

INSPECTION REPORT

The High Arcal School

Sedgley, Dudley, West Midlands

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103873

Headteacher: Mr J Williams

Lead inspector: Mr M Merchant

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th May 2004

Inspection number: 265721

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

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Terms used in this report

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

*At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. 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** reached by pupils 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 are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those in which pupils attained similar standards at the end of Years 6 and 9.*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1109
School address:	High Arcal Drive Sedgley Dudley West Midlands
Postcode:	DY3 1BP
Telephone number:	01902 838038
Fax number:	01902 838039
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Denzil Smith
Date of previous inspection:	18 th January 1999

The High Arcal School is an average sized comprehensive school, educating 1109 girls and boys aged 11 to 16. There are approximately equal numbers of boys and girls at the school. The number on roll has increased greatly since the last inspection and the school has more pupils applying for places than it has room for. The school is situated in a mixed residential area in the north of Dudley, in West Midlands. Many pupils live close to the school, but a significant number travel from all over Dudley, Sandwell and beyond to attend. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is consistently below average. The socio-economic back ground of most pupils is average although there are pockets of significant social and economic deprivation in this urban area and some pupils come from comparatively disadvantaged backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The school population is predominantly white – British (1040) then:

- Asian or Asian British (19)
- Mixed – White and Black Caribbean (18)
- Mixed – any other background (7)
- White – any other background (6)
- Mixed – White and Asian (5)
- Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi (2)
- Black or Black British – Caribbean (2)
- Black or Black British – any other Black background (2)

The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low, at nearly 2 per cent and none are at the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, is below average at just under 10 per cent. Special needs include dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties, severe learning, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and speech, visual impairment and physical impairment and autism.

The school attained Artsmark and Sportsmark Status and a Schools Achievement Award in 2002, and Investors in People and a Healthy Schools Award in 2003. In September 2004 the school will become a Specialist Science College.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27368	Michael Merchant	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
13786	Susan Walsh	Lay inspector	
8756	Pat Hannage	Team inspector	Mathematics
31135	Rachel Hobson	Team inspector	English
20380	Neville Pinkey	Team inspector	Science
15051	Lynne Kaufman	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
30518	Michael Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design
10308	John Paddick	Team inspector	Design and technology
30215	Helen Feasey	Team inspector	Geography
24127	Jim Kidd	Team inspector	History Citizenship
14790	Robin Schlich	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
23308	John Morrell	Team inspector	Music
22042	John Challands	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs
12118	Alan Paver	Team inspector	Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The High Arcal is a **good and effective school**; it provides a **good quality of education** for its pupils. It is a happy, harmonious community of learners and an orderly place in which to learn. The inspirational leadership by the headteacher, well supported by governors and other key staff, has ensured that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Teaching and learning are good in all years, and there is much that is very good and excellent. The school provides **very good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well and attain standards that are average overall because of the imaginative and exciting teaching in the majority of lessons. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school with much that is very good or excellent.
- Achievement overall is very good in mathematics, science and geography.
- Not enough pupils achieve the very highest grades at GCSE.
- The inspirational and highly effective leadership of the headteacher and his senior team has created an orderly environment in which learning can flourish.
- The school makes intelligent use of assessment information to both evaluate its work and set clear targets for improvement for its pupils.
- Attitudes to learning are very good because staff give pupils the confidence to learn.
- Pupils behave well in and around the school and have an extremely mature and responsible approach to their work
- The school cares for, guides and supports all its pupils very well through its very successful house system.
- The school has forged very effective partnerships with its parents and other schools which contribute to its success.
- Achievement is not high enough in religious education because not enough time is allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11 and so teaching over time is unsatisfactory.
- Within a picture of satisfactory and improving attendance, the erratic attendance of a small minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is holding back achievement.
- Too few subjects are making enough use of ICT

The school has made **good improvement** since the last inspection. Standards of achievement have improved and are now good and the school has maintained its good ethos for learning. Two of the three key issues from the previous inspection have been fully met. The school has succeeded in ensuring that that boys attain higher standards, and the provision for ICT across the school has greatly improved, but there is still insufficient time for religious education in Years 10 and 11.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	C	C	C	C

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

Pupils' achievement is **good**. From overall below attainment on entry to the school, pupils achieve well to reach standards that are average overall by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils' English language and literacy skills are average and their competence in mathematics and ICT is above

average. Gifted and talented pupils and those with a special educational need achieve as well as other pupils in the school.

Personal development including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Attendance is satisfactory as is punctuality, but the erratic attendance of a minority hold back achievement. Attitudes to learning are very good and behaviour is very good. The school is an orderly and pleasant place in which to learn. The school is fully inclusive and prepares its pupils well for life in a multi-cultural society. The school is a model of a completely harmonious community. The school succeeds in raising the self-esteem and confidence of pupils and prepares them well for life.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **good** quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning is **good overall** and the use of assessment is **very good**. This is a very real reflection of the school's ethos, which provides a conducive atmosphere for learning and thus enables pupils to achieve well. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons that capture pupils' interest so that they are eager to learn. The curriculum has many good features but is **satisfactory** overall because the school does not provide enough time for religious education in Years 10 and 11. Enrichment opportunities are **good**. The accommodation and resources of the school are **satisfactory**. A very good induction programme helps new pupils settle well into school life.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **good**. The governance of the school is **good**. The headteacher's leadership is inspirational and is **highly effective**. Other key staff provide **good** leadership and together they ensure that the effectiveness of management is **good**.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school has **very effective** links with parents. The quality of links with the local community are **good**. The school has **very good** links with other schools and colleges. The school is extremely popular and oversubscribed. There were no concerns expressed by parents, either at the pre-inspection meeting, or in the very large number of questionnaires returned. Similarly, pupils are very happy with their school. They felt that they are encouraged to work hard and that they are achieving well. Pupils also stated that the school deals with isolated incidents of bullying promptly and sensitively.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Develop strategies to ensure that more pupils achieve the very highest grades at GCSE.
- Improve the erratic attendance of a small minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensure that all subjects make full use of ICT to enhance learning.
- Make sure that enough time is allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is **good**. From overall below attainment on entry to the school, pupils achieve well to reach standards that are **average** overall by the end of Years 9 and 11 Pupils' English language and literacy skills are **average**, and their competence in mathematics is **above average**. Skills in the use of ICT are **above average**. Gifted and talented pupils and those with a special educational need achieve as well as other pupils in the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning throughout the school and effective leaders, ensure that pupils' achievement is good overall and very good in mathematics and science.
- Pupils and teachers work hard to ensure that, from overall below average on entry, standards are average by Years 9 and 11
- In mathematics, science, design and technology and geography, pupils' standards are above average overall.
- Good provision for pupils with special education needs ensures these pupils also achieve well.
- The school has worked tirelessly to find ways of improving the performance of boys and there is now little difference between the standards of boys and girls.
- Pupils' speaking skills are under-developed which prevents many from fully participating in class activities.
- A lack of sufficient time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 means that teaching over time is unsatisfactory and pupils underachieve in this subject.

Commentary

1. Standards in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average overall compared with all schools nationally and well above average compared with similar schools. Pupils' achievement up to the end of Year 9 was good overall in 2003. The school easily exceeded its ambitious targets at the end of Year 9 in mathematics, but did not quite reach them in English and science.
2. These results were better than those in 2002 and showed a continuation of the steady improvement seen over the last three years. The biggest improvements were in mathematics and science. Very good leadership and management and consistently good teaching over time in these two subjects have seen:
 - results in mathematics rise to above average compared with all schools and very high compared to similar schools, (placing the school in the top 5 per cent of similar schools in the country) so that pupils achievement was very good;
 - results in science rising to close to average compared with all schools and well above average in comparison to similar schools. Pupils achieved very well.

- English results in the Year 9 national curriculum test were average compared with all schools nationally and well above average compared with similar schools. This particular group achieved well.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.7 (34.5)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.3 (34.4)	35.4 (4.7)
science	33.9 (33.5)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 217 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- GCSE results in 2003, as measured by the average points pupils attained in these examinations, were average overall compared with all schools and also with similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was average compared with all schools and below average compared with similar schools. This, however, is misleading because the good achievement of pupils at the end of Year 9 placed the school in a higher prior attainment grouping and so distorted the picture of achievement at the end of Year 11. Value added data supplied by the school supports the judgement that these pupils in 2003 achieved satisfactorily from Year 9 to 11 and achieved well from Year 7 to 11. The school narrowly failed to reach the very high targets it set itself in 2003.
- The school did particularly well for its middle attaining pupils. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more, or one of more, grades at GCSE was well above average for all schools as well as for similar schools, and these pupils achieved very well. Overall, girls attained higher results than boys, similar to the situation nationally. This is a very big improvement since the last inspection when the gap between boys and girls was very large. It is a testament to the leadership of the headteacher and the imaginative teaching of his staff that boys at The High Arcal no longer underachieve relative to the girls. The school carefully monitors the standards of pupils based on their ethnicity and this shows that pupils from most ethnic groups achieve as well other pupils in the school. However, in all subjects except art and design and child development, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades, A* and A at GCSE was below average.
- The GCSE results were average in both English and English literature and achievement was good. The erratic attendance of a minority of pupils depressed overall results. In mathematics standards were average compared with all schools and just above average compared with those of similar schools. GCSE results are improving but not as fast as Year 9 tests are, although results for GCSE modules already taken show a big improvement from 2003. In double award science in 2003 the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was above average but the proportion achieving the highest grades was below average. Overall the results were broadly average but well above average in comparison with similar schools.

