

INSPECTION REPORT

Buckler's Mead Community School

Yeovil, Somerset

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123890

Headteacher: Mr Mike Featherstone

Lead inspector: David Darwood

Dates of inspection: 13th September - 16th September 2004

Inspection number: 268361

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1024
School address:	St. John's Road Yeovil Somerset
Postcode:	BA21 4NH
Telephone number:	01935 424454
Fax number:	01935 431088
Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Carol Lamont
Date of previous inspection:	26-Apr-1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a specialist technology college situated in a residential area of Yeovil. It is a popular school, which is over-subscribed. It is working in partnership with the local college in developing a greater range of relevant and vocational courses. The school has been successful in gaining a number of national and regional awards. It has grown since the previous inspection and there are currently 1024 pupils on roll. It serves a mixed socio-economic area with relatively high levels of employment, a significant amount of which is low income. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. Relatively few pupils come from ethnic minorities and even fewer come from homes where English is not their first language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average and many of these pupils have social, behavioural and emotional difficulties. Few pupils join or leave the school during the school year. The attainment of pupils coming into the school is below the national average. The school hosts a local authority Language Resource Base, (LRB), with nine of its 12 places currently filled. The base takes pupils from a wide area. These pupils all possess Statements of Special Educational Needs relating to a wide range of complex language difficulties. These needs are often accompanied by other difficulties, such as hearing loss and problems of self-worth, which require skilled and multidisciplinary programmes of work from sensitive staff.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3552	David Darwood	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
11072	Shirley Elomari	Lay inspector	
3472	Kathy MacFarlane	Team inspector	Mathematics
12568	Chris Morris	Team inspector	English
31159	Clive Simmonds	Team inspector	Science
32289	Tony Lydon	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art and design
33368	Val Greatrex	Team inspector	Design and technology
32382	John Bryan-Williams	Team inspector	Geography
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team inspector	History Citizenship
21855	Dennis Carty	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music
32724	William Jepson	Team inspector	Physical education
16930	Jeffery Plumb	Team inspector	Religious education
23436	Jane Davies	Team inspector	Special education needs
23412	Alvin Jeffs	Team inspector	SEN Unit

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Buckler's Mead Community School is a **very good** school with many significant strengths, not least of which is the excellent leadership of the headteacher. There is a clear focus on raising achievement and standards as well as the self-esteem and aspirations of its pupils. The staff and governing body are committed to improving the learning opportunities provided for all pupils. This is reflected in the very good support and guidance given to pupils and the wide range of courses on offer. The headteacher and senior management team have a clear vision of what the school should, and could, achieve and are a powerful driving force in bringing about improvements. Overall, the achievement of pupils is good and standards are improving. The school provides **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. He is innovative and along with the senior management team provides a clear direction for the school.
- The hard working staff has a strong commitment to raising achievement, providing a stimulating and secure environment, and ensuring that all pupils and staff feel valued.
- The good quality of teaching is a key factor in raising pupils' aspirations and overall achievement.
- The school has an innovative and appropriate curriculum to meet the differing needs of its pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11. There is also a very good and well supported range of after school activities.
- The school has very constructive links with the community and industry. Links with other schools are excellent. These partnerships enhance the range of experiences offered to pupils.
- Pupils feel closely involved in the life of the school. They appreciate the very good care and support they receive. Relationships in the school are very good and contribute to a good atmosphere around the school and in lessons.

There are no significant weaknesses in the school as a whole, although there are some areas for improvement related to specific subjects.

At the time of the previous inspection, there were no major issues for improvement. Since that time, the school has continued to improve and progress is good. Standards, although fluctuating, largely as a result of past staffing difficulties, are in line with national averages. By the end of Year 11, standards are significantly higher than in similar schools. Teaching is at least good in all subjects and in some it is very good. There has been a significant improvement in the range and nature of courses available to pupils.

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	A

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

Overall achievement is **good**. Standards, overall, are in line with the national average. However, given the below average attainment of many pupils entering the school in Year 7, their achievement is **good**. In 2003, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were slightly below average overall. In English they were well below the national figures whilst in mathematics and science they were below. Standards of work seen during the inspection were in line with the national average. The 2003 GCSE results show standards to be average. However, results in national tests at the end of Years 9 and 11 were affected by difficulties in recruiting suitable English and science teachers. These difficulties have now been resolved and standards during the inspection, and unconfirmed

results for 2004, compare well with the national average. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is good. Compared to similar schools, GCSE results are very high and have been consistently so for the last three years. Improved standards and good achievement are the result of good teaching, the effective support given to pupils, the high expectations of staff and good assessment and monitoring procedures.

Pupils' personal development, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, is **good**. There is a very good and caring ethos throughout the school. Pupils are well supported. Their attitude towards lessons is good, as is their behaviour. Overall, attendance is in line with the national average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. Overall, teaching and learning are **good** and a significant proportion of lessons are very good. Teachers have high expectations, both in terms of work and behaviour and pupils respond accordingly. Good teaching is, in part, a result of very effective staff development, which has led to good quality planning and an increased range of strategies to interest and motivate pupils. The curriculum is **very good**, particularly the range of appropriate and relevant courses in Years 10 and 11. Provision is enhanced by very good after-school activities. The school provides high quality support, advice and guidance for all its pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall the quality of leadership and management is **very good**. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. He is well supported by a very effective senior management team. Together they give a clear sense of direction to the school and have established appropriate priorities for improving standards and achievement. Management of the school is also very good. Teamwork is a strength of the school. The heads of faculty and subject area leaders understand what is expected of them and work hard to improve teaching and learning in order to raise standards. The governance of the school is very good. Governors are committed to the school, recognise its strengths and weaknesses and operate an effective advisory group system, which enables them to be fully involved in the work of the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Attendance at the pre-inspection parents' meeting and the response to questionnaires was low. The majority of parents were very supportive of the school. They particularly commented on the good induction programme for Year 7 pupils, the range of activities and the good quality of teaching. They also commented that the school was well led and managed. Some concerns were expressed about behaviour and bullying. Pupils' views were similar to parents. The inspectors found that overall behaviour was good and instances of bullying in the school were dealt with effectively. The majority of pupils stated that they enjoyed school and felt well supported.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- To continue to raise standards and address the issues identified in individual subject reports, particularly attainment in mathematics in Years 10 and 11.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the requirement to provide a daily act of worship is met.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in, subjects and courses

Overall, achievement is **good**. Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are **average** when compared to those nationally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Standards in GCSE are well above those of similar schools.
- By the end of Year 11, standards in art and design and physical education are well above average and achievement is very good.
- Standards in mathematics in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils with special educational needs as well as those in the language unit make good progress and achieve well.
- Pupils are good at using information and communication technology (ICT) for a wide range of tasks.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.75 (30.8)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	33.98 (33.7)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	30.76 (31.6)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 216 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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	49 (49)	52.0 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (97)	91.0 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (95.5)	96.0 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	32.8 (34.8)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 230 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Attainment on entry to the school is below the national average and a significant minority of pupils have social and emotional difficulties as well as low levels of self-esteem. In 2003, the results in the end of Year 9 national tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were below the national average, overall. They were well below in English. However, standards of work seen during the inspection are at the national average and better than the national test results might indicate. Standards in the other subjects are average, with the exception of music and citizenship where they are below and physical education and ICT, where they are above the national average. In design and technology they are well above. The overall trend in results saw a slight dip in the core subjects in 2003. There have, however, been significant staffing difficulties in the past few years in these subjects, which restricted the implementation of some of the school strategies for raising standards. The school places great emphasis on improving standards of literacy across all subjects of the curriculum. This is

effective in helping pupils make progress. Given both the attainment on entry and the socio-economic context of the school, the achievement of pupils is good.

2. Overall, standards of work by Year 11 are at the national average. GCSE examination results in 2003 were broadly in line with the average. This is also true for the unconfirmed results in 2004. Compared to similar schools¹, based upon pupils' prior attainment, results are very high. This has been the case for the past few years. The school enters a higher proportion of pupils for GCSE than the national average. This is part of the school's policy to allow as many pupils as possible to gain accreditation. Standards of work seen in art and design and physical education are well above the national average. Those in modern foreign languages, mathematics and religious education are below. Results in the vocational GNVQ subjects are above average. Given staffing difficulties in the core subjects over the last few years the school has done well to maintain standards. This is due to very good leadership and management, very good induction procedures, greater consistency in the quality of good teaching, effective use of support staff and the range of new courses on offer.
3. Overall, boys' attainment is below that of girls as is the picture nationally. Within subjects there is, however, some variation in this. In mathematics, design and technology and English girls did significantly better than boys, whilst in geography boys did better than girls. There are relatively few pupils from minority ethnic groups and even fewer for whom English is not their first language. These pupils are well supported and their achievement is good.
4. Standards of language and literacy are satisfactory. Many pupils enter the school with well below average levels of literacy, but make good progress in this area throughout their time in the school. Overall, achievement is good and pupils are increasingly confident in their use of literacy as they move throughout school. Pupils' mathematical skills are satisfactory and sufficient to allow them to handle mathematical questions and problems in other subjects. Standards in ICT are good. Pupils show increasing confidence and competence in the use of new technologies.
5. In all years, the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. This is because teachers and support staff are experienced and sensitive to the pupils' needs. Pupils make good progress against the targets identified in their individual education plans. Achievement of pupils in the Language Resource Base (LRB) is good. Pupils supported by the LRB make good progress in respect of the targets identified in their specific individual education plans. They achieve well in literacy and numeracy skills and in general confidence. All take the opportunities offered to them to undertake GCSE work and this represents good, and often very good, progress from the literacy and language levels with which they entered the school. Very good work was seen during the inspection, especially in areas of food, design and information technology. Gifted and talented pupils also achieve well. Teachers take account of their needs when planning and good use is made of teaching assistants to support their learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school are **good**. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is **good**. They form very good relationships with one another and with staff. Pupils are very willing to take responsibility within the school community. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory, overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitude to learning is good. They are interested in their lessons and enjoy the wide range of activities provided for them.
- Pupils' behaviour is good because the school sets high expectations and works very hard to achieve them.
- The social and moral development of pupils is very good.
- Attendance is very well monitored.

