have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Lessons are planned well and his good relationship with pupils is used effectively to keep them on task. He uses the interactive whiteboard well to demonstrate and encourage pupils to experiment with different possible solutions to challenges he sets. However, the shortness of the lessons means that often there is insufficient time for the development of learning points and the pace of the lesson is lost as time runs out. He leads the subject well and has produced an appropriate and detailed development plan and mapped the use of ICT in other curricular subjects.
52. Pupils' progress is well tracked by an internal assessment scheme. This is a graded system detailing pupils' grasp of increasingly complex skills and competencies. The system is well

understood by pupils and enables them to achieve certificates as they develop their ICT skills. Given the range of skills that pupils are developing it is unsatisfactory that there are no opportunities for them to gain external qualifications at a higher level than the entry level examination they take.

## **Information and communications technology across the curriculum**

53. Although during the building work there have been difficulties accessing computers, all teachers make use of them in their teaching. In English there is good use of computers; for example, Year 8 pupils have made computer presentations of their work on fossils. Interactive whiteboards are used regularly in the teaching of most subjects. Displays around the school also show that pupils are able to use scanners, digital cameras and word processing programs competently to produce work in a range of subjects.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography and history**

54. It was not possible to make a judgement relating to geography and history. Although work in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons touches on aspects of geography and history, this is insufficient and means that currently pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not offered their National Curriculum entitlement.

### **Religious education**

Provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory**

55. Religious education is taught through citizenship topics. None was seen during the inspection and the amount of work in pupils' books is very limited. There is no planning for the subject and, although the locally agreed syllabus is available, it is not used well enough to develop pupils' skills and knowledge of world religions. Because of this, the requirements for the teaching of religious education are not being met.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

### **Art and Design**

*Although two lessons of art and design were observed and the co-ordinator's planning was examined, there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on provision in this subject.*

56. Teaching was good in the two lessons observed. In a Year 7 lesson on mixing primary colours to produce secondary colours there was good pace and challenge and pupils were able to adapt and improve their work so that they had a good understanding of colour mixing. Year 8 pupils are also able to mix colours to produce tertiary colours. Although, pupils work well and show interest in the subject there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in a sufficiently wide range of activities. A range of art activities are, though, on offer during option sessions during the afternoon. Accommodation and resources in art and design are satisfactory.

### **Music**

*It was not possible to make a judgement relating to music as it is currently not taught and there is no evidence available of work undertaken previously. It is planned to teach the subject next term.*

## Design and Technology

*One lesson of design and technology using resistant materials was observed relating to a project 'Ballista' to create a model military catapult. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on provision.*

57. In the good lesson seen Year 7 pupils showed they understand the design brief and can use a template and cut out the sides of the base structure. The topic engaged the pupils' interest and the support of the teacher and the learning support assistant encouraged the pupils to take care with their design drawings and writing. Because the teacher 'modelled' the correct use of the saw when cutting their wood, then coached pupils, they gained confidence in the task. The teacher and the learning support assistant informally assessed the work and understanding of pupils as the lesson progressed and supported them as necessary. By the end of the lesson pupils were beginning to work for short periods independently and collaboratively, something they did not find easy.

## Physical Education

*One physical education lesson was observed during the inspection and evidence of pupils' achievements in outdoor education were considered. The subject leader and staff responsible for outdoor education were interviewed.*

The provision for physical education is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- High expectations are set for pupils' dress and participation in lessons.
- Outdoor education activities are very well organised and make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Planning for the full physical education programme is limited.
- Pupils with specific talents in table tennis are well supported.

## Commentary

58. In the lesson seen pupils were all changed, willingly engaged in a warm-up and took a full part in all the activities of the lesson. They were developing their skills in football and clearly enjoyed the lesson. They display good skills in controlling a football and shooting and are able to organise themselves into teams to play a game. During the game element of the lesson, though, the teacher missed opportunities to coach pupils in how to play more effectively together as a team.

59. Physical education is well supported by a very good outdoor education programme of activities. Pupils take part in rock climbing, mountain biking, canoeing and walking. These activities are popular with pupils, who stress how much they enjoy taking part. A significant feature of the programme is the long-term projects that occur regularly throughout the year. At the end of each half term there is always a three-day outdoor educational experience. Recently pupils have walked the full distance of Offa's Dyke; a trip of 174 miles. This was completed over a number of three-day stages, with pupils achieving a range of distances. The current project involves pupils cycling from Liverpool to London, a distance of approximately 300 miles. Many pupils have taken part in stages of this and the overall project is now only 50 miles away from London and will be completed in October of this year. Another project completed recently has been a 100 mile canoe test, although only a small number achieved the full distance, many others participated in the training. Pupils also take part in the Duke of Edinburgh programme where they engage in map reading, climbing, canoeing, swimming and the development of independent skills.

60. Specialist table tennis coaching is also offered to pupils. This takes place as part of the afternoon activities and the coaching is of a very high standard. It is as a result of this that pupils have been able to take part in national competitions; this year two pupils progressed as far as the semi-finals in national schools Championships.
61. There is a programme of what will be covered in physical education lessons and pupils also take part in a range of physical activities in the 'choice' lessons. These show that pupils follow a good curriculum. The planning, though, of how each aspect will be covered is limited and as a result it is difficult to see how pupils' skills will be increased as they move through the school. Because of this leadership and management of the subject overall is satisfactory, although the leadership of the outdoor education programme is very good.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHCE)**

Provision in PSHCE is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good quality of teaching in PSHCE leads to pupils achieving well.
- PSHCE contributes well to pupils' language and communication skills.
- Pupils are developing a good awareness of citizenship through participation in practical projects.
- Good leadership ensures that the subject has a high priority in the school.

### **Commentary**

62. Pupils are taught about the responsibilities of living as part of a community. As part of this in lessons a wide variety of very relevant tasks are planned which meet the needs of pupils well. For example, in Year 9, pupils are building a water feature in the grounds of the school as part of a project linked to the environment. The initial task was to develop an awareness of community spirit and be able to work well together. Pupils have worked hard to complete their part of the task and consequently have valued the contribution made by each other to the finished product. These interesting practical activities are helping pupils to improve their self-esteem, confidence and behaviour.
63. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own contributions and assess how well they think they are doing. Because pupils enjoy the subject, they can explain many of the finer points of the work in detail. One pupil was able to tell how the different layers of the water feature needed to overlap and slope forwards so that the flow of water would not be restricted. He was eloquent and knowledgeable in his explanation, and full of confidence in his own ability.
64. Pupils are developing a good awareness of citizenship. The new school council is popular, and pupils talk about it with enthusiasm. Subjects such as history, geography and religious education are taught as part of PSHCE when they are relevant to topics being covered. For example, if pupils are learning about democracy, they may study other countries around the world that are democratic, or they may look at the history of democracy across the world. However relevant this work is, though, it does not ensure that pupils are receiving their full entitlement in each of these subject areas
65. The subject is well led and managed by two enthusiastic members of staff They motivate pupils to do well by providing the kind of activities that hold their interest. The good displays in the PSHCE base show that the subject supports learning in many areas of the curriculum.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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