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	51 (53)	52 (50)

Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (93)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	34.8 (33.9)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 206 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. Standards seen up to Year 9 during the inspection concur with those indicated in the test results of 2003. Overall standards are now average; they are above average in mathematics, science, ICT and geography and average in all other subjects. Pupils are achieving well overall because, driven by the very good leadership of the headteacher and his senior team, teaching and learning are good with much that is very good or excellent. In mathematics and science, very well structured assessment systems are contributing to very good achievement. So too is the, well-planned and organised curriculum which fully embraces the government's initiatives to improve standards in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is also consistently good in these subjects. Very good teaching and learning and a carefully crafted curriculum in geography is the reason why pupils are achieving very well in this subject.
8. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are average and this represents good achievement in relation to these pupils' standards in Year 7. This is better than the achievement indicated in last year's GCSE results. This reflects the substantial work the school has done in Years 7 to 9 to monitor and improve teaching and learning and thus raise standards, the fruits of which are now being seen in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' achievement in mathematics, science and geography is very good and they are working at a standard that is above average. The very good achievement in geography is the result of very good teaching and learning by talented teachers under the direction of a very effective subject leader. Standards in mathematics and science reach above average levels because teaching and learning over time is consistently good and teachers make inspired use of assessment data to ensure that all pupils attain in excess of that expected of them. Good teaching and learning in English, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and citizenship, ensure that pupils' achievement is good. Achievement in religious education is unsatisfactory because not enough time has been allocated to the teaching of the subject in Years 10 and 11. In some subjects, notably English pupils' achievement is held back because of the erratic attendance of a small minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11.
9. Literacy skills across the school are average. Pupils are achieving well due to good teaching by the English staff and by a carefully planned approach to fostering pupils' literacy skills in most areas of the curriculum, although some subjects do not sufficiently develop pupils' writing skills. Pupils generally write accurately, spell and punctuate appropriately and use correct grammar. A big weakness, however, is that oral skills are under-developed across the school and this impedes their ability to fully participate in lessons that make use of role-play and group work. The erratic attendance of a small minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 impedes their progress and hold back standards.
10. Pupils' competence in mathematics across the school is above average because the National Numeracy Strategy is fully in place. There is an effective policy for co-ordinating numeracy across all areas of learning. Students' numeracy skills are developed well in many subjects.
11. There has been a big improvement in pupils' ICT skills since the last inspection and they are now above average. This is largely because of the increased use of computers across the

school, an efficient technician, and the increased confidence that teachers have gained as the numbers of computers in the school have increased.

12. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities achieve well and make good progress towards their personal targets. This is because of the cooperation and planning that takes place between teachers and teaching assistants. Since work is well adapted to match pupils' needs, many improve their learning. The pupils who have statements of special educational needs also make good progress for the same reasons
13. A significant number of the pupils on the register of special educational needs have specific or moderate learning difficulties. Inevitably the majority of these pupils tend to perform below the level of others in their year group with regard to basic skills and in particular speaking, listening, reading and writing. Their difficulties also affect their ability to progress in other areas of the curriculum. However support from teaching assistants is very effective and teaching staff are aware of their needs and work extremely hard to ensure that appropriate resources and strategies including some withdrawal from lessons are utilised. Achievement overall for these pupils is good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance rates and pupils' punctuality are **satisfactory**. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good** and incidences of exclusions are low. Provision for moral education is **very good**; and the provision for spiritual, social and cultural education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils work hard in class and this helps them to achieve well.
- Relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Traditional values and very good management of pupils ensures that their behaviour is very good in lessons and around school.

Commentary

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

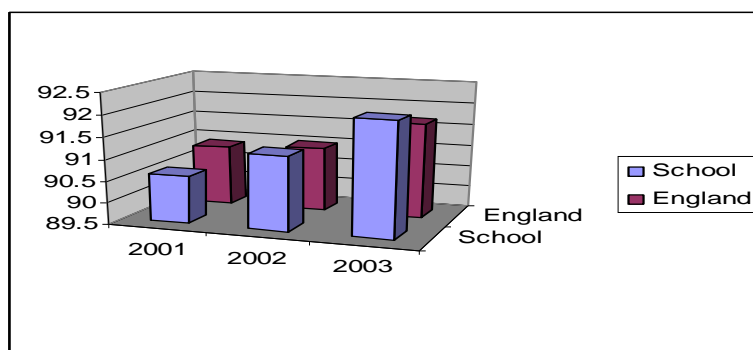
Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.4	School data	0.5
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

14. Attendance rates have improved over recent years, as shown in the graph below, and are now slightly above the national average. Most pupils attend school regularly but there are a significant number with entrenched patterns of poor attendance who do not achieve well in GCSE examinations. The school works hard at monitoring attendance and an automated response to absence has helped to keep unauthorised absence rates below the national average. However this system does not encourage personal contact between the home and school regarding attendance. Heads of house and a teacher responsible for attendance work closely

with the educational welfare service for improvement. The problem of absences at either side of the weekend, however, together with a small but significant number of pupils with sustained absences, is proving difficult to resolve.

The school's attendance rate compared with the national average



15. Pupils generally like school and enjoy the friendly supportive atmosphere. They work hard in lessons and produce neat well-thought out pieces of work. The very good attitudes of pupils make a significant contribution to good achievement. Pupils are very aware of the school's high expectations regarding standards of behaviour and they respond extremely well. A very small number who may be truculent are managed well by teachers. An appropriate curriculum and high standards of care for pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour ensures that exclusion rates remain low. Parents and pupils report that as soon as the school is aware of any bullying, including teasing and name calling, immediate and effective action is taken. Racism is actively discouraged. The school is very calm and orderly, lunchtimes and break times are pleasant and relaxed. Relationships are very good both between pupils and between teachers and pupils. Pupils are generally sensible mature and very willing to take on responsibility.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1040	45 (19 pupils)	1
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	18	5 (1 pupil)	
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	3 (1 pupil)	

16. A good effort is made to provide a daily collective act of worship. In addition to regular house assemblies each tutor group has time to reflect on a well chosen thought for the day. Assemblies are very traditional and there is limited music, pupil involvement and opportunities to promote spiritual awareness. However there are good opportunities for spiritual development in many lessons. For example, in a science lesson pupils wondered at the origin of the solar system and this had a profound spiritual effect on the pupils who reacted with mature reflection to staggering data.

17. The school provides a very strong moral code and clear messages regarding what is right and wrong. Pupils apply these principles well. There is a healthy respect for the views and feelings of others and relationships are very good. There is extensive involvement in fund raising for local and national charities.
18. The school's well established link with a secondary school in Romania not only extends pupils' social development but also allows them to appreciate their own lives. Pupils generally develop well socially. The school council and house councils, together with the Youth Action Forum are encouraging them to engage in democratic processes and become involved in community life. However, there are few social areas in the school and in some lessons there are limited opportunities for group work, which would encourage pupils to share ideas and work together co-operatively. There is a good emphasis on the local Black Country culture in lessons such as history and geography. Pupils learn to appreciate the wider western culture through trips to galleries and theatres. Pupils' horizons are successfully extended and they learn about other cultures in many subjects including art and dance.
19. Pupils with special educational needs have a very positive attitude to lessons and this is particularly the case when learning support assistants work with them. Pupils are confident they will succeed because both learning support and teaching staff are generally aware of pupils' specific needs and plan accordingly. Pupils have very good relationships with one another as well as with members of staff.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**, and the school's use of assessment to drive up standards is **very good**. The breadth of curricular opportunities is **satisfactory**. Opportunities for enrichment are **good**. The school cares for and guides its students **very well**.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good**. The use of assessment to drive up standards is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned and carefully structured which ensures that time is used well and the majority of pupils are challenged appropriately.
- Teachers are enthusiastic, demonstrate good classroom management and use a good range of methods to motivate and interest pupils.
- Teachers and learning support assistants work well to support individuals who may find the work difficult, and they help them make good progress.
- There are limited opportunities to discuss work and thus extend and reinforce learning in some lessons.
- ICT is used inconsistently across subjects of the curriculum.

Commentary

20. Good teaching ensures pupils make good progress and achieve well. Parents and pupils are aware that teaching is good and appreciate that pupils are encouraged to work hard. There is a

stable staff with many experienced teachers, who have well developed skills. The number of teachers has increased significantly and new staff have brought fresh approaches that complement skills well. The quality of teaching in most subject areas is good; it is very good in geography. Teaching was unsatisfactory in religious education because teaching over time in Year 11 had led to unsatisfactory achievement. The proportion of good lessons is similar to those seen in the previous inspection and there is only a very small number of unsatisfactory lessons. Teaching in Years 7 and 9 is consistently good. However, a significantly higher number of very good and excellent lessons were observed in Years 10 and 11, which reflects the school's drive to further improve standards in GCSE examinations.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 138 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (2.9%)	25 (18.1%)	70 (50.7%)	37 (26.8%)	2 (1.4%)	0	0

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

21. Teachers plan lessons effectively and make sure that pupils understand what is to be learnt. Lessons are carefully structured which ensures that time is used well and that pupils do not get bored. Specialist knowledge of subjects and how to teach it enables pupils to develop a good understanding of complex issues, for example, in science the theories regarding the creation of the universe are carefully examined and well understood. The majority of teaching is lively and enthusiastic and interests and engages pupils. For example in a history lesson the teacher used role play to help pupils understand issues in Germany during World War 2. However there were a small number of dull lessons, for example, in religious education where lessons moved along slowly and the teacher talked for too long and pupils became bored and stopped learning. Resources are used well to maintain interest. The use of ICT to create interesting and up-to-date lessons is improving and is used very well in some subjects including science, geography, and music. In a citizenship lesson seen, the internet was used effectively as a research tool in order to increase pupils' understanding of parliament. There was a good contribution to pupils' personal development with research skills and independent working being encouraged. However in too many subjects, including English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and art, ICT is used inconsistently and its full potential as a learning aid has not yet been realised.
22. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour, which results in pupils behaving very well both in the classroom and around school. Learning Support Assistants contribute well to learning, skilfully keeping pupils with special educational needs or challenging behaviours fully involved and well motivated. Teachers also provide good individual support for pupils, which helps them to understand the next steps they need to take in order to make good progress. Teachers establish very good relationships where pupils are treated with respect. Consequently pupils enjoy their lessons and appreciate the support they get. Their levels of confidence increase. Intelligent insight into how boys learn has resulted in improvements in boys' achievement.
23. The school's good work in response to the government initiative on improving teaching in Years 7 to 9 has had a positive impact in a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics and science. Lessons are well structured and aims are shared with pupils who know clearly what is expected of them. The good application of the initiative has resulted in improved standards and achievement reflected in external tests at the end of Year 9.