¹ Results are compared not only nationally but also with those obtained by pupils in schools with similar ability intakes.
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Commentary

6. Almost all pupils have a positive attitude to their learning. They are well motivated by good teaching and work that is planned to engage their interest. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 makes a significant contribution to sustaining these good attitudes and pupils enjoy the different ways of learning open to them. Pupils are willing to work and settle quickly in lessons. They concentrate well and listen to their teachers and other pupils respectfully. The very good relationships between pupils and teachers contribute to their good attitudes. Pupils of all ages are very appreciative of the effort teachers make to provide the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Most pupils are actively involved in clubs and other activities outside the school day. Pupils take a pride in their achievements, both in lessons and in other activities, partly because these are well celebrated by the school and in the local press.
7. Almost all pupils respond positively to the very high expectations the school sets for their behaviour, which is good, overall. Unacceptable behaviour is restricted in the main to a very small minority. These pupils are now generally well managed so that their behaviour does not affect the learning of others. They respond well to the range of strategies that help them learn to take control of their own behaviour. The school is very committed to keeping pupils in school and the level of exclusions is low when compared with other local secondary schools. The school follows appropriate procedures and records show that few pupils are excluded more than once. The good standards of behaviour help pupils to learn well. The school has very good systems in place to deal with bullying. These include the group of prefects, who are trained to help younger pupils when bullying occurs. In some cases bullying takes place off the school premises, which is beyond the remit and control of the school.
8. The school is a successful community in which individuals are known and valued. Pupils develop into confident and mature young people as they move through the school. The relationships between pupils, their peers, teachers and other adults are very good. Pupils are proud of their school and are willing to undertake responsibilities within it. They develop a strong sense of right and wrong, partly due to the school's code of conduct and partly through the process of debating moral issues within lessons. Pupils' social development is very good. They play a full part in the life of the school community. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have to work together in pairs or small groups, both in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Moral and social development are very well fostered by the programme of personal and social education that takes place in tutorial time and special focus days. Pupils' spiritual development is good. In many areas of the curriculum they have the opportunity to gain in self-knowledge through debate and reflection, relating the topics to their own lives. They show good levels of respect for others and are appreciative of the skills and qualities of other people. Cultural development is good. Pupils learn about their own and other cultures through work in citizenship, history, geography and other subjects.

Attendance

9. The level of attendance is typical of that found in secondary schools nationally. The level of unauthorised absence is lower than in most schools. Almost all pupils attend both regularly and on time. Most parents inform the school promptly of the reason for any absence. The school has very good procedures in place to encourage good attendance and all unexplained absences are followed up thoroughly. This results in a consistent level of attendance. Most pupils arrive on time in the morning and lessons begin promptly. Pupils have responded well to the earlier start to the school day, introduced in September.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	7.4
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	1.0
National data:	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1041	61	1
White – Irish	1	1	
White – any other White background	1		
Mixed – any other mixed background	3		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	6		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	3		
Chinese	1		
No ethnic group recorded	2		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

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

Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good planning, ensures well-structured lessons.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils encourage pupils to attempt challenging tasks.
- Targeted support by teaching assistants meets the needs of both gifted and talented and low-attaining pupils.
- In a small number of instances, lessons that are too teacher-directed restrict independent learning.
- Very good use is made of new technology, such as electronic whiteboards to both motivate pupils and increase learning opportunities.
- Specialist support assistants provide very good support for pupils within the Language Resource Base (LRB).

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 115 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (3%)	33 (29%)	54 (47 %)	25 (22%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

10. The quality of teaching is good in all years. The overwhelming majority of lessons are good or better and of these nearly one-third are very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The quality of teaching is consistently good across the different subjects. In no subjects is it less than good and it is very good in physical education and art and design.
11. A real strength of teaching is the systematic and comprehensive planning. In addition to ensuring good curriculum coverage in all subjects, it also leads to the majority of lessons being well structured. Good use has been made of the recommended lesson structure in the Key Stage 3 Strategy and this is now a strong component in lessons. Objectives are generally made clear to pupils at the outset and in a majority of lessons opportunities are taken at the end of lessons to summarise and reinforce the main issues.
12. In the most successful teaching, there is a very good range of activities that enables pupils to work in pairs or groups on a variety of collaborative tasks and also undertake sufficient independent work. There are particularly good examples in science, English, drama, art and design, physical education and information and communication technology. There is a tendency in some lessons for the teacher to be too directive with few opportunities for independent learning.
13. There is increasing and effective use of new technology in order to make lessons stimulating. A number of departments now make very good use of electronic whiteboards to illustrate important points creatively, quickly recall material from previous lessons and allow pupils to demonstrate ideas to the whole class. Very good use occurs in mathematics, science, leisure and tourism and English. Teachers generally use resources effectively and often tailor particular resources to meet the needs of different pupils.
14. Pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils are taught well. Very good support is provided by teaching assistants and, in subjects where there is regular designated provision of such support, this is carefully planned and entails both work within the classroom and withdrawal for extra support and extension work. Occasionally, in lessons there is insufficient matching of tasks to meet pupils' individual needs and although this is not a major issue, it is sometimes the difference between good and very good teaching. In a small number of lessons, pupils are given insufficient time to reflect upon and consolidate learning.
15. All the above strengths occur in the context of very good relationships between staff and pupils. As a result, pupils feel confident when undertaking difficult tasks and readily volunteer to answer questions and present ideas. The overall effect of the consistently good teaching is that pupils are well motivated and frequently enthusiastic. They make good progress in acquiring relevant skills and understanding.
16. Staff are well supported in their own professional development, which has been an important factor in improving the quality of teaching. Training is carefully linked to monitoring and the overall development needs of the school. Performance management and effective monitoring of teaching and learning through the school's 'quality framework' for evaluating performance have helped to ensure a common understanding of what constitutes good teaching. There is a consistent approach to the way in which this is achieved in classrooms.
17. There has been a good improvement since the previous inspection in that no teaching is unsatisfactory and the overall quality of teaching is at least good in all departments.
18. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school and very good in the Language Resource Base (LRB). Teachers display commitment to the needs of the pupils. This commitment is well supported by a very effective team of teaching assistants and learning support assistants. Detailed assessment provides the structures for focused teaching of pupils with a range of needs including specific learning difficulties. Liaison between support staff and subject teachers is good, overall, and effective use of support in lessons has a significant impact on pupils' learning. The withdrawal groups benefit from well-planned, intensive sessions with effective use of computers to support their learning. The interest and motivation of pupils with special educational needs is high. The teamwork demonstrated by the LRB staff is of the

highest quality and is the result of very good links between the education and health professionals involved.

19. Learning is well supported by assessment. Most subject departments are developing individual targets for pupils and tracking their progress from year to year across the key stages. In physical education, the systems are outstanding with detailed descriptions of pupil levels in a variety of skills. This allows a rapid built-in check on pupils' progress to ensure rapid identification of underachievement. Pupils are aware of how well they are doing and are involved in a critical self-evaluation of performance. In design and technology assessment recording is very thorough and used to modify planning. In art and design, assessment of GNVQ work is also good and meets the exacting requirements of the examination board. Assessment in mathematics is unsatisfactory, data is not always used to set targets and there are inconsistencies in marking. Marking generally across the curriculum is good. It is diagnostic and helps pupils to improve their work and raise standards. Pupil self-evaluation is effectively being developed in some areas and is being used to set challenging targets.

The curriculum

The school provides a **very good** curriculum, enriched with **very good** provision of extra-curricular opportunities. Resources for learning are **good** and accommodation is also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has an innovative range of appropriate and relevant courses, which meets the needs of its pupils particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good planning, regular monitoring and review of the curriculum ensures continuous high quality curriculum development and improvement.
- There is a very good careers education programme, which prepares pupils well for future training and employment.
- There is a very good range of well supported after-school activities.
- Provision for preparing pupils for the world of work is good.

