

INSPECTION REPORT

EASINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Peterlee, County Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114318

Headteacher: Mr P B McHugh

Lead inspector: Mrs G Salter-Smith

Dates of inspection: 04 – 07 October 2004

Inspection number: 268379

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: 967

School address: Stockton Road
Easington Village
Peterlee
County Durham
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Telephone number: 0191 527 0757
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Mrs J O'Brien
governors:

Date of previous 21 October 2002
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Easington Community School is an average sized comprehensive school in a small village in the east of County Durham. Numbers are going down due to population movement out of the area where there is little economic and industrial activity. The school takes its pupils from a wide area consisting of many small former mining communities.

The pupils are almost all of white United Kingdom origin with just three pupils from other origins. Although pupils who do not have English as their first language are represented in a very small number, they are no longer in the early stages of learning English. There are more girls than boys overall. Many pupils come from below and well below average social and economic circumstances. Many of the areas in which pupils live score highly on nationally recognised scales of social and economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is above average. There is a stable school population, only small numbers of pupils leave or join the school at times other than the usual start in Year 7.

The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register is above the national average as is the number with specific statements of need. Most of these pupils have needs associated with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). Smaller numbers have physical difficulties or hearing impairment.

The attainment of pupils when they join the school is below average overall and pupils have weak literacy skills. After a peak for Year 9 pupils, attainment on entry to the school is declining for Year 8 and Year 7. When the current Year 11 and the group who took GCSE examinations in 2004 joined the school their attainment was well below average. Overall girls enter the school with better standards than boys.

The school gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2002, the Quality in Study Support Award at the established level in 2002 and the Durham LEA Anti-bullying Charter Mark in 2004. The school has strong links with the Easington and Seaham Education Action Zone.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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32329	A Stafford	Team inspector	Art Design technology
32340	P McKay	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography
19452	A Pearson	Team inspector	History Religious education
33242	S Wall	Team inspector	Modern languages
4697	R Black	Team inspector	Music
33649	J H Purcer	Team inspector	Physical education
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The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Easington community school is an improving school which provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils and has many good features. Strong leadership and management and a high level of care and support for pupils have created a positive ethos for learning where relationships are good and pupils enjoy coming to school. Satisfactory teaching helps pupils to reach overall standards which, though below the national average, represent satisfactory achievement. **The school provides satisfactory value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Strong and innovative leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team has ensured substantial improvement in standards, teaching and ethos.
- Pupils behave well and there is a positive climate for learning supported by consistently applied systems of discipline, high quality assemblies and well-focused care and support.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and in mathematics and science overall.
- Standards are rising, but are below average overall; girls do better than boys; and speaking and listening skills are weak.
- Teaching and achievement are not as good in Years 7 to 9 as they are in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils do not achieve well enough in art and design.
- Though senior leaders carry out rigorous checks on teaching, those carried out by subject leaders are inconsistent and there is not enough opportunity to share best practice.
- Rates of attendance are below the national average.
- Though pupils' work is marked regularly, it is not always clear what they must do to improve.
- Leadership and management in history are unsatisfactory.

Since the previous inspection improvement has been good and the school no longer has any serious weaknesses. Teaching has improved, especially in Years 10 and 11, helping to raise standards, and improve results at GCSE. The school now pays good attention to pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, social and moral development. Behaviour and attitudes have improved significantly. Issues arising from the previous report have been tackled and improved. Provision in art and design and the leadership and management of history have not improved enough.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Though standards of work across the school are below the national average overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve well in response to good teaching. In 2003 (the most recent year in which it is possible to make comparisons with the national picture), results in Year 9 national tests in English, mathematics and science were below the national average but average when compared with schools with pupils of similar prior attainment. In 2004 results in mathematics improved but in English and in science

they dipped a little. Current standards of work in Year 9 are below average overall, but in English, mathematics and science are average and an improvement on the 2004 results. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve satisfactorily in response to overall satisfactory teaching. Pupils achieve well in mathematics, science, design and technology-graphics, geography, music and religious education. Pupils do not achieve high enough standards in art and design across the school.

Current standards of work in Year 11 are better than previous GCSE results due to improved teaching and very good care and support. Standards, although below average in Mathematics, are average in English and science and pupils achieve well overall. GCSE results dipped in 2004 but results are provisional because some subjects are being re-marked. Most pupils added value to their prior attainment. Girls outperformed boys in 2003 and 2004.

Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily, doing well where they receive specialist support. Pupils' literacy skills improve and are average overall with weaknesses in extended writing, speaking and listening. **Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness is good.** Pupils behave well and are punctual. Though improving, current rates of attendance are unsatisfactory, but means of monitoring it are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education and teaching is satisfactory overall. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good. Teaching is good overall in mathematics, science, design and technology - graphics, French, geography, music and religious education, and in English in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is unsatisfactory in art and design. Teachers plan lessons well and insist on high standards of behaviour and use ICT well. Most pupils apply themselves to learning and make progress but many are not confident to learn on their own. In Years 7 to 9, some teaching is dull, lacking variety of activities and sometimes challenge. Assessment is satisfactory; pupils' performance is tracked closely but not all subjects make it clear to pupils what they need to do to improve. Very good support and guidance is provided for pupils through the pastoral care system, learning mentors, the 'Connexions' centre and additional study support. A good range of vocational courses is offered. The school seeks and acts upon pupils' views well. Links with other schools and the community are well established, especially through the local education action zone.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. Very good leadership of the headteacher and the leadership group, has driven through significant improvements. Rigorous self-evaluation by senior leaders identifies good and weak practice and ensures that support is given. Management is satisfactory. While many departments are well managed, the means of checking on standards and teaching within subjects are inconsistent. Leadership and management in art and design and history are unsatisfactory. Good programmes of professional development help to improve teaching and learning. Finances are very well managed and governance is good ensuring that the school is held to account and that action taken is effective. Statutory requirements are not fully met for reporting on ICT for Year 11 pupils, recording pupils' absence due to holidays and providing a daily collective act of worship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are satisfied with what the school provides and are supportive of the school's ethos. Pupils enjoy coming to school and appreciate the support they get from their teachers.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise standards overall, especially that of boys and improve achievement in Years 7 to 9;
- improve pupils' speaking and listening skills by providing more opportunities to talk about work;
- raise standards and the quality of teaching in art and design;
- improve the quality of teaching, especially in Years 7 to 9, by ensuring systems to check on the quality of teaching and to share the best practice are consistently good across subjects;
- ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and what to do to improve in all subjects;
- improve rates of attendance;
- improve leadership and management in history;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that all pupils experience a daily collective act of worship;
- ensure that pupils' absence due to holidays taken in term time are recorded correctly;
- ensure that the progress of Year 11 pupils in ICT is reported to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils join the school with below average standards, and especially weak literacy skills. Year 11 pupils and the pupils who took GCSE examinations in 2004 joined the school with well below average standards. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall and well in Years 10 and 11. Standards in relation to the national picture are below average. Girls do better than boys.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2003, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE was well above average when compared with schools with pupils of similar prior attainment.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 in response to good teaching, high expectations and increased aspirations.
- Pupils do not talk about their work with confidence because their speaking and listening skills are weak.
- Pupils' achievement in art and design is unsatisfactory.
- Gifted and talented pupils gained good added value in the 2004 GCSE examinations.

Commentary

1. Since the last inspection the school has focused on improving the ethos for learning, the quality of teaching and providing specific support for many pupils in Years 10 and 11. This has resulted in significantly improved GCSE results and rising standards across the school. The improved behaviour has allowed pupils to learn in classrooms and make progress. The improved quality of teaching, including the use of individual target grades and levels has brought higher expectations and aspirations and greater variety of approaches, especially in Years 10 and 11.
2. When pupils join the school in Year 7, based on nationally recognised tests, standards are below average and pupils, especially boys, have weak literacy skills. The standards of the current Year 11 pupils and the pupils who took GCSE examinations in 2004 were well below the national average when they joined the school.

Years 7 to 9

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.7 (32.5)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	33.7 (33.0)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	32.3 (32.0)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 169 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Current standards of work in Year 9 are below average overall, but in English, mathematics and science, standards are average. This is an improvement on the 2003 statutory

national test results in these subjects which were below the national average. When compared with schools with pupils of similar prior attainment the 2003 results were average. Improved staffing, leadership and management in English have had a positive effect on current standards. In 2004, test results dipped in English, and science but in mathematics were similar to the 2003 results. It is not yet possible to compare the 2004 results to national averages. Up until 2003 the upward trend in results was above the national trend. In 2004 the school did not meet its ambitious targets which were based on most pupils making better progress than is usually found. Girls do better than boys in national tests but boys enter the school with lower prior attainment and weaker literacy skills than girls.

4. In mathematics, science, ICT, design and technology – graphics, geography, music and religious education pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well in response to good teaching. Where pupils achieve satisfactorily rather than well, such as in English, citizenship, design and technology – textiles, French and physical education this is the result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the subject. In English, though staffing has improved, not all teachers in Years 7 to 9 are secure in their knowledge of the subject. In French, though teaching is currently good, pupils still have not caught up after they fell behind due to teaching in previous years that was less than satisfactory. Though most subjects pay good attention to helping pupils to improve their reading, spelling and writing, less attention is paid to improving extended writing and speaking skills and pupils' low levels of literacy hold their achievement back.
5. In art and design pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory because the teaching does not make enough demands of pupils and work is carried out in a narrow range of media.

Years 10 and 11

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	45 (30)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	85 (83)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	93 (92)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	29.8 (26.1)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 193 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. Current standards of work in Year 11 are below average and, taking account of this year group's standards when they joined the school, this represents good achievement. Current standards of pupils' work are an improvement on recent years' GCSE results. In 2003, the school gained its best GCSE results ever when the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more A* to C grades was average compared to all schools. Overall results, based on average points scored, though below the national average, were above average when compared with schools with pupils of similar prior attainment. In 2004, GCSE results dipped but were still a significant improvement compared with the previous inspection. Girls outperformed boys, though boys' prior standards were lower than the girls, especially in literacy. Most pupils show at least satisfactory added value on their prior attainment and gifted and talented pupils show good added value. Up until 2003 the upward trend of improvement in GCSE results was broadly in line with the national trend. The school did not meet its very

ambitious targets and the governors are reconsidering the methods used to set targets to ensure that they are realistic yet demanding.

7. The school has deliberately focussed on raising standards in Years 10 and 11. As a result of improved teaching, well-targeted support for pupils likely to gain a higher grade at GCSE or experiencing difficulties completing coursework, current standards of work and pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 have improved significantly. Currently pupils achieve well in English, mathematics, science, design and technology – graphics, geography, music, religious education and health and social care in response to good teaching.
8. Where pupils achieve satisfactorily in citizenship, design and technology – textiles, ICT, history, French and physical education this is often due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. In ICT it is because Year 11 pupils have been taught skills, knowledge and understanding through a variety of subjects and their progress has not been tracked closely. In French, as in Years 8 and 9, prior unsatisfactory learning experiences have held pupils' progress back and they have not yet caught up. Unsatisfactory achievement in art and design, as in Years 7 to 9, is related to the unsatisfactory quality of teaching characterised by low challenge and expectations.
9. Higher attaining pupils, including those identified as gifted and talented, are well challenged and rigorous expectations ensure that they do well in English, mathematics, science, design and technology – graphics, geography, music and ICT. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and a good range of additional activities, some in local universities and in holiday time provide challenge and stimulation. Music and physical education ensure that talented pupils have the opportunity to do well.
10. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall and make similar progress to their peers in most subjects. Many have weak literacy skills on entry to the school. Year 7 pupils make good progress as the result of a well organised compensatory curriculum for numeracy and literacy. They are taught in small groups by a very experienced special needs teacher and are supported by trained learning support assistants. This allows them to make good progress within the compensatory curriculum. This is not always the case in class groups. For example in English, lower ability groups in Years 7 to 9 containing some pupils with special educational needs, are taught by non specialist teachers and insufficient attention is paid to the individual education plans so that work is not well matched to their needs.
11. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 perform well in a variety of vocational subjects which allow them to learn through practical activities. Pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties are well supported and do well, especially through the pupil improvement centre and the 'Connexions' room (a room where many types of advice from adults and peers are available, including careers guidance and the school nurse). There is a shortage of learning support available in classrooms, especially in Years 10 and 11. Consequently some pupils with special educational needs are short of specific help, for example in geography.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

12. Pupils' behaviour and their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory, their punctuality is good but attendance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils behave well in most lessons and around the school in response to rigorous and consistently implemented procedures to ensure discipline for learning.
- Attendance is monitored very well, but is below the national average.
- The school's recording of absence due to holidays does not fully meet statutory requirements.
- The school council is an effective and powerful group.
- Pupils are not confident independent learners.
- Well planned assemblies are highly effective in supporting the school's positive ethos for learning and pupils' personal development.
- Provision for pupils' personal development has improved significantly and is now good but arrangements for checking on the quality of the quality of provision are not fully in place.

