

INSPECTION REPORT

Hall Mead School

Upminster, Essex

LEA area: Havering

Unique reference number: 102337

Headteacher: Mr Alan Wunderly

Lead inspector: Ross Parker

Dates of inspection: 24th - 27th January 2005

Inspection number: 268392

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;	1014
School address:	Marlborough Gardens Upminster Essex
Postcode:	RM14 1SF
Telephone number:	01708 229655
Fax number:	01708 220232
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Diane Jenkin
Date of previous inspection:	March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hall Mead School is a specialist technology college catering for boys and girls from Year 7 to Year 11. It is situated in an established residential area of Upminster, which includes a significant proportion of local authority housing. Employment in the area is high, but experience of higher education is below average.

The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is low, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. However, an average proportion is entitled to Statements of Special Educational Need, though the school is leading a pilot scheme for the local authority where parents forego their right to a formal Statement so that resources can be diverted from bureaucracy to direct support. A very small proportion of the low number of pupils from ethnic minority groups use English as an additional language.

Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. Pressure for places at the school is high and pupil mobility is low. Having successfully supported developments in local schools for several years as a Beacon School, Hall Mead is now continuing this work as a Leading Edge School. It also plays a significant part in Graduate Teacher Training, and sees this as an important way of attracting staff in an area where recruitment is difficult.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
30046	Ross Parker	Lead inspector	Work-related learning
10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector	
32149	Nick Dry	Team inspector	Mathematics Special educational needs
2561	Tony Byrne	Team inspector	English
21873	Mary Le Breuilly	Team inspector	Science
17349	Paula Askew	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team inspector	Art and design
13805	Lynn Lowery	Team inspector	Design and technology
32147	Ann Wallis	Team inspector	Geography
24127	Jim Kidd	Team inspector	History
12110	Roger Bailess	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education
3162	Philip O'Neill	Team inspector	Religious education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Hall Mead School provides a **very good** standard of education with many excellent features. It supports **very good** achievement and personal development, and provides excellent value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the senior leadership team.
- Excellent behaviour, based on very high expectations and excellent relationships.
- Excellent inclusion of all pupils who attend the school, founded on excellent care and attention to their welfare.
- Excellent consultation of pupils and involvement in the way the school develops, leading to excellent levels of satisfaction amongst both pupils and parents.
- Excellent work to maintain the high quality of staffing in the school.
- Restricted opportunities for spiritual development due to the inconsistent delivery of a daily act of collective worship.
- Unsatisfactory information to parents about the achievement of some pupils in Years 10 and 11 in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Some less challenging lessons within the overall very good teaching and learning.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. All of the issues raised by that inspection have been dealt with effectively. Standards have continued to improve significantly. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. The school has extended its support for other local partners. The roles of all staff have been revised to increase the scope for raising standards further.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 11 results

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
	A	A	A	A*

Key: A - very high; 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.*

Results in the 2003 tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average, and they were sustained in 2004. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations maintained the well above average standards which have been the pattern in recent years. Work seen during the inspection showed that standards are above average overall by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 where pupils improve steadily on the average standards that they bring to the school. They make very good progress in both history and music. Pupils' understanding of work-related learning is not as well developed as their skills in other subjects. Achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11, and progress made by both boys and girls between Year 7 and their GCSE examinations is amongst the best nationally. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well, and in 2004 many gained good grades at GCSE.

Pupils' personal development is **very good**. Attendance is good, and punctuality is very good. Behaviour is excellent, and the very small minority of pupils who occasionally break the rules do not affect the learning of others. Pupils show very good attitudes to learning, though there is scope to develop even greater independence. Social and moral development are very good. Cultural development is good even though the school population provides less ethnic diversity than is usual in most other parts of the country. Spiritual development is good, though the daily act of collective

worship is not delivered consistently. This means that some pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to learn about different views on the meaning of life.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is **very good**. Teaching is **very good**. The excellent relationships and behaviour mean that pupils spend a very high proportion of time in lessons working very hard, and learning very well. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 where the high level of subject expertise is more consistent, and where lessons are more frequently exciting and innovative. A high proportion of excellent teaching was observed during the inspection.

The curriculum is very good. It is constantly reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. There is a very good range of extra curricular activities and these are very popular.

Care of pupils is excellent, and the quality of guidance and support is very good. Links with parents are very good though the school has overlooked the need to report how effectively pupils continue to develop their ICT skills if they do not follow an examination course in ICT in Years 10 and 11.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are **very good**. The headteacher and leadership team provide excellent direction, with very good support from governors who have a clear vision of the blend of traditional values and high quality innovation that they want to sustain. Extensive efforts to provide a workable daily act of collective worship have not yet succeeded in giving pupils equal access to valuable and stimulating opportunities for reflection, and there has been an oversight of the need to report in ICT. Management overall is very good though. The school is a powerful partnership between staff and pupils which is totally focussed on learning and personal development. This ethos pervades every activity, and there is a constant drive to reach even higher standards.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Both parents and pupils are highly satisfied with what the school has to offer. Pupils in particular value the fact that they are treated with respect from the moment they come to the school, and every individual is expected to succeed.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Spread the best practice in teaching more consistently across all subject areas, and spread the very good achievement in Years 10 and 11 down into Years 7 to 9.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship consistently so that all pupils have access to opportunities for reflection on spiritual issues.
- Report to parents on the achievement of all pupils in Years 10 and 11 in ICT.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are well **above average** overall. They are **above average** in Years 7 to 9, and **well above average** by Year 11. Achievement is **very good** for all pupils across Years 7 to 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' progress from Year 7 to GCSE examinations in Year 11 is amongst the best nationally.
- An excellent emphasis on inclusion supports pupils with special educational needs to achieve very well.
- Higher attainers do not always make as much progress in Years 7 to 9 as they do in similar schools.

Commentary

Key Stage 3

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003 (There are no comparative data for 2004)

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.1 (35.5)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	38.7 (37.3)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	36 (34)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 199 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Standards on entry to the school are average overall. Although pupils reach just above average levels in tests at the end of Year 6, when inspectors talked to them, watched them in lessons and looked at their work, they found that they were not sustaining these standards in new situations. When talking, reading, or writing pupils showed average skills, though they do improve significantly by Year 9. Skills in ICT vary considerably in Year 7 depending on the resources and expertise available in primary schools.
2. Achievement through Years 7 to 9 is good for both boys and girls, so that by the end of Year 9 standards are above average overall. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated considerably. In 2003 (the latest year for which comparisons are available) results were well above average nationally, and similar to those achieved by pupils in other schools who had reached similar levels by the end of Year 6.
3. Results in English were above the national average, but below the standards in similar schools, as they had been in 2002. This was because the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was well below that achieved in similar schools. In the 2004 tests the English results improved significantly, and exceeded teachers' expectations.
4. In mathematics results were well above the national average, and above the standards in similar schools. They had been well below the standards in similar schools in the previous year. Standards were maintained in 2004.
5. In science results were well above the national average, and matched the standards in similar schools, having been very low in comparison in 2002. Standards were maintained in 2004, though the percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels was smaller than expected.

6. Work seen during the inspection showed that standards are above average overall. They are well above average in drama, music, and in history, where the teaching and assessment methods are supporting some pupils to write at GCSE level in Year 9. Standards are average in work-related learning where the school is at an early stage in its work to raise the profile of enterprise and knowledge of the workplace.

Key Stage 4

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	85 (81)	52(52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (94)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (99)	96. (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	43.9 (42.9)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 216 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average, and achievement through Years 10 and 11 is very good. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average, and they have been very high compared to results in similar schools for the last four years. For several years now the progress that pupils have made during their five years at Hall Mead School has been amongst the best in the country.
8. Standards were particularly high in science. They were well above average in the majority of other subjects, and were above average in art and design and religious education. Standards were lower in geography, though still average nationally. Here the classes included a high proportion of pupils who were less successful across all of their subjects. Standards seen during the inspection confirmed overall very good achievement.
9. The school ensures that pupils are motivated to do their best regardless of the standards they are reaching. An emphasis on effort means that the great majority of pupils believe that they can succeed. As a result pupils with special educational needs are successful in examinations, and in 2004 many achieved good grades at GCSE. The very good provision available for pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language was seen in one instance where a careful diagnosis of language skills led to very good support. This resulted in very good achievement, particularly in the development of spoken English.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and personal development are **very good** and their behaviour is **excellent**. Their attendance is **good** and punctuality is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good attitudes make strong contributions to the standards they attain and their very good achievement.
- Pupils are very polite and behave exceptionally well in all situations.
- Pupils develop extremely good relationships with other pupils and with adults.
- The school's ethos and high expectations are particularly effective in promoting pupils' moral and social development.