Commentary

20. The school has very effectively translated its vision of meeting individual learning needs into an innovative and high quality curriculum for the 14 to 16 age range. Pupils are offered a very wide range of pathways and given very good guidance on which choices will meet their particular requirements. A partnership with the nearby tertiary college and another secondary school means that pupils are able to choose from a very good range of vocational and non-vocational courses. As a result of this very flexible arrangement the school meets the needs of individuals and all groups of pupils very well. Within individual subject areas pupils are often offered a good choice. In science three courses are offered which meet a range of different needs. The quality of courses provided is high because the school very effectively monitors and evaluates its provision. Since the previous inspection ICT, religious education and citizenship courses have been introduced for all pupils, complying with statutory requirements.
21. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a good curriculum with the National Key Stage 3 Strategy firmly in place in most subjects with 'catch up classes' available to pupils in mathematics, science and English. Overall, improvement in the school's curriculum has been good. The introduction of a new school day has been carefully planned to ensure that time allocated to subjects reflects national guidance.
22. There is no satisfactory provision for a daily act of collective worship although the school day has been changed to make structured time for reflection possible.
23. The school has very recently introduced a well-planned new programme of personal, health, and social education. This is taught in the daily tutorial time, through work in science and in specific profile days. Pupils see the relevance of the topic to their lives and were appreciative of its value. The quality of careers information is very good. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 receive early guidance as part of their personal, social and health education programme during tutorial sessions. In Years 10 and 11 pupils have a timetabled lesson and provision is enhanced by

involvement of outside consultants and very good links with the local college, local business and community partnerships and training providers. Pupils benefit from individual interviews and work experience. Staff have received appropriate training and the overall programme is monitored by a well informed co-ordinator.

24. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities for boys and girls of all abilities. Art and design, drama and science offer very good programmes for pupils to enhance their learning out of school but there are activities in all curriculum areas. Opportunities in sport are excellent with an impressive programme of clubs, inter-school competitions and inter-form fixtures. Excellent use is made of professional coaches from local clubs and this coaching is supplemented by the sports prefects who provide effective and mature role models for other pupils. Learning support programmes ensure that pupils with special educational needs are given encouragement to succeed and the gifted and talented pupils are similarly challenged to maximise their abilities. Attendance at these activities is very high and extra-curricular work makes a significant contribution to the personal development of the pupils.
25. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. The school demonstrates its commitment to their needs in a range of ways. Pupils with specific learning difficulties and speech and language difficulties benefit from highly-skilled specialist teaching. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are equally well supported through the Pupil Support Base. The provision of an option in Years 10 and 11 in which pupils with special needs have the opportunity to receive support with their coursework is a significant factor in ensuring that pupils achieve well. The provision of appropriate vocational courses in conjunction with the local college and of work experience placements further ensures that individual needs and aspirations of special education needs pupils and those in the LSB are met. The ASDAN course (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) is popular with pupils and successfully provides accreditation for pupils with special educational needs.
26. Overall, resources are good. The school has a good range of ICT suites as well as lap top computers. Most departments also have electronic whiteboards, which are used effectively to motivate and engage pupils in their work. The library is an effective and pleasant working area with a good range of fiction books. Most departments have a good range of resource materials, although there is some shortage of text books in history and religious education. There are currently insufficient resources in art and design to meet the increased demand for the GNVQ course, but this is being addressed. Citizenship is a new GCSE short course and, whilst resources are satisfactory, there is a heavy reliance on worksheets, which vary in quality.
27. Accommodation is good. All faculties are now suited and there is a comprehensive programme of in house refurbishment. Most rooms are well decorated, clean and create a positive and pleasant environment in which to work. The new music suite and design and technology areas provide very good specialist facilities. There is a clear strategy to improve both the limited outdoor PE facilities and the potentially dangerous entrance into the school.

Care, guidance and support

The school has **very good** procedures in place to ensure the care, welfare, health and safety of all its pupils. **Very good** support, advice and guidance are provided for all pupils throughout their time in school. Pupils are involved very well in the life and development of their school. The induction procedures for pupils new to the school are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good systems ensure that pupils receive highly effective academic and personal support and guidance throughout their time in school.
- The school provides a safe and very caring environment where pupils feel secure and can focus on learning.
- Pupils make a very strong contribution to the life of their school.
- The arrangements to support pupils when they join the school are very good.

- Pupils with severe language difficulties receive personal and academic support of the highest quality.

Commentary

28. The school is very committed to, and successful in, providing pastoral care of very high quality to all its pupils. The systems in place are very well designed and backed up by a wide variety of appropriate support strategies, such as anger management programmes and mentoring. This ensures that pupils' problems are identified at an early stage and dealt with in a way that meets their individual needs. The willingness of the school to involve appropriate outside agencies and to offer an innovative curriculum in Years 10 and 11 make a significant contribution to the very high standard of care. Form tutors are responsible for monitoring their pupils' personal development and for reviewing their academic progress in order to set appropriate targets. Year co-ordinators and the school's inclusion manager are also readily available to provide support, advice and guidance. Pupils know that teachers are willing to listen and to help them through difficulties. They appreciate the care they receive. Good careers education and guidance is provided. Pupils value this and are confident that it helps them to make appropriate choices about their future. Year 11 pupils benefit from well-organised work experience.
29. The school is a secure, caring community. Procedures for child protection are very clear and are made known to all staff. Arrangements for first aid are very good. The school has recently gained a Healthy Schools Award. The systems in place to meet health and safety requirements are very good. Teachers pay very good attention to health and safety in lessons so that pupils learn how to take care of themselves. Pupils know that their safety and welfare are a very high priority. They feel safe in school and so are able to focus on their work.
30. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the school community. The prefect system offers a wide variety of responsible roles that involve senior pupils in the smooth running of the school. Pupils of all ages are actively involved in the school forum and through this they help to achieve changes that benefit the whole school community. Pupils appreciate that their views are taken into account when changes are planned. Their involvement in the life and development of the school increases their pride in being part of it.
31. The induction programme is very well organised. Pupils and their parents speak highly of it. Pupils in Year 6 have a good range of opportunities to visit their new school. Teachers exchange information very effectively so that appropriate support is immediately available when pupils start the school. Pupils enter Year 7 confidently because they have already met their form tutor and have spent time in lessons and around the school. Prefects are linked to Year 7 form groups, acting as mentors to help them settle in.
32. The school has successfully maintained and built upon the very strong support, welfare and guidance noted in the previous inspection report. The systems now in place provide a network of care and support that enables pupils to grow as individuals and to concentrate on learning.
33. The school has effective arrangements that ensure that pupils with special educational needs are successfully integrated into the life of the school. There is good liaison with feeder primary schools together with good quality assessment arrangements for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils' learning and behaviour targets are precise and regularly reviewed. Pupils are fully involved in the process so they are aware of their targets and know what to do to improve. Teaching staff are provided with assessment data and teaching strategies which have a positive impact on the pupils' learning. Pupils within the LSB who have significant language difficulties are very well supported to ensure that their needs are met. The review of targets is regular and detailed with good involvement by the pupils themselves.

Example of outstanding practice

Social support provided by the Language Resource Base

The Language Resource Base is a hut in the playground. Unlike many such structures, it is at the heart of the school and provides a very good point of contact for pupils working in a totally inclusive setting. Its doors are open before school, when pupils take the opportunity to drop in to check on their timetable or simply pass on news. After school there is the same accessibility to allow pupils the opportunity to chat or, as on the inspection day, report a taxi missed.

However, it really comes into its own at lunchtimes when any pupil attached to the base can call in for lunch and an opportunity to play games and talk with adults and other pupils. On the day of the inspection this was well attended throughout the dinner period with a lot of laughter and discussion. In no way did it appear to reduce the inclusive ethos of the school as few pupils come every day. On Fridays pupils can bring a friend and the base reports the only difficulty as stemming the flow of pupils wishing to join in.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed **very good** partnerships with parents and the community. It has excellent links with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school uses its excellent links with other local schools and colleges to provide an enhanced range of educational opportunities for pupils of all ages.
- Parents receive a wide range of useful information about school life, and their child's work and progress. They are well involved and consulted.
- The school's very close partnerships with outside agencies have a very positive impact on pupils.