Commentary

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/03

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.1	School data	0.9
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

13. Attendance in 2002/3 was well below the national average. In 2003/4 it was 90.8 per cent, which although improved, is still unsatisfactory and has a negative impact on the attainment of the pupils concerned. The main reasons for absence are illness and factors relating to home circumstances. However, some parents are not fully supportive of the need for their children's regular attendance. For example, in the last year, holidays taken in term time accounted for about one per cent of missed schooling; this is a proportion higher than usually found. Last year the school did not record appropriately holidays taken in excess of two weeks as unauthorised absence. This does not comply with statutory requirements and serves to underestimate the recorded level of unauthorised absence.
14. The school has successfully introduced an excellent electronic system of registration, which is taken in every lesson. An external agency is used to contact home on the first day of any unexplained absence. Staff are vigilant to monitor and follow up any absence from school or lessons. These good measures have dramatically reduced the level of post registration truancy to a handful of pupils who are quickly detected. Punctuality has similarly been improved by better monitoring and is now good.

Attitudes and behaviour

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
964	243	4
1	0	0
1	2	0
1	0	0

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

15. Pupils have responded well to a new behaviour management programme. Staff are consistent in the implementation of the agreed procedures encouraging discipline for learning and pupil behaviour is good in the vast majority of lessons and around the school. The school has a very high number of fixed period exclusions, which have resulted from the rigorous and effective application of the new behaviour programme. As the systems of discipline become more effective and expectations of good behaviour are more widespread, then the number of exclusions is beginning to diminish. Pupils state that there is a small amount of bullying within the school but there are good systems to support those

who are harassed, with effective support provided by trained pupils and adult staff through the 'Connexions' room. The pupil improvement room is used well to support pupils who are near to exclusion and those pupils with special social, emotional and behavioural needs. There is still some low-level disruption during lessons where teaching is dull and uninspiring and where activities are not well matched to pupils' individual needs.

16. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory and pupils respond positively to opportunities to take responsibility. The school's pupil council is well run and representatives ensure that the school is graffiti and litter free, and that pupils' opinions are well represented. The meetings are well organised and council members are polite and welcoming to their visitors. Year 11 pupils have formed the 'Friends' club which supports younger pupils who are experiencing difficulties with peer relationships. Year 11 pupils also support Year 7 form periods. Most pupils enjoy their work and contribute enthusiastically when teaching is good and the pace of lessons is brisk. Pupils are not confident in taking responsibility for their own learning and independent research and study. Attitudes and behaviour have improved significantly since the last inspection.

Provision for pupils' personal development including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development

17. Provision for pupils' personal development has improved since the previous inspection when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. It is now good, although the school recognises that still more could be done, particularly in improving arrangements for monitoring the provision.
18. The school deliberately set out to strengthen its contribution to pupils' social development and its success is well reflected in the harmonious nature of behaviour and relationships both in classrooms and around the school generally. Provision for social development is now good. There is much greater consistency by teachers, for example, in their use of the school's procedures for promoting good classroom behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils can see the positive benefits to the social environment as a result of the efforts made on their behalf by the very effective school council. Their concern for others is now more obvious, for example through their involvement in charitable activity and the school's links with a Ghanaian school. Substantial improvements to the programme of personal, social and health education ensure that relevant themes such as drugs and alcohol abuse are now explored. Contributions to pupils' social development are now more extensive through the subjects, for example through the emphasis on fair play observed in physical education lessons. Across a number of subject opportunities for pupils' personal development are not specifically planned.
19. Themes explored in the very well planned and highly effective programme of assemblies also contribute substantially to pupils' social development as well as all other aspects of their personal development, most notably the spiritual. Senior staff leading these occasions engage pupils very well because they are prepared to share their own personal beliefs and experiences and make the themes relevant to pupils' own lives. Planning ensures that there is an active contribution through the subjects. For example, science led a week of assemblies, which explored issues raised by different genetic problems. Pupils and staff respond well and with respect to the invitation to reflect on the formal and informal prayers, which effectively reflect the themes. However, despite good planning by the school, the statutory requirement for pupils to experience daily collective worship on the days when they do not attend assembly is not always fully met. The school has good strategies to help pupils to deal with bereavement. Pupils' experiences in religious

education lessons also contribute substantially to their capacity to respect the beliefs and values of others as well as reflecting on their own. Contributions from other subjects are less strong, but nevertheless, the provision for spiritual development is now good.

20. The contribution made to pupils' moral development through the subjects, including the improved provision for personal social and health education programme, is now stronger than at the time of the previous inspection. This provides good support to the effective whole school arrangements for ensuring that pupils behave well and consider others. Science, geography, design and technology, history and religious education explore a wide range of moral issues through their programmes of study.
21. Opportunities for pupils to appreciate both their own and other cultural traditions have also improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. This now ensures that, considering the similarity of cultural heritage of the vast majority of pupils, they are now better prepared for life in the more diverse society of modern Britain. Pupils' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity is promoted well through religious education. For example, Year 8 pupils appreciate the importance of the celebration of Diwali to Hindus and Sikhs. Music makes a strong contribution to cultural development, providing workshops from a range of Asian and African cultures as well as the European. Music makes a significant contribution to spiritual and social development. Good contributions are evident in English, citizenship, and food technology lessons although more could be done through art and design.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

22. The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. A good range of vocational courses is provided for pupils aged 14 to 16. Pupils are well cared for and receive very good guidance and support. Partnerships with other schools, the community and some local colleges are well developed.

Teaching and learning

23. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently applied systems of discipline establish a good atmosphere allowing pupils to learn.
- Rigorous monitoring by senior managers followed by support and relevant professional development has helped to improve the overall quality of teaching.
- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 expects a lot of pupils, but there is a smaller proportion of good and better lessons in Years 7 to 9, often related to teachers' less secure knowledge and a slower pace to learning.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in art and design.
- Teachers use ICT well, especially the inter-active white boards, to make learning interesting.
- Though teaching pays attention to improving pupils' writing and reading skills, not enough has been done to help pupils to write at length and to talk about their work with confidence.

- Information on pupils' test and examination results is analysed closely to identify strengths and weaknesses and to set target levels and grades, and so raise aspirations and expectations of pupils, parents and teachers.
- Though pupils' work is marked regularly and pupils have clear target levels or grades at which to aim, not all subjects make it clear to pupils what they need to do to improve.
- Not all subjects use the individual educational plans for pupils with special educational needs to plan relevant learning activities.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 111 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2%)	19 (17%)	46 (42%)	36 (32%)	6 (5%)	2 (2%)	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.

24. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The school's clear focus on raising standards and improving the quality of classroom learning has been effective. Changes in staffing and leadership in some key areas, very well implemented systems of pupil discipline and concerted efforts to raise pupils' self esteem and involvement in learning have all had a positive effect. Crucially, the senior leadership's close checking on the quality of classroom learning has been effective. Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of test and examination data have identified weaknesses and enabled support to be given and also allowed best practice to be identified and shared as part of a well-focused programme of professional development.
25. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. This is partly a reflection of the school's major aim of raising standards at GCSE where the deployment of the most effective teaching has been focused on examination groups. In Years 7 to 9 where teaching was more often satisfactory, some teachers are less confident in the knowledge of the subject they are teaching, for example in English, and this can lead to lower expectations and a slower pace of learning.
26. In those subjects inspected in depth, teaching is good overall in English, mathematics, science, design and technology – graphics, geography, music, religious education and health and social care. Teaching is unsatisfactory in art and design across all year groups.
27. Most lesson are well planned and follow the school's clear guidance on structuring lessons which reflects the national strategy to raise standards in Years 7 to 9. Pupils are very clear of what is expected of them because the objectives for learning are shared with them at the start of lessons. In the best lessons there is frequent reference to these and checks on how well pupils are doing in relation to them throughout the lesson and so learning is well tracked and pupils are involved and aware of how well they are doing, as seen in English and design and technology. Good planning also ensures that learning takes place in small steps that are manageable and pupils' success in achieving them helps their motivation. This is especially evident in design and technology – graphics and geography.

28. Teachers have on the whole well established positive relationships with pupils that help to establish a good working atmosphere in classrooms. They insist on high standards behaviour in lessons. Their high expectations are very well supported by a member of the senior leadership group who continually tours the school and drops in on lessons to assure high standards of discipline and ensure that learning can take place. The consistency with which the school's strategies for ensuring good discipline for learning in lessons is implemented by teachers has had a positive effect on pupils' learning. Pupils and parents recognise and appreciate the improvements in the levels of discipline in the school as a whole and in classrooms. A small number of parents are not happy about what they consider to be unfair sanctions, but overall there has been significant improvement in behaviour and discipline and learning can take place without undue interruption in almost all classrooms.
29. In most subjects, appropriate attention has been paid to improving pupils' weak literacy skills, especially in reading, spelling and some aspects of writing. However, not enough attention is paid to helping pupils to write at length in their subjects and to providing well-structured opportunities to talk about their work. Geography is an exception to this where pupils have good opportunities for debate and to talk to each other about their work. Furthermore, in an excellent Year 9 science lesson the teacher skilfully involved pupils in a debate on natural selection using questioning that demanded full answers and challenging pupils to justify their answers and give scientific explanations. Expectations of pupils' contributions were very high.
30. Most subjects make good use of the interactive whiteboards available in almost all classrooms to help to motivate pupils and make learning stimulating. For example, in religious education video clips were used as exciting sources of information and in English, pupils have been highly involved in producing high quality multi-media presentations of their poetry and stories for younger children. In an excellent Year 10 English lesson with a lower attaining group, boys made exceptional progress in handling the language of the media because of the rapid pace and lively interaction made possible through the teacher making the best use of the inter-active whiteboard to demonstrate key features of the learning.
31. Much of the best teaching has benefited from exploring the theory behind how pupils learn, which has been a recent focus for professional development. As a result many subjects plan a varied range of learning activities to meet individual learning needs. Combined with a good knowledge of pupils' prior attainment, teachers are able to make many learning activities challenging and stimulating. The needs of higher attaining pupils are especially well met in design and technology, geography, English, mathematics, science, ICT and music. In science, geography, religious education, design and technology and citizenship pupils are often involved in group work and thinking skills are promoted. ICT, geography and health and social care are especially successful in encouraging pupils to work on their own, without direct help from teachers.
32. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, such as in art and design and occasional lessons in physical education, English, mathematics and history then subject knowledge is not secure so that learning activities are not well structured and the pace of learning slows down. Often pupils react badly to a lack of challenge and there is low level disruption of the lesson. In art and design low expectations, a narrow range of media and insufficient guidance on how to improve leads to low levels of achievement and learning.

33. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall and good in geography, physical education, religious education and design and technology. This is because the work is well matched to the pupils' individual needs and the resources used have been adapted to the needs of the pupils. A good example of this is to be found in the teaching of geography. Teachers are given good information about pupils with special educational needs which includes written advice. Effective support includes a weekly 'surgery' for staff. Pupils' individual education plans have clear measurable targets but are not addressed consistently across the subjects. This means that pupils with special needs are not always supported well in improving their literacy and numeracy skills and they therefore have difficulty in remaining on task or completing their work.
34. The school does not yet use performance descriptors to measure the progress of pupils who are performing below expected National Curriculum levels. This does not allow the 'next steps' to be identified for pupils or small steps in attainment to be acknowledged. The recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinator has introduced a rigorous monitoring procedure for tracking the attainment of special needs pupils across the three core subjects. This is helping to inform teachers' planning and assist in matching the curriculum to pupils' individual needs.