- Some pupils get more chance to develop their self-awareness and spiritual understanding than others.

Commentary

- Pupils arrive at school and in lessons in very good time because they are committed to the school. They absorb the school's very strong work ethic. Pupils willingly apply themselves to their learning, working hard and performing very well. The exceptionally high level of pastoral support, with its emphasis on inclusion, secures pupils' loyalty to the school. Pupils enjoy the many extra curricular activities and participate enthusiastically and energetically. They relish the many and varied inter-house competitions.
- The school is an extremely calm and dignified community. Staff promote correct behaviour exceptionally well and very consistently. New pupils quickly absorb the school's very high expectations and respond very positively. Pupils therefore conduct themselves properly whether in lessons or around the school. Pupils manage their own behaviour particularly well. Consequently, the whole community can pursue the business of learning very effectively and efficiently. Pupils endorse the view that bullying is unacceptable within the school, and rarely happens. The school deals exceptionally well with any incident. A tiny minority of pupils, mainly boys, occasionally break the school rules. Teachers ensure that this misconduct does not affect the learning of others. Staff work very hard to keep all pupils in school. They work tirelessly to counsel and mentor their charges. They use fixed term exclusion sparingly and hardly ever exclude a pupil permanently.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	806	47	
White – Irish	1	4	
White – any other White background	15		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	7		
Mixed – any other mixed background	1		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	12		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2		
Black or Black British – African	6		

Chinese	4		
Any other ethnic group	1		
Parent/pupil preferred not to say	25		
Information not obtained	126		

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

12. Relationships are excellent throughout this community. Pupils' initial comment is invariably about the friendliness of the school. Staff and pupils work and play very well together. Voting to "custard" a member of staff is a popular money raiser for charity. Pupils work very well together in lessons and enjoy the many group and paired activities. They show great regard for the industry, talent, feelings and beliefs of their class mates and enjoy celebrating the success of their peers. They offer each other exceptionally good support throughout school life and care tenderly for any peers with particular or individual needs.
13. The distinctive ethos of the school encourages pupils to accept responsibility for their actions, and to treat everyone with respect. Mutual trust and respect are therefore very evident between all members of this dignified community. Pupils are valued for their individuality and helped to do well in as many ways as possible. Staff constantly encourage pupils to consider the needs of others. Pupils respond very positively to this and develop, during their time at school, into confident and considerate young people. They take their many responsibilities very seriously. Prefects act as most effective role models for younger pupils. They take a well-informed stance on both local and worldwide issues.
14. They show compassion for the lives and needs of others. Many responded very sensitively to their lessons on the Holocaust. They can reflect carefully on life's fundamental questions. Most teachers and tutors promote this reflection and understanding well, but there is still some inconsistency. Assemblies and tutor periods do not all capitalise on pupils' willingness to be reflective, and to explore feelings. The school does not hold a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Pupils value strongly social, cultural and ethnic diversity. They show a good understanding of, and interest in, other people and cultures.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003-2004 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.0	School data:	0.2
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.

15. Attendance is good at the school. Good procedures to follow up absence ensure that the rate of unauthorised absence is well below that of other schools. The school ensures that parents take their responsibility for their child's attendance very seriously.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **very good** quality of education.

Teaching and learning

Teaching, learning and assessment are all **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers in Years 10 and 11 fully exploit their very good understanding of what pupils need to do to achieve examination success.
- There is an excellent learning atmosphere across the school where teachers and pupils trust and respect each other.
- The most highly developed teaching skills are less consistently seen in Years 7 to 9.
- There is a very effective system to monitor how hard pupils are working.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 115 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12 (11%)	47 (41%)	43 (37%)	13 (11%)	0	0	0

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

16. Good teaching supports good learning and good achievement across Years 7 to 9. Teachers manage behaviour very well and create very good relationships so that pupils are confident and there is an excellent ethos where people listen to each other with real respect. The school deliberately groups pupils with different levels of competence together in most subjects. This arrangement effectively helps the most competent to deepen their understanding when they help other pupils. It also builds and protects the confidence of less competent pupils. As a result of these factors pupils spend almost all of every lesson working hard. They are encouraged to remember that their success will be more closely related to the amount of effort they put in than to any success or failure in previous learning. Almost all of the pupils accept this philosophy and are able to make a success out of it.
17. There is a significant amount of very good teaching, across all years, and some excellent practice which is characterised by a wider variety of teaching and learning approaches which pupils find more exciting and stimulating. Teachers adjust work carefully to ensure that the highest attainers and those who have more difficulty can achieve well. They share their own enthusiasm to captivate and engage pupils, and expect very high standards regardless of ability. They use questioning very effectively to probe and push pupils to explore ideas. They maintain a relentless pace, but still provide extensive opportunities for pupils to discuss ideas amongst themselves to clarify and refine their understanding. This allows more competent pupils to support those who are less confident which builds confidence throughout the class. In the very best lessons the techniques which recent government initiatives have promoted as best practice are completely embedded. Teachers plan imaginatively to ensure that pupils are totally involved, and always active, and they make expert use of the most modern resources. In the less stimulating lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9 teachers do not use such effective questioning techniques. Often their questions ask for facts, rather than speculation or opinions, and there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to talk to each other to clarify their thinking before they are asked to write. The most competent pupils are not always fully stretched, whilst some others are left to struggle or drift off task because teachers are unaware of their difficulties. In these situations teaching weaknesses still lead to satisfactory learning overall because of the excellent behaviour that pervades the school. Despite some passive response or loss of momentum, pupils still try to complete the tasks they have been set.
18. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is consistently very good and promotes very good learning and achievement. The principal factor supporting this success is the trust between teachers and pupils. There is a clear understanding that everyone in the school is working together, and that this will result in success in GCSE examinations. This is strengthened by the very high level of expertise amongst teachers across all the subject areas. Teachers know the GCSE requirements very well, and understand exactly how they can support pupils to succeed.

Within this overall very good picture there are high spots of excellence. Here the teachers' enthusiasm and their own excitement about learning infects the pupils. Highly imaginative ways of introducing a topic such as prohibition in American history mean that pupils engage very quickly with learning and are able to persist through whatever difficulties they encounter. Excellent behaviour is the norm, as is the respect that allows pupils to work together effectively, and to risk failure to gain success. This was particularly evident when Year 11 boys were able to empathise with victims of domestic violence in an excellent drama lesson.

19. The school has its own well-established and very effective system of monitoring based on objective assessment of pupils' efforts with their work. Assessments are very carefully correlated to give both parents and pupils a very clear understanding of how hard any individual is trying compared to the rest of the class. For all concerned this provides a reliable indication of how successful they are likely to be in GCSE examinations.
20. The management style within the school means that each department is encouraged to seek the very best way of marking and assessing pupils' work from day to day. Inevitably this leads to some variation in the quality as well as the style of marking and assessment. The history department, for example, has developed an excellent system where time is not lost in routine marking which merely acknowledges that work has been completed. This is checked quickly and economically. Instead, selected pieces of work are marked in detail, with close reference to very clear criteria. Pupils are then asked to follow this up with another assessed piece, relying on similar skills and concepts. This too is marked in detail, and comments are made to show whether there has been sufficient improvement in target areas.
21. Marking is very effective in all subjects in Years 10 and 11, where there is frequent and very well informed reference to GCSE grades. In Years 7 to 9 there is less consistency, and though the practice is good overall there is scope for further improvement in some subjects where there is not close enough reference to what pupils need to do to attain higher levels in the national curriculum.
22. Assessment from lesson to lesson is good though the school has rightly identified a need to improve the quality of questioning in lessons. In Years 7 to 9 particularly there is scope to use questioning more effectively to establish how much pupils have understood during each lesson, so that plans for the next lesson can be adjusted. The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs is assessed very effectively, though it is not yet monitored frequently enough to identify the small steps of progress that some pupils make.

The curriculum

The curriculum provision for pupils aged 11 to 16 is **very good**. There is **very good** provision of extra-curricular activities. Staffing, resources and accommodation are **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is reviewed regularly and meets the needs of pupils very well.
- There is very good extra-curricular provision which promotes sport, the arts and other interests.
- Staff are highly committed to maintaining an inclusive curriculum for pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities.
- There is a very good match of teaching staff to the needs of the curriculum.

Commentary

23. The curriculum offers a very good range of relevant options for pupils and meets the needs of all pupils very well so that their achievement is very good. It is reviewed and updated regularly in response to the needs of the pupils and in the light of new developments. A very good range of curriculum options is available for pupils aged 14 to 16 years. Many pupils take GCSE examinations early and then study new subjects, which enhances their learning. The curriculum is highly inclusive and provides very well for all pupils including those with special

educational needs and disabilities. Well-planned additional support ensures that pupils have the literacy skills that they need across the curriculum. Examinations in Year 11 are chosen carefully to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs can leave school with an appropriate qualification. Detailed curriculum information is sent to parents, which allows them to understand exactly what their children are being taught.