Commentary

34. The schools and colleges in Yeovil work together very closely as a federation to provide a wide range of educational opportunities for all children. Some joint training is organised so that the best practice is spread between the schools. This co-operation has a very positive impact on the provision the school offers its pupils. The school supports primary schools in a variety of ways, particularly in ICT. The school also provides technical and curriculum support to local schools. The very strong links with the primary schools ease pupils' transition from primary to secondary education so that pupils in Year 7 settle confidently and quickly into their new school. Pupils have the chance to work with others from the secondary schools and the special schools. This widens their experiences very well and boosts their confidence. The school works closely with local colleges to extend the range of courses open to pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are made aware of the wide range of options they have to continue their education beyond the age of 16 years. There are innovative plans in hand to increase this co-operation, for example, through the development of common policies for behaviour management.
35. The school provides parents with a very wide range of clearly written, attractively presented and useful information about its life and work. In addition, letters go home to commend pupils, as well as when concerns arise. Pupils' planners are used as a means of communication between school and home. The effectiveness of the planners is satisfactory overall but variable, ranging from good to unsatisfactory. Form tutors stay with their form as they move through the school so that they develop very good relationships with almost all parents. Interim reports are sent to parents twice a year, with one full annual report. Following consultation with parents, the format of the annual report has been significantly altered. The new reports are much shorter but provide a very clear picture of individual progress and attitudes. Initial feedback from parents is very positive about the changes. The school regularly uses questionnaires to invite parents' views when changes are planned. Parents are invited into the school on a regular basis to consult with teachers, attend celebration evenings, sporting and other events. Meetings are held to enable parents to support their children as they prepare for examinations and parents can attend courses on information and communication technology. The school is working hard to increase the information available to parents through its website.
36. The school has very good links with the community and particularly with local businesses. As a community and specialist technology school, the local community uses the facilities extensively.

The school is a very active member of the local education business partnership. Earlier this year, 16 companies were actively involved in a very successful science and technology event. The school is involved with a very wide range of organisations in the 'Building Safer Communities' project. Links with other organisations provide a range of opportunities for pupils. For example, youth workers run the anger management programme and the fire service provides 'Firebreak' courses. The school produces a regular and informative community newsletter that has a wide circulation.

37. The learning support department maintains close links with parents who are regularly informed of pupils' progress. The learning support co-ordinator and the head of the Language Resource Base make frequent contact with parents. Parents of pupils in the LSB also receive an imaginative newsletter, which lets parents know when there is a change in their child's needs. The school works closely with its feeder primary schools and with local special schools in order to ensure that appropriate provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. Effective partnerships have been developed between the school and local colleges and agencies in order to provide relevant courses and training opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11. There are also very good working links with the local authority speech and language therapy services which assists in the smooth transfer of pupils into the LSB.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are **very good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **excellent**. The leadership of other key staff is **very good**. Management is **very good**. Governance is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and the senior management team are innovative and have a clear vision for guiding the school forward. They have a strong commitment to the needs of the pupils and all staff.
- Governors are highly committed to the school and share and support the headteacher's vision to do the best for all pupils.
- The arrangements for performance management, induction and continuing professional development are excellent and contribute significantly to school improvement.
- The school reviews its performance regularly and accurately, in order to set targets for improvement.

Commentary

38. The overall leadership of the school is very good. There is a very positive atmosphere in the school within which all pupils can learn and feel secure. All staff, including non-teaching staff play a significant role in creating this atmosphere through the way they work with pupils and parents. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. He has provided a very positive vision for the school and has played a key part in the on-going improvements. This is despite a range of difficulties relating to staffing and accommodation over the past few years. His calm and professional approach, combined with a deep commitment to the school, has provided an excellent role model to staff. The headteacher is well supported by a strong and effective senior management team who are very approachable to pupils, staff and parents. There are clearly stated aims, which are translated into action effectively. There are clear priorities for improvement for all aspects of the work of the school over a three year period. These priorities are updated and reviewed regularly. The school also has technology status and uses the available resources well to support its priorities for improvement. Very good use is made of contacts with other schools and training providers. This increases opportunities for collaborative work for both staff and pupils. It also allows the school to share its facilities and expertise with other institutions. Senior staff, heads of faculty and governors have a shared view of the challenges, priorities and possibilities facing the school and the way forward.

39. Management of the school is very good. It functions very effectively on a day-to-day basis as a calm and orderly community. Communications are very good overall. There is a hardworking and dedicated support staff who serve the school well. The headteacher encourages and

supports innovation. For example, staff with ideas are encouraged to put them forward and are invited to join the senior management team if their suggestions are developed. All subject and pastoral staff have clear job descriptions and are both responsible, and accountable, for their areas. For support, they are linked with a member of the senior management team other than their line manager. The school has a good self-review programme, which is currently focusing on teaching and learning strategies. All staff are involved in the process which is leading to a greater consistency of practice within and between departments. The school has effectively integrated pupils from the LRB and leadership and management in this area are very good.

40. The school has addressed a number of difficult staffing issues recently, which have adversely affected the progress and standards achieved in particular subjects. It has worked hard to deploy its workforce effectively. The extra teaching support staff are a good example of the use of funding by technology college resources. They play a significant role both in supporting pupils and teaching staff.
41. Performance management is well established and appreciated by staff. There are excellent arrangements for induction of new staff. Both these processes are carefully linked to the excellent continuing professional development programme and ideas generated by courses and training are shared with colleagues. This programme has been a major factor in contributing to improvements in the school.
42. The governance of the school is very good. Governors understand their roles and responsibilities. They give effective support and are dedicated to the school. They are fully involved in the school's development planning process as well as setting the budget. They both challenge and support senior managers. They have an innovative advisory group structure which works very well. The groups include both teaching and support staff who wish to be involved in the discussions before recommendations are put to governors. The chair and vice chair are well involved and informed by the school. The governing body and the school understand and apply the principles of best value.
43. The school's financial management is very good. The experienced bursar is a member of the school management team. Together they ensure that procedures are in place to monitor expenditure and make informed decisions about school priorities. The school has used careful housekeeping and made good use of additional resources, successfully obtained, to improve its overall provision. A good example of this is the new music block. The school provides good value for money.
44. The learning support department is well led and well managed. The co-ordinator has successfully developed a complex and effective department that plays a significant role in the life of the school. He has a clear vision for support in the school and has managed a range of initiatives to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs receive good support. Support staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and their deployment is very effective.
45. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. There were no key issues identified in the previous report and that remains the case now. It has been through a period of staffing difficulties, which have now been resolved and overall standards have been maintained. There are significant improvements in the accommodation and the range and use of resources, particularly in the use of ICT. The overall quality of teaching is good in all subjects and there was no unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection. The minor areas commented on in the previous report have largely been dealt with although the school does still not fully comply with its statutory obligation to provide a daily collective act of worship for all.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income (inc B'Fd)	3,721,232.00	Balance from previous year	408,495.00
Total expenditure	3,423,084.00	Balance carried forward to the next	298,148.00
Expenditure per pupil	3,220.21		

46. The large carry forward at the end of 2002/3 was an accumulation of monies saved over six years plus monies from the local education authority. These monies were earmarked for the music block, which was built during the financial year 2003/4. The carry forward from 2003/4 is money allocated for the art block extension and renewal of ICT equipment during this financial year.

Other specified features

Work-related learning

The overall provision for work related learning (WRL) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a good programme of vocational and work-related activities.
- Standards in the GNVQ courses are above average.
- Pupils are very positive about the range and quality of provision and respond appropriately.
- There are very good links with other training providers to help broaden and enrich pupils' experiences.
- Work-related learning is well managed.
- There has been no audit and only limited training to help all subjects recognise ways in which they can support learning in this area.

Commentary

47. The school has developed a very good range of work-related courses including full GNVQ foundation and applied vocational GCSE programmes. Standards in the GNVQ courses are above the national average. They are below the average in the recently introduced Applied GCSE programmes. There are, however, fewer pupils following these courses and, given their attainment at the end of Year 9, they make good progress and achieve well, overall. The school's programme is well targeted to pupils' needs and aspirations. Pupils' attitudes are good and the great majority see the relevance of the work and its importance in understanding the world of work. For many the courses have led to improvements in attendance, organisational skills and motivation. In addition, there is also an increase in the number of pupils entering further education and vocational training programmes.

48. The school has very good links with other training providers, particularly Yeovil College, Wessex Vocational Training and Somerset County Training. These links not only help in the development and delivery of courses but also in enhancing work experience, careers education, a range of enterprise projects, contact with outside consultants and providing pupil mentors. The school has won several awards from the local Educational Business Partnership group for its work in promoting vocational and work-based skills, particularly for those pupils who are less interested in the more academic approach to learning.

49. Teaching of the vocational courses is good. Some subject areas, particularly design and technology, mathematics, ICT and science, are explicitly developing skills to support enterprise, such as problem-solving activities and business simulations. Here the teaching approach effectively engages pupils in a practical way of learning. For example, in science visiting speakers give insight into the need for science knowledge in the fire service, nursing, public

health and the environmental services as well as beauty therapy and hairdressing. This is less effective in other areas of the curriculum although the school is aware of this and has plans to share and extend good practice. Careers education is good and there is a good programme of work experience. For some pupils there is the opportunity for extended work experience to help motivate and prepare them for the next stage of their education and training.