Assessment

35. The school uses a central system to record, analyse and disseminate data on pupils' examination and assessment results. The information is used effectively to identify trends in the performance of subjects, class groups and individuals. For example, pupils who are not achieving their full potential are identified and they are supported with learning mentors. Modern foreign languages and English have introduced the good practice of pupil progress files; these are updated using a range of extra tests and supply additional information to inform the target setting process. Day to day assessment that is used as part of teaching and learning is more variable. All subject areas are expected to mark literacy skills and this has helped to improve pupils' literacy skills. However, the overall quality of marking and grading pupils' work is inconsistent across subjects. Best practice was seen in English, ICT, geography, design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education. In these subjects assessment criteria are shared with pupils and they understand what they have to do to achieve their targets and improve their work. In art and design, citizenship and history marking is unsatisfactory. Pupils are not given a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum

36. The school offers a satisfactory curriculum, which is broad and meets the needs of the majority of pupils. The opportunities for enrichment of learning beyond the normal school day are satisfactory. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work related and vocational courses are well established in Years 10 and 11.
- All pupils have equal access to the curriculum.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from specialist assistants, teachers and academic mentors but not all subjects use individual educational plans well enough to match learning tasks to pupils' needs. There are not enough learning support assistants.
- Pupils value the well-planned programme of careers education and guidance but not all pupils take full advantage of the guidance on offer.
- Though the course is well-planned and pupils enjoy the lessons, the quality of teaching in the personal, social and health education programme is inconsistent.
- Though the school provides high quality assemblies, the statutory requirement to provide a daily collective act of worship for all pupils is not met in full.
- Opportunity for pupils to participate in arts activities out of school hours is limited.
- The school is well resourced, with good access to ICT, especially inter-active whiteboards.

Commentary

37. The school offers a broad curriculum designed to meet the needs of the pupils. A full range of subjects is offered but there is no provision for drama on the timetable. The curriculum broadly fulfils the majority of statutory requirements but fails to provide a daily act of collective worship for all. Curricular links with local primary schools are strong, and ease the transition of younger pupils from primary school into Year7. Links with other secondary schools and colleges enrich the curricular opportunities in Years 10 and 11 and enable a wider choice of vocational and work related subjects to be offered.

38. Pupils attend local colleges on vocational and work related courses and this provision is carefully monitored and evaluated by the school; where weaknesses are identified, swift action is taken to rectify the situation. The school offers a good range of vocational courses both within the school and through links with other providers. Lower attaining pupils and those in danger of losing interest in their school take part in a good range of alternative courses that serve to maintain their interest in education, for example, those run by Ground Work Trust, The Prince's Trust and ASDAN.

39. The school's curriculum successfully offers equality of access and opportunity to all pupils. The school makes good use of data and departmental subject reviews to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum. There are innovative plans to develop the 14 to19 curriculum further in partnership with local schools and colleges.

40. The programme for personal, social, citizenship and health education is well constructed and thorough to cover fully the needs of pupils and reflect the school's policies on, for example, sex and relationships, citizenship, alcohol and drug misuse. Pupils receive one lesson per week and they enjoy the lessons. Though good in many lessons, the quality of

teaching is not consistently good because insufficient training of the team of teachers teaching the subject has yet taken place.

41. Careers education and guidance is satisfactory. A well planned taught programme of careers guidance is delivered as part of the personal, social, citizenship and health education programme in Years 7 through to 11. It is well taught by specialist teachers and pupils value the guidance they are given. Every pupil in Years 10 and 11 takes at least one vocational subject and as part of this come into contact with the world of work; this usefully complements their careers preparation. The 'Connexions' service gives good support to the school. Pupils are able to ask for individual "one to one" careers interviews with the advisor or can research the good range of materials in the careers library. However, in practice not all pupils choose to avail themselves of these good opportunities. Last year about a quarter of pupils leaving school after Year 11 are shown as unemployed or destination unknown. This is a high proportion. For these pupils the careers guidance needs to be strengthened with clearer lines of responsibility for overseeing pupils' progress towards making constructive choices of their post 16 routes.
42. The school offers a wide range of enrichment activities and is particularly strong in offering opportunities for study support after school and in holidays, sometimes in local villages. Numbers of pupils participating in such support activities are monitored by the school. There is also a full range of sporting activities on offer at lunchtimes and after school. However, opportunities to participation in enrichment activities in the arts are limited and monitoring of numbers of pupils participating does not take place.
43. Provision for pupils with special needs is satisfactory overall and has a number of strengths. Pupils are supported well by a small number of trained classroom support assistants who also support withdrawal classes. However, there is not enough additional support in classrooms. The school's academic mentors provide good support for pupils with special educational needs and they have recently introduced an effective social communication programme for identified pupils. This is having a positive effect upon pupils' self esteem which in turn helps to support their learning. Pupils have responded well to this programme. In Year 7 there is effective compensatory education for pupils with very low levels of attainment in literacy and/or numeracy. In Years 10 and 11, pupils with special educational needs are served well by the range of vocational and alternative courses offered by the school, such as the ASDAN course. In a small number of subjects pupils' individual educational plans are not used well enough to match their needs, for example in art and design, design and technology-textiles and in some English classes.

Staffing, accommodation and resources

44. Staffing is much improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Some very good appointments have been made to improve the overall quality and stability of the teaching staff. There are large classes in some subjects and teachers have minimum time to prepare for their teaching. However, the school is working hard to re-model the workforce and has provided good levels of administrative support for each subject. Three non-teaching supervisors cover lessons for absent teaching staff and three learning mentors provide valuable targeted support for pupils in danger of underachieving. There is very good technical support in design and technology and it is just adequate for science. There is a shortage of learning support to assist pupils with special educational needs in lessons across subjects.

45. The library has improved since the last inspection when it was considered poor. The stock of books has improved with a 17 per cent increase in the number of books, though there is still room for further improvement. There is access to ICT with ten workstations available. The use of the library has improved. Revision classes are held regularly and Year 7 have their 'Catch up' classes in there. It is used for private study at lunchtimes. However, it is still a small space for a school of this size.
46. The school is well-resourced. There is good access to ICT and all teachers have laptops and access to inter-active whiteboards. Good levels of equipment, audio visual materials and books in science, religious education and music support learning. A shortage of text books in history is still an issue from the last inspection and there is a shortage of interesting reading books for pupils with special educational needs. ICT is not used well enough to support pupils with special educational needs.
47. Good accommodation is provided for almost all subjects and that for mathematics, science and music is very good. The majority of classrooms offer a bright, attractive environment further enhanced with good displays of pupils' work and subject-specific information such as keywords and level and grade descriptors; most are provided with internet access and interactive white boards. Rooms for ICT, however, are too small and do not have separate teaching areas. The school has addressed issues raised by the previous inspection: the library has been reorganised to make better use of limited space, a much larger room caters for pupils excluded from lessons and new accommodation has been provided for music. Pupils have rightly expressed concerns about the condition of toilets and the lack of external covered accommodation, particularly when queuing for entry to the dining room. This is too small to cater for the present numbers, with the consequence that some pupils are late for afternoon lessons.

Care, guidance and support

48. The school acts well to ensure pupils' care, welfare health and safety. Pupils receive excellent quality personal advice and good academic guidance making this aspect of provision very good overall. The school involves pupils effectively in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils value the high quality personal support the school offers.
- Pupils are given good academic support and guidance.
- Levels of supervision around the school are good.
- The arrangements to help pupils settle into school when they start in Year 7 are good.
- Health and safety and child protection procedures are good.
- The pupils' toilets are not adequately maintained.
- Form times for older pupils do not always provide a positive start to the day.

Commentary

49. Both pupils and parents at the school recognise and appreciate the major improvements that have been achieved in recent years to achieve a calm environment in which successful learning takes place. Pupils know that their problems will be listened to sympathetically and acted upon. This reassurance helps them to learn with confidence. The 'Connexions' room is a central base for an unusually wide range of support staff and agencies, including

counsellors for bereavement, mental health and bullying support, medical support, careers advice and the educational welfare officer. This multi- agency support is carefully and effectively co-ordinated. Pupils say that they find this centre invaluable as they can drop in without appointments for help and advice on a wide range of issues. Pupils speak highly of the “Friends”, a group of pupils who have trained as peer mentors. The “Friends” operate a very effective “drop in centre” at lunch times to help resolve any friendship conflicts.

50. Pupils receive good guidance through the well planned programme of personal, social, citizenship and health education. Senior management at the school closely monitor pupils’ behaviour and successes and intervene with support strategies effectively. Form time in the mornings is generally used well to register attendance, check equipment and have a thought for the day. However, in some of the older year groups the routines are not as clearly established and there can be too much social chatter, the thought for the day is not well-respected, so personal development is not as well supported.
51. Pupils are given good information about the level of attainment at which they are working and in most subjects they have good guidance on how to achieve more; there are some subjects that do not make this clear enough. The roles of the heads of year have been redefined as that of learning co-ordinators. They and their teams of form tutors are making a promising start in developing an oversight of pupils’ progress across the subjects. Most subject departments run study clubs to provide extra help and targeted pupils are given very good support by the team of learning mentors based at the school. Last year pupils identified as being on the C/D borderline at GCSE were mentored with a positive impact on their attainment.
52. The induction arrangements for pupils from primary school are good and successful so that new pupils are familiar with the school and expectations before they start. The school runs Summer Schools to help raise the attainment of their prospective intake. Several Year 9 and 11 pupils have trained as peer mentors and help at the weekly ‘Smart Club’ which is run for targeted Year 7 pupils and provides fun and constructive lunch time activities. This provides particularly good support for any vulnerable new pupils.
53. Child protection policy and practice is secure and effective. The progress of any children who are in public care is suitably monitored. Health and safety procedures are effective and risk assessments in place as appropriate. Pupils said that they would like further improvements to the toilet block and a less cramped dining room. The inspectors agree this would improve welfare provision. Currently the toilets lack soap and provisions and there are some broken locks, seats and taps. Levels of supervision around the school are very good and ensure good behaviour at lunch times and lesson transfers as well as checking that all pupils go to their lessons. Working with the local Primary Health Care Trust, the school has developed an effective anti-smoking group and encouraged a number of pupils to give up and thus improved their well being.
54. The school regularly canvasses pupils’ views. These surveys and conversations with pupils during the inspection show that pupils have positive views of their school. Pupils contribute their ideas about school matters through the elected school council, which is an effective body. The school council has influenced pupils to respect and care for their school, for example with its litter campaigns. Pupils play an active part helping as prefects and monitors and thus gain a good sense of commitment to their school and this creates a positive ethos.

55. The school works closely with other agencies including the local education authority's educational Psychologist. The annual Review process for pupils with statements of special educational needs is well organised and parental attendance has improved. Pupils and parents are involved in the construction of individual education plans.
56. There are regular review meetings organised by the special educational needs co-ordinator with the school's learning support co-ordinators. This ensures that subject teachers are kept informed of pupils' needs and that pupils' individual targets are monitored.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

57. The school has a sound partnership with parents and good links with the community and other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides good quality information and seeks parents' views effectively.
- Parents are pleased with the school, but are not involved enough in active support of the school's work.
- Community partnerships with local schools and the Education Action Zone have helped to raise pupils' aspirations and achievement.

Commentary

58. Parents have positive views and are mostly pleased with the recent improvements in behaviour and discipline at the school. They say that the school expects their children to work hard, teaching is good and the school is well run. Some parents did not feel well enough informed about their children's progress. This is partly because of the geographical location of the school and difficulties of transport arrangements. The school is aware of this and currently revising the format and timings of the parents' consultation meetings to take this into account. The inspectors consider that the annual reports sent to parents on their children's progress are good and usefully supplemented by interim reports. This reporting pattern provides timely and apposite information on the children's attainment and progress in all subjects. The school uses an external consultancy to find out parents' views of the school and acts on their views effectively.
59. The school sends out regular good quality information, including newsletters every term, so parents are well informed about school life. The prospectus and governors' report to parents contain the appropriate information and are well presented. The student planners are useful and school specific and are now used effectively. The school does not currently enjoy the dedicated support of a parents association and whilst attendance at performances or events involving their own children is good, there is a disappointing response to other events. Attendance at the consultation meeting with teachers has improved since the time of the last inspection but is still relatively modest with between 40 to 60 per cent of parents choosing to attend.
60. The school's sports facilities are used by the community and the local youth club is run at the school. The school works closely and effectively with other schools in the area through the Easington and Seaham Education Action Zone. Participation in the Education Action

Zone initiatives has helped to raise the quality of leadership, teaching and learning. Other benefits have included mentoring for pupils and training for the school's leadership groups.