24. Arrangements for the teaching of literacy and numerical skills across the curriculum are good and for ICT they are very good. Personal, social and health education is well planned and forms part of an integrated teaching programme which includes citizenship. This combined programme makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Good careers advice is available to pupils as they progress through the school.
25. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good, especially in sport, music and drama where participation rates are very high. Most subjects run clubs and give very good support for learning outside of the school day. Many activities and events are organised through the house system, which gives pupils a sense of belonging and makes a very valuable contribution to the positive atmosphere and ethos which pervades the school.
26. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is very good. Significant investment in staffing has resulted in small class sizes which help to ensure that pupils' learning is of a very good quality across the curriculum. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and enables all curriculum areas to operate effectively. Whilst the school has suffered significant delays with its major refurbishment project it does have robust and clear systems for day-to-day maintenance of accommodation and a rolling programme of improvement which is carefully linked to school improvement and financial planning. Overall the quality and range of resources to support the curriculum are good. The school has made significant investment into ICT and the library, which support teaching and learning well.

Care, guidance and support

The school has **excellent** arrangements for the health, safety and welfare of pupils and for involving pupils in its work and development. It provides **very good** support and guidance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Day to day procedures for ensuring pupils well-being are extremely effective.
- The house system makes an exceptionally strong contribution to the support of all pupils.
- The school constantly asks pupils how they feel about the school.
- Very well planned induction procedures help incoming pupils to settle quickly

Commentary

27. The school takes exceptionally good care of its pupils and its staff. This is a major strength of the school. Health and safety arrangements are now rigorous and include pupil health and safety representatives in each form. The pupils take these responsibilities very seriously and participate fully in identifying and assessing risks to health and safety. Child protection arrangements are very good. The school trains all staff regularly, and ensures all new and student teachers and staff are fully aware of procedures. The school takes the needs of sick and injured pupils very seriously and provides expert help and support. Highly proficient and very committed support staff ensure that information about pupils' needs flows very efficiently.
28. Parents and pupils, rightly, rate the house system highly. It promotes very effective support for all pupils and fosters a genuine sense of belonging. Pupils identify very closely with their house. It encourages their commitment to the school and helps them feel safe and secure. Pupils say there is someone they can trust to assist them if they have concerns or problems. They value the constant support provided by all tutors. Tutors track pupils' personal development very carefully. They are alert to any change in the pupils' demeanour. They take prompt action to arrest any further deterioration and to help the pupil get back on track. Pupils

with particular needs know that specialist staff provide sensitive and well-considered help. The school provides an individual, alternative curriculum for those pupils whose behaviour or attendance prevents them accessing normal school life. These pupils begin to commit to their education because of the exceptional care taken to foster their needs.

29. The school has a deservedly strong reputation with parents of children with significant needs. It has been part of a pilot to suspend Statements of Special Educational Need with the full co-operation of parents. Pupils receive the same level of ongoing review and individual planning as would be required for Statements. The arrangements allow the school to focus on planning to meet the needs of pupils rather than the bureaucracy associated with Statements. Pupils are involved in meetings to review their progress, and the school ensures they develop the independent skills necessary for adult life. There is well-planned transition into further education, supported by the school and the careers adviser.
30. Pupils say that the school continually seeks their views about the full range of school activities. Year 11 pupils value, particularly, their two private interviews with the headteacher. They feel free to discuss any aspect of their education, and respond accordingly. This is just one of a raft of strategies which the school employs to harness the views of pupils. Pupils are confident that the school acts promptly on their ideas and suggestions. They feel full partners in school improvement. For instance, pupils participated in the recent recruitment of the next headteacher.
31. Staff work very effectively with primary schools to ensure a smooth transition into Year 7. Pupils confirm that they settle well in their new surroundings, and quickly establish very good relationships with staff. The school provides good careers guidance for pupils so that they approach the next stage of their education or training confidently.
32. Teachers routinely track the academic progress of all pupils throughout the year. They assess pupils' work regularly and share the outcomes with pupils and parents. They give marks for effort and ensure that pupils know exactly what progress they are making towards predicted final grades at GCSE. Teachers involve pupils well in evaluating their own work. Most, but not all, departments help pupils set very accurate and detailed targets for improvement. Pupils know exactly what they need to do next to improve in most subjects.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very good** links with parents and other schools. It has **satisfactory** links with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works very effectively with parents to support pupils' learning and well-being.
- Technology college and Leading Edge status activities promote an impressive range of links with many other schools.
- Links with the community are not as strong as with the school's other partners.
- Annual reports do not all comply with legal requirements.

Commentary

33. Staff work very hard and effectively to include parents in their child's education. The stability promoted by the house system ensures that staff know their pupils and their families very well. Staff involve parents very quickly when any intervention is necessary. The school surveys parental opinion regularly, often including home school association members in the discussions. This ensures that parents' views are included in future development planning. Parents report that any concerns are handled very effectively using correct procedures. Staff communicate particularly carefully with parents of children who have any special or additional need. The school arranges very effective support, often from within the school, and ensures

that parents are full partners in this collaboration. Parents are therefore very confident that the school meets their child's needs, and they value the support given.

34. The school provides very good information for parents. Very informative curriculum booklets ensure that parents know exactly what their child is studying and how they can help. Annual reports are good. Teachers provide good detail about pupils' performance, noting particularly the efforts pupils make. Most reports, but not all, include precise suggestions for securing further improvement. However, the school fails to report the progress of some pupils in Years 10 and 11, in ICT. Parents value the additional reports in pupils' record books, which allow them to check their child's performance during the year.
35. The school is sincerely committed to working in partnership with other schools and colleges. It makes a very strong contribution to the improvement of education locally, especially to the development of school leadership, where the headteacher's personal contribution is excellent. It regularly hosts professionals from other schools, who are eager to experience the ethos and innovation present at Hall Mead. The school is very aware of its areas of excellence and willingly shares these with others. It makes an extremely effective contribution to the initial training of teachers through highly developed links with universities and colleges. The additional funds attracted by specialist status enable the school to share its expertise with other schools. Hall Mead pupils are often involved in these activities across music, languages, mathematics, ICT and design and technology. These events promote the pupils' confidence and their awareness of the needs of others. Teachers participate regularly in activities with primary schools in many, but not all, subjects. Pupils and parents praise the arrangements for pupils' transfer from primary school, which are very good and include annual evaluation by both groups. Exchange of pupil related information with partner schools and colleges is productive and systematic.
36. People and organisations from the community use the schools' facilities regularly. Occasional visits or visitors enrich the curriculum. Pupils enjoy particularly the assemblies taken by the local vicar. The school intends to increase the number of visiting presenters and has already appointed a member of staff to co-ordinate and extend the links with the community. The school has a very well established link with a German school. An excellent innovation enables about 20 pupils to complete their work experience whilst living in a German community, whilst a similar number of German pupils become part of the Hall Mead community for three weeks. This makes a very effective contribution to pupils' cultural awareness.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good** overall. The leadership of the headteacher and also of the senior leadership team is **outstanding**. Other staff, including heads of department, heads of faculty and heads of house provide **very good** leadership. Management is **very good**. Governance is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and his senior team lead by example and provide excellent role models, to which both staff and pupils aspire.
- There is a consistency in the high quality of academic and pastoral leadership and teamwork is much in evidence.
- The school evaluates its work closely and there is a strong commitment to improve provision in all areas of school life.
- Induction procedures are excellent and teachers new to the school speak highly of them.
- Expenditure is very well planned and controlled and the school demonstrates excellent value for money.
- The school does not provide for a regular daily act of collective worship and does not report standards in ICT in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