50. The school is very committed to work-related learning and has been at the forefront in building creative partnerships with other schools and providers. Extending, monitoring and evaluating vocation experiences are a key part of the school's development plan. An effective manager, who is also part of the senior management team, co-ordinates provision. The school is aware of recent changes in legislation relating to the development of work-related learning although there has not as yet been an audit of practice across the school nor are all staff aware of the way in which their individual subjects can contribute to the provision. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress in vocational courses and their work experience programmes are good.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The marked improvement in the unconfirmed results in the 2004 examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11 reflects the good achievement seen during the inspection.
- Standards achieved by boys in Year 11 are below average.
- Consistently good, well-planned teaching ensures comprehensive coverage of the curriculum.
- Very good leadership and management of the department have overcome previous staffing difficulties and created a strong new team.
- Strategic use of a teaching assistant provides effective support for both low-attaining and gifted and talented pupils.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils build confidence and good motivation amongst pupils.

Commentary

51. Results in 2003, in Year 9 national tests, were well below the national average and the average for similar schools. The unconfirmed results for 2004 show a good improvement as does work seen during the inspection, although standards are still below the national average. In 2003, GCSE results were well below the national average. The unconfirmed results for 2004 show a marked improvement and English Language results are now very close to average. Standards seen during the inspection are at the national average. There was a huge improvement in English Literature results in 2004. Standards seen during the inspection indicate a further improvement, although still below the national average. The performance of boys in 2004 was relatively much weaker than girls and, although this applies to GCSE work seen in the inspection, this is being addressed by current teaching. The drop in results in 2003 was closely allied to a period of staff difficulties with many classes taught by temporary or supply teachers. This has now been fully rectified.
52. Achievement in English is good for all pupils including high-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Pupils enter the school with standards in English that are well below average and now make steady progress throughout the school. In 2004, by Year 11, the proportion of pupils who achieved the highest (A* and A) grades was very close to the national average. In speaking and listening by Year 9, all but a few pupils are confident about expressing opinions and discussing in a variety of groups. By Year 11, most are able to change tone and register when reading. In reading, the very lowest-attaining pupils lapse into recounting main events when commenting on novels read. Other pupils show an increasing ability to consider character, themes, structural devices and authors' intentions. In writing, by Year 9, pupils generally write in a suitable wide range of styles for varied purposes. The lower-attaining pupils experience difficulty with structuring longer pieces of writing. By Year 11, the highest-attaining pupils are very adept at constructing arguments and drawing conclusions.
53. The teaching of English is good, overall, with much that is very good. As a consequence learning is also good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and there has been an improvement in quality since the previous inspection. A real strength is the systematic planning. As a result, there is very comprehensive coverage of the curriculum with detailed targeting of the nationally recommended objectives for Years 7 to 9. Lessons show good balance between whole-class teaching and group and individual work. In all but a few, adequate time is devoted to teachers and pupils reviewing and reiterating the main points of the lesson.
54. The pace of lessons is generally good and lively. There is a smooth transition from one activity to the next and many of these activities are such that pupils' interest and motivation is ensured.

Year 10 pupils, who had watched brief video extracts from 'Holby City' and a documentary about life in a hospital, were very keen to compare and contrast the different language and styles of speaking in the two programmes. Occasionally, pupils would benefit from slightly more time to reflect upon and consolidate their learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. The resulting atmosphere allows pupils to undertake new work confidently and ask for help when needed.

55. The use of extra support is a positive factor in pupils' learning. Well-planned and strategic use of a designated teaching assistant ensures that pupils with special educational needs receive regular extra help, and gifted and talented pupils are given extension activities at a relevant level.
56. Assessment of pupils' work is usually accurate. Teachers regularly identify good achievement and reward this with praise. There is some inconsistency in the way in which guidance on how to improve is given, so that it is not always easy to act upon.
57. Teachers make good use of information technology to enhance and encourage learning. Electronic whiteboards are a beneficial feature of many lessons. Pupils in the 'Online' Poetry Club have produced a guide to poems on the GCSE course, which may be accessed by other pupils. The department contributes well to the social, moral and cultural development of pupils with discussions and consideration of a wide range of issues emerging from the literature they read.
58. The very good leadership and management of the department has overcome serious staffing difficulties in previous years to forge a strong and enthusiastic team. Morale is very good and teachers of differing levels of experience bring a consistent approach to the subject. All staff share high expectations and careful mapping of the curriculum has ensured a common understanding of the constituent parts. The previous report was very positive with only a few issues raised but there has been good progress in addressing these. Overall improvement has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Standards of language and literacy are satisfactory and are sufficient to support learning across the curriculum. Pupils enter the school with lower than average levels of literacy but make good progress in this area throughout their time in the school. The provision for, and the teaching of, literacy are good, overall. In physical education, provision for literacy development is very good with a particularly strong emphasis on the use of correct vocabulary. In all other subjects, the provision and teaching of literacy is good apart from history and geography where it is satisfactory. In art and design, there is a particularly good emphasis on requiring pupils to annotate and evaluate work and thus extend their use of subject-related terminology. In science, pupils are given good opportunities to discuss the meaning of particular terms. Marking in music and mathematics does not pay close enough attention to language and literacy. The school has very recently appointed a new literacy co-ordinator who has started to build on the previous whole-school training and focus on areas of priority.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in both French and German is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are below average.
- The newly appointed head of faculty provides a very good role model for staff and pupils, through her sense of purpose, high aspirations, and commitment.
- Teachers have good levels of subject knowledge and plan thoroughly.
- Teachers ensure very positive and productive working relationships that promote good pupil attitudes.

- Pupils are insufficiently involved in self-assessment of progress and lack the necessary independent learning skills to raise standards further.

Commentary

60. In 2003, GCSE results in French and German were below average for grades A*-C, with pupils performing at a lower level than in most of their other subjects. Unvalidated results for 2004 GCSE showed similar results. Work seen during the inspection was below average in Years 10 and 11. Overall, however, achievement at the end of Year 11, given attainment on entry to the course, is satisfactory. Results in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2003, were average and recent trends show that these standards are improving. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson, pupils were confident in the use of the perfect tense, talking about their recent holiday activities and conducting in-class surveys. Girls' written work is better than that of boys, but boys' contribution to some lessons is better than that of girls. At the end of Year 9, achievement is good given low levels of literacy upon entry to the school.
61. Teaching and learning are good, overall. This teaching is characterised by high, yet realistic, expectations of pupil performance, with a wide range of activities that engage pupils in their own learning. The significant majority of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good or better. Very good teaching was seen in Year 9, where the National Key Stage 3 Strategy principles were evident. Teachers' command of the subject is very good, with appropriate levels of authentic language being used with pupils. Planning is very effective, with learning objectives shared with pupils and invariably reviewed at the end of lessons so that pupils may recognise their learning gains. Although improving, as a result of increasing confidence and expertise of teachers in the use of a range of new technologies, pupils still have too few opportunities to develop as independent learners. Assessment for learning is satisfactory. However, as yet it is not used effectively to set individual targets for improvement and pupils are not sufficiently involved in the process.
62. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed head of faculty has high aspirations and expectations, setting a very good role model to staff and pupils. Self-evaluation by the faculty is fast developing and the head of faculty is forming an insightful view of its strengths and its priority development areas. However, currently programmes of study and accreditation in the 14 to 19 curriculum are not serving the needs of all pupils. The issues raised in the previous inspection have been resolved and improvement has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at the end of Year 9 are close to the national average and represent good achievement.
- GCSE results at the end of Year 11 are unsatisfactory and below national figures.
- Staff are well qualified, experienced and committed to the success and welfare of the pupils they teach.
- Teaching is good, overall.
- The faculty is not making sufficient use of data and marking in order to monitor pupil progress.
- Effective use of the teaching assistant helps pupils achieve well.

Commentary

63. In 2003, results in tests at the end of Year 9 were close to the national average, but very good when compared to similar schools. At the start of Year 7, the mathematical skills and knowledge of a significant number of pupils are below average. They make good progress in the lessons during their time in school and standards of work seen are above the national average. By the end of Year 11, standards overall in GCSE examinations in 2003 were well below average. However, over the last two years a lack of continuity in the leadership and management of the faculty has contributed to the lack of improvement. Standards and progress in lessons in Years 10 and 11 were satisfactory, but the middle ability groups make less progress than the others

and do not always achieve satisfactory results. Girls did slightly better than boys at the end of Year 9, but by the end of Year 11, the gap widened and was greater than that nationally. The department is now focusing on ways to improve this situation. Unconfirmed results in 2004 were similar to those achieved in 2003.

64. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Two thirds of lessons seen were good or very good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 was good, but in Years 10 and 11 it was satisfactory, overall. Lesson planning is good and teachers have very good subject knowledge. Teachers make sure that pupils understand the purpose of the lesson and what they are about to learn, but only in the very best lessons are review sessions used effectively for pupils and teachers to assess progress. Starter activities are used well, particularly in Years 7 to 9, to recap or to set the scene for the lesson in an enjoyable and motivating way. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and work rate and the vast majority of pupils respond to these. The teaching assistant is used very well to support both low-attaining pupils and those who are underachieving. Teachers were making good use of the electronic whiteboards during their lessons. Pupils were motivated and keen to use the boards to explain their answers to the rest of the class. In a significant number of lessons, teachers were not always using strategies to ensure that pupils of all levels of attainment made good progress. In a few lessons, boys dominated with silly behaviour and as a consequence the teacher gave insufficient attention to the girls. Questioning took place regularly but did not always include enough 'What if...?' questions to challenge thinking. Marking was not always completed regularly and did not include comments to enable pupils to understand what they needed to do to improve.
65. Recently, the faculty has experienced staffing changes. Given this, progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. This is a result of the implementation of the numeracy strategy and the significant improvement in the opportunities for the use of ICT. The faculty is contributing positively to the school's work-related curriculum. However, not enough has been done to improve standards at the end of Year 11 and marking remains unsatisfactory. The teachers work well as a team but do not always share good practice and decide what works well. Currently leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed head of faculty has a clear understanding of the faculty strengths and weaknesses and a well-planned strategy to improve standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Standards of mathematical competence are sufficient to allow pupils to make progress in their other subjects. Mathematics lessons almost always include practice sessions, which improve pupils' confidence, particularly when applying their knowledge. In science, pupils were able to analyse graphs and link their shapes with experimental results. In one class, Venn diagrams were used successfully to show different combinations of nutrients. Few examples of the use of mathematics were observed during the inspection.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and the sharing of good practice is helping to raise standards.
- Standards in GCSE are not high enough.
- Assessment of pupils' achievement is good.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.
- Some classes in Years 10 and 11 have insufficient practical work.
- Although still in the process of completion, the improved accommodation and resources create a pleasant and effective area for learning and teaching.

Commentary

67. Results in the National Curriculum tests, at the end of Year 9, were below the national average in 2003. They dropped slightly from the results in 2002, but have improved since the previous inspection. There was little difference between the results of boys and girls. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations, in double award science, were well below average. Girls performed slightly better than boys.
68. By the end of Year 9 standards are average. This represents good achievement for many pupils in relation to when they entered the school. This includes those with special educational needs and those whose home language is not English. Pupils are confident and enthusiastic when doing practical work. They plan and observe experiments accurately. Good strategies are used by both teachers and teaching assistants so that pupils of all abilities show increasingly good literacy skills which support their understanding of science. By the end of Year 11, pupils' knowledge of science is average. Standards have improved over the last year, particularly in investigative work and they accurately predict results of experiments. High-attaining pupils can identify and explain anomalous results. However, in some lessons there are missed opportunities to carry out investigations to support theory work. The introduction of applied science into the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has extended the way pupils learn science. It links science to everyday life, particularly in the field of employment. The course gives pupils an insight into science in the world of work and particularly the range of job opportunities available within the field of science. Overall, achievement is good.
69. Teaching and learning are good across the faculty. Strong features of the most effective teaching are planning, the effective use of time and assessment of pupils' achievement. Planning is improved by the sharing of new ideas and good practice. This increases the range of teaching strategies and helps to raise standards. It is a major contributor in the push to raise standards in GCSE science. Time is very well used so that lessons start promptly with sufficient time at the end to question the pupils and see what they have learned and understood. Assessment informing pupils how to improve is good. Teachers check pupils' understanding in class with searching questions. The questions are structured in such a way that they encourage pupils to think more deeply before answering. This improves the accuracy of their responses.
70. The faculty is well led and managed with a strong focus on raising standards. There is a shared understanding within the faculty of those factors, which contribute to higher standards. In recent years, the faculty suffered from serious, but unavoidable, staffing problems, which saw results in GCSE science decline. There is now a full team of specialist science teachers. The head of faculty has welded together new and experienced teachers into an effective team. As a result, standards are beginning to rise. The leadership places a high priority in helping to develop teachers' skills and sharing their good practice. With the exception of the two newly qualified teachers, they have all been trained in ways to support the National Science Strategy. This is having a positive effect on practical work by sharpening up analysis of data. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The use of ICT has increased and the interactive whiteboards have added a beneficial visual impact to learning. Accommodation is now good and the refurbished laboratories form ideal rooms in which to teach and learn. Resources are now good and there are many up-to-date texts, which promote literacy improvement as well as gains in scientific knowledge.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 7 teacher transforms a simple science lesson about cells into an exciting and valuable experience.

The lesson began with a word game in which all pupils contributed in naming, spelling and re-pronouncing cell structures. A wonderful ploy to build the confidence of children with low literacy levels. A pupil with partial hearing was able to articulate the words as a result of the positive discreet support of the speech and language assistant. The pupils were captivated as the teacher constructed a large model of a plant cell using a perspex box for the cell wall, jelly for the cytoplasm and a range of everyday objects for different parts. Pupils then had to make comparisons between drawings of plant and animal cells then answer a range of questions using computers. Pupils were excited with their learning following this well focused introduction to the lesson. They then had to write up their findings and both teacher and assistant were purposeful in support, ensuring low literacy levels did not hold back their understanding of science. By the end of this excellent lesson all pupils could name the parts of cells and give a simple idea of the function of each part. Higher attaining pupils knew where food was made in plant cells and how it could be used. The atmosphere of the whole lesson was enhanced by the sheer enthusiasm of the pupils and their eagerness to ask and answer questions and talk about cells.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 9 are above the national average.
- Achievement, overall, is high because of very good innovative assessment, positive pupil attitudes and consistently good teaching and support.
- Pupils are developing greater independence in the use of computers.
- Very good leadership has led to improvement in standards and levels of achievement.
- A few low-attaining pupils are studying at an unsuitable level. However, they are given effective additional support that ensures they make very good progress.

Commentary

71. Achievement by all groups of pupils is high from Years 7 to 9. They enter the school below the national average and by the end of Year 9 both boys and girls are above average. Very effective collaboration with primary schools, including regular visits by a teaching assistant, ensures that progress is rapid from the start of Year 7.
72. Standards seen in Year 11 are average as were the 2003 GNVQ results. This represents good progress by these pupils many of whom were below average in Year 9. By the age of 16, pupils are increasingly independent because they follow a good range of suitable courses. In Year 11, a small number of pupils are unlikely to attain a pass grade on their current course. The department is planning alternative qualifications for them and developing new programmes for future years. Additional teacher support is provided which enables these pupils to make very good progress.
73. Teaching, and as a result learning, in lessons is good, overall. Lessons are well structured and teachers use a wide range of approaches, including real-life business problems, to motivate pupils. Teachers insist on high standards in all lessons and this leads to pupils behaving very well with positive attitudes towards the subject. The assessment of pupils is very good and this enables teachers to skilfully guide their future work and respond to individual needs. This is supported by the excellent work of the ICT teaching assistant and by pupils' own independent access to very good learning resources outside of the lesson. Pupils with special educational needs are also well supported. As a result, overall achievement by different groups of pupils is very good.
74. The leadership and management of the department are very effective, securing good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils now study ICT in all years and there is an innovative approach to assessing pupils, planning courses and meeting the needs of different groups of pupils. The department now benefits from excellent teaching assistant support, additional technical support and much improved resources.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. There is good use of computers and other information and communication technology in most subjects of the curriculum. This is facilitated by a very good whole-school network, which allows pupils and staff to share and manage their work. A large number of interactive whiteboards and well above the national average provision of computers to children effectively contributes to learning in the classroom. Pupils make good use of the Internet and select and present information well. In science, good use is made of ICT to monitor the progress of experiments and pupils handle information confidently. In music, pupils make very good use of composition and recording facilities and in art and design they create animations. Using ICT to support poetry in English typifies the imaginative approach of the school.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils is good in all years.
- Teaching is good. This is particularly so in Years 10 and 11. This is key feature in the positive attitudes shown by pupils and reason for their overall achievement.
- Leadership and management are good. The head of department is well supported by a strong and committed team.
- In some lessons, insufficient attention is paid to the needs of the lower attaining pupils.
- There are good fieldwork opportunities in all years to help enhance pupils' learning.

Commentary

76. Standards on entry to the school are below expectations. Below average literacy skills for many pupils have a marked impact on their initial work in geography. Frequently pupils show a better understanding of their work by talking about it than when writing about it. By Year 9 standards shown by teacher assessment are much closer to the national average. This is confirmed by the inspection. The higher attaining pupils make good use of geographical terminology, have a well-developed sense of place and can manipulate geographical data successfully in a variety of contexts. Lower attaining pupils do not have good location knowledge and most of their work is made up of simple description rather than explanation. GCSE A* to C grade results in 2003 were marginally below the national average at 54 per cent and in 2004 increased to 59 per cent with a much larger number of candidates. Achievement of pupils overall is good and very good for boys in Year 11 whose GCSE results are significantly better than for boys nationally. This is as a result of good teaching across the department.

77. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons pupils make rapid progress in learning because the lessons are stimulating, the teaching enthusiastic and tasks are challenging. Key learning objectives are shared with the pupils and frequently revisited by the teacher. The pace of lessons does not flag and there are a variety of well-resourced tasks. In a very good Year 9 lesson on traditional Japan, the teacher used a combination of pictures, film and text to enable pupils to make conclusions about key features of Japanese culture and life style. There is an appropriate balance between independent and collaborative learning and good support for helping pupils with their growing literacy skills. In less successful lessons the pace of learning is slowed when the task set is not sufficiently matched to the needs of the pupils.