61. The effective links established with primary schools help pupils make a smooth transition and there are some good subject links being developed to ensure curriculum continuity. Pupils from a nearby special school join with pupils at the school for design and technology lessons and this arrangement works to mutual benefit. Links with local post 16 colleges are generally good, but are currently in a state of flux, whilst the school establishes new constructive arrangements with colleges further afield. As part of the Aim Higher programme in East Durham, pupils visit universities for taster sessions and this helps to raise their aspirations.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

62. **Leadership and management are good overall.** The headteacher offers very good personal leadership to the school, supported very effectively by the senior leadership team. Management overall is satisfactory. Improvements have been well managed at senior level and in many departments but there are variations across subjects. Good governance has helped to ensure that action taken is effective though not all statutory requirements are met in full.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's strong personal vision for the school is now being realised and he is supported by a staff committed to rapid improvement.
- The senior leadership team are a positive group with shared values rooted in a desire to improve teaching and learning through innovation.
- Very good self-evaluation at senior and in many subjects has resulted in identifying the right priorities and making significant improvements.
- Performance management and professional development is well-focused on the school's priorities and includes all staff across the school.
- Art and design and history still do not have effective leadership and management.
- The school has worked very effectively in partnership with the local education action zone.
- The budget is planned very effectively to support school improvement.
- Effective use is made of grant funding.
- Statutory requirements are not fully met for reporting on ICT for Year 11 pupils, recording absence due to holidays and providing a daily collective act of worship.

Commentary

Governance

63. Governance of the school is now good. Since the last inspection the governors have undertaken a comprehensive training programme on the roles and responsibilities of governors and take an informed and active interest in the school and its policies and provide appropriate challenge. The governing body is appropriately structured. A governor is assigned to support each of the subject departments in the school. A monitoring committee has been established to oversee the school's response to the key issues for improvement identified in the last inspection. This has focused the governors on the strengths and weaknesses of the school and enabled them to participate well in the school's improvement. The governing body ensures that the school meets statutory requirements, apart from in three areas. The school does not fully meet the requirement for a daily act of corporate worship, which is planned for but in practice not always delivered in some of the form periods. The progress of Year 11 pupils in ICT is not reported to parents. The recording of absence due to holidays taken by pupils does not fully conform to requirements.

Leadership

64. At the time of the last inspection, the current senior leadership team had recently been formed and an unsatisfactory situation had been changed to one with potential for improvement. That potential has been realised in the good overall improvement since then. This has been rooted in the vision of a school in which learning is at the forefront, and in which pupils' attitudes and behaviour are believed to have a positive effect on learning. This vision coloured every decision taken, all of which were monitored closely. For example, a new discipline code was introduced, and one assistant headteacher was charged with patrolling the school to act upon instances of inappropriate behaviour without delay. This code is implemented in the majority of classrooms and results in lessons proceeding without major interruptions. As a result, the pace of teaching and learning has improved and standards have risen, albeit with a blip in the provisional results in 2004. All members of the senior leadership team have specific whole school responsibilities that they carry out with diligence and with one eye firmly fixed on their vision for the school. When together in a group, they talk animatedly of the actions already taken and their view of the next steps. This group meshes together extremely well, and provides very good role models for colleagues.

65. At the time of the last inspection, too many departments were ineffectively led. This was a factor in the weak achievement reported. Since then, new appointments have been made, and the results of data analysis, monitoring and evaluation have been used effectively to improve the performance of many departments. The core departments of English and mathematics were particularly targeted with conspicuous success. English is now led very well, with an outstandingly clear vision based on an excellent understanding of what is needed, resulting in high expectations and improvements in provision. Mathematics is led well, also the result of a very clear vision and focus on the requirements of tests and examinations. Science, the other core subject, is led very well. Other subjects that enjoy very good leadership include geography, music and religious education. Citizenship, design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education are all led well. However, weaknesses still persist in the leadership of art and design and history, in which a lack of direction has resulted in insufficient progress since the last inspection.

Management

66. The school's clear focus and success in raising pupils' achievement is underpinned by many good management systems. Plans and priorities for improvement have arisen from effective systems of self-evaluation which include close analysis of test and examination data by senior and subject leaders, regular subject reviews and frequent monitoring of standards and teaching by senior leaders and most subject leaders. Self-evaluation of this nature has resulted in well focused professional development and led to improvements in teaching and learning.
67. The effects of professional development are well monitored and evaluated. For example, shortly after a whole school approach to lesson planning had taken place, senior leaders carried out checks on lessons and subjects to ensure the policies were being followed. As a consequence the vast majority of lessons observed during the inspection were well planned and structured and pupils had a clear understanding of what they were expected to learn in lessons.
68. The strong commitment of the staff to improvement has contributed to the school's rapid development and improvement. This has been brought about through an approach to development and planning that values all staff, both teaching and non-teaching. This is seen in practice, for example, in the involvement of staff from all parts of the school in a well planned programme of professional development. One development has been the use of ICT and inter-active whiteboards. Staff have undertaken extensive training and shared ideas within and beyond the school to ensure that the new equipment brings benefits to learning and teaching. The inclusion of all staff, including the 'dinner nannies' in the training on the 'Discipline for Learning' behaviour management policy was a key to its success. Furthermore, focused working groups involving staff from all levels have helped to define priorities such as the need to find ways to raise pupils' self-esteem. The very well planned programme of assemblies and the improvements to the personal, social and health education programme arose from this group.
69. Performance management is well embedded and is supporting school priorities and personal development. For example, a recent focus was for all staff to demonstrate improvements in teaching and learning and awareness of different approaches to learning. This has resulted in overall improvement in the quality of teaching and wider use of a variety of approaches to teaching to take account of different learning styles.
70. The school has made very good use of its partnership with the local education action zone to support professional development. They have benefited from sharing best practice with local schools and at a distance. For example, the 'Discipline for Learning' policy arose after visits to a school in Birmingham where a similar system had proved successful. Effective training for senior and subject leaders has been well supported by the Education Action Zone.
71. The management of subjects has improved significantly since the last inspection. Across subjects and the pastoral team the vast majority of leaders are well-focused on raising standards and improving teaching and learning. Schemes of work are now in place. Good systems of self-evaluation and opportunities for sharing best practice underpin the work of most subjects. In art and design and history, however, management is unsatisfactory and strategies for improvement have not been effective enough.

72. The quality of staffing has improved considerably since the last inspection. The governors have attracted a number of good quality staff to the school and this is having a positive impact in subjects such as English and mathematics. Learning mentors are well deployed and focused on supporting pupils with the most need. The school is working on remodelling the workforce and has provided more administrative support to allow teachers more uninterrupted non-contact time in which to focus on activities related to teaching. Each subject is allocated non-teaching assistant hours and cover supervisors are employed to take responsibility for classes in the absence of a teacher. Though some parents have reservations about this practice, pupils and parents report on the improved discipline in these covered lessons. Lessons covered by the supervisors were not observed during the inspection.
73. Strong leadership from the recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinator has resulted in many positive changes including the re-location of the special needs department to more attractive and spacious accommodation. Meetings between subject representatives and the special educational needs co-ordinator help to ensure that departments receive support in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs.

Financial management

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,449,867	Balance from previous year	1,948
Total expenditure	3,386,198	Balance carried forward to the next	63,669
Expenditure per pupil	3,524		

74. The headteacher and bursar together prepare a draft budget for consideration by governors, and it is informed by the priorities contained within the school development plan. This process is rigorous, and makes effective use of grant funding available to the school, for example through the Leadership Incentive Grant which has resulted in effective training of leaders at all levels, and the local Education Action Zone. Governors are not directly involved in the preparation of this draft, but they do carefully check that it reflects their priorities and monitor it through the finance committee through the year. The budget is managed very well on a day-to-day basis, with the principles of best value well to the fore. The school applies the principles of best value very effectively when considering the quality of education it provides. It uses benchmark data well to compare its performance with other schools. It challenges itself to do better through the use of rigorous targets, though these have sometimes been over ambitious in recent years. The school consults with staff and governors as a matter of course, but also with pupils via the school and year councils and parents through a questionnaire every two years.

WORK RELATED LEARNING

The provision for work related learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils in Years 10 and 11 are offered a range of vocational courses.
- The school has a number of supportive business partners.
- There is good coverage of work-related learning through other curriculum subjects.
- Although pupils enjoy their college placements, currently they are not offered appropriate forms of accreditation.
- Opportunities for the work-related co-ordinator to meet with other staff are not formalised.
- Boys and girls do not receive enough support and encouragement in choosing less traditional roles for work placements.

Commentary

75. The provision within the school for work related learning is good. The school has recently appointed a co-ordinator for the work-related curriculum who is also the co-ordinator for vocational education. The school has completed an audit of work-related activities within the curriculum and has drawn up an action plan for the further development of activities which is helping to develop pupils' skills for employability.

76. All pupils are offered a range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. These include GCSE, BTEC, GNVQ, NVQ and an ASDAN course for lower ability pupils, which includes a very specific work-related element. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to

learn through work by means of a co-ordinated work experience programme that is offered to Year 10 and 11 pupils, and through work placements linked to vocational courses and college placements. Pupils who go on work experience benefit from completion of a log-book that helps them to review their performance and realise the expectations and demands of actual employment. Pupils have responded well to all of these experiences and state that they enjoy the practical opportunities that vocational and work related courses offer. They particularly enjoy the increased level of independence that college courses and off-site experiences bring.

77. Year 11 pupils have taken part in enterprise activities through their vocational programme and in BTEC Business are asked to run their own company. This helps to develop pupils' skills for enterprise. The school hopes to increase these activities during the next academic year through its partnership with the Durham Business Learning Partnership. The school has a number of other business partnerships which help to provide pupils with a range of work-related activities. The local education action zone, of which the school is a part, also provides a valuable source of support for work-related experiences.
78. There is good coverage of work-related learning through other curriculum areas. The science department has good contacts with two local chemical firms which facilitates visits related to health and social care courses. The ICT department delivers a unit of work which allows pupils to learn about pay and pay-related issues. GCSE physical education pupils also cover the Junior Sports Leader Award as part of their course and learn how to coach and have the opportunity to work with professional coaches, teachers and leisure centres.
79. The school's academic mentors provide additional support for some pupils in areas such as writing letters of application, preparing a curriculum vitae and opportunities for mock interviews. These activities support the development of pupils' writing and speaking and listening skills as well as preparing them for employment opportunities.
80. Members of the school council show good evidence of the skills they have learned during their work-related activities and have undertaken several market research activities around proposals made to them by other pupils. They intend to research the sales in the dining room and make comparisons with charging at other local schools.
81. Pupils receive a satisfactory standard of careers education through personal, social, citizenship and health education lessons and form time. Pupils appreciate the individual careers counselling given by the 'Connexions' careers adviser. The newly appointed work-related learning co-ordinator offers strong enthusiastic leadership and ensures that the school provides good opportunities for pupils to work through work, about work and for work.

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English and French were inspected in depth. Spanish is taught in Year 7 only and one lesson was observed in which teaching, learning and achievement were good and standards were average.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE are too low especially for boys.
- Though achievement and teaching are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, they vary across teaching groups and are less good in groups taught by non-specialist teachers.
- Very good leadership gives clear direction on raising standards.
- Very good planning provides detailed support for all teachers.
- The use of ICT is very good.
- The media course is well taught.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to work independently.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Standards of work seen	Average	Average	Average
2003 Year 9 national test results 2003 GCSE results	Below average	Well below average	-
Teaching	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Learning	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good		
Management	Very good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Very good		

Commentary

82. Pupils enter school with standards below average and weak literacy skills. Results in national tests taken by pupils in Year 9 in 2003 were below the national average. The 2004 tests dipped a little. Current standards of work in Year 9 are improving rapidly due to a thorough review of planning and effective support of teaching by the new team leaders. Standards are now average which reflects the impact of a well-structured curriculum and a clear focus on improving literacy skills. However, achievement varies across teaching groups. It is good where pupils are well taught by specialist teachers and, despite good support by the leadership of the subject, pupils achievement is lower in groups taught by non-specialist teachers. Overall achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Pupils with

special educational needs achieve satisfactorily and they do well in response to good specialist support. However, not all teachers use individual educational plans well enough to match tasks to their learning needs.