37. The excellent leadership of the headteacher and the senior team has focused on a shared vision for how the school should develop. Moreover, senior leaders place great trust in middle managers and, as a result, high expectations of departmental and school performance are shared with all members of staff. Teachers and pupils speak highly of the headteacher and of the senior leadership team and say that consultation, advice, and support are of the essence in their leadership styles. Moreover, senior staff are very talented teachers and they lead by example. High aspirations among all segments of the school community are intrinsic to everything which Hall Mead attempts to do and stem directly from the approach of senior leaders
38. The school has addressed very effectively issues from the previous inspection in relation to the role of middle managers. To this end, the establishment of the management board has ensured that both academic and pastoral leaders meet on a regular basis to discuss the progress of their pupils in terms of subject performance and personal development. Middle managers, therefore, now play a key role in evaluating whole-school provision and they take more responsibility for the development of their individual areas. The quality of leadership amongst these staff is consistently good and in many cases very good. They demonstrate a real commitment to supporting staff and pupils outside their subjects and houses and they share with senior leaders a willingness to look for improvement in all areas of school life. The same very good leadership ensures that pupils with special educational needs receive very good quality care and guidance in the school.
39. Teachers speak highly of the school's strategies for the induction of new staff and they make particular mention of the approachability of their colleagues whatever their level of responsibility. They are grateful for the opportunities they have to share good practice and are delighted that their ideas are valued. Furthermore, the school plays an important role in the training of new entrants to the profession and has an enviable reputation in this area. The excellent programme of graduate teacher training has been a significant feature in the very successful effort to recruit and retain very good teachers.
40. The school's arrangements for financial planning and control are very secure. It uses the funds available to it very well and accounts for them appropriately and accurately. In relation to the quality of education provided, the results achieved and pupils' personal development, value for money is excellent.
41. The governors are rightly very proud of what the school has to offer its pupils and are very committed to its continued success. They give freely and extensively of their time to visit the school and to support the pupils and staff. They are well aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and play their part in the evaluation of policy and practice. They participate in strategic and financial planning and examine proposals for development closely and thoroughly. The statutory duty to provide a daily act of collective worship is not met but governors have already introduced an audit of the school's provision in this regard. They are now looking to establish procedures for reporting standards in ICT in Years 10 and 11.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,315,085	Balance from previous year	258,123
Total expenditure	3,943,182	Balance carried forward to the next	330,163
Expenditure per pupil	3,889		

42. The balance carried forward each year is higher than might be expected because the school holds funds for other partners in the Leading Edge and Graduate Teacher Training programmes.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

The quality of provision for work related learning is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils benefit from a carefully organised work experience programme.
- The school is actively seeking ways to meet new requirements without undermining the very good quality of its existing provision.
- There is no systematic assessment of pupils' work-related achievements.

Commentary

43. Work-related learning has a satisfactory effect on pupils' achievements. Standards in GNVQ ICT, the one vocational subject which pupils can study in Years 10 and 11, are well above the national average, and amongst the best in a very good school. Business studies, another subject which develops pupils' skills in a workplace context is also very successful, though these two subjects together only cater for about half the pupils in Years 10 and 11.
44. Teaching and learning are very good in the two specifically work-related courses in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are satisfied with the careers education which forms part of the personal, social, and health education programme in every year group. They are given clear advice before they make option choices in Year 9, and get good support from Connexions advisors in Years 10 and 11. They have open access to a wide range of information about careers, and feel that their needs are fully met. The curriculum does not include the range of additional activities which some schools provide to introduce pupils to the conventions, demands, and requirements of the workplace. Nor is there any planned focus on enterprise or industry. Instead the school has kept a very tight focus on success in GCSE examinations, and supplemented this with a well-organised programme of work experience. This is carefully evaluated in English lessons when pupils come back into school, though there is no system for assessing pupils work-related skills or understanding. A small number of pupils who find it difficult to match the work rate and motivation which dominates Years 10 and 11, do benefit from individual work placements which are designed to help them to keep in touch with learning.
45. Work related learning is satisfactorily led and managed. The established provision is carefully organised. To meet recently introduced requirements the governors have commissioned a comprehensive analysis of what the school needs to do to meet statutory requirements, and the local options available. This report explores in great detail the developments which would be needed to match the scale of work-related provision in other schools. It offers governors and senior managers a range of choices between the current provision, which is very effective in relation to GCSE, and the new requirements, which place more emphasis on a broader perspective. To clarify the scale of any conflicting priorities the school has also begun an audit of the work-related elements within the existing curriculum, and the scope for integrating the new requirements into the existing provision.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress to reach well above average standards.
- Progress is very carefully monitored so that teaching can be adapted to make sure pupils achieve their full potential.
- Consistently high quality teaching inspires confidence and eagerness to learn.
- Mutual respect in relationships encourages pupils to participate and to be open about what they do not understand.
- Very good leadership and very good management support a strong team.

Commentary

46. Standards are well above average. Results in 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average compared to national results, but below similar schools' results. Thorough and effective action has been taken to improve the identified weakness in non-fiction writing, and results have risen in 2004. There is no indication of under-achievement in the 2003 cohort who are now in Year 11. Standards were well above average in the 2004 GCSE examinations. Standards in work seen are above average in Years 7 and 8, and well above average in Year 9. This is then maintained through Years 10 and 11. Pupils enter the school with mainly average skills in English and literacy at the start of Year 7 and they develop a mutual commitment with their teachers to improve in the subject, so that in Year 9 well above average standards are obtained. The progress they make represents very good achievement by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Boys' and girls' achievement is different. Girls achieve better, but both are above their gender average nationally and boys narrow the gap by Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because teachers spot opportunities for them to succeed, which boosts their confidence to make further effort. The achievement of able and gifted pupils is high. On the whole pupils achieve very well because they rapidly and continuously improve. By Year 9 many can write essays that achieve a standard equivalent to a GCSE pass at grade C or above. Year 11 pupils can express how the structure of a poem contributes to its meaning and understand deeply the symbolism of *"Lord of the Flies"*. They also have good command of the terms of literary criticism and the effective use of quotation, as seen, for example, in an excellent essay on *"Wuthering Heights"*. Spelling and punctuation and correct usage are sometimes weak in Years 7 and 8, though work is almost always presented well, including writing by lower ability pupils. Non-fiction writing, which had been identified as a weakness in Years 7 to 9, is now a strength.
47. Learning is very good overall. The cumulative impact of very good teaching raises pupils' expectations of what they can do and excites and interests them. Year 11 pupils stated that English is a subject that constantly challenges you to think about new ideas. In a Year 11 lesson on the poetry of Gillian Clarke, the pupils and the teacher became so absorbed that the time flew by. All classes are of mixed ability, but the teachers do not avoid dealing with challenging texts and skilfully make them accessible. The common practice of mixing genders in group work helps pupils to stay on task. When pupils in the mixed ability classes work in small groups, all benefit from the blend of ability. More able pupils develop high skills by leading group activities, whilst others gain a real advantage from the support that provides. The variety of different media and genres used in lessons maintains interest, even for those boys whose attention span can be short. It is useful that teachers hear pupils read aloud to check understanding and progress. This is one demonstration of the trust that exists in

classrooms. Pupils learn very well because the respect of their classmates and teachers makes them feel secure to attempt an answer or task, even when they are unsure. Behaviour management is masterful but civilised and pupils comply because they are eager to learn. In Years 10 and 11, there is continuous, but unobtrusive, explanation of how to work in a way that will gain high marks in examinations. Displays of work model good learning in all the department's rooms. Assessment is very good because teachers track pupils' achievement closely and identify their needs and pupils are involved in setting their own targets.

48. Both leadership and management are very good. Leadership is focused on continuous improvement and there is no complacency in the well-established team, even though outcomes are so positive. In response to examiners' reports and breakdowns of marking, non-fiction writing has been comprehensively improved. The team ethos encourages teachers to share their ideas informally, and regular meetings support good practice in learning and teaching. Performance management is thorough, but not very much time is given to less formal, mutual observation to share good approaches. Management has important strengths that impact on learning. The tracking of pupils' progress and performance is first rate and leads to effective action being taken. Schemes of work and resources are very well organised. Very good staffing draws on the valuable contributions of part-time staff, without resulting in many classes being taught by two teachers. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Overall standards have been maintained, but boys are now doing better, and schemes of work have been significantly improved.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. The standard of literacy is good overall. Pupils enter Year 7 with average skills and by the end of Year 9 they are above average. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11. In all subjects pupils develop speaking and listening skills effectively because they are expected to answer questions in some detail. In art and design, drama and physical education pupils are encouraged to give their opinions of each other's work. There is good discussion in groups in some subjects. Pupils have a variety of opportunities to improve writing and are often supported by frameworks that help them organise notes. There is very good extended writing in history, as well as in English. Subjects check spellings of specialist words, but only history and English correct general spelling and punctuation errors sufficiently. Pupils' reading ages are closely monitored and by the end of Year 9 pupils can cope with all reading demands, or are given appropriate support. Reading is very well supported by the very good library provision, but the records of borrowing kept as part of the very efficient service show a steep decline in wider reading of fiction after Year 9 and departments do not make enough use of the good stock of non-fiction books.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' standards are well above average in German in Years 10 and 11.
- Achievement is very good in Spanish in Years 8 and 9.
- ICT is well used to support learning.
- In French lessons teachers use too much English.
- In some classes the narrow range of activities fails to motivate pupils.