78. Working relationships are very positive with pupils interested and keen to learn. Homework is set to extend the work in the classroom. All teachers have a good command of their subject. The use of computers is good in GCSE work but needs further development in teaching in Years 7 to 9. The marking of work is thorough but not enough use is made of this information so that all pupils see how to improve their work.

79. The head of geography shows a clear vision and has high aspirations to raise attainment, which he transmits to the rest of the team. The planning of the work is detailed and there are effective methods in place to identify underachievement and to support individual pupils where necessary. The shortcomings of the previous inspection have been addressed and improvement since that time has been good, particularly in using computers in GCSE, supporting literacy and the quality of the teaching.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between staff are good. This is leading to positive attitudes towards their work.
- Good quality teaching has a positive effect on pupils' learning and achievement.
- Leadership and management are good. There are clear strategies to raise standards.
- The overall assessment process has some good features, but pupil targets do not support a sufficiently rigorous evaluation of their progress.
- Work in lessons is not always sufficiently matched to individual pupil needs.

Commentary

80. Standards are at the national average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Given attainment on entry and low levels of literacy for many pupils, their achievement is good. End of Year 9 assessments in 2003 were similar to the national average. GCSE examination results in 2003 were below the national average and significantly so for boys. However, the unconfirmed 2004 results indicate that 63 per cent of pupils secured A* to C grades, an improvement of 22 per cent on the previous year. Evidence from pupils' work and lesson observations, show that boys' attainment is still below that of girls. Overall, however, standards and achievement are improving particularly in the current Years 10 and 11.
81. By Year 9, pupils develop a good range of historical skills. They are aware, for example, of the significance of primary and secondary sources. By Year 11, pupils develop a good knowledge of the complexities of modern world issues, for example, the Arab/Israeli conflict. Pupils use ICT to research their homework and coursework assignments, however, the current schemes of work do not include a comprehensive indication of the contribution of the Internet to pupils' learning.
82. Teaching and learning are good in all years because teachers plan and organise their lessons well to provide an effective and structured learning environment. However, not all written work is sufficiently challenging for some higher-attaining pupils nor sufficiently supported for some lower-attaining pupils. Pupils are keen to learn and they show positive attitudes to their studies. Attitudes and behaviour are good in all classes and this is a strength of the department. There are good question and answer sessions, with a wide range of pupils making thoughtful contributions. The analysis of source material by pupils is good. Homework is regularly set and marked, with encouraging comments. However, appropriate targets for improvement are not always set and as a result many pupils do not have a clear enough understanding for further development.
83. Leadership and management of the department are good with a clear vision for additional developments. The recently appointed head of department has already made a positive impact and there are plans in place to develop the schemes of work and to strengthen the monitoring and review of performance data. There is an enthusiastic and effective team providing strong support for pupils' learning. Improvement has been satisfactory because the aspects of good achievement, teaching and learning and successful management have been maintained since the previous inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained by the current Year 11 pupils are too low.
- Achievement by Year 9 is good because teaching is good and learning is fun.

Commentary

84. Since 2003 all pupils have followed a GCSE short course in Years 10 and 11. The first examination was taken in 2004. The results cannot be compared against the national average because this data has not yet been published. However, results were poor and pupils did significantly worse than in their other subjects. Boys' performance in the examination was much worse than girls.

85. Standards attained by current Year 9 pupils are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Achievement is good because attainment on entry in Year 7 is below that expected for pupils of that age. By Year 9, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils at an early stage of learning English can give their own views about religious issues and reflect on what they have learnt. For example, in a Year 9 lesson these pupils presented to the rest of the class a TV interview they had prepared to question Mohammad about his life.

86. Standards in the current Year 11 are below the national average and achievement is unsatisfactory. This is because a significant minority of pupils in this year group had a barren experience lower down the school during a period when the school had difficulty in recruiting a quality specialist to manage and teach the subject. As a consequence, many have very negative attitudes towards the subject. The head of department, supported by his line manager, has worked very hard to change this culture. He has been successful in changing pupils' attitudes in Years 7 to 10 but his hard work has not yet impacted on the entrenched negative attitudes in Year 11.

87. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall. The best teaching, based on good subject knowledge, skilful behaviour management and effective use of questions results in good learning. A significant positive feature is the very good relationships between teachers and pupils resulting in pupils having the confidence to ask probing questions. As a result, they gain new insights into very complex issues. Teaching makes a valuable contribution to raising pupils' awareness of cultural diversity and also to promoting their spiritual development as evidenced in a Year 8 lesson where pupils reflected on the importance of forgiveness. Where there are shortcomings, there is insufficient challenge and activities are not well matched to the needs of pupils with special educational needs resulting in unsatisfactory achievement for some pupils. Lack of sufficient GCSE textbooks has a negative impact on homework, as not all pupils have access to an examination text of their own.

88. Leadership is good. Management is satisfactory. Currently marking does not give very precise guidelines to each pupil as to what needs to be done to raise the standard of their work. In a relatively short space of time the head of department, however, brought about significant improvements since the previous inspection. Assessment is better, there is a good curriculum programme in Years 7 to 9 and statutory requirements are now met.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, overall. This leads to high levels of pupil motivation and good achievement.
- Schemes of work are comprehensive and innovative. They focus on raising attainment and are designed to meet the different needs of pupils.
- Thorough assessment and recording is in place and is used to monitor and track progress.
- Links with industry and the community enhance pupils' learning experiences.
- The department is well led. There is a clear direction and strategies for improvement.
- There are significant variations in GCSE results within the different design and technology courses

Commentary

89. Overall, standards are at the national average. Standards on entry to the school in this subject are below average, but by the end of Year 9 they are well above the average. By the end of Year 11, standards are at the national average, although there is some variation between the different design and technology courses. Overall, achievement is good and very good in Years 7 to 9. Overall, results in the 2003 GCSEs were broadly average. In 2004, the unconfirmed results saw improvements in all areas, apart from resistant materials where there was a significant drop. Overall, results therefore remained at the national average.
90. A rotation system in Years 7 to 9 gives ample opportunity for pupils to work in the areas of textiles, food, graphics, electronics, resistant materials and systems and control. The good schemes of work enable pupils to build on their experiences through Years 7 to 9 and be able to choose an appropriate option for GCSE. Pupils gain in confidence in lessons and participate well in discussions and question and answer sessions. Pupils' practical skills can be seen improving through each year and there are good examples of pupils effectively evaluating their own work. A good assessment and recording scheme allows pupils and their parents to know pupils' attainment levels and gives targets for future attainment.
91. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and particular strengths are apparent across all design and technology areas. The pace of lessons was rapid and pupils' attention was focused on the variety of tasks set. Relationships with pupils are good and staff are good role models. Teachers offer after school 'drop in' sessions to support GCSE coursework, which shows their commitment to the pupils.
92. The department is very well led and is supported by a strong team of specialist teachers and the senior management team. The head of department has a clear vision of where the department is going and involves her team in decisions. Management is good. Planning across the subject is good and it is easy to see the progression of skills and targets set within the schemes of work.
93. Accommodation and resources are very good and good use is made of the computer suite in the department. There is a good range of software and effective training provided for staff to enhance and aid pupils to raise standards in their designing and presentation skills. Since the previous inspection improvements have been good. The school has secured Technology status and standards have risen. In addition links with the community and industry have been significantly improved giving pupils the opportunity to gain experience outside the classroom.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear sense of purpose and direction in the work of the department.
- Teaching and learning are very good, promoting high achievement, enjoyment and confidence.
- Pupils on the GNVQ Intermediate course achieve particularly well, gaining very high results.
- Very effective teaching of key skills gives young pupils, especially boys, good confidence.
- Non-specialist teachers require training and classroom support.
- Currently, resources within the department are insufficient to allow all pupils to experience the full range of media in the GNVQ course.
- There is a very good and popular option range of courses available in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

94. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average, with most pupils, particularly boys, achieving very well. The unconfirmed 2004 GCSE results were average, GNVQ Intermediate results were very high with only poor attenders gaining below A*-C equivalent grades. Many attained A*/A equivalent. An extremely large percentage of pupils opt for art and design each year because pupils enjoy their learning and know they will succeed well. GCSE photography presents highly-motivated and higher-attaining pupils with a very good additional opportunity to extend their studies and results have been excellent.
95. Pupils progress very rapidly from, what for many pupils, is low attainment on entry because teachers ensure that they learn key skills highly effectively. Most pupils acquire good practical two and three-dimensional expertise. They also develop good ability to annotate their work evaluatively, reinforcing literacy skills. Boys in particular make very good progress to Year 9. In the minority of classes taken by non-specialists standards are lower. Standards and achievement are good by the end of Year 9 and very good by the end of Year 11.
96. This high level of achievement has resulted from very good teaching. Staffing has changed recently, but specialist teaching remains a strength. High level of demand for GNVQ means that non-specialist staff teach art and design. Training and classroom support are required to ensure a better quality of learning for pupils in these groups. Learning in Years 10 and 11 is particularly impressive because pupils use the good skills they have acquired by Year 9 in individually interpretive ways. They explore their own visual ideas very creatively. Pupils use ICT well at all ages. Using their good early experience, pupils also annotate and evaluate work as they go along in critically mature ways, largely independent of teachers. Assessment has improved recently, particularly for examination courses.
97. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department provides a very good role model for teaching the subject and is very effectively involved in training new staff. This is a high performing department, serving a large number of pupils very well. There are, however, shortcomings in resourcing, as at the time of the previous report. Most will be resolved through an imminent new building extension, which will include resources. However, funding is low, particularly for the demands of GNVQ. Improvement since the previous report has been good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Pupils respond with commitment and enthusiasm to the stimulating and challenging teaching.
- Clear, dynamic and effective leadership has contributed to significant improvements since the previous inspection.
- Pupils do not set themselves sufficiently challenging targets for improvement.