83. Results in GCSE English language and in English literature in 2003 were well below the national average. The 2004 GCSE results are the subject of a remark but are likely to show improvement. Girls made better progress and gained higher standards than boys in both years. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and nearly all obtained a GCSE grade in English in 2004. However some pupils could have obtained higher grades had they attended school regularly. Higher attaining pupils do better than pupils in similar schools obtaining more of the higher grades 'A' and 'B'. The very small number of pupils learning English as an additional language are no longer in the early stages of language acquisition and they are achieving well.
84. Current standards of work in Year 11 are average overall and improving rapidly. Rising standards are the result of significantly improved leadership and management that is setting high standards of pupils and teachers. However, the picture remains inconsistent due to staffing difficulties in previous years which affected the progress made by pupils in some teaching groups.
85. Standards in reading are rising steadily and are average as a result of the effective teaching of reading strategies. All classes have a specific period for reading where teachers teach reading skills and suggest appropriate texts. Particular focus is placed on reading materials which interest and motivate boys. Year 8 pupils were able to visualise, empathise and predict skilfully in their reading of "The Boys in 'D' tent".
86. Standards in writing are average overall. Most pupils are confident about writing in a variety of styles for a range of purposes and many have developed accuracy and control. However, in some groups pupils still lack confidence and have not caught up after their previous less than satisfactory experiences due to staffing difficulties. Standards in writing are improving particularly where pupils are taught examination techniques such as redrafting. Written responses to reading of both fiction and non-fiction are good for pupils of all ages. This is due to structured teaching which shows pupils how to respond to a text and represent the appropriate information in a variety of writing styles. Creative pieces are generally weaker, they are shorter and lack imagination, and are spoilt by weak spelling and sentence construction.
87. Standards in speaking and listening are still below average. There are too few opportunities for pupils to discuss and share ideas prior to writing. Pupils respond well to media texts and ICT and, by age 16, they are able to describe visual images, identify print and other graphics and make analytical comment on music or soundtracks. Pupils use their knowledge about technical devices to construct multi-media presentations which are of the highest professional quality.
88. All work is presented neatly demonstrating good relationships and a high regard for their work. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to work independently on their own researching the lives and works of poets and authors. Much of this information is provided in note form by the teachers.
89. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and some excellent and very good teaching was seen. Only one lesson was judged to be unsatisfactory. The core team

display good subject knowledge and this, combined with high expectations, ensures pupils remain challenged, as in a Year 10 lesson where lower attaining pupils became 'Fleet Street journalists'. In this lesson and in others, very good use was made of interactive whiteboards to stimulate and motivate pupils. Careful planning combined with rigorous and purposeful teaching underpins the more successful lessons. In these lessons pupils understand what it is they are expected to learn and how they will learn it. Where teaching was unsatisfactory teachers dictated notes or led the whole group through laborious annotations of text and so pupils were not actively involved in learning.

90. Teachers mark work thoroughly but the good practice of sharing marking criteria with the pupils is not used across all groups. Pupils' achievements are recorded each half term and the information used to raise standards in most teaching groups. The leadership and management of English is very good. The new lead teacher has led a rigorous review of the department which has already had an impact on raising achievement especially for boys.
91. The newly formed teaching team are enthusiastic, hardworking and dedicated to raising standards even further. Monitoring of teaching is bringing a coherent and consistent approach across the subject and developing the very good practice seen during the inspection. However, time for the subject leadership to carry out this work is limited. Progress since the last inspection is very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

92. Pupils have below average standards of literacy on entry to school and when Year 11 joined the school their standards of literacy were well below average. The early identification of children with very weak literacy skills is good and as a result many of these pupils are well supported and make good progress in developing literacy skills, especially in geography, English, religious education, history and design and technology.
93. By Year 11 most pupils who attend regularly have reading and writing skills largely in line with national expectations. Nearly all pupils achieve a grade in English.
94. All teachers use a structured approach to reading and writing. Some good examples were seen in history, English and in religious education where pupils produced a leaflet on Jewish marriage. The weakness in the development of literacy is the lack of opportunities to write extended pieces in a range of writing styles i.e. reports. Pupils have few opportunities for the retrieval of reading material independently.
95. Opportunities for developing speaking and listening skill are not extended to all pupils and across all subjects. Where discussion is used it is of the highest quality, as in geography where pupils have the opportunity to express thoughts and views and take part in debates. However, there are insufficient opportunities for the development of speaking and listening skills for pupils and as a result pupils frequently lack confidence.
96. All subjects teach literacy skills satisfactorily but the effect is inconsistent and too few departments monitor their development. The management of this initiative is now satisfactory. The recently appointed co-ordinator is aware of the need to monitor the teaching of literacy alongside pupils' progress.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Pupils' speaking and reading skills in French are weak.
- Teaching is well prepared and makes good use of resources to promote learning.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Pupils' have insufficient opportunity to develop and use their French creatively and independently.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average	Below average
2003 GCSE results	-	Not applicable	-
Teaching	Good	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory		
Management	Satisfactory		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Satisfactory		

Commentary

97. The number of pupils entered for GCSE is too small for meaningful comparison to national averages. In 2003, of the 16 pupils entered for GCSE in French, 75 per cent gained grades A* to C and 25 per cent gained grade D. In 2004, nine pupils were entered, of whom seven gained grades A* to C and two gained grade D.
98. In 2003, teachers' assessments for the end of Year 9 were above average and in 2004 below average, more accurately reflecting the standards observed during the inspection, which were below average. Achievement overall is satisfactory because the good teaching pupils receive now promotes good learning in lessons. However staffing difficulties in previous years necessitated the use of several supply teachers for extended periods of time and this has had a marked adverse effect on the progress of many pupils. In Year 9, pupils use the present and past tenses but without accuracy. They have a fairly wide vocabulary at their disposal but their oral skills are weak. They do not use complex sentence structure nor do they use French creatively to express their ideas and feelings. Standards in Year 11 are just below average but in Year 10 are well below average because of the staffing difficulties over the past two years. Achievement is now satisfactory overall, again because of the good teaching the pupils are now receiving. In Year 11, pupils use a variety of tenses but struggle for accuracy. They are beginning to use more complex sentence structures but they rely too heavily on the teacher's help and written prompts and rarely use their French spontaneously or independently.
99. Teaching is good and encourages good learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use French well in lessons to promote good listening comprehension skills. Teaching is well prepared, varied and makes good use of resources to motivate the pupils and promote good learning. Only occasionally does the pace of lessons drop and then the pupils' interest soon wanes with a consequent drop in the quality of the learning. Overall pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good and help to promote good learning. Teaching relies heavily on teacher-led activities and the use of prompts and frameworks. As a consequence, pupils do not yet have sufficient opportunity to learn independently and use their French creatively.
100. The quality of leadership and management of modern foreign languages is satisfactory. They are very new and have not yet had sufficient time to have a clear impact on the work of the department. However, a clear vision is guiding improvements in teaching, learning and standards. Good quality schemes of work, previously not available, are being developed, as are clear policies and procedures for marking and assessment. The modern languages department is well stocked and equipment is used well and to good

effect. A limited range of enrichment activities is offered but a successful European Languages Day was held in September 2004.

101. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The staffing difficulties identified then as a major concern have been tackled and, although standards remain below average, teaching is now good and is promoting good learning and a rise in levels of achievement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New leadership in the department has enabled rapid improvements.
- Pupils now achieve well because of good teaching with rigorous expectations, especially of higher attaining pupils.
- The range of teaching styles in use is narrow, and is a factor in girls achieving better than boys.
- ICT is not always used well to support learning.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Standards of work seen	Average	Below average	Below average
2003 Year 9 national test results 2003 GCSE results	Below average	Average	-
Teaching	Good	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Good		
Management	Good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Very good		

Commentary

102. Standards in National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 9 have been improving since 2003. The provisional results for 2004 show a continued improvement. Similarly, provisional results at GCSE show a continued improvement in 2004. Girls consistently outperform boys in tests, although the gap narrowed in Year 9 in 2004. This improvement has come about as the result of focused leadership and effective management. Test and examination results are scrutinised closely, and used to identify areas of strength and weakness. This plentiful data has been used well to ensure that teachers' strengths are utilised and that areas that pupils find hard are identified and made more accessible. At the time of the last inspection, schemes of work were thin. They have been extensively rewritten to ensure that all areas of the National Curriculum and GCSE syllabus are appropriately covered. The analysis of pupils' completed work shows that they are followed and that teachers have very rigorous expectations, especially of the highest attaining pupils.

103. Most years, the average attainment of pupils as they enter Year 7 is below average, and for some years it is lower. The attaining of these standards, taken into account alongside observed levels of challenge, indicate that pupils achieve well in the school. The highest attaining pupils in Year 9 work on quadratic sequences, whilst their less capable peers carry out addition, subtraction and multiplication of fractions. In Year 11, pupils suffer from a 'learning deficit' because provision in the past was not good enough, and this is why, despite the good teaching, their standards remain below average even though they achieve well overall. Nevertheless, the most capable factorise quadratic equations to solve them, whilst their weaker peers work on more basic number work like the equivalence of fractions, percentages and decimals.
104. Much has been done in the time since the last inspection and significant improvement have been made. It was recognised that the most immediate priority was to raise standards from their unsatisfactory level. All of the department's efforts went into this successful crusade, and this is evident in lessons, in which the particular strength is the clear focus on the expectations of test and examination papers and the technique required to get the best grades. This leads to lessons that efficiently impart the required knowledge to pupils using effective methods. In the best lessons, questioning is used particularly well to check on and enhance individuals' understanding of the topic. The scheme of work similarly focuses on gaining the best academic results possible. This has led to many lessons being taught in a similar format, in which a technique is rigorously taught and then practised by the group. Some elements of more active learning are evident in some lessons, as was seen in a good lesson for pupils in Year 9 as they used computers to investigate the properties of straight line graphs using a drawing package. However, the principal teaching style encourages passive learning and a steady pace to lessons. This particularly suits many girls' styles of learning, and is a factor in their higher achievement. Indeed, in some lessons for lower ability sets, this passive approach caused boys to become restless, and the pace was made slower as the teacher had to deal with their low level disruption. More active methods from the national strategy to raise standards in Years 7 to 9, that do involve boys more, though used well in some lessons were not used consistently. Standards in speaking and listening are still below average for pupils aged 14 and 16. There are still too few opportunities for pupils to discuss and share ideas prior to writing. Pupils respond well to media texts and ICT and, by age 16, they are able to describe visual images, identify print and other graphics and make analytical comment on music or soundtracks. Pupils use their knowledge about technical devices to construct multi-media presentations which are of the highest professional quality.
105. Very little extended writing was seen in lessons or in completed work, so pupils do not regularly have the chance to explain what they have learned and can do in their own words, thus reinforcing that learning. However, lessons do include sound opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing through the use of questioning in class and worded problems, although when pupils answer questions in lessons, teachers do not consistently ask them to explain their methods. The setting system used in the department ensures that the level of challenge for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is appropriate.
106. The department has a pleasant set of rooms located together, each of which includes a computer-linked whiteboard. In some lessons, good use was made of this facility, for example, to display educational websites or to run through the elements of a topic via an interactive demonstration. However, the potential of these as a tool to make

mathematics really exciting was not always realised. Similarly, some rooms include lively, challenging and interesting display, for example of pupils' work or about fascinating problems and the lives of famous mathematicians of the past. This is similarly not consistent so that pupils do not consistently experience the excitement of mathematics, although they do learn its techniques effectively.

Mathematics across the curriculum

107. Although all departments include a member of staff charged with overseeing the implementation of the mathematics thread of the national strategy to raise standards in Years 7 to 9, they do not meet regularly, and no-one is currently responsible for monitoring this element of provision. Consequently, the use of mathematical skills in other subjects is not consistently promoted. The mathematics department sets work in context when appropriate, but pupils do not readily transfer the skills learned here to other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 8 were seen struggling to work out the scores in a quiz in science. This is compounded by the weak numerical skills of a number of pupils, who do not have instant recall of, for example, multiplication tables. Nevertheless, good use is made of pupils' skills of graphing and interpretation in geography, spreadsheets are used effectively in ICT and good reference is made to the skills of scaling drawings in design and technology.

SCIENCE

108. The school teaches courses in dual award science, dual award applied science, single award and entry level science in Years 10 and 11. These courses were sampled and teaching and learning are good and pupils are making good progress. The dual award science was inspected in depth.