Commentary

50. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average in French and German. In Spanish standards reached by higher ability pupils are well above expected National Curriculum levels. One class is entered early for Spanish GCSE in Year 9 and results are good. Pupils join the school with average language skills but achieve well, particularly in the progress they make in

writing accurately and at good length. In German pupils of below average ability and with special needs achieve very well in their oral work.

51. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in the last two years is well above average. Results are particularly good in German. The number of pupils gaining the higher A grades in both French and German is, however, lower than nationally. A reason for this has been the policy of entering pupils for the lower rather than the higher levels of the GCSE. This policy is now under review. There are no significant differences between the results of boys and girls.
52. In lessons seen and work analysed during the inspection standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average in French and well above average in German, and achievement is good across the two years. In German, pupils achieve very well in speaking the language in short dialogues and in their written composition. A small group of pupils in Year 10 who obtained GCSE in the language the previous year begin to study for A/S level Spanish. They achieve well but their progress is not as good as in Years 8 and 9. This is partly a result of work which is sometimes hard for them to understand and they need more support.
53. The quality of teaching is generally good and pupils learn well. There are some weaknesses in French but there are examples of excellent and very good lessons in German and Spanish. Lessons are carefully planned. Skilful guidance and support result in pupils learning to speak and write confidently. There is regular use of new technology such as electronic whiteboards. These are used very effectively in German, for example, where they motivate lower attaining pupils to contribute and play an active role throughout the lesson. Marking and assessment are thorough and detailed. In contrast the range of activities in some other French lessons is unimaginative. There is over reliance on translation, reading and writing, and the use of English. Even in these lessons, however, pupils' behaviour is good although they are passive learners.
54. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has been in post for a relatively short period of time. Rapid progress has been made in developing work in Spanish, using ICT to support learning and extending the range of school visits. A very positive development this year has been staff from the school teaching French and German in local primary schools. However, there is still some inconsistency in teaching approaches across the department and the teaching of French is less effective than that of the other languages. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection and there is clear capacity for further development.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress and GCSE results are well above average.
- Pupils have a very good attitude to their work.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is very good.
- Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The department uses assessment very well to help pupils achieve.
- There is strong leadership and management from the head of department.
- There is a very good match of teachers to the curriculum.
- Some aspects of ICT are insufficiently used.

Commentary

55. At the end of Year 9 in 2003, test results were well above average nationally and in line with similar schools. In 2004 these results improved further. Pupils achieve very well overall, including those with special educational needs. Pupils in the current Year 9 entered the school with average standards, and are now working at above average standards.

56. In 2004 GCSE results were well above the national average for similar schools and work seen during the inspection confirms that pupils in the current Year 11 are now working at standards well above average. Pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 because of the use of assessment, and challenging expectations. A large group of more able students are entered for GCSE in Year 10 and in 2004 nearly all of them achieved a B or C grade before they started Year 11. The best pupils are then able to concentrate on achieving the highest grades in Year 11, and this has helped the department improve the number of A and A* grades at GCSE. The high standards seen in examinations are reflected by the work seen in class, and pupils' books.
57. Teaching and learning are very good overall. They are good in Years 7 to 9 with very good practice in Years 10 and 11. Pupils behave to a very high standard in the vast majority of lessons, and have a mature attitude to their work. This contributes greatly to their success. The school has introduced interactive whiteboards as a teaching tool and these are used very effectively to enhance whole class explanations. In the best lessons there is a celebratory approach to pupils' achievements, and praise is used to build pupils' confidence. Teaching styles are varied according to the level of pupils' understanding. In lower ability sets, good planning ensures that all learning needs are met. In higher ability sets, there is a high level of challenge to ensure pupils achieve the highest grades.
58. Assessment is a strong feature of the school's approach to teaching mathematics. The department's approach helps pupils understand what level they are capable of achieving, and they respond to the challenge. All pupils are rigorously tracked using half termly tests in every year group. This information is fed back to pupils so that they know what they need to do to improve. Pupils have a very good understanding of the level they are working at and what they need to aim for at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. There are very well organised revision programmes for Year 11, and extra curricular activities for pupils with special educational needs in Year 7 and 8. This creates a positive attitude towards the subject and supports their achievement in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs, gifted and talented pupils and pupils from ethnic minorities make the same progress as other pupils.
59. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department supports all staff well to create an expectation of high achievement for all pupils. Teachers share responsibility for the achievement of all pupils and have a very good range of skills which are used well. There is an effective informal monitoring policy in place, which the department uses to share good practice.
60. Pupils use some ICT in mathematics through graphical calculators and interactive whiteboards. Accommodation difficulties have restricted the further development of ICT but there are plans to address this by introducing laptop computers.
61. Even though standards in mathematics have remained high, there has still been good improvement in results at a higher rate than schools nationally over the last 5 years. The high standards seen in examinations are reflected by the work seen in class and pupils' books. Issues about the quality of graphical work have been addressed, and there has been some introduction of investigative work into the curriculum to improve the range of work in using and applying mathematics.

Statistics

62. Students who achieve a C grade at GCSE in Year 10 follow a statistics course in Year 11. This provides a satisfactory broadening of the curriculum for those pupils who struggle to understand the higher level learning objectives necessary for the highest grades. The school entered pupils for GCSE statistics in 2004. The achievement of pupils at A*-C grades is very good compared with results nationally. This is particularly impressive considering the pupils are not chosen from the highest achievers in the school, and the course is completed in two

terms. Pupils are well prepared by very good teaching of the statistics element of GCSE mathematics in Year 10.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. Because of the high standards in mathematics, pupils are competent to use their mathematical skills in other subject areas. The department has carried out an audit which has resulted in departments across the school identifying mathematical skills required in their subject areas. Mathematics teachers have run training so that other subjects can develop pupils' mathematical skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management combined with excellent teamwork are driving the department forward.
- Many lessons provide a wide variety of activities that enrich learning.
- Well-structured schemes of work provide both quality and equality of access.
- Teachers reflect carefully on ways to improve their teaching and act on their reflections.
- The use of ICT to support learning is developing well.
- A small number of lessons are not pitched at levels that meet the needs of all pupils in mixed ability classes.

Commentary

64. Standards in science are very good. At the end of Year 9 pupils achieved results that were well above the national average in 2004 examinations and GCSE examination results were excellent. Pupils' work seen during the inspection confirmed these well above average standards across all years. Achievement is very good across all years. There is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well but in the 2004 tests at the end of Year 9 more able pupils achieved below expectations. Pupils achieve very well because lessons are carefully structured by capable and energetic teachers who have very good subject knowledge. Small class sizes in science mean that teachers know their pupils well and pupils get individual attention in every lesson.
65. Teaching is very good. In the best lessons seen, teachers provided pupils with a well planned variety of activities that kept concentration levels high and maintained pace. Well-designed practical work was linked to learning objectives that had been clearly shared with pupils. Questioning and other activities required pupils to think for themselves. Investigative science is a strength of the department and is well integrated into the scheme of work. In a small number of lessons seen the older booklets for pupils did not provide a spread of activities to match the ability range in the class and closed questions limited pupils to factual answers rather than promoting deeper understanding. The department is already revising and improving these booklets.
66. Learning is very good. Pupils concentrate very well and their behaviour is exemplary. Because relationships in classrooms are supportive they readily turn to the teacher or to other pupils for help and they discuss work with their peers to clarify their thinking. Revisiting topics in different ways, for example, in practical work, role play, written work and discussion, means that they approach the same work a number of times and this reinforces their understanding. Learning is least effective in lessons in Years 7 to 9 where pupils' knowledge is not probed by follow-up questions to factual answers and hence pupils miss the opportunity to explain thinking and address misunderstandings. The printed booklets used by all pupils work best where they outline the learning progression clearly and where they reflect the imaginative activities of the best-taught lessons. They are least effective when they limit the attainment of pupils to a

narrow ability band and provide too much structure so that pupils' recording of work is restricted to short, factual responses only. Pupils frequently self-mark factual answers in their booklets and this provides them with the opportunity to reflect on their own work.

67. The hardworking technicians make a significant contribution to learning because they set out experiments in a way that ensures that teachers can proceed seamlessly to demonstrations or practicals. The use of ICT to support learning is developing well. Teachers are beginning to make imaginative use of the newly installed interactive whiteboards, for example, showing video clips to support learning or using software that models electrical circuits to demonstrate the answer to a pupil's question. They make regular use of computers to record work and to research on the Internet.
68. The head of department provides very good leadership and management. His strong, exciting vision for the department is shared by all staff and he leads by example in both teaching and administration. Shared responsibilities and joint decision-making have fostered an excellent team spirit and all staff feel that their contributions are valued. Departmental routines and procedures are highly effective and the smooth running of the department means that teachers can focus on teaching and learning. Decisions for change are based on evidence, particularly evidence of pupils' attainment. Monitoring and evaluation is thorough and the head of department knows the strengths and weaknesses of the department well. However, monitoring does not have a clear and comprehensive structure and the possibility therefore exists for some less effective aspects of practice to remain unchallenged. The department is continually seeking to improve and innovate. It has a positive partnership with the local education authority and, as a leading department, is supporting other schools in the area to develop good practice. Progress since the previous inspection has been very good.