Commentary

98. Standards of attainment, seen during the inspection, at the end of Years 9 and 11 are below that expected nationally. The assessments undertaken by teachers indicate that girl's attainment is significantly better than that of boys. During the inspection this difference was much less apparent. Pupils' musical ability is well below average on entry to the school. Levels of achievement at the end of Year 9 for all pupils, including those with special educational needs are good. Achievement is also good for pupils at the end of Year 11. In 2004, after a gap of three years, pupils were entered for GCSE examination. Previous staffing problems had disrupted their lessons during Years 7 to 9 and as a result only a few pupils attained A*-C grades. The current Year 11 pupils have had consistent teaching, and standards of work seen indicate that levels of attainment are now higher. More competent pupils produce musical sketches and rhythmic ideas, developing them into longer musical structures. However, there are still weaknesses in listening to and describing music.

99. Pupils achieve well because of the consistently good, enthusiastic and challenging teaching. This is characterised by comprehensive musical knowledge and teachers' high expectations. Content is always relevant to pupils' interests and they enjoy their lessons. Working relationships are strong. Learning is good. Pupils are all involved and work hard to support each other through paired and group work. Success in performance considerably raises pupils' self-esteem and confidence. More competent pupils are able to play melodic lines with backing tracks and chords and all take care to use correct fingering when playing keyboards. Lesson planning is good, so that all musical skills are developed systematically. Occasionally, pupils are unable to reflect and consider their responses because teachers do not give them sufficient time during activities. Questioning is rigorous and adapted well to develop pupils' oral skills and encourage correct use of musical language. A significant boost to learning is the department's new accommodation, which provides considerable space for ensemble and rehearsal work.

100. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear sense of direction for the department, consistency of approach and strong teamwork. The attainment of different groups of pupils is monitored and analysed carefully. However setting of individual pupil targets is less effective in providing challenging goals for improvement. Currently, there are a small number of ensembles, but ways are being explored to increase these and provide an improved range of instrumental lessons. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been very good. Music is now offered for GCSE examination, the quality of teaching has improved and the new accommodation for music has transformed pupils' interest in and perception of the subject.

Drama

Drama was not inspected in depth, but three lessons were sampled.

101. Drama lessons were observed in Years 8, 10 and 11. Pupils achieved well in all lessons. Standards were good and reflect the above average GCSE results. Teaching of drama is good with pupils encouraged to discuss and evaluate their performances and use appropriate terminology in so doing. Activities are at a suitable level of difficulty and all tasks are clearly explained. Pupils work well together. Drama clubs for different year groups enhance pupils'

experience of the subject and school productions provide valuable opportunities for a large number of pupils to participate. Leadership and management of the department are good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Inspirational leadership promotes a high level of commitment from all staff.
- The quality of teaching is very good and all pupils learn very well as a result.
- Very high expectations of performance and behaviour ensure the very good achievement made by pupils.
- The very good relationships between pupils and teachers are a significant aid to learning.
- The external playing areas are poorly drained and limitations in their use affect the delivery of the curriculum.

Commentary

102. Standards of pupils in Year 7 on entry are in line with national expectations. By Year 9, standards are above average for girls and boys and achievement is very good. In rugby, boys at all levels of ability including pupils with special educational needs show good technique in rucking and mauling. The especially talented pupils show very good skills at pace and in a game situation demonstrate a tactical awareness. Girls show good stick control in hockey and all levels of ability are able to stop and push pass with confidence in practice routines. By Year 11, standards are well above average in both core and GCSE work representing very good achievement. In GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils gaining AA* grades has risen consistently over the past three years and are now at the national average. Pupils on the GCSE course show well above average ability in practical and theory work. All pupils are able to evaluate their performance with confidence and show good oral skills in describing technical points. Extensive use of ICT is a significant factor in the quality of pupils' work.
103. Teaching and learning are very good. Very high expectations of work and behaviour promote very good learning. The level of challenge is appropriate to different abilities and the high quality of the coaching skills enables pupils, including the less able, to make good progress in the acquisition of key skills. Pupils are routinely invited to evaluate their performance so that they are aware of their standards and what they must do to improve. There is pace, purpose and energy to lessons which encourages focus and commitment. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and are a positive aid to learning and to the personal development of pupils.
104. Leadership and management are outstanding. Inspirational leadership and a very clear vision for improvement have helped to build a powerful and high quality team, which is driving success. Management provides very good planning documents which are very well presented and are a supportive and constructive aid to teaching. Assessment procedures are excellent. Extensive practices are rigorously monitored through an impressive computer programme. The care, guidance and support they offer to pupils are outstanding. Performance management of staff is routinely carried out and very well linked to professional development and to the school improvement plan. The curriculum is broad and creative to match the needs of pupils with a good distribution of coaching skills in staffing to ensure effective delivery. It is very well enhanced by the extensive extra-curricular activities on offer, which provide very good opportunities for improvement for all abilities. Accommodation can cause problems in delivery of the curriculum when the poor drainage prevents use of the outdoor playing areas, challenging, but creative planning by management minimises the difficulties. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. GCSE examination results continue to improve and the overall quality of teaching is now very good.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

105. There is a good range of vocational courses and activities in Years 10 and 11, many of which are linked to subjects of the curriculum. A small number of vocational lessons were sampled including full award GNVQ leisure and tourism, GNVQ ICT, and art and design. Lessons were also seen in GCSE applied science and applied ICT. Overall, standards and achievement are good. This is the result of good teaching and learning. Pupils generally enjoy their lessons and their motivation and attitudes are good. They are encouraged to enter into discussion, make decisions and evaluate their learning. The schools make good use of external links to enrich pupils' learning experiences. Leadership and management are good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**. In citizenship it is **satisfactory**.

Citizenship

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The GCSE short course offers good opportunities for developing pupils' knowledge and understanding in Years 10 and 11.
- Good teaching is enabling pupils to learn well.
- Pupils demonstrate good discussions on a range of issues. Written work, however, is less well developed.
- There are too few staff development opportunities to develop citizenship skills in other subjects.

Commentary

106. Standards are below average in Year 9 and average in Year 11. Citizenship has only recently been introduced into Years 7 to 9 and pupils have not had sufficient opportunity to fully develop their skills, particularly writing at length. The short course was examined for the first time in 2004 and 50.7 per cent secured A* to C grades. This compares favourably with many other subjects in the school. Achievement is satisfactory in Year 9 and is good in Year 11. By Year 9, pupils have a sound understanding of the impact of crime on society and by Year 11 they have a good understanding of consumer rights. Some teachers are skilled at encouraging debate and reflection with the result that oral and thinking skills are good. Paired work in a Year 10 class very successfully identified, sorted and prioritised a range of consumer rights situations.

107. Overall, teaching and learning are good in all years. However there is a much wider range of teaching in Years 10 and 11 from very good to satisfactory. Lessons are well planned with effective starters and good group activities. Expectations of pupils are high and most teachers encourage pupils to develop their ideas and to share them with others. Overall, the pupils' response is good and most pupils enjoy the lessons. Learning is through work sheets, group discussion and textbooks. There is, however, a shortage of textbooks and an over reliance on worksheets which vary in quality and effectiveness. Pace and challenge are good in most lessons. An assessment strategy has yet to be fully implemented in Years 7 to 9, although plans are well advanced.

108. Leadership is good because there is a clear view of how the subject is developing and the first group of pupils has completed the GCSE short course with satisfactory results. However, despite the participation of many pupils in school and community initiatives there is no overall monitoring and co-ordination to ascertain how effective, and to what extent, pupils are involved, or benefiting from this involvement. Most staff have yet to receive sufficient training, particularly to support the subject's introduction into the early years. Several staff are teaching the subject for the first time this year. Management is satisfactory, overall. It is not better because of the lack of time given to allow for more effective monitoring, support and co-ordination. The subject was introduced subsequent to the previous inspection.

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 previous inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal qualities (ethos)	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
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	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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