24. In most lessons teachers have high expectations, which have a significant impact on the quality of pupils' work and promote good achievement. However sometimes teachers can dominate the proceedings and pupils are expected to make only a limited contribution. Short answers are accepted and further questioning is not used to extend debate and to deepen and reinforce learning. Although pupils apply themselves very well, concentrate and work intently and produce work of a good standard, the most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and this is reflected in a limited number gaining the very highest levels in GCSE examination results. Homework is generally used well but occasionally tasks could be developed to meet the needs of the most able more specifically. Pupils' needs are well known by teaching staff and a wide range of activities and resources are used. In many subjects flexible setting arrangements that are regularly reviewed are also contributing to effective learning. In a Year 8 English lesson on improving writing styles pupils made very good progress because the class teacher was aware of the needs of all the pupils in the class and because very good support from the teaching assistant was effectively utilised. Resources and activities were adapted to suit the needs of the pupils. Arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting the progress of pupils with special educational needs are good and meet statutory requirements. Procedures for identifying pupils are very thorough. Individual education plans are increasingly used by staff to set appropriate subject specific targets although pupils are not yet involved enough in the procedure.
25. Support from teaching assistants is a significant factor in the good progress made by these pupils. They are very well informed and work very well with teaching staff to ensure that pupils make appropriate progress. In a minority of lessons where there was no support, progress of those pupils with special educational needs was restricted. Support for those whose basic literacy skills are below the national average is provided through some withdrawal from lessons and from tutor periods. They are all involved in a very structured programme, often using information technology.
26. The school's procedures for assessing and monitoring progress are very good. There is a very clear policy and faculties follow the procedures very effectively. Marking of pupils' work is thorough and comments clearly indicate the level of the work and guidance is given on how it can be improved. Regular assessments build up a comprehensive data bank both in subject areas and centrally, so that very effective monitoring of progress is maintained. This has contributed greatly to pupils' very good achievement in mathematics and science. In many subjects self-evaluation by the pupils is well developed and is proving a valuable tool in developing their aspirations. Target grades are set for pupils on entry to the school and regularly reviewed. All pupils know their targets and their current progress in relation to the targets. In subject areas where pupils are taught in groups of similar prior attainment, there is regular and sensitive adjustment to ensure that individual needs are constantly being met. Pupils' total awareness of their progress throughout the school contributes very significantly to their motivation and achievement.

The curriculum

The curriculum has many good features but is **satisfactory** overall because the school does not provide enough time for religious education in Years 10 and 11. Enrichment opportunities are **good**. The accommodation and resources of the school are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum development is good and there is a growing range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11.
- There is great emphasis on ensuring that primary and secondary school staff are aware of how they may cooperate on curriculum issues for the benefit of those pupils transferring in Year 7.
- The provision for physical education and sport is good and the Junior Sports Leader initiative is a strong feature.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, which are well supported by pupils.
- Provision for religious education is unsatisfactory because this subject does not get enough time.

Commentary

27. The school works hard to provide and develop a curriculum, which meets the needs of all its pupils and fosters their good achievement. To this end, the vocational curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is developing and there is a range of applied GCSE courses, supported by the effective links with Dudley College. Furthermore, although the provision for ICT as a learning tool is not consistent across all departments, the school has done much to address this key issue from the last inspection. However, the lack of time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 means that teaching over time is unsatisfactory and pupils underachieve.
28. Pupils entering Year 7 benefit from the school's success in the Best Practice Research Scholarship and teachers are fully aware of the content of the curriculum and the approach of teachers in the feeder primary schools. Moreover, there is an emphasis on providing homework assignments, which address the different learning styles of individual pupils. This is one reason why pupils' achievement in Years 7 and 8 is good. There is good provision for physical education and sport and pupils who may be disaffected often become involved in the prestigious Junior Sports Leader initiative.
29. There is a good range of extra-curricular sessions, of which pupils speak highly and which they attend regularly and in large numbers. In addition to many sports activities, there are drama and musical activities, subject clubs, booster classes and house and school council meetings. Furthermore, there is a thriving breakfast club and a very effective paired reading programme. The school organises a wide variety of foreign holidays and educational visits and the curriculum is enriched by the strong links with the Romanian school in Cluj-Napoca.
30. Although the school is, quite rightly, proud that many pupils follow a second modern language; this has an adverse effect on their physical education since dual linguists lose one period in this subject.
31. The quality of personal, social and health education (PHSE) is good. There is a good programme that has a strong focus on health education. Sex and drug education meet statutory requirements. Form tutors teach lessons in Years 7 to 9 and more specialist staff teach lessons in Years 10 and 11. Although teaching is not formally monitored, the quality of teaching is usually good. Some pupils report that PSHE lessons can be dull and the programme has few visiting speakers or theatre presentations at present.

32. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive good support as do all others on the school register of pupils with special educational needs. Support from teaching assistants is very good for pupils with special educational needs. All pupils receive their basic curriculum entitlement. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have very good opportunities to participate in a communication skills programme which for many involves developing vocational and life skills. This is a very flexible programme which is adapted to cater to the needs of individual pupils and involves a range of providers outside the school.
33. The match of teachers to the curriculum is good with some very good strengths in science, ICT and geography. There are sufficient support staff who are deployed effectively therefore the match of support staff to the curriculum is also good.
34. The school's accommodation is satisfactory and enables the curriculum to be taught effectively in the majority of subjects. Music experiences major problems with insufficient accommodation to meet the increasing demand to accommodate the additional Year 7 class. Some pupils receive their music lessons in a food technology room. The physical education department has much improved accommodation but there is still a problem with drainage of the sports field which restricts its use. The majority of subjects have improved their accommodation from the previous inspection as a result of the visionary building programme. This has been in progress for seven years; pupils and staff have coped well with the on going disruption. The site staff have pride in their work and ensure each school day starts with a fresh welcoming environment.

Care, guidance and support

Procedures to ensure pupils' care, health and safety are **very good**. The school provides **very effective** support and guidance for pupils. Pupils' views are sought, valued and quickly acted upon.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The house system works very well and provides a very high standard of pastoral care.
- There is very good support for pupils with a wide range of educational and personal needs.
- There are very good programmes to support transition between primary and secondary school.
- The school council is very effective.
- There are weaknesses in careers education.

Commentary

35. Daily routines, such as at lunchtime, are well planned and carried through effectively. Action is taken to eliminate and minimise hazards and high quality maintenance ensures that the school is safe, clean and pleasant. The school promotes healthy living. There are sensible procedures for child protection and vulnerable pupils are very well supported.
36. The house system works very well and ensures that pupil's behaviour; attendance and academic performance are well monitored. Tutor time is well used for both administrative tasks such as the monitoring of pupils' planners and to promote personal development through daily reflections on a range of issues.

37. Teaching and support staff have very good relationships with pupils. Form tutors, heads of house and subject teachers all know pupils very well. Pupils are confident that they can turn to staff with personal and academic problems and the quality of care and guidance is very high. Thorough monitoring ensures that pupils who are falling behind with their work are quickly identified and well supported. There is a very good range of initiatives that help children learn and organise themselves. Early morning homework clubs, revision classes and catch up sessions are well attended and are appreciated by parents and pupils.
38. Very good links with other schools and colleges ensures that transition is smooth both to and from the school. There is an extensive induction programme for prospective Year 7 pupils and shared programmes of work, regular shared activities and a three day visit at the end of Year 6 ensure that pupils settle quickly into secondary school life. The close links between the school and the on site college provision helps to ease transition into sixth form and has encouraged more pupils to stay on at school.
39. Careers education is satisfactory. Pupils have access to a well planned high quality programme of work experience. Talks from a good range of local providers of post-16 education and business education partners help inform pupils of post school opportunities. However, the taught programme of careers education has some weaknesses; for example, there is a lack of focus on identifying pupils' strengths and weaknesses and linking those with future career options. There is also insufficient information about different routes in education and training and the use of computer software packages. Similar weaknesses were identified by the previous inspection. The careers' library contains insufficient information at present. Support from Connexions¹ has recently improved and a concerted effort has been made to ensure that those pupils who need extra provision to ease the transition into adulthood are well supported. The school's more senior members of staff are acutely aware of the need to raise aspirations but at present this raised level of awareness has not been fully translated into action in the area of careers education.
40. Pupils respect the school council and are confident that it can bring about change. The council provides a very successful forum where pupils can express their opinions directly to catering and caretaking staff as well as senior management. The school has responded well to pupils' concerns and there have been improvements to toilets, lunchtime arrangements and the quality of homework.
41. Links between departments in the school and the learning support department are good and are very effective in ensuring that most staff have an appropriate understanding of the specific learning needs of those pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans provide appropriate information and are being increasingly used by departments to set subject specific targets. Liaison with primary schools is very good and forms the foundation for initial assessment which is then developed through testing of pupils on entry. This provides relevant information which helps the school to make decisions about the level of support. This is a very inclusive school and significant progress has been made to ensure that all pupils including those with special educational needs make good progress and have access to the whole curriculum.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

¹ The careers advisory service

The school has **very effective** links with parents. The quality of links with the local community are **good**. The school has **very good** links with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective links with parents promote very good behaviour and encourage good achievement.
- The school is outward looking and is very open to the exchange of information and ideas, which promotes good improvement in the quality of education.
- There are very productive links with feeder primary schools.