Example of outstanding practice

A highly effective practical demonstration using a model electricity grid significantly enlivened the potentially dry and theoretical topic of the use of transformers in the National Grid. Skilful questioning drew out predictions and explanations from pupils, allowing them to work out the key points for themselves. Difficult concepts were revisited and time-limited activities maintained the pace of the lesson. Pupils' tasks were matched to their ability and individual support was provided by the teacher in a sensitive manner. All pupils made excellent progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A strong team teaches and supports ICT in the school.
- Pupils' independent learning and study skills are well developed.
- Pupils use ICT responsibly.
- The school is well resourced for ICT.
- The progress of some Year 10 and 11 pupils in ICT is not reported to parents.

Commentary

69. Standards of attainment in ICT of students when they join the school are variable, but in general are in line with the national average. Work seen during the inspection confirms that pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. In 2004 the results of teacher assessments in Year 9 were above average, which represents good achievement. Students following the GNVQ in ICT in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well. Overall results in this course in 2004 were well above average, with the majority of students gaining an A* to C grade. The overall picture in all years is of improvement year on year.

70. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good. This is the first year that the whole of the Key Stage 3 Strategy¹ has been implemented, and teachers are still becoming familiar with the materials. Students are encouraged to become independent learners by developing good practice in note taking in lessons and resources being made available by the teachers to support the individual learning needs of all pupils. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' expectations and effective systems of monitoring progress of those pupils following the GNVQ course results in all the pupils feeling challenged and producing work of a high and professional standard. All students were observed using ICT responsibly both in lessons and out of class. They are able to work independently, but also collaborate effectively and support each other when they encounter problems. There is a substantial programme of ICT activities during lunchtimes, after school and in the school holidays.
71. Leadership of the department is very good and management is good though a significant statutory requirement has been overlooked. The department has a small team of ICT teachers who have good subject expertise who work closely together and have a shared vision of how to continue to improve provision further. The team benefits from very good technical support.
72. Since the previous inspection there has been very good progress. There is increased availability of computer hardware and software. There is also greater access to ICT for both teaching and learning particularly in light of the new technologies available since the previous inspection five years ago. In addition the department has implemented the Key Stage 3 strategy for ICT and improved the links with primary feeder schools, which is further strengthening provision in Years 7 to 9.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is very good. As a result of the technology college status and very good management of this development the school has very good resources with a secure infrastructure to support both the staff and pupils in their use of ICT for teaching and learning. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in music, science and business studies is very good, and in other subjects good practice is developing. In art and design and mathematics the use is less well developed and has been identified as areas for future support by the school.
74. The school has carefully mapped ICT provision in all subjects and reviews this annually to ensure statutory coverage in Years 10 to 11 for all pupils. However, the school does not assess or report on the ICT capability of around half of the pupils in each year group who do not follow an examination course with a substantial ICT component.
75. A working party for ICT across the curriculum, which has representatives from all departments, has been effective in developing the use of ICT to support both teaching and learning with computers and in exploiting the new technology available in the school to improve achievement.

HUMANITIES

¹ The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. This National Strategy now affects all subjects. It started with English and mathematics in 2001 and now includes science, information and communication technology and teaching and learning in the foundation subjects as well as ensuring that all subject departments contribute to the development of pupils' understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy. For more information please go to the Government's Department for Education and Skills web-site: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in their acquisition of historical skills and they have a very perceptive understanding of the nature of evidence.
- Teachers have a very secure knowledge of their subject and inspire their pupils to opt for GCSE courses in increasing numbers.
- Leadership and management are very good. Teachers work as a cohesive unit and set challenging but achievable targets for development.
- Pupils benefit from detailed feedback on their progress and they are grateful for their teacher's advice on how they may improve their work.

Commentary

76. Pupils performance at GCSE has improved markedly over the past four years and in 2004, from a large entry, results were well above average. There was no significant difference between boys and girls and the percentage of A* grades was over twice the national average for both genders. Standards in lessons mirror this trend and, by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 they are also well above national expectations. Indeed, some work seen in Year 11 would not go amiss in sixth-form history and the best essays in Year 8 are of GCSE C grade standard at least.
77. Pupils, including those who find the work difficult, achieve very well across all years. As early as Year 7, youngsters are developing a keen understanding of how historians come to their judgements and they already use historical terminology accurately and in context. By Year 9, they consider the reliability and utility of the evidence open to them, on anti-Jewish legislation in Nazi Germany, for example. In the GCSE years, pupils demonstrate a profound knowledge of the International context from 1956 to 1959, as part of their study of the Cold War.
78. Because teachers are very well qualified and transmit their passion for the subject to their pupils, numbers opting for courses in Year 10 are increasing. Moreover, pupils benefit from relentless challenge and sophisticated questioning techniques. As a result, and as early as Year 7, learners justify their opinions with evidence and are not afraid to express their views. For example, in an excellent Year 8 lesson on the terror during French Revolution, pupils made comments, which belied their years. Similarly in an outstanding Year 10 session on prohibition in 1920s America, spontaneous debate ensued because the teacher's approach encouraged her pupils to see the past in terms of its own standards and values. Teaching and learning are, therefore, very good overall and staff are now considering strategies to extend group work further in lessons.
79. The department is led and managed very well and high levels of teamwork and commitment to setting targets to raise standards are very much in evidence. Staff evaluate their own individual performance and that of the department with the utmost accuracy. Furthermore, they offer their pupils regular feedback on how to improve their work and the marking of GCSE assignments is outstanding. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Standards are higher, achievement is better and teaching has improved.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-structured lessons ensure that pupils' learning is purposeful and focused so they achieve well.
- Pupils have very mature attitudes to learning and respond well to the knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching they receive.
- Good teaching is carefully matched to GCSE examination requirements.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to develop their enquiry skills through fieldwork.
- Teacher assessments of pupils work in Year 9 were over generous but new systems are now being put in place to ensure they are accurate.

Commentary

80. GCSE examination results in 2004 were average. Although pupils achieved less well in geography than in some other subjects they took these results represent satisfactory achievement for the pupils concerned compared to their attainment at the end of Year 9. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average. However, because National Curriculum criteria were not always applied accurately these assessments were slightly over-generous. Pupils' achievement was good compared to their average starting point when they entered the school.
81. In work seen standards are above expectations at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and pupils achievement is good. All pupils use geographical terminology confidently and accurately and higher attaining pupils understand complex geographical concepts well.
82. All pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject and communicate this successfully to their pupils. They plan and structure their lessons well so no learning time is wasted. Pupils are very keen to learn, concentrate well and respond very positively to the good teaching they receive. Teachers give constructive individual support to pupils with special educational needs so they achieve well. Teachers are widening the range of teaching methods and resources they use and are making good use of ICT to engage pupils' interest. Teaching is carefully tailored to GCSE syllabus requirements so pupils develop the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in examinations. Pupils produce high quality coursework following their trip to Epping Forest in Year 10 but there is insufficient opportunity for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to apply their skills in a real environment through fieldwork visits.
83. The leadership and management of the department are good and appropriate priorities have been identified for development. Tests and assessments are being reviewed and refined so that pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 can be judged more accurately. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively. The department works well collaboratively and shares good practice in order to raise pupils' attainment. Improvement since the previous inspection is good as standards continue to rise. The department has both the capacity and the commitment to improve further.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of teaching that is consistently attentive to their individual needs and uses assessment well.
- The leadership and management of the department are clearly focused on the further improvement of pupils' learning.
- Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they get to discuss issues of relevance to their lives.
- Opportunities to develop pupils' discussion skills in order to support writing are occasionally missed.