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good with a clearly shared vision and high expectations.
- Teaching is good; challenging activities are planned to meet pupils' needs.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good contributing to good behaviour and learning.
- Information on pupils' attainment is used well to inform planning and for assessing pupils' progress.
- Marking does not always help pupils to know how to improve their knowledge and skills.
- Though pupils' literacy skills improve through good teaching, weaknesses prevent some pupils from achieving more in examinations.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Standards of work seen	Average	Average	Average
2003 Year 9 national test results 2003 GCSE results	Below Average	Below Average	-
Teaching	Good	Good	Good

Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Very Good		
Management	Very Good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Good		

Commentary

109. Results of the national tests for Year 9 pupils taken in 2003 were below the national average but were in line with schools with pupils of similar prior attainment. In 2004, overall results dipped because the number of pupils gaining higher levels fell. Girls did better than boys. The results of the GCSE dual award in 2003 were below the national average. Results in 2004 rose maintaining the upward trend of the last few years. Girls continued to do better than boys. However, boys' attainment on entry was below that of girls.
110. Attainment in science when pupils join the school is below average and standards of literacy often well below. Standards seen in science during the inspection were average and an improvement on recent test and examination results and pupils are achieving well. Pupils are achieving well as there has been an improvement in the pupils' literacy skills and in their behaviour and attitudes since the last inspection. Pupils are making good progress in all years and are gaining both knowledge and understanding of biology, chemistry and physics. Their investigative skills and practical skills are improving because they are well taught. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their needs are well met through the teaching and the suitability of the course that they are following. Weak spelling of scientific words and the difficulty many pupils have in constructing written sentences and paragraphs affect their ability to achieve more in national examinations and tests. The department is employing effective strategies to help these pupils with key words and phrases and with examination skills. The use of ICT to improve pupils' ability to analyse and predict is beginning to have an effect but still needs to be developed. Pupils in Year 9 record results and present them in a variety of ways. They construct graphs and have a good understanding of fair testing. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 can interpret data, predict outcomes and understand the importance of controlling variables. Higher attaining pupils have a well-developed understanding of science and can debate the moral and social issues in topics such as selective breeding and organ transplants. The most able pupils have opportunities to further their scientific knowledge by visits to universities.
111. Teaching is good overall, and often very good or excellent, and as a result pupils learn well. At its strongest, teaching is innovative showing good planning and there is a good match of a variety of suitable teaching strategies to meet the learning needs of pupils. Strategies to promote and challenge the thinking skills of pupils are particularly effective in raising their motivation and self esteem. For example, active team games test scientific knowledge and understanding and the ability to make connections between facts learned in lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of their pupils. Relationships are warm and encouraging and teachers use the school's code of behaviour effectively. As a result pupils' attitudes are positive and cooperative and learning and progress are good. In a few lessons observed the pace of the lesson was not brisk enough and resulted in some low level disruption by some pupils so slowing down the progress of the class. Assessment of work is satisfactory. There is good monitoring of pupils' progress towards their targets. Marking, however, is insufficiently focussed on helping pupils with their further understanding of science and their

investigative skills. The advanced skills teachers are making a very positive contribution to the department's teaching.

112. There is a very positive ethos within the department and a shared set of values aimed at raising standards further. The leadership has resulted in a strong team of teachers sharing ideas, resources and effective strategies. There is considerable emphasis placed on mentoring pupils, matching teachers' strengths to pupils' needs and there are specific strategies now in place to improve examination skills. There are good out-of-hours learning opportunities for all pupils. Pupils' progress is monitored very thoroughly and carefully and teaching planned to raise the aspirations and achievement of all abilities. Laboratories are well looked after with examples of pupils' work, course requirements and key words attractively displayed. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The careful monitoring of pupils' progress, the emphasis on improving the skills and knowledge needed for examination success and the overall good teaching and curriculum opportunities are having the effect of raising standards in all year groups and in particular at GCSE.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good teaching and learning in the GNVQ course in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7, 8 and 9 because they are well taught.
- Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 do not benefit fully from teachers' marking and assessment because of the way their work is stored, organised and presented.
- Pupils' progress in ICT across subjects, in Years 10 and 11 especially, is not tracked well enough or correctly reported at the end of Year 11.
- Assessment is not used well enough to set targets for pupils.
- Work set does not always match the ability of pupils.
- Poor attendance affects the results of a few pupils taking GNVQ.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Standards of work seen	Average	Average	Average
2003 Teachers' assessments 2003 GCSE results	Average	Below average	-
Teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Learning	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory		
Management	Satisfactory		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Good		

Commentary

113. Pupils enter the school with varying experiences in using ICT. Overall standards when pupils join the school are below average except in Year 7. Year 7 pupils have benefited from the improved provision of ICT in local primary schools and their standards are above average. Teachers' assessments in 2003 for Year 9 pupils show standards were average. These standards were maintained in 2004 and match the current average standard of pupils' work. This represents good achievement. By Year 9 pupils complete the national scheme of work in ICT although more able pupils have difficulty applying advanced functions when completing the modelling task using spreadsheets.
114. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average. Results have significantly improved and in 2004, half the pupils taking GNVQ ICT achieved merit grades. The ability of pupils opting for ICT is better matched to the requirements of the GNVQ examination. Standards seen in GNVQ examination classes during the inspection confirm these improved standards. Standards of those pupils not taking examinations in Year 11 are average as evidenced by their ICT work in English, science, maths and design and technology. All pupils in Year 10 not opting for GNVQ are now taking the GCSE short course but work in this course has only just begun and no judgement can be made on standards on the limited work seen. Standards in GNVQ represent good achievement for these pupils. Achievement overall in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Pupils use ICT appropriately across a range of subjects. They complete work using data logging, digital microscopes and spreadsheets in science. In design and technology there is good use of ICT across the subject including the use of graphics. In geography and leisure and tourism pupils use digital photography and the use of graphs to complete survey work. In English and other subjects pupils use word processing and desktop publishing to complete coursework, to create display work and to research projects using the internet.
115. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good overall and some very good lessons were seen. Teachers have good control and maintain positive relationships with pupils so they behave well and enjoy learning. Lessons are well planned in line with the suggestions of the national strategy to raise standards in Years 7 to 9. The tasks provide good challenge for higher achieving pupils but often do not match the abilities of lower achieving pupils whose progress would improve with more skills based tasks rather than extended projects. The current storage and presentation of work in files on the computer limits the effectiveness of teachers' assessments and makes it difficult for pupils to consolidate their learning. The use of headers and footers on all work would also help track pupils' progression.

116. Teaching and learning in examination classes in Years 10 and 11 are also good. Teachers are knowledgeable and focussed upon examination requirements. Pupils are set clear objectives with appropriate time frames and their work is continually checked. The majority of pupils are able to work independently and complete their coursework which adds considerably to their knowledge of the world of work and business. Poor attendance by a few pupils is a significant factor in their lack of examination success. Teaching and learning overall in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory. Pupils use ICT effectively across a number of subjects but there is no overall monitoring or reporting of their progress.

117. Improvement in the provision of ICT since the last inspection is good. Standards are rising and the GCSE short course has been introduced for all pupils not taking GNVQ in Year 10. There is good evaluation of teaching in the department but the monitoring of pupils' work remains a weakness in Years 7, 8 and 9 and insufficient use is being made of assessment information to set targets for pupils.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

118. Overall, pupils have average level ICT skills which they use competently in many subjects. They use ICT creatively in English. Year 8 pupils give excellent Power Point presentations to support their writing of poetry; they use digital technology very effectively to record activities and plays. Pupils use technology well in science, music and design and technology. ICT is not used enough in mathematics, art and design, physical education and religious education and is underused to help pupils with special educational needs.

119. There has been good improvement in the use of ICT to support learning across subjects since the previous inspection. Resources have improved particularly in science, design and technology and music. Teachers are increasingly confident in their use of ICT and use projection and interactive whiteboards well to support learning in music, geography, history, ICT, and modern and foreign languages.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership shows a clear vision for the development of the subject.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to learn independently.
- Support for improving pupils' literacy in geography is very good.
- There is not enough additional in-class support for pupils with special educational needs.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average	Below average
2003 GCSE results	-	Below average	-

Teaching	Good	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good		
Management	Good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Good		

Commentary

120. The results of both the 2003 and 2004 teachers' assessments in Year 9 were below average; standards in the current Year 9 are closer to, but still below, expectations. Pupils' attainment on entry is well below average: their experience of the subject is varied, geographical skills are underdeveloped and many have low levels of literacy. The good progress made by all pupils in Years 7 to 9 is helped by the many opportunities for them to learn through independent enquiry and research, both in the classroom and in the field, and by the very good strategies for developing a specifically geographical style of writing and speaking. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of places and can describe human and physical patterns and processes, such as volcanic activity, but show less understanding of their consequences.
121. The 2003 GCSE results, although below average, continued a trend of steady improvement, with both the highest and lowest attaining pupils performing particularly well. The unconfirmed results for 2004 were lower but overall the great emphasis placed on producing high quality coursework and the clear focus on developing the technique of higher-level responses to examination questions is clearly an effective strategy. Pupils develop a sound understanding of basic geographical ideas through case studies but are less confident in explaining more complex patterns, such as the correlation of population distribution and the location of industry in Japan.
122. Good, and often very good, teaching enables pupils to learn well in manageable, incremental steps through varied tasks which challenge pupils of all attainment levels. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively in bringing the world into the classroom as, for instance, when a Year 9 class studying volcanoes were able to watch live pictures of the activity on Mount St Helens. Teachers know their pupils and support them well with individual attention and with textbooks and materials matched to their capabilities. However, those with special educational needs would benefit from additional help in reading, interpretation and the organisation of their work. Good assessment procedures mean that pupils are well informed of their progress in relation to national standards and what they must do to attain clearly defined targets. Pupils respond to good teaching with positive attitudes, hard work and good behaviour.
123. The effectiveness of leadership in establishing geography as a strong and popular subject is evident in the quality of teaching of a team of non-specialists and in the greatly increased numbers choosing the subject for GCSE. Strategic planning is informed by thorough self-evaluation and clearly identifies improvements in teaching, curriculum and resources as priorities for raising standards further. Schemes of work provide a very good basis for lesson planning and an extensive programme of off-site and extra-curricular activities enhances the geography curriculum. There are few formal checks carried out within the subject on the quality teaching other than those carried out through individual teachers' performance management. Informal observation, discussion and sharing of good practice, however, have a positive impact on the quality of teaching.

124. The impact of leadership on raising standards, improving teaching and developing the curriculum represents good progress in the short time since the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Management is ineffective because subject performance is not being monitored well enough and the strategies for improvement, which are in place, are not effectively implemented.
- Pupils are well behaved and respond well in lessons.
- Teaching and learning are inconsistent and good practice is not identified and shared.
- Lessons provide good support for developing pupils' literacy.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average	Below average
2003 GCSE results	-	Well below average	-
Teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Unsatisfactory		
Management	Poor		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory		

Commentary

125. The overall quality of teaching together with their generally positive attitudes to learning ensures that the majority of pupils makes satisfactory progress in history. However, subject management has important weaknesses. Issues raised at the previous inspection have either not been attended to, or improvements, for example, the introduction of cohesive schemes of work, have been too recent to have any significant impact on examination results, standards or pupils' achievement. Some good progress has been made in devising assessment procedures in Years 10 and 11, which usefully include the pupil in the process of monitoring their progress towards the targets set for them. However, they are not effective because they are not being used consistently. Resources have improved but there are still not enough textbooks.
126. As at the time of the previous inspection, the above average standards indicated in the teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9, are not reflected in the work seen during the inspection. Arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 are sound but assessment tasks and the marking of pupils' work are not always based on an accurate understanding of National Curriculum levels. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the reasons for and results of historical changes are steadily developed after a good basis for future learning is quickly established in Year 7. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils write well at length, reflecting the good support provided for pupils' literacy development. Progress in other key historical skills such as the use of evidence is more uneven, resulting from differences in the quality of learning experiences between teaching groups and the weaknesses in the assessment procedures. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils because learning activities are adapted for them.
127. Examination results in 2003 improved in relation to 2002, but still remain well below average. Girls outperformed boys and too many pupils did not do as well as they should have in relation to their starting points at the beginning of the course. In 2004 provisional results suggest a broadly similar picture but are currently under review by the examination board. In the work seen in Year 11, standards have improved and higher attaining pupils, girls in particular, write effectively when analysing sources of information. Most pupils use their knowledge and understanding of events soundly in support of their opinions, for example about the effectiveness of the League of Nations but sometimes lack real detail. However, the majority of pupils do not use their own knowledge and understanding of events well enough in support of their arguments.