Commentary

42. The school is extremely popular and oversubscribed. Parents are very confident that the school will provide their children with a high quality education. The school works very effectively with parents and there is a very strong sense of partnership which helps to promote good achievement and very good standards of behaviour. Information to parents about their children's progress, behaviour and the work of the school is of a high standard. Termly reviews contain very detailed information about the work of individual houses and subject departments which parents can use to supplement and support their children's learning. There is a very active parents association, which addresses educational issues as well as providing fundraising and social events. Parents are regularly consulted about their views either through questionnaires, focus groups or the parents' association. Their views are valued and properly considered. Any complaints are resolved effectively and sensitively.
43. The school is outward looking and has good links with the local community. The school is sensitive to issues in the local community and the work of the Youth Action group and the Residents' Association promotes understanding between older residents and young people. The presence of a playgroup on site helps promote achievement in child development. Partnerships are well managed and the school's involvement with local groups, such as the Education Business Partnership, helps to improve the quality of education in areas such as careers education. Business links have brought about good local support for the school's science college bid but links between business studies and local businesses are underdeveloped. Local resources are used well by the history and geography department and foster a strong sense of pride regarding the pupil's Black Country heritage.
44. The transfer of information between partner schools and colleges is highly productive. An impressive range of initiatives run in conjunction with primary schools help to ease transfer and increase educational opportunities for both primary and secondary school pupils. Well developed links with feeder primary schools and other local secondary schools enable staff to share information and develop their expertise. The school is heavily involved with the external on-site sixth form provision but also ensures that pupils are well aware of other local providers of post 16 education. Good links are developing with a local university which are designed to raise aspirations and promote achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governance of the school is **good**. The headteacher's leadership is inspirational and is **highly effective**. Other key staff provide **good** leadership and together they ensure that the effectiveness of management is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The determined and inspirational leadership of the headteacher has created an extremely clear vision and highly respected ethos for the school.
- The deputy and assistant headteachers support the headteacher very well.
- Middle managers are effective and have created a strong ethos for sustained improvement in their subjects.
- The highly effective monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and intelligent use of assessment information has contributed greatly to the school's good improvement.
- The governing body has made a good contribution to the success of the school by carrying out its role as a critical friend in full.
- There is an insufficient focus on long term planning and of integrating the school improvement and financial plan.
- Procedures for managing staff are good overall with some very good features.

Commentary

45. The effective leadership and management of the school is one of the main reasons why standards are rising. The headteacher has shared his extremely clear vision for the development and improvement of the school with all colleagues and has won their full support. At the heart of his vision is a clear focus on the individual pupil and an appreciation of the pivotal importance of teaching and learning, in an orderly environment, as the motor that drives up standards. The fruits of this vision are now being realised in a school that commands the full support of parents and in the steady improvement of standards, especially in Years 7 to 9.
46. Under the inspirational and highly effective leadership of the headteacher, the school has developed into an ambitious, open, yet self-critical institution. It is completely devoid of complacency and sets itself challenging targets. The headteacher's superb interpersonal and coaching skills have ensured that staff have developed a great belief in themselves and what they can achieve for the school. One of his great skills is the ability to build effective teams, then delegating real authority to them and so empowering them to reach their goals. The senior leadership team is one such example. Their skills complement each other's well and they have proved to be influential and effective in supporting the headteacher's drive for higher standards. For instance, through their lead on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, the careful review of the work of subject departments and their intelligent use of assessment, they have played a significant part in contributing to the school's strong improvement.
47. Governors support the head teacher and staff well especially during the long period of disruption caused by the building programme. Governors have a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses through constructive links with subject departments. They are extremely loyal and positive about the school but are not afraid to hold it to account for its weaknesses as "critical friends". They do not, however, as yet, play a sufficiently influential part in working with the head teacher and senior managers to create medium and long term improvement plans for the school which sufficiently address these weaknesses.
48. Subject leaders and heads of house are an effective group. Very good leadership is seen in mathematics, science, geography and physical education. These very effective subject managers

have taken their lead from the headteacher and created a very real ethos for improvement in their subjects. These teams have led the way in developing innovative approaches to teaching and learning, imaginative use of assessment data and sensitive, yet highly effective, methods of ensuring high quality in their subject areas.

49. The management of support for learning is very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator has developed good links with departments who are in turn very well informed about pupils' special educational needs. There is a clear policy and a good and developing range of information for staff. A large team of support staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Many are attached to departments and planning between teaching assistants and teaching staff is generally good. The deployment of teaching assistants is very well organised. Although procedures for the recording of the progress of individual pupils is good procedures for the daily recording of pupil progress by teaching assistants is still developing. Very good links between the special educational needs co-ordinator and the social inclusion co-ordinator are effective in ensuring that appropriate intervention is available for all pupils. There are very effective links with many outside agencies who support the school in providing appropriate intervention for pupils with a wide range of special needs. The governing body fulfils statutory requirements.
50. The school has worked hard to ensure that it is a fully inclusive, harmonious environment for learning. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic background achieve equally as well as other pupils because teachers are sensitive to individual needs. The school's commitment to the inclusion of pupils with physical disabilities and medical difficulties is very high.
51. Procedures for managing staff are good overall with some very good features. There is a coherent underlying strategy underpinning the strong commitment to raising the performance of all staff, teaching and non-teaching, into which performance management is closely integrated. The induction of all staff is very good. Internal procedures for the induction of newly qualified teachers are particularly good. The annual training needs of all staff are assessed against the development plan and good provision rigorously monitored by senior managers and governors. The school makes a very good contribution to initial teacher training through its links with one institution and subsequently has recruited well. The school is wise to extend its links to other providers. Staff numbers are rising as the school grows in size. The school manages its recruitment of staff well and has been able to appoint high numbers of newly qualified teachers and use them very well to maintain the pace of improvement. The stable teaching staff also makes a strong contribution to the growth of the school and the cost of supply cover is low, although there is now long-term sickness absence in physical education, ICT religious education and careers. Budget constraints mean that contact ratios are above average but managers are making good progress in developing the workload agreement. For example work experience, the administration computer network and the input of assessment data are now maintained by non-teaching staff and progress lessons in English are taught by learning support assistants.
52. Financial planning is good and helps the school achieve its educational priorities, of raising standards through improving the quality of teaching and learning. It is a testament to the careful management of the school's budget that pupils achieve well despite the well below average income the school receives. The school budgets systematically for all expenditure and is generally clear about the costs of development. The principles of best value are well applied in all areas of expenditure, at whole-school and team level. However, because the cost of the school's improvement plan is not always made explicit, it is difficult to always evaluate the effectiveness of the school's individual spend decisions.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,153,677
Total expenditure	3,148,990
Expenditure per pupil	2,942

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	9,620
Balance carried forward to the next	4,687

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching and learning.
- Teachers mark and assess work consistently well, helpfully identifying how pupils can improve.
- There are insufficient opportunities to develop and extend speaking skills.
- The department is well led and managed and is appropriately focused on raising standards.
- The use of computers to extend learning is under-developed.

Commentary

53. Standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are below average. Results in the Year 9 national curriculum test in 2003 were average compared with all schools nationally and well above average compared with similar schools. This particular group achieved well. Results in English were below mathematics and a little below science. The rising trend over the last five years is broadly in line with the national picture. The GCSE results were average in both English and English literature and they represent good achievement. A significant minority had erratic attendance and this depressed overall results, which, however, were an improvement on the previous year. Girls attained higher results than boys, similar to the situation nationally. GCSE results in both subjects have risen significantly in the last five years.
54. Current standards are average in Year 9, and pupils are achieving well. Most can write accurate, extended pieces, using paragraphs and punctuation correctly. Highest attaining pupils write in a range of ways very effectively. A number of good pieces were seen in which pupils confidently and accurately analysed drama, fiction and poetry. All pupils understand and can use the basic vocabulary of literary criticism and distinguish between fact and opinion. Lowest attaining pupils write much shorter, less developed pieces and make quite a lot of spelling and punctuation mistakes.
55. By the end of Year 11, standards are also average and pupils are achieving well. They are introduced to an appropriate range of literature and can explain aspects of characterisation and plot convincingly. Higher attaining pupils can write for a variety of purposes well. For example, a pupil looked at aspects of stereotyping in 'Romeo and Juliet' and effectively explained how the characters change and develop in the play. Another essay explored the narrative structure of 'Frankenstein' and it showed the pupil's very good understanding of underlying, as well as major, themes. Pupils also write creatively well, building atmosphere and evoking mood. Some higher attaining pupils, however, are failing to reach the highest grade because they lack a sophisticated awareness of language. Middle attaining pupils produce good thorough work; they can analyse a piece of literature effectively, but they write shorter,

more straightforward pieces and sometimes fail to appreciate underlying themes. All pupils are entered for GCSE and the lowest attaining pupils show a straightforward understanding of writers' intentions.

56. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, as other pupils do, partly as a result of careful setting arrangements with teachers planning effectively to support their learning. Many pupils lack confidence in speaking in formal situations. Generally, opportunities for extended speaking are limited in lessons, and as a result pupils tend to answer in short sentences and are reticent in discussion.
57. Teaching and learning are both good. Teachers are subject specialists, and they challenge pupils effectively to think deeply and work productively. They teach skills of literary analysis carefully, building up pupils' knowledge and understanding from Year 7. Work is marked consistently well, with helpful comments indicating clearly how pupils can improve. Many lessons are planned to include a variety of tasks and activities and this helps to keep pupils interested. All these features are contributing to good learning, along with pupils' own positive attitudes. Pupils do use computers to write essays and produce newspaper articles, and sometimes to carry out research, but these opportunities are limited. Computers are not yet being used much to extend learning deeply. There are also times when learning could be deeper if pupils were given more opportunities to think and reflect, and also be encouraged to articulate their thinking out loud, or present their views to others more formally.
58. The department is well led and managed and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The head of department is focused on raising standards and achievement. There are effective procedures in place for monitoring teaching and learning and performance data is well used to track progress and target under-achievement. The head of department identifies appropriate priorities, such as improving boys' performance. The line management structure is confusing, however, with the head of department having in effect two line managers. This results in her not being developed or supported quite as much as she could be. There are useful revision and booster sessions delivered at key points in the year outside lessons. There are a satisfactory number of enrichment opportunities for pupils, such as a debating competition for those in Year 9. However, there are few links with the library in creating a rich literary atmosphere around school, or with drama in developing oral skills.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Literacy skills are average across the school. Most pupils write accurately, usually spelling words correctly, and using punctuation appropriately. Most departments focus on correct use of technical vocabulary and in many subjects pupils get varied opportunities to write in different styles for different purposes. For example, in religious education pupils write letters and postcards and teachers provide them with frames to help them structure their writing. In art lessons pupils are encouraged to explain their views in extended pieces of writing. There are, however, missed opportunities for the development of writing skills. In history, teachers do not consistently identify spelling and punctuation mistakes and in science there is little emphasis on extended writing.
60. Oral skills are under-developed across the school. Whilst many teachers ask questions, they often only expect a short, undeveloped answer, and they miss opportunities to develop extended speaking. There is good provision for pupils with weakest literacy. The corrective reading programme run by the learning support department helps pupils with very low reading

ages to improve well, and literacy progress units also successfully target pupils to raise both their reading and writing skills.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers in the department are hard-working and dedicated and work effectively as a team.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour make an important contribution to good learning.
- All but a very small number of pupils take French up to GCSE, and an encouraging number in Years 10 and 11 are now studying German as well.
- Too much English is used in lessons
- After some years of disappointing GCSE results the introduction of a modular course has contributed to a significant improvement in pupils' performance.

Commentary

61. Standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are below average. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show that attainment in French has been broadly in line with national averages or a little below. These pupils, then, achieved well.
62. GCSE results have, however, been disappointing, well below average and below the targets set by the school; there have been very few top grades A* and A. The gap between girls' and boys' results has narrowed, but boys are still some way behind. In German, which is started by more able linguists only in Year 9, standards have been very much higher but numbers continuing in Years 10 and 11 have been very small.
63. Current standards in Years 7 to 9 are average. The overall achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good. Standards of written French are good. There is a lot of work in books, almost all done carefully and well presented. All pupils are familiar with present, past and future tenses by the end of Year 9. Higher attaining pupils use a good range of vocabulary and structures to describe actions and express reasons and opinions. Middle attainers do similar work, but the emphasis is more on adaptation rather than original writing. Pupils in lower sets do more simple work. Little work in either reading or listening comprehension was seen during the inspection, but pupils are familiar with a good range of vocabulary and standards are at least satisfactory. Standards of spoken French are weak. Pupils are reluctant to speak in formal situations and the use of French for classroom communication or authentic dialogue is very limited.
64. The picture in Years 10 and 11 is similar to that in Years 7 to 9. Some pupils are placed in separate classes for boys or girls only, an arrangement which pupils say they find helpful. Written work is again a strength, and spoken French still the weakest skill. There is, however, evidence of careful and systematic work on a relatively narrow range of language for the GCSE speaking tests, so that with careful revision candidates can hope to do well. Standards seen during the inspection are now average. This represents an improvement on recent years and is confirmed by pupils' performance so far in the modular course now being followed. If the final

results are similar, they will be very close to national averages, with considerably more top grades A* and A. Achievement for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 is now good.

65. More able linguists starting German in Year 9 have only one double lesson each week but make rapid progress. They build a sound foundation of careful written German and show a good understanding of work covered. In the lesson observed pupils used the perfect tense with confidence and were making good progress with modal verbs. The group in Year 10 have also made very good progress and their best work is not far below the standards of higher attainers in French. Standards in Year 11 are above average, but relatively less strong than in Year 10. Speaking is again a weakness in all years. Some pupils speak with confidence but others need a written text to refer to. Overall achievement by the end of Year 11 for all pupils including those with special educational needs is good.
66. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both languages. Pupils' positive attitudes help to create a good working atmosphere. Teachers manage the long 75 minute periods exceptionally well. Lessons have clear objectives, move along at a good pace with varied and carefully planned activities, and keep pupils well occupied. Expectations are high and pupils respond accordingly. There is a clear emphasis on grammatical aspects and pupils are given very good advice about how to raise the standard of their work. Teachers, however, do not always give sufficient opportunities and encouragement to pupils to develop their spoken language. The department does not make sufficient use of ICT.
67. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has succeeded in building a united, hard-working team who share their ideas and use very similar teaching methods. The introduction of new course books, with well constructed schemes of work, and the change to a modular GCSE syllabus, has led to more focused teaching and learning. After some difficult years the department is set to move forward. There is, however, still a lot to do, especially to encourage pupils to use more spoken French and German in lessons. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management are clearly focused on improving standards.
- Standards have improved and are above average.
- Pupils' achievement is very good because of teaching which is rarely less than good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and work very hard.
- Pupils' oral skills are not as good as their written ones.
- The use of ICT is not used consistently enough to improve pupils' learning.

Commentary

68. Standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are below average. National test results in Year 9 have steadily improved since the previous inspection and in 2003 were above average. In relation to pupils in similar schools, the results were very high and placed the school in the top

5 per cent of similar schools in the country. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average and all pupils are achieving very well.

69. In 2003 GCSE results were average and just above average compared with those of similar schools. GCSE results are improving but not as fast as Year 9 tests are. Results for GCSE modules already taken show a big improvement from 2003. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average and pupils are achieving well. Pupils are building on the higher standards they reached in Year 9.
70. Overall, from below average attainment at the beginning of year 7 to above average standards in Year 11, achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs is very good. Contributory factors to this are a very well structured assessment system and a well planned and organised curriculum. The cumulative effect of these factors, together with consistently good teaching and pupils' hard work, is very good achievement.
71. Pupils develop a secure foundation across all aspects of mathematics in years 7 to 9. Lower attainers consolidate their basic number skills to underpin later work; higher attainers move on quickly to develop good skills in algebra.
72. In Year 11 higher attaining pupils have a wide range of skills across all aspects of mathematics. For example they can find unknown sides or angles in triangles using the sine or cosine rule. Lower attainers can usually carry out standard, straightforward calculations; needing support in explaining their reasoning.
73. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. Skilled teaching and smaller classes are positive factors in bringing this about. Pupils with very high mathematical ability are also well catered for, for example through an A level programme.
74. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Lessons are well planned and no time is wasted, making the most of opportunities for learning. The atmosphere is purposeful. Pupils know they are expected to work hard and do so. Teachers explain new concepts clearly and use well chosen examples to develop pupils' understanding. Teaching provides very clear models for pupils' own written records; consequently the standard of presentation of pupils' written work is high. Their oral skills are not as good. Pupils are willing to ask and answer questions although often briefly. Some are not confident in extending their answers and explaining their reasoning. There is some use of ICT to help pupils understand new ideas. It was used effectively in a Year 7 class, to illustrate rotation of shapes through known angles. However, ICT is not used consistently enough by all teachers, mainly due to difficulties in access to computers.
75. The leadership and management of a large team of teachers are very good. Very well structured departmental assessment and review systems track progress at all levels. Areas for improvement are highlighted and swift action taken to remedy these, for example by reshaping the curriculum.
76. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Standards, achievement and teaching have all improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

77. Pupils' competence in mathematics is above average and makes a strong contribution to their progress in other subjects. The National Numeracy Strategy is fully in place. There is a policy for coordinating numeracy across all areas of learning. Students' numeracy skills are developed in many subjects with display and analysis of data particularly strong in most areas. For example, in ICT pupils can use spreadsheets to model different situations by changing

variables. In history pupils can construct time lines and in many subjects such as science and geography they can collect and represent data in a number of ways. Their skills in interpreting data presented graphically are good.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well through the school because of consistently good teaching and high expectations.
- Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress are very good.
- Pupils' very positive response in lessons contributes very significantly to their learning.
- The flexible setting² arrangements are very well used to plan for pupils' needs.
- Higher attaining pupils do not have regular opportunities to broaden their studies.
- Opportunities for speaking and extended writing are limited.