Commentary

84. Overall standards of attainment are above average in Year 9 and Year 11. This represents good achievement in relation to the average levels of attainment, particularly in writing, that pupils bring to the school. Pupils attained above average standards in the 2003 GCSE examinations. There were too few pupils entered in the 2004 GCSE examinations to make meaningful comparisons with results nationally. However, most pupils attained the higher grades A to C and all attained at least a pass grade. Pupils build quickly on their earlier attainment and achieve well, exceeding the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus by the end of Year 9 and being above average by the end of Year 11. In all years, pupils write well for a good range of purposes and readers, handling questions of faith, belief and practice with increasing sophistication. This is a result of good and sometimes very good teaching, which is particularly effective in building pupils' confidence and their skill in handling often challenging ideas of morality and religious belief.
85. Teaching and learning are good across the school, with much that is very good. The teachers are effective in stimulating the interest and curiosity of the pupils who, in turn, show a real enthusiasm for tackling questions of belief. Teachers use assessment well to support learning, often giving pupils good opportunities to assess their own work. They are good at relating questions of faith and religious practice to pupils' own lives and aspirations. The teachers are skilful in developing strategies for including all pupils in discussion and debate. Group work is generally used well. However, there are some missed opportunities to use discussion before pupils progress to writing, and this limits the range of ideas that they are able to explore.
86. The department is well led and managed. It has moved forward on many fronts since the previous inspection and has the drive and enthusiasm to improve even further. Standards have improved, teaching is more focused on learning, and the time allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11 is at the recommended level. The department uses ICT well to support learning.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is well above average by Year 11.
- Very good teaching is based on high expectations of pupils.
- Leadership of the department is very good.
- Teachers give freely of their time to help pupils achieve high standards.
- Pupils enjoy their work and are motivated to do well.

Commentary

87. Pupils of all abilities achieve very well in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results in 2004 were well above average compared with the national average. An unusually large number of pupils achieved A* and A grades. Results in resistant materials were particularly high. Food technology results were lower than in other aspects of the subject. However, they have improved consistently for the last three years and were above the national average in 2004. The most able pupils are identified at the beginning of Year 9 and given the opportunity to enter the examination in Year 10. These pupils achieve exceptionally high results every year. In 2004, all of them achieved A*, A or B grades. Pupils' coursework is very thoroughly completed and their practical work is of a high standard. Careful research and evaluation underpins all their work.
88. In Years 7 to 9 pupils achieve well, regardless of ability. The 2004 teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 indicate that attainment is below the national average. However, work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are, in fact, above average. Lower attainers receive extra help and higher attainers are given extension activities. Practical skills are well developed in all aspects of pupils work except textiles, where the lack of a specialist teaching room and limited resources restrict the level of attainment. Pupils regularly use ICT to enhance their work and competently use two and three-dimensional design packages. They use the design process consistently, develop good research and evaluation skills, and show a pride in the quality of finish of their practical work.
89. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9, and very good overall. Pupils benefit from very hard-working teachers who are happy to provide support before and after school and at lunchtime in order to achieve the highest possible standards. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and have high expectations. Activities are interesting and pupils enjoy them. Practical skills are taught competently. Teacher/pupil relationships are very good. A very thorough understanding of examination requirements enables teachers to provide individuals with high quality advice, which results in high standards. A new assessment system has been introduced this year for the younger pupils. It is detailed and useful, but as yet, not all teachers are using it consistently and so its impact is not as great as it could be.
90. The head of department provides very good leadership and management. He is enthusiastic, willing to try new ideas and has a clear vision of the future development of the subject. He has overcome serious recruitment difficulties and has successfully built a committed and enthusiastic department. He analyses data carefully and uses the findings to improve results.
91. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards are higher, teaching is better and there is now a greater consistency of approach across the faculty. Accommodation and resources have been significantly improved, although one food technology room remains in need of updating and refurbishment.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Specialist teachers use their knowledge well to plan and manage lessons.
- Pupils achieve well and standards are above average.
- Some tasks provide insufficient scope for independent and expressive work at the highest levels.
- Positive relationships support good learning and achievement.
- Pupils have insufficient opportunities to use ICT to develop their work.
- Leadership and management are good

Commentary

92. Whilst some pupils enter the school with well-developed art skills and knowledge overall standards are average on entry in Year 7. As a result of good teaching pupils achieve well and standards are above average by the end of Year 9. The standards for both boys and girls at GCSE have been maintained above the national average since the previous inspection. In 2004 GCSE standards were above average and achievement good. Girls did better than boys but overall pupils did not achieve as well as in their other subjects. Some of this is attributable to staff absence that disrupted learning for some groups.
93. Work seen during the inspection confirms good achievement by boys and girls and standards are above average. Pupils develop and broaden their skills across a range of media in two and three dimensions and some make good use of computers for research. Pupils are encouraged to develop their art vocabulary and some use this well to contribute in lessons. Well-structured tasks help lower attainers in particular to achieve. The use of ICT to create and develop images is a weaker aspect of pupils work.
94. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons ICT is used effectively for presentation and challenging questioning and discussion extends pupils thinking and learning. Teachers manage lessons very well and pupils develop positive and productive attitudes to their learning. Whilst practical skills are taught well through structured tasks this is sometimes at the expense of more expressive and independent work. There are too few opportunities for discussion which would further develop knowledge and understanding, particularly amongst the higher attainers. Resources apart from ICT are used well to support pupils' learning and teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and achieve well. Assessment of work is good and involves pupils in self-evaluation that helps them understand how to improve.
95. A new head of department has managed a period of transition and staff absence well and sustained good standards whilst developing an effective team of teachers. The head of department is a good role model and uses ICT well to support teaching. There has been good development of consistent assessment systems and self-evaluation. More challenging work is being introduced to ensure gifted and talented pupils are stretched. ICT resources have improved but there is still work to be done to support pupils' learning. Areas for development are identified for implementation once improvements to accommodation are completed. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well because well-established routines give them the security to take risks.
- The leadership and management of the department ensure consistently high expectations across all classes.
- Lessons and extra-curricular opportunities make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

96. Overall standards of attainment are well above average in Year 9 and Year 11. This represents very good achievement in relation to the average skills in spoken English that pupils bring to the school. Pupils attained well above average standards in the 2004 GCSE examinations. They build quickly on their earlier attainment and achieve very well. By the end of Year 9 they collaborate very effectively, and can use a wide range of dramatic techniques to illustrate moral and social issues. Pupils know exactly what is expected of them. They listen to each other particularly well, and the mutual respect means that boys in particular can resist the temptation to over act in tense or challenging situations. By Year 11 they are very good at choosing a variety of presentation styles to get their message to an audience with maximum

effect. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported so that they too are confident to take a full part in all of the work.

97. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers are effective in capturing the trust of the pupils who, in turn, show unusual maturity in tackling sensitive issues. Teachers use assessment well to support learning and pupils' own evaluations of each others' work are thoughtful and constructive. The teachers are skilful in exploiting group work to ensure that all pupils feel able to experiment and contribute their ideas. They ensure a very high work-rate throughout the lesson by manipulating the timing of activities very effectively
98. The department is very well led and managed and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have improved significantly, and the high quality extra-curricular opportunities have been maintained. The quality of teaching is consistent, and there is a clear focus on skills.

Media studies

99. One lesson of media studies was sampled where Year 11 pupils were identifying the intended audiences of a range of local radio broadcasts. Very good teaching founded on thorough preparation and high quality resources supported very good learning with a high level of commitment and a very good work rate. These pupils were achieving very well. Standards in GCSE examinations were well above average in 2004, the first year that students had been entered. Students were reflective, discerning and serious in their discussion of music and cultural influences. They find the work demanding, and say that it requires more originality than most of their other examination options.

Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results were well above average in 2004.
- Outstanding subject knowledge and very high expectations are key characteristics of the very good teaching.
- Excellent leadership is the driving force behind a successful department.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes and their very good behaviour help them to achieve very well throughout Years 7 to 11.
- The impressive quality of computers and their regular use enhances music teaching and learning.
- Pupils are not involved in setting their own targets.

Commentary

100. Standards of work by Year 9 pupils in 2004, and confirmed by work seen during the inspection, were well above average. This is an improvement on those reported at the previous inspection. Pupils in Year 7 have little musical knowledge when they arrive in school. Because of the systematic development of musical skills achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs or those who are gifted and talented is very good. Pupils have very good understanding of rhythm and can improvise and structure melodies to set chord patterns. Performance by Year 11 pupils in the 2004 GCSE examination was well above average. More pupils than in previous years attained the highest grades and achievement for all pupils is very good. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils know how to use harmony and instrumental colour in order to compose high quality pieces. They compose and play together confidently different lines of music combining electronic and acoustic material, but when pupils describe and discuss their music they do not use musical language with sufficient detail.