128. Common strengths in teaching include the quality of classroom relationships, support for pupils' literacy development, and effective use of audio-visual technology. Other significant strengths, such as very good planning based on recent national strategies aimed at improving teaching, the provision of interesting tasks well matched to pupils' capabilities, and very well designed resources, were evident in some lessons. However, in the lessons observed, the quality of teaching ranged from unsatisfactory to very good. In some lessons, tasks were not well matched to pupils' capabilities and the marking of completed written work did not accurately reflect pupils' strengths and weaknesses. There is currently no strategy in place to identify and share the good and very good practice and eliminate the weaknesses.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results and standards are improving and pupils achieve well.
- Interesting and demanding teaching capitalises on pupils' positive attitudes and leads to good learning.
- Religious education makes a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Innovative curriculum arrangements are having a positive effect on standards.
- Assessment and marking procedures are not always consistently followed.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average	Below average
2003 GCSE results	-	Below average	-
Teaching	Good	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good		
Management	Good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Good		

Commentary

129. In 2003, results in the "short" GCSE course in religious studies were well below average and girls outperformed boys in common with the national trend. Results have steadily improved over recent years and this trend continued in 2004 when nearly half the pupils entered for the examination obtained the higher A* to C grades. The school's analysis of their performance indicates satisfactory added value overall and good achievement by girls. The proportion of pupils entered for the examination has also steadily increased so that most pupils now obtain a qualification in the subject. However, the achievement of a minority of pupils has been adversely affected by their absence from religious education lessons, albeit to take part in other school activities. Year 11 pupils' capacity to make personal response to religious issues is good but the depth and extent of their knowledge and understanding is inconsistent as the result of differences in the ways in which this is taught. Standards seen however are close to but below average overall.

130. Pupils are now starting to follow the GCSE course in Year 9. They are beginning to develop a sound understanding of Christian and Jewish beliefs about marriage and the family with higher attaining pupils confidently backing up their explanations and opinions with well chosen scriptural references. Throughout Years 7 to 9 pupils learn to write at length often making good connections between their learning. For example, they make good links between aspects of coming of age ceremonies in Christianity and the other world faiths, and their own lives. However, description and explanation of key beliefs and worship in the religions studied tends to lack sufficient depth. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers usually adapt the learning well to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Recent innovative curriculum arrangements aimed at ensuring good continuity of learning in religious education from primary to secondary school have a positive effect and a majority of pupils in Year 7 is already reaching expected standards.
131. Throughout Years 7 to 9 teachers provide a range of interesting and challenging learning tasks, which involve the pupils practically, for example, in role-play and this contributes to the good achievement. Good use is made of interactive computer technology to present interesting and sometimes exciting sources of information, for example film clips, which help bring the subject alive for pupils. Pupils' work is marked regularly but not always in a way which allows pupils to see the standards reached and how they can improve. Good assessment procedures in Years 10 and 11 are not always used consistently so some pupils are unsure about the progress, which they are making towards the targets set for them.
132. The department is very strongly led and well managed. There is a very strong sense of commitment to all aspects of pupils' personal development through religious education reflected in the wide range of learning experiences and the opportunities provided to see the positive effects of faithfulness to a set of beliefs and values. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good and the vision for further improvement is reflected well in development planning.

TECHNOLOGY

133. The school teaches courses in electronics, food studies, graphics, resistant materials and textiles. The courses in electronics, food studies and resistant materials were sampled. The teaching and learning in a Year 7 electronics lesson were very good because the pace of the lesson was very good. Achievement was very good and standards were average. Food studies and resistant materials are both studied to GCSE. In 2003 the results in food studies were excellent and were the best in the school. In resistant materials they were very good. Two lessons were observed in food studies and teaching and learning were good. The variety of teaching styles, that also incorporated praise, enabled achievement to be good. Two Year 11 lessons in resistant materials were observed. Although standards were below average the satisfactory teaching enabled the pupils to move steadily towards completing their GCSE coursework.

Design and technology – graphics

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The large number of pupils entered for GCSE in 2003 achieved well in relation to their prior standards and gained results in line with national averages.
- Teaching and learning through the use of ICT improves pupils' achievement.
- Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress raises standards.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Standards of work seen	Average	Above average	Above average
2003 GCSE results		Average	
Teaching	Good	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Good		
Management	Very good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Good		

Commentary

134. Attainment in graphics when pupils join the school in Year 7 is below average. Current standards of work in Year 9 are average and pupils achieve well. This is due to pupils experiencing much of their learning on computers. An example of this was seen when the world of advertising was brought into the classroom when pupils designed a point-of-sale display that was aesthetically pleasing. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their peers. The twenty-six highest attaining pupils in Year 9 are taught as a 'super set'. They have targets to raise the standard of their work and they do well.
135. In 2003, ninety-seven pupils, from the whole ability range, took GCSE graphics. For this cohort to get results the same as the national average for design and technology was good achievement. From work seen during the inspection standards on the GCSE course are above average. Pupils have well-developed ICT skills that they are able to use to produce outcomes that score well against the examination assessment objectives. This was seen when GCSE pupils followed the design process through from the initial brief to the end product when designing a label for a fizzy drink. This indicates that these pupils are maintaining their earlier good progress.
136. Teachers are knowledgeable and confident in their abilities to teach well. The structure of lessons is good. They have strong introductions telling pupils what they have to do, and time at the end to review the positive learning that has taken place. In the main part of the lesson teachers circulate giving help or advice where it is appropriate. They challenge the higher attaining pupils with open-ended questions, have a sympathetic approach to all pupils, and are particularly supportive of the lower attaining pupils. All projects are given marks that are recorded. These are used to chart pupils' progress and set them targets. This rigorous system ensures that all pupils achieve their potential.
137. High aspirations of the leadership of the subject are leading to rising standards. Leadership is a good role model for expertise in teaching. This is of particular benefit to student teachers training in the department. The management of the technology faculty is very good. The model for self-evaluation as seen in graphics is used in all the subject areas in the faculty. Self-evaluation is detailed and honest. It is used to inform the subject's development plan, which is moving the subject forward.
138. Resources for graphics, particularly through the provision of access to computers, have contributed significantly to the good improvement since the previous inspection.

Design and technology - textiles

Provision in design and technology - textiles is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching includes clear steps to enable pupils to learn confidently.
- Accurate assessment feeds into the tracking of pupils' progress and helps to raise standards.
- Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are not used effectively.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory
Standards of work seen	Below average	Average	Average
2003 GCSE results	-	Low	-
Teaching	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory
Learning	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good		
Management	Satisfactory		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Satisfactory		

Commentary

139. Standards when pupils join the school in Year 7 are below average and well below average for the lowest attaining pupils. On entry to the school pupils have had little experience in learning about fabric, fibres and yarns. Standards are maintained and remain at below average by Year 9. This is broadly in line with the teachers' assessments. This is satisfactory achievement for these pupils because they have advanced their skills and knowledge of fabrics, yarns and fibres. Pupils in Year 9 are able to demonstrate abilities to work safely with equipment. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with their peers. Their individual education plans are not used sufficiently to inform planning, teaching and assessment and because of this opportunities for individual pupils to make more progress are missed. Girls do better than boys.
140. Results at GCSE in 2003 were low but numbers were too small to make comparisons to national averages. Few pupils chose the subject and only one in four gained the higher grades A*-C. Standards in the present Year 11 are improving and are average and this represents good achievement for this group of girls. Designing and making are better developed than evaluation. Indications are that GCSE results will improve because of the improvement in standards noted during the first year of the course. Pupils follow the design process effectively. They model their first idea in paper. This leads them to make improvements for the final product.
141. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. Adherence to the faculty's policy of using well-structured lessons enables pupils to know what to do at every stage of the lesson. Teaching that leads pupils through their learning step-by-step improves their achievement and learning. In Years 7 to 9, when pupils evaluate the design process teachers do not give enough guidance in the literacy component of the task. All pupils benefit from individual tuition in each lesson. Pupils can programme and sew on the computerised sewing machine. Pleasant relationships exist between teacher and pupils which enables a partnership of learning to be pursued. Teachers use attainment information from the end of Year 9 to set short and long term targets for the girls who opt for GCSE textiles. Teachers' records show that marks for every project contribute to end of year assessments that appear on the informative reports to parents.
142. There is a clear determination to drive up standards and action is being taken to ensure that this occurs. This is evident from the team approach to improvement that exists in the faculty. The subject is effectively managed and the momentum of pupils' learning is maintained through smooth day-to-day running in this subject area.

143. The subject has improved satisfactorily in the last two years because standards are rising, particularly in Year 11.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are very low.
- Teachers' low expectations depress standards.
- The content of lessons has insufficient demand.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is inaccurate and comments inhibit progress.
- The ethos of pupils in Year 7 is good.
- Visits to art galleries extend pupils' learning experiences.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average	Below average
2003 GCSE results	-	Very low	-
Teaching	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Leadership	Unsatisfactory		
Management	Unsatisfactory		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory		

Commentary

144. The Year 9 teachers' assessments show that the pupils are attaining below the national average. Attainment at present is below average. Pupils enter the school with variable skills; overall they are below average with some pupils well below average. They make unsatisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. This is because teaching does not develop pupils' understanding of the concepts and techniques used in creative art and design. Lessons have clear objectives but there is too low an expectation by the teachers that pupils will produce good quality outcomes. Pupils do not fully understand the basic uses of some of the formal elements of the subject such as tone, line and texture. They do too little of the very important observational drawing. Pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress in line with their peers. When learning support is provided in their lessons their achievement is better. Girls achieve better standards than boys.

145. GCSE results are very low, and have been over recent years. Pupils who take art and design do not do as well as they do in their other subjects. Poor attendance has affected the results of some pupils. The standard of pupils' work when they choose the subject is below the national average and the progress they make during the course is unsatisfactory. From the scrutiny of work standards at the end of Year 11 are below average. This represents unsatisfactory achievement for these pupils because indications are that their GCSE results will be very low. The tasks they are set to do satisfy examination requirements but they do not extend pupils' learning sufficiently to raise standards. Use of some of the formal elements of art is satisfactory, such as texture, colour and composition, but, overall, it does not enable pupils to present their

individual ideas effectively. Pupils' research work is patchy and reveals inadequate background knowledge of the work of other artists and how to make connections with it.

146. For lessons, teachers prepare the work they set out to do. However, too often, the structure of the lesson is weak. The pace of teaching does not meet the needs of pupils with different capabilities. There is insufficient variety to the work that is offered. These reasons make teaching unsatisfactory. Pupils do not learn enough about the ideas that artists are expressing because too much emphasis is given to biographies. Pupils do no three-dimensional work. Many pupils are not willing to work at home. This is a barrier to them developing independent learning skills. The work set lacks challenge and results in unsatisfactory learning. Assessment is inaccurate and impedes raising achievement. There is a lack of clear constructive comments to tell pupils what they need to do to improve. When teachers make negative remarks it disaffects the pupils concerned.

147. Leadership does not provide a good role model for teaching. Reasonable team spirit exists but it is ineffective in bringing about change. Departmental self-evaluation clearly indicates areas for improvement but the action taken is ineffective. The department's development plan enumerates items for improvement but outcomes are unsatisfactory. A review of the curriculum has taken place and areas for further development have been identified. Professional development of teaching is emerging but so far has been ineffective. The ethos of pupils in Year 7 shows that they are eager to learn. They behave well and give teachers every opportunity to teach them effectively. Accommodation is good. Access to computers contributes to good resources. Pupils have extended the breadth of their knowledge of art and artists by visiting the Baltic Gallery in Gateshead and walking the Sunderland riverside sculpture trail.