Commentary

78. Results in the tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were close to average but were well above average in comparison to similar schools and pupils achieved very well. The results in science were better than English, but not as good as mathematics. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. The results over the last five years have broadly followed the national upward trend.
79. In the GCSE examinations in double award science in 2003 the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was above average but the proportion achieving the highest grades, A* and A, was below average. Overall the results were broadly average but well above average in comparison with similar schools. Virtually all pupils in Year 11 gain a GCSE grade. Both boys and girls performed overall better than the national averages. The 2003 results were slightly below those for 2002, but the general trend over recent years has been one of steady improvement.
80. Pupils enter the school with below average standards in science. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 are above average. These test results are better than the GCSE results because of the intelligent use science teachers have made in Years 7 to 9, of assessment information to help pupils further improve their work. All pupils, then, are achieving very well in Years 7 to 9.
81. Most pupils have a good, broad and quite secure knowledge base, express ideas well and use scientific terminology accurately. Science investigations are carried out confidently, results are well handled and clear conclusions drawn. Higher attaining pupils competently tackle quite sophisticated concepts for their age, such as bond energies and enthalpy changes in chemical reactions. Lower attaining pupils present their work well and discuss it with accuracy at an appropriate level.

² A "set" is a teaching group of pupils who have broadly similar prior attainment in that subject.

82. The standards of work seen at the end of Year 11 are above average, better than the test results of 2003; a result of the extension into Years 10 and 11 of the sensitive use of assessment information by teachers to help pupils improve. Most pupils display good understanding of their work and good proficiency in using mathematical skills in handling a range of calculations at their level. Coursework investigations are good and data collected is well presented in a variety of graphical forms. Higher attaining pupils respond very well to the challenging work but are not regularly provided with opportunities to broaden their knowledge in the various topics. All pupils achieve well in Years 10 to 11.
83. From below average standards when they enter the school, pupils make very good progress to attain above average standards by the end of Year 9. This is because of a very well structured assessment system and a well planned and organised curriculum. The cumulative effect of these factors, together with consistently good teaching and pupils' hard work, is very good achievement.
84. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of skilled teaching and smaller classes. Pupils with very high scientific ability are also well catered for, through, for example, very well chosen extension work.
85. The overall quality of teaching and learning is consistently good, with much that is very good and excellent. It is equally good in all years. Teachers consistently plan lessons well, with a good variety of activities and an appropriate level of challenge. They have high expectations of pupils, who invariably respond well. Teachers integrate the use of computers and video clips effectively and imaginatively in their teaching, and pupils use the Internet well to seek information. All pupils achieve very well overall as a result of the consistently good level of the teaching, the focus on high expectations and the standards set by teachers. Literacy skills are well addressed through key words, but there are few opportunities for them to develop wider oral skills, such as debating controversial issues in science, and extended writing skills are not well developed. Marking is very good with a clear indication of the level of the work and guidance is given about how to improve.
86. The faculty is very well led and managed and has ensured good improvement since the last inspection. The head of faculty monitors the subject's performance very well, and has a clear vision of what is needed to raise standards even further. There is a very good balance of subject specialism and experience in the teaching staff, and a very good team spirit. Assessment procedures are very good, all pupils know their current target, and the sensitive and flexible use of the setting arrangements adds significantly to pupils' motivation and achievement. The accommodation is good, although rather dispersed, and the adequate resources are well managed by the technical support staff.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and Communication Technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good commitment to monitoring teaching, learning and assessment.

- There is effective implementation of the national strategy for communication skills.
- At Y11, there has been a lack of an external computer examination.
- Initial good links have been made with the primary school so planning can build on prior learning.

Commentary

87. In 2003 there were no GCSE examinations in ICT. The school has since introduced GCSE which will be examined for the first time in 2004.
88. Pupils enter the school with standards that are just below average. Work seen in Years 7 to 9 is just above average and the achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs is good. One reason for this good achievement is that self-assessment is used very effectively to help to highlight what pupils need to do to improve. Pupils are thoroughly involved in target setting and evaluating their work against National Curriculum levels. Teachers planning also helps pupils to meet the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Annotation is a weaker area of pupils' work, along with their general knowledge of how computers influence them as citizens. Pupils use computers creatively for presentation, research, problem solving and as a tool to support other subjects for example in Year 9 science where data logging was used well to demonstrate temperature changes.
89. The majority of pupils in Year 11 are on target to reach their predicted grades, showing satisfactory achievement from below average standards. Some pupils are concerned about the problems with missing course work. This is being investigated and communications with the examining board are ensuring no pupil will be penalised in the final examination. Course work is a concern for a minority of pupils who find keeping to deadlines difficult. However innovative revision and extra classes are helping these pupils to achieve their potential.
90. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well from Year 7 to 11 because of skilled teaching and well directed support. Pupils with very high ICT ability are also well catered for through carefully designed additional work. Staff and pupils' confidence has grown because of the increase in ICT resources in the school.
91. Teaching and learning are consistently good with some inspiring examples of excellent teaching. Pupils are challenged at all levels as a result of a strong commitment to monitoring teaching, learning and assessment. The present staffing problems are being solved by the expert assistance of a local advisory teacher and good quality supply staff, who are maintaining the standards, set by the department. ICT staff have a passion for challenging learning through a range of well-designed modules that focus ICT in the context of pupils' interests. For example Year 9 worked with a buzz of enthusiasm as they constructed a holiday web site using their independent research to plan eye catching front pages with interesting hyperlinks. In some lessons learning was constrained by cramped working conditions.
92. Staffing problems have had a negative impact on leadership and management at present the line manager is 'care taking' the department's management. The department's response to the previous inspection report has been very good because the head of department built up an effective and ambitious team. The school's senior managers have worked successfully with the ICT co-ordinator on the department's self evaluation, giving a clear action plan for development. However, policies and procedures in the department lack organisation to give strength to the good practice observed. Hardware has improved significantly but software puts

limitations on the wider use of ICT as a tool for learning, as seen in web page design. The school's teacher assessment in 2003 was generous and lacked consistency. A link to the primary partner schools is being developed through a Best Practice programme. This 'moving on' project gives pupils opportunity to spend quality time in the secondary school prior to their transfer. However there are no actual computer results passed on to the secondary school.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

93. The standards of competence in ICT are good because of the increased use of computers across the school to enable learning. The previous report made this area of the curriculum a key issue. Effective planning and training, an improvement in hardware and an efficient technician have developed whole school plans to use ICT to raise standards of work in the majority of subjects. Competence with ICT across the curriculum is good because teachers have gained more confidence in computers and hardware has improved. The system is soon to be 'refreshed' so that teachers are not frustrated by slow response from equipment.
94. A good curriculum audit has improved plans for future development. This audit has highlighted a gap in the use of ICT as part of citizenship teaching. Design and technology, religious education and mathematics are areas where computer use is at an early stage in comparison with geography and music where ICT is integral to the success of these departments.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are above average.
- Pupils achieve very well because teaching and learning are very good.
- Very good leadership and management of the department provide a clear vision for continued success and future development.
- Fieldwork and investigative activities enhance pupils' enjoyment of geography and promote independent learning.
- Although the department produces high quality resources, there is a shortage of up-to-date textbooks.

Commentary

95. In the 2003 GCSE examination, results were above the national average, maintaining the position established in previous years. Pupils performed better in geography than in their other subjects and there was no significant difference between boys' and girls' results. Boys' performance was much better than that of boys nationally.
96. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are above average. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of geographical knowledge and skills. Throughout the first three years in this school they achieve very well, reaching above average standards by the end of Year 9. Pupils are quickly introduced to essential map, computer and investigative skills that increase their self-confidence and their ability to work independently. More capable pupils write fluently and

accurately about geographical issues ranging from possible improvements to the school environment to the impact of oil extraction in polar regions. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve equally well when they have extra support in lessons together with resources that are adapted appropriately for them. Pupils have a keen sense of exploration and enjoy active participation in lessons and fieldwork.

97. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Geography is a popular subject, attracting a large number of pupils with a wide range of prior attainment. Most achieve very well, reaching standards that are well above their predicted performance. Pupils are able to take responsibility for their own learning and know how to improve because the department has established very thorough systems for assessing work and setting targets. Many pupils produce detailed, sophisticated course work. This, together with access to very good revision lessons, enables them to make very effective use of their knowledge in examinations.
98. Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have expert subject knowledge which they share very readily in a wide variety of teaching and learning styles. Most lessons proceed at a very rapid pace and with extremely high expectations of pupils, although this level of challenge is less obvious in the small proportion of lessons taught by non-specialists in Years 7 and 8. Exciting ventures using ICT in lessons are underway, with further developments planned, so that constantly changing geographical ideas and information are available to engage pupils. Although the department produces many high quality resource booklets and worksheets, the shortage of recent textbooks curtails opportunities for wider reading in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of this very skilled teaching which is very well directed to meet their needs. Pupils with very high geographic ability are also well catered for through carefully designed additional work.
99. The department is very well led and managed. Its detailed response to the last inspection report has resulted in sustained improvement. Individual expertise within the team is celebrated and there is a strong focus on continued development of teaching and learning through shared expertise and supportive monitoring of lessons. The department maintains a high profile within the school with an energetic vision for future success.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising because leadership and management are good and have established well-founded strategies for improvement.
- Teaching is good and because there is a wide variety of methods to meet learning needs, pupils in all years achieve well.
- Pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve and the subject is becoming increasingly popular as a result.
- GCSE results were below average in 2003 because not all pupils completed their coursework.
- Although there are increasing opportunities for pupils to research their work through ICT, it is not used consistently across the department.