101. Teaching and learning are very good. In Years 10 and 11, much is excellent. Teachers' knowledge of music and national criteria underpins their very good planning and very high expectations. Therefore pupils are constantly challenged through varied tasks which all have an explicit focus. Musical skills are revisited and pupils are adept at using musical knowledge to improve their work. Teachers are excellent musicians and through their practical demonstrations boys and girls are inspired to learn and do as well as they can. The very good relationships and humour found in lessons means that pupils learn from each other and sympathetically evaluate others' work. Pupils learn to explain musical concepts to each other, which means they are very clear about what they are doing. Time is used effectively and the very good feedback of their work in lessons means that pupils understand how to improve and attain the highest possible standards. From Year 7 as part of their music lessons, pupils use the impressive computers and recording facilities. This means they can record, save and refine their work regularly and use technology to help them compose more complex pieces of music.
102. The leadership of the head of department is excellent. He is an exceptional role model through his own teaching, and conveys his enthusiasm and love of music to pupils and other staff. Policy and planning is exemplary and provides excellent guidance and support for all teachers, including those new to the profession. Management is very good. Pupils progress is analysed comprehensively, however, they do not set their own targets at the end of each unit of work. This means pupils rely on teachers and do not know how to improve and measure their progress against national standards. The very good range of ensembles, which enrich the musical experiences of many pupils, illustrates the commitment of all staff, including visiting instrumental teachers to the musical life of the school. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection, especially in achievement and the quality of teaching and learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The overall quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the GCSE examination are very significantly above the national average.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Very good relationships and good lesson management ensures that pupils have a very positive attitude to the subject.
- The very wide range of extra-curricular activities is very well supported by large and enthusiastic groups of pupils.

Commentary

103. In recent years GCSE examination results have been above the national average, and in 2004 they were very significantly better than the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that the pupils in the current examination groups are performing at least as well, with a majority achieving at the highest level.
104. The levels of attainment at the end of Year 9 are overall better than that achieved nationally. This represents good achievement by pupils, some of whom have only limited physical education experiences and skills when they arrive from their primary school. Pupils perform well in a wide range of activities. In games they demonstrate good ball control and are acquiring the skills to enable them to compete successfully. In gymnastics most pupils can create gymnastic sequences that are performed with fluency and control.
105. Pupils make very good progress during Years 10 and 11 and their attainment is well above that seen nationally. Pupils are able to undertake a range of tasks including acting as officials, referees and coaches. Pupils understand the necessity of warming up, and many are able to lead warm-up sessions with much confidence. In September 2003 the school began offering

its pupils the opportunity to take a GCSE in dance. This offer has been taken up by large groups of pupils. They respond very positively and enthusiastically to the very high quality teaching. Their overall achievement is well above that seen nationally, with a significant number showing an ability to perform, evaluate and choreograph at the highest level.

106. Teaching is good overall and a significant number of very good and excellent lessons were seen. Lessons are very well prepared and their content is well matched to pupils' interest and attainment. Teachers are continually making demands for high quality performances and good behaviour, and invariably these demands are met. Pupils respond very positively, are highly motivated, and their enjoyment of their lessons is very evident. Pupils with special education needs are very well integrated. They are given much sensitive support and encouragement from both staff and fellow pupils and attain levels of performance that is commendable for them.
107. The department is very well managed, including a very extensive programme of extra-curricular activities that are very well supported. It is very well led so that hard working and talented teachers work well together, support each other, and show a strong commitment to their pupils and to the improvement of the department. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The department has been awarded the Sportsmark, which is national recognition of high quality provision in physical education, the examination results have improved, and the school now offers pupils the opportunity to take a GCSE dance.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve two good examination grades in a single GCSE time allocation.
- GCSE standards have been well above average in recent years. Attainment is similar in the current Year 11.
- Teaching and learning are very good, enabling pupils to achieve very well in the two subjects.
- Good access to ICT resources, including published materials created by the department, supports pupils' studies very effectively.
- The department's links with outside businesses are limited.

Commentary

108. GCSE A*-C results in recent years have been high, particularly in 2004 when pupils attained very well at A*/A grades. Entry numbers were high in 2003, but fell to nearer average in 2004. The course provides a very good opportunity for pupils to achieve two GCSE grades at high levels, because they take a full award in business communication systems in the same amount of time as their business studies qualification. Pupils' standards on entry to the course are higher than average for the school and though most attained slightly lower grades in business studies than they did in their other subjects, they achieved very well in the two subjects delivered in one option block.
109. Standards in the current Year 11 are similarly high. These students have just begun their studies for the business communication systems elements of their course and the standard of their business studies work is well above average. Students' attitudes in response to the very high workload required to achieve these two qualifications are very good, contributing significantly to their success. Many attend additional extra-curricular days and lunchtime sessions to boost achievement before the examination. Year 10 have started their course very positively and are already achieving well.
110. Subject knowledge is a strength and has contributed to the development of very effective, published learning resources, which support pupils' learning very considerably. The teaching team works very well together, and benefits from being based within the ICT faculty. This is

very helpful, as all resources and expertise are shared. Results have improved since this team came together. Curriculum planning to enable coverage of two subjects in such a short time is very effective. A very good range of different activities within lessons, including role-play and use of the computers, appeals to all sorts of learning styles and keeps pupils very interested and engaged in learning. Although one group has fewer lessons per two weeks than the other, the department works hard to ensure that this does not compromise standards. Assessment is good, helping pupils to understand how to improve their work.

111. Leadership and management are very good. Teamwork is very successful and new staff are developed and supported very well. The department is developing its links with outside businesses, using these with Year 10, for example, to create a real marketing campaign. There are too few links currently to set pupils' learning in a more realistic context. There was no report on business studies at the previous inspection, so no judgement can be made about improvement.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

The overall quality of citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The personal, social and health programme makes a good contribution to citizenship.
- The new head of the subject has a clear vision for citizenship, and has identified appropriate area for development.
- Systems for assessing and reporting on citizenship are at an early stage of development.
- Pupils achieve well in developing skills of enquiry, participation and responsibility in response to the generally good quality teaching.

Commentary

112. Citizenship is well established in the school. All subjects including personal, social and health education lessons and tutorial lessons are delivering the many aspects of the subject. In addition pupils are learning the skills of citizenship and political literacy through tutorials, which have encouraged them to express their views. Good opportunities are also provided for pupils to participate in school decision-making such as the council meetings. The citizenship agenda of political literacy, social and moral responsibility and community participation strongly underpins the school's ethos, thus providing a strong basis for the delivery of the subject.
113. Standards for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are above average and pupils' achieve well. They show a good understanding of the nature of British society today as it affects them, their school and people in the wider community. Standards in Year 10 and 11 are also above average and achievement is good. Among other topics they are developing their understanding of ways of securing a healthier life style and what can be learned from the experiences of other people.
114. In personal, social and health education lessons, where citizenship is often the focus of the lesson, the quality of teaching and learning is generally good. Lessons are well planned and objectives shared with pupils so they know on what to concentrate. Pupils are given ample opportunities to express their views in whole class discussions and in paired and group work and this improves their speaking and listening skills. Pupil's skills of enquiry and communication are good and their knowledge and understanding about citizenship is developing well.
115. Pupils take part in a good range of citizenship activities through personal, social, health and careers education and subject lessons, visiting speakers, assemblies, and in involvement in fund raising for charities. They have good opportunities to take on responsibilities at school, for example, prefects, membership of the school council and peer mentoring. The subject is

very well supported by contributions from other subject areas. Each subject has been required to audit teaching and learning opportunities, to include specific reference to these in schemes of work and to produce departmental policy to support the citizenship component of lessons. For example, in a Year 9 history lessons pupils were asked to consider the implication for Jewish people in Nazi Germany who had their citizenship of that country withdrawn. They became totally involved in the lesson, and were able to consider the implication of having their citizenship rights withdrawn from them.

116. The subject co-ordinator only took responsibility for the area at the beginning of the present academic year. She has already demonstrated good leadership and management. Much is now in place, but she is very aware of how the subject needs to move forward, which includes the development of the newly introduced assessment policy, and she has the ability and energy to put in place the necessary measures.

Personal, social and health education

Provision for personal, social, health and careers education (PSHCE) is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision is well managed to integrate citizenship and religious education.
- Very good relationships create an ethos of curiosity and genuine debate in lessons.
- The careers programme is well organised and pupils appreciate the advice that is available.

Commentary

117. Standards in personal, social, health and careers education lessons are above average by Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils in Year 9 are confident and aware that they have progressed to a sophisticated level of discussion on issues such as how to say no to sex. In Year 8 they show a good understanding of the consequences of alcohol abuse, and the atmosphere in lessons means that they are able to disagree maturely. By Year 11 pupils are efficient researchers and can exploit the potential of the Internet to provide serious religious perspectives on terrorism. This represents good achievement from their average discussion and research skills when they came to the school.
118. Teaching is very good and supports very good learning. Pupils are highly collaborative and show a good commitment to developing their understanding. They stay on task throughout their lessons and they show genuine curiosity. This is primarily because the teachers' expertise gives them confidence, and the warm relationships create an