148. Provision since the last inspection has not improved because GCSE results, though improved a little, are still very low. Teaching, learning and achievement are unsatisfactory, as they were in 2002.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Significant improvement is due to very good leadership and management.
- Pupils' good achievement is the result of good teaching which is supported by very good resources in both classroom percussion and technology.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good; they show a good capacity for work.
- Schemes for assessment and target setting are well planned.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Standards of work seen	Average	Average	Average
2003 GCSE results	-	Well below average	-
Teaching	Good	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good.		
Management	Very good		

Commentary

149. Results in the 2003 GCSE were well below national averages but within the past year there has been a very significant improvement in standards and the 2004 provisional GCSE results are much improved and likely to be much closer to the national average. Standards in the present Year 11 show this improvement being maintained. The pupils are most enthusiastic about the very new resources now available to them, particularly in the field of technology. Pupils are making good initial progress in using the new software as an aid to composition. One group of pupils, performing a most accomplished song by one of their members, was utilising to the full the very good new accommodation which allowed them to show off their considerable skills on guitars and drums.
150. However, the present overall average standards in Year 11 do reflect the less than satisfactory musical experiences that these pupils had in early years but they are now making good progress in making up lost ground in the areas of composition and performance due to the good teaching they receive.
151. Teacher assessments at the end of last year's Year 9 showed standards not only to be well below the national average but also to be very low in comparison to other subjects in the school. This again is an indication of unsatisfactory learning in earlier years. However, standards have improved considerably in response to good teaching and are now average overall. A Year 9 class, observed during the inspection, showed very good understanding of the structure of the Samba dance and produced most enjoyable and praiseworthy performances in their group work. Year 7 pupils also showed good achievement in that they had also developed a good sense of ensemble, playing with strong conviction in their group work exploring rhythm. They played with a good sense of pulse and were very adept at reading the music notation. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils.
152. The present improving standards show that the pupils are being well taught. The teaching is never less than good and sometimes is very good. The pupils respond to this good teaching with enthusiasm. Their attitudes to music are clearly shown by the very good behaviour that was apparent in all the lessons observed. They show interest, listen well and answer questions readily, and with understanding, and clearly very much enjoy the new accommodation and resources. The strengths of the teaching lie in the very well developed professional skills of the teachers and the relationships they establish with the pupils. There is an excellent command of the subject in all aspects and lessons are planned effectively, with the material being well aimed at the pupils. Teachers' expectations are high and are well supported the overall planning. Schemes for assessment of pupils' work have developed well but need to be fully in place very soon so that pupils are really aware of their standards and what they need to do to improve.
153. This is a good and very much improving department. The previous inspection found the music provision to be unsatisfactory but the vision of the new leadership, supported by the equally very good management, has enabled the development of a department that is committed to high standards of music education. Recent developments are significant, with the move into new, and unusually interesting, accommodation. This, together with the

very good provision now for information technology in music, shows how just far the school has come in a very short time.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are good and close to the national average because good teaching motivates the pupils to succeed.
- A good programme of extra-curricular activities encourages participation and good achievement for higher attaining pupils.
- Regular monitoring of teaching has taken place, but this has not been successful in reducing some ineffective teaching.
- Too many girls in Years 10 and 11 do not take part in lessons on a regular basis.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Standards of work seen	Average	Average	Average
2003 GCSE results	-	Average	-
Teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory		
Management	Satisfactory		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Satisfactory		

Commentary

154. The proportion of pupils achieving A* to C in GCSE grades in 2003 was close to the national average. This represented good achievement for the group and pupils do well in physical education compared to the other subjects they take. There are far fewer girls than boys taking the examination course, so valid comparisons are not possible. In GCSE practical lessons Year 11 boys show good control and the ability to pass accurately in football. Year 11 girls refine basic individual moves and develop simple routines in trampolining. With the additional support from an experienced sports co-ordinator, Year 10 GCSE skills of passing and shooting in basketball are above average for their age. The few girls in the group make a positive contribution to both the practices, and the small sided games. Pupils respond well to praise, and strive to improve. Due to the structure of the GCSE course, where the theory work is done in the last six months of Year 11, very little work was available. Although pupils' work is regularly marked, there was little evidence of guidance from the teacher to help the pupils to know what to do to improve.

155. Standards are average in Year 9. There is no significant difference between the boys and girls. In netball, the girls have the ability to find space, and lose their marker, and pass accurately; the less able have difficulty with the footwork rule, but show a basic understanding of positions on court. Pupils know how to warm up but rarely take responsibility for this part of the lessons. In Years 10 and 11 in the course which all pupils take, the standards are average. In small sided games of football the basic skills of control, passing and shooting are done well by most boys. In Year 10 netball, the girls show good understanding, and play a full game with good movement and good footwork by the majority. In Year 11, in trampoline and aerobic dance, the skills are less defined, and girls perform at a basic level because they have had less experience of these activities in previous years. Achievement for all groups by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 is satisfactory overall.
156. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons, and make satisfactory progress. Learning support is available in a small number of lessons, and this enhanced all the pupils' opportunities by good support of the lead teacher. Physically talented pupils achieve well in the subject, and have provision for further opportunities with an extensive extra curricular provision. There are regular fixtures in football and netball, and opportunities to take part in athletics and cross-country, and courses in dance, tag rugby, and fitness for rowing, arranged by the district sports organisation. Badminton and table tennis are popular recreational activities after school. A learning support assistant organises Year 8 netball, which has links with the community. Year 10 pupils participate in the Junior Sports Leaders Award. This helps the pupils to improve their understanding of the game, and their ability to evaluate performance, by giving the opportunity to referee and coach.

157. Most of the teaching is good but there are unsatisfactory and occasionally poor lessons in both key stages. Most lessons are well structured, have pace, and the tasks set are challenging for all, creating a good learning environment. Effective use of questioning and answer was used at the start of lessons, drawing on the pupils' knowledge, but pupils were rarely required to evaluate their work to help increase their understanding. In a Year 11 GCSE trampoline group, good use of analysis and evaluation helped to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils in lessons were mainly good, but in the vast majority of classes a few pupils did not take a physically active part. The percentage of girls not participating was higher than the boys. However, these pupils were well organised by teachers and were actively engaged as equipment monitors and referees in most lessons. Where the teaching is inadequate, it is due to poor use of time, a lack of effective planning, and inappropriate activities. As a result, some pupils become disaffected, and deliberately try to disrupt.
158. Assessment of pupils' attainment is carried out at the end of each course of activity, identifying both their ability and attitudes helping to motivate pupils. Assessment is organised well, but the logistics are time consuming because ICT is not used to full effect.
159. Leadership has created a positive ethos and a good team spirit, but the strategies to improve poor teaching have not been effective. The curriculum has a games bias, which has caused a lack of interest for participation in physical activity for a group of girls in Year 10 and 11. This problem is currently being addressed by offering aerobic dance activities, which is popular, but more aesthetic and creative physical activities, such as trampolining are not available to pupils in Years 7 to 9.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

160. The Level 2 course in health and social care course was inspected in depth and is reported on below. Other vocational courses taught include applied science, business, ICT and leisure and tourism. Pupils are also entered for GCSE business studies. At least one lesson was observed in each of these courses apart from ICT which was inspected in depth and is reported on in full in the ICT report. A successful course in engineering is run in partnership with a local college of further education but this was not sampled.
161. A programme of Increased Flexibility offers students courses which include hairdressing and construction at the local college of further education. Lessons were not observed in these courses. In discussion with pupils attending the Increased Flexibility courses, they expressed appreciation of the courses and they enjoy the learning experiences offered. However, the school is not happy with the level of accreditation offered, which is less than NVQ Level 1 for some courses, and is currently negotiating alternative arrangements with another provider.

Business

162. In 2003, 5 pupils took the GSCE business studies with 40 per cent gaining grades A* to C. In the GNVQ business studies 59 pupils were entered and 86 per cent passed. In 2004 the school entered 94 pupils for GCSE business studies, 92 pupils passed and 40 per cent achieved grades A* to C. Comparisons with national averages are not yet possible. Two lessons in applied GSCE business studies were sampled during the inspection. In these lessons, teaching was satisfactory. The lessons were taught at a good pace, with effective questioning and good use of the interactive whiteboards for

explanations. Teaching of some aspects of mathematics were not accurate. Pupils were well motivated, although some of their coursework was behind schedule. The standards seen were in line with national expectations but weak numeracy skills impeded the progress of some pupils. Achievement was satisfactory.

Dual award applied science

163. A good lesson in Year 11 was observed. In response to good teaching, including effective use of ICT, pupils were taking responsibility for finding out about local industries using science-based production processes. A business and science day in the previous year had been particularly successful in contributing to their learning.

Leisure and tourism

164. Examination results in the leisure and tourism course were above average in 2003 and similar results were achieved in 2004. In the one lesson observed challenging teaching enabled most pupils to achieve well in evaluating the location of a local leisure centre. Standards were below average but in line with pupils' prior attainment.

Health and social care

Provision in health and social care is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is raising the aspirations and achievement of pupils.
- The relationship between teachers and pupils is good and contributing to the good behaviour and attitudes of the pupils.
- There are good opportunities for work-related learning.
- The very good teamwork of teachers contributes significantly to raising achievement.
- There is no uptake of the course by boys.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 10 to 11
Achievement	Good
Standards of work seen	Average
2003 GNVQ results	Below average
Teaching	Good
Learning	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Good

Commentary

165. The 2003 GNVQ course results were below average. The results in 2004 GCSE were similar to those of the previous year but at the time of the inspection the school was waiting for the result of an appeal to the examination board. The wider spread of ability in the pupils currently studying the subject has resulted in both standards and achievement improving. This is helped by good teaching and the emphasis teachers put on improving the literacy skills and the portfolio work of pupils. Achievement is good in both Years 10 and 11 with pupils able to use ICT for both research and presentation. They are knowledgeable about aspects of the National Health Service and the specific needs of individuals. They speak confidently about their experiences in work placements and how

this has contributed to their understanding of the subject. Some pupils still experience difficulty in expressing their knowledge and understanding when writing.

166. Teaching and learning are good overall and some lessons are very good. Lessons are well planned and delivered with a good variety of task and activities to motivate the pupils. At its strongest there is emphasis on the ability of pupils to work independently or in small groups and to make informed decisions. The pace of the lessons and the high expectations of the teachers ensure good learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and as a result pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are correspondingly very good. Assessment is good leading to pupils striving for higher achievement in examination work. There is a good emphasis by teachers on work-related learning and the department organises visits and invites professionals from the Education, Social and the National Health Services and from local industry to speak to pupils.

167. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is no one person who has responsibility for the subject and no central record of pupils' progress or records of meetings and planning. Teachers work very well together as a team and all contribute to the planning and to the resources. Teachers analyse pupils' progress to inform their planning for individuals. The department has made good progress since the last inspection and has strategies in place which are being used effectively to continue to raise standards. The teaching is more focussed on raising the achievement of pupils. The behaviour of the pupils is now good. Despite active marketing of this course to boys they have not yet opted for it. The department is now using good male role models from care homes and the National Health Service to address this issue.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

168. Citizenship is taught as part of the course all pupils experience in personal, social, health and citizenship education. Personal, social and health education was sampled across the year groups. Pupils enjoy the lessons. Teaching was good in most lessons and pupils were well motivated and taking part in a good range of learning activities. Where teaching was satisfactory not enough training has taken place to prepare teachers to teach the subject and the range of learning activities was more limited.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership demonstrates the vision, determination and capacity to establish citizenship as a high profile subject.
- Schemes of work and resources are very good.
- The teaching of citizenship across the curriculum is inconsistent and often incidental.
- There are many activities to enrich the citizenship curriculum.
- The assessment of pupils in Year 9 in 2004 was inaccurate.

Key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
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Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average	Below average
Teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good		
Management	Good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Satisfactory		

Commentary

169. The school's initial plans to implement the National Curriculum for citizenship proved unsatisfactory and were replaced, under new leadership, by the current scheme in 2003. Consequently standards attained by pupils in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 are below expectations because they have not yet experienced the full range of the new curriculum for citizenship. In particular, knowledge and understanding of major themes such as the criminal justice system are significantly underdeveloped. Nevertheless, achievement is satisfactory given pupils' low recent starting points in this subject. The statutory assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2004, whilst giving equal weighting to all aspects of citizenship, were largely subjective and considerably overestimated the proportion of pupils working beyond expectations. Procedures are now in place to produce accurate assessment of pupils' progress.
170. Lessons are planned to provide a range of stimulating and challenging activities, with clear objectives, which take account of different learning styles. Pupils are encouraged to consider and analyse a wide range of situations in an objective manner; in Year 8, for example, pupils reflect on the short and long term consequences of crime through a "criminal and victims" game. There are ample opportunities for pupils to express and develop ideas orally, individually and in groups. Pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm and co-operate well with teachers and with each other. Teaching in other subjects contributes to the citizenship curriculum but there is a lack of consistency in identifying elements of citizenship, in making learning objectives explicit and in pupils recording their experiences.
171. Very good strategic planning has enabled the implementation of a coherent programme for the teaching of citizenship and personal, social and health education. Very good schemes of work and resources and a schedule of in-service training allow a team of 11 non-specialist teachers to plan well-structured lessons. Given the difficulty in holding team meetings, management is effective in enabling planning and the sharing of ideas and good practice to take place. A further audit to address the inconsistency of cross-curricular provision is underway. A very innovative range of activities, such as the recently held mock Euro elections, a local democracy week and involvement in the World Citizenship Project on eliminating prejudice, provides very good opportunities for active participation.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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