Commentary

100. GCSE results in 2003 were above the school average but below the national average and girls performed at a higher level than boys. There is no overall trend in examination performance and in 2002, from a smaller entry, the percentage of pupils reaching grades A* to C was much greater.
101. From below-average attainment on entry to the school, pupils in all years are achieving well and make good progress in the acquisition of historical skills and standards are rising. By the end of Year 9, for example, pupils' performance is average and there are examples of where it is higher than this. Youngsters of all ability levels are beginning to see the past in shades of grey and benefit from the consideration of whether King John was a good or a bad king and also whether Oliver Cromwell was a hero or villain. Similarly, standards in the GCSE years are improving and, because there are now systems in place to ensure that coursework is completed on time, pupils are working at standards that are average. Pupils are adept at evaluating source material for reliability and usefulness. Their written work is completed with pride but many are still rather diffident in expressing their views orally to the whole class. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and achieve well.
102. Because teachers are concerned to vary their methods and because group work is a strong feature of all lessons, the different learning needs of pupils are effectively met. Teachers have very secure knowledge of their subject and their questioning is both challenging and relentless. As a result and because pupils are aware of the levels at which they are operating, history is becoming an increasingly popular option and pupils enjoy the subject-matter, aspects of the medical renaissance and also Nazi Germany, for example. Although a minority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not always fully engaged by the topics under consideration, teaching and learning is good overall and in nearly a quarter of lessons it is very good. Teachers now recognise that ICT needs to be used more consistently as a learning tool.
103. Leadership and management are good and have rapidly established well-founded strategies for development. The thriving history club, the impressive classroom displays and the quality of feedback after National Curriculum assignments in Years 7 to 9 are just three examples of the good improvements made since the last inspection. High levels of teamwork and a profound care for the welfare, both academic and social, of all pupils are strong features of a department, which is well placed for further success.

Religious Education

Provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is insufficient time to teach religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- GCSE results in 2003 were significantly below average.
- Teaching over time on the GCSE course has been unsatisfactory consequently standards seen in Year 11 are below average and achievement over time is unsatisfactory.
- Under the leadership of the new subject head, standards are rising quickly in Year 10.
- Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are rising because teaching is good and pupils are achieving well.

Commentary

104. In teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2003 results in religious education were well below average and have declined since the last inspection. Compared with their attainment on entry to the school, achievement was satisfactory. GCSE results in 2003 were below average. They were unchanged since the last inspection and declined from 2002. Pupils achieved significantly less well in religious education than they did in their other subjects.
105. Standards seen in Year 9 are rising and average overall. Achievement is good overall. Good numbers attain average levels. Pupils know their target levels and grades and are engaged well in their own improvement.
106. In Year 11 standards seen are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. The course for Year 10 was not fully covered and pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs is unsatisfactory. There has been insufficient focus on techniques to help pupils pass the examination. Pupils' standards have regressed since Year 10.
107. Under the leadership of the new subject head, standards in Year 10 now are rising sharply and pupils are achieving well. There is much good writing from a Christian perspective about pressing topical issues such as human rights, pacifism and feminism. A sharp focus on answering examination questions and rigorous marking is driving up standards.
108. No religious education was observed for non-examination classes for Years 10 and 11 because none was taught during the inspection.
109. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall because teaching over time in Year 11 is unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning between Years 7 and 9 is good overall. That observed on the GCSE course is satisfactory. Permanent teachers are well-established subject specialists though two carry major pastoral responsibilities which limit their attendance at department meetings.
110. Where teaching is good or very good, the pace of learning is fast; pupils are challenged and fully engaged. Where the pace is slow and learning is heavily teacher-dominated, pupils disengage from their learning and are bored. Over time this has led to under-achievement. When learning is active and open-ended, classroom assistants make a strong contribution to learning but they are passive during prolonged teacher-talk. Planning and preparation are good, using a variety of tasks and materials prepared appropriately for different levels within each class. A distinctive departmental teaching style is emerging.
111. The good leadership of the new head of department is implementing change and standards are rising. Very hard work has managed wide-ranging reorganisation. Development targets are clear and the subject leader is well capable of continuing progress. Improvement since the last inspection remains unsatisfactory because religious education in Years 10 and 11 still has insufficient time.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and Technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising and pupils are achieving well because leadership and management are good.
- Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and so pupils show positive attitudes to learning.
- Lack of ICT equipment is restricting the quality of pupils' work.

Commentary

112. GCSE results have improved since the previous inspection when they were below average. In 2003, they were average overall and represented good achievement. Results in textiles and food technology were much stronger than in graphics, electronic products and engineering. Overall, girls did better than boys. Pupils generally did better in their other subjects than in design and technology.
113. Current standards are broadly average in Year 9 and represent good achievement. By Year 9, pupils demonstrate average practical skills in making products. Their technical vocabulary is good because this aspect of the subject receives strong emphasis. They are supported well from Years 7 to 9 by a series of work booklets that cover all aspects of the design process. Hence, they experience all its elements many times before they embark upon their GCSE courses. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to cover extra ground. For example, even in Year 7, there is evidence of work of higher grade GCSE standard. Pupils with special educational needs also do well because they receive individual help of good quality.
114. Standards rise further by Year 11. Currently, they are above average overall and represent good achievement. The department successfully enters virtually all pupils for GCSE. Approximately two thirds of pupils are currently working at standards closely relating to GCSE grades A* to C. The previously poorly performing engineering course has been withdrawn so that pupils now have to choose between higher attaining options. This has had the effect of improving the achievement of boys and raising standards overall. However, standards in food technology and textiles are still higher than in graphics and electronic products. Design portfolios and the products that pupils make are above average in quality. As in Years 7 to 9, there is evidence of work of the highest quality. For example, superb design work in textiles on the joint theme of 'Elizabethan' and 'Punk' has resulted in exquisite finished garments. These are of such high quality in terms of visual effect and perfection of manufacture that they are way beyond the GCSE grade range. The terms, 'professional costume designer' and 'exhibition' come to mind!
115. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. Some very good teaching in textiles and food technology really motivates pupils to do very well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and manage them well in the classroom. Activities that they organise create a high level of engagement. Particularly good approaches are evident for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils show a positive attitude and respect for each other while they work, and behaviour in lessons is often very good. A major strength is the way that teachers routinely develop pupils' competence in writing, numerical skills and, to some extent ICT, in the context

of technology subjects. This helps them with technique for GCSE examinations and enables them to enhance their design portfolios by incorporating these features into their work. Marking is satisfactory but variable. Sometimes it does not identify poor spelling or poorly presented diagrams.

116. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Staff morale is good and improvements in standards are constantly sought. Managers effectively monitor teaching and learning for quality. Organisation and assessment are good and enable them to monitor and evaluate progress accurately. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in relation to rising standards. The main barrier to further development is in relation to the insufficient provision of specialist ICT equipment for the subject. This limits the potential for pupils to incorporate industrial practice into their GCSE coursework and reach even higher standards.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

117. Art and design and music were inspected in depth and drama was sampled.

Drama

118. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have a weekly timetabled double lesson for one term in each year. This small amount of time, with long gaps in between, results in pupils making limited progress and attaining below average standards. Drama is also offered as a GCSE option. In one Year 7 lesson seen, pupils learnt well how to improvise a piece of drama when the teacher was in role herself. Pupils responded well when she came in as 'the king's representative' and quickly picked up how to use dialogue to continue the drama. In a Year 10 GCSE lesson, pupils learnt a satisfactory amount about how to make an entrance and an exit. Learning might have been deeper if the teacher had involved pupils more in directing the action, rather than tightly directing the scenes herself.

Art and Design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and pupils enjoy good relationships and pupils benefit from personal tuition and guidance.
- Quality of teaching and learning is good: lessons are well planned with good integration of theory and practical work.
- Use of sketch books for research and development in Years 10 and 11 is good.
- A wider range of media opportunities would enhance GCSE study.
- Group sizes are too large in Year 9 for a wide media experience.
- There are not enough opportunities to work in three dimensions.

Commentary

119. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades A* - C in GCSE examinations in 2003 was below average overall but an above average proportion (25 per cent) achieved the highest A* or A grades. The performance of girls was close to national levels and that of boys was below.

There has been an upward trend since the last inspection because good leadership has given the subject a clear sense of educational direction.

120. Standards in the current Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement for pupils in relation to their knowledge, understanding and skills when they entered the school, which were below average. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils of all abilities are able to observe from direct observation and use line and tone effectively in their drawings. These standards are achieved because pupils are supported well in classrooms and apply themselves purposefully. There is no significant difference between boys and girls.
121. Standards in the current Year 11 are average. This represents good achievement for all pupils over the two years of the course. Middle and higher attaining pupils are able to show some influence of important movements in art and design or of particular artists. Sketch books are annotated and used most effectively and technical language develops well. Pupils demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other cultures through the work they produce. Lower attaining pupils achieve well and benefit from individual attention.
122. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. Where very good lessons were observed, very good pace and a variety of activities which maintained pupils' interest were evident. A strong feature of the most effective teaching is very sharp teacher questioning which ensures the participation of all pupils. When pupils were actively engaged in debate about their work and clear about their immediate learning objectives, their responses were very positive. The full potential of ICT as a learning aid has not yet been fully developed. Higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged to achieve their full potential. Large class sizes, especially in Year 9, restrict the range of materials used and this has an adverse effect on teaching and learning. For example, there is insufficient use made of working with clay for three dimensional study.
123. The leadership and management of art and design are good. Staff have good subject knowledge and expertise and work well as a team. Departmental meetings and the monitoring of lessons are used well to share ideas and good practice. Extra curricular activities and visits to galleries and museums have a positive impact on the quality and range of pupils' work. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, most notably in the use of sketch books for research, resources, and the achievement of boys. Schemes of work and departmental policies provide good guidance for staff so that consistency is ensured throughout the department.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The integration of ICT into all music lessons offers all pupils equal access to worthwhile musical experiences.
- The vision of the school in offering potential instrumentalists a free term's trial tuition.
- The high standard of the limited number of extra curricular activities offers pupils invaluable opportunities to develop their performing skills.
- The shortfalls in accommodation and resources restrict musical activities available to some pupils.

- The department does not sufficiently implement the school literacy policy to enable pupils to become more musically articulate in both spoken and written work.

Commentary

124. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were just below average. These results were in line with the teacher's estimations, with the average point score being above the school average. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 9 standards are average. As pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7 is below average, this represents good achievement.
125. Standards at the end of Year 11 are also average. This again represents good achievement. Pupils in Year 10 demonstrate very good independent learning skills whilst working on their compositions. Pupils in Year 11 show good progress in developing their performance skills to bring them up to examination standards. However they are not sufficiently forthcoming when answering questions and are happy to let the teacher dominate the lesson. Homework is regularly set for all year groups. The tasks allocated are always related to lesson work and this is another important contributory factor to the good learning which takes place.
126. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well from Year 7 to 11 because of skilled teaching and well directed support.
127. Teaching and learning are good. In Years 7 to 9 pupil's learning is furthered by the teachers' good subject knowledge, and their ability to pass this on in an easily intelligible manner. This is particularly the case with regard to the use of ICT. Pupils enjoy the practical nature of the lessons which are well planned and resourced in those lessons which take place in the main music building. This is not the case in the single lesson which is held in a non specialist classroom. This room is too far away from the music building, is too small, and has no resources. All pupils achieve well because tasks are well structured. Consequently pupils with special educational needs also achieve well and there is little variance between the progress of boys and girls. More musically able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Pupils' learning is also furthered by their own good behaviour which is due to the teachers' very good class management and establishment of an acceptable code of conduct in the department. However in one lesson unacceptable behaviour had a serious impact on the quality of learning. Insufficient emphasis is given to the literacy element of the curriculum, which prevents pupils becoming more fluent in both their spoken and written answers to questions.
128. Leadership and management are good. Teachers confer regularly, year group marks are standardised, and low achievement is quickly detected. The use of ICT features as an integral part of the lessons but the size of the non specialist room and the inadequate resources available sometimes holds back learning. The current building programme will enable this shortfall to be rectified when the work is completed. In the main music area there are insufficient practice rooms for group work in lessons and there is a shortage of storage space. Extra curricular activities are limited in number. Those observed during the inspection were of a high standard offering very good opportunities for all participants to improve their performing and ensemble skills. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The number of pupils taking GCSE is rising and standards are improving. The number of pupils taking instrumental tuition has also increased thanks to financial support from the school which enables pupils to experience a free trial term before committing themselves to regular lessons.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision for physical education is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and occasionally very good and excellent teaching results in good achievement overall
- Very good relationships between pupils and with members of staff make a significant contribution to the good learning in most lessons.
- A very good range of activities after school support and enrich work done in lessons.
- The leadership of the department is very good and has ensured a purposeful atmosphere with an appropriate focus on developing teaching and learning.
- Assessment procedures are very good and are a significant factor in the good progress made by pupils.

Commentary

129. In the 2003 teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 results were well below average. GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average although results over the previous three years were in line with the national average. Pupils achieved at least as well in physical education in 2003 as they did in their other subjects.
130. Standards observed in the inspection by pupils in Year 9 were average. This represents good achievement overall during their first three years in the school, given the below average attainment of pupils on entry to the school.
131. Standards in Years 10 and 11 for those who are not on the GCSE course, are also average overall. Boys in cricket have sound batting and bowling technique, while girls have a good understanding of factors leading to fitness and the importance of exercise. Standards in tennis are below the national average. This represents good achievement despite the restricted time available for physical education in Years 10 and 11.
132. Evidence from GCSE course-work indicates standards that are above the national average. These pupils are achieving well and have a good understanding of many aspects of the course including physiology and anatomy and the acquisition of skills. Pupils are beginning to apply this knowledge to practical situations through a very high standard of coursework on analysing performance in a specific sporting activity.
133. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well from Year 7 to 11 because of skilled teaching and well directed support.
134. Teaching and learning is good with much that is very good and excellent. A secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance; appropriate intervention and good question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning, are also features of many lessons. In an excellent lesson on developing batting skills in cricket the class teacher used a video and a very effective question and answer session with pupils to identify the aspects of technique he was hoping to develop. An excellent range of activities that motivated pupils followed and ensured that pupils of all abilities were successful. Progress was excellent. Relationships between staff and pupils

are very good and most pupils respond with enthusiasm. Assessment of performance by teachers in the best lessons is used to enhance teaching.

135. In those lessons where teaching is not quite so good individual pupils are not set clear targets for improvement and the range of activities is not appropriate. Occasionally there are limited strategies for engaging pupils. All pupils on the GCSE course are aware of their target grades and have a very good understanding of what is required for improvement. Procedures in the department for ensuring the progress of gifted and talented pupils are secure and are beginning to ensure appropriate progress. ICT is used very well by many pupils in their GCSE course work and opportunities to develop this use in other areas of the course are developing. There is a very good range of activities after school for pupils of all abilities to support and enrich work done in lessons. The school competes very successfully with other schools in a range of sports and many pupils achieve representative honours.
136. The subject is very well led and well managed. Although the head of department has been absent for some time, all procedures and documentation are well established and provide very good guidance for the department. There is a tangible and very effective emphasis on developing teaching and learning, with a very clear vision which is understood and supported by all members of the department. There is very good communication and co-operation between members of the department; all are very good role models for the pupils. The day to day organisation of the department is very good and the department is being very well led in the head of department's absence. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

137. Vocational courses are slowly gaining momentum in the school. The national programme for vocational education is an important focus in the school's development plan. At present only three areas fulfil the criterion for vocational courses. These include health and social care, child development and leisure and tourism. Achievement in health and social care and child development are very good. GCSE business education and child development were sampled.

Business Education

138. A Year 11 lesson was seen in which pupils revised effectively for their forthcoming examination. The teacher took half the class for an intensive revision session while the rest worked through a computer programme; they then swapped over half-way through. The teacher encouraged, explained and reminded them of how they could maximise their marks. There was a purposeful and supportive climate for learning.

Child development

139. GCSE results are above national average in child development with the proportion gaining A* also above the national average. Pupils have a very positive attitude to the subject and obvious pride in the work they produce. Boys and girls are equally successful. Teaching and learning was excellent in the lesson observed. Revision for Year 11 was brought to life with many different approaches to sharing study skills and challenging pupils to be confident independent learners. Marking and teacher feedback is exceptional and provides very good guidance to help pupils improve. Leadership and management are very good. The poor accommodation is

enhanced by very good display of pupils work and a very buoyant ‘fun-loving’ approach to independent learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is good, there is a strong commitment to the subject and accurate strategies for development are being established as a result.
- Teaching is good, pupils benefit from an emphasis on class discussion and achieve well.
- The house and school councils and the range of relevant extra-curricular initiatives are very effective in providing pupils with opportunities to express their opinions and play an active part in pressure groups.
- Although pupils’ achievement is reported at the end of Year 9, there is no recording of progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Because formal monitoring of provision is not yet in place, the school profile of citizenship is not high enough.

Commentary

140. The achievement of pupils in all years is good and youngsters are developing a secure understanding of a range of local and national issues in relation to government and democracy. The house and school councils are regarded highly by the pupils, who enjoy becoming actively involved and who say that these institutions make a real difference in many areas of school life. Moreover, the ‘Kick Racism out of Football’ initiative is well supported and several youngsters have gained prestigious awards in this area. The school places considerable emphasis on local, national and international work for charity and many pupils play an important part in fund-raising activities. The link with the Romanian School in Cluj-Napoca is a key aspect of this provision and pupils have spent much time considering just how they can support youngsters who are not as fortunate as themselves.
141. Challenging questioning to make pupils think, opportunities for discussion and on-going self-evaluation of progress are some of the major features of the formal teaching in the subject. Pupils see the value of what they are doing and are more than willing to express their views on a range of issues, the effect of new technology in the workplace, for example. They work well in groups and adopt a most mature approach to their studies. Teachers generally have a secure command of their subject and give a range of anecdotes to bring the individual modules alive. Teaching is, therefore, never less than satisfactory and is good overall. There are systematic procedures in place to assess pupils’ achievement at the end of Year 9 but formal reporting of progress does not yet appear in Years 10 and 11.
142. Leadership is good and, although the co-ordinator has only been in post for a short time, accurate strategies for future development have already been identified and learning through participation is quite rightly seen as an essential element of citizenship provision. Management is satisfactory and teachers recognise that, in order to raise the profile of the subject further,

more formal procedures for monitoring teaching and learning now need to be established. There is a strong commitment to the subject and, as a result, pupils recognise its importance to their lives both within and outside school. The department is, therefore, well placed for future success.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	2
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	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
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	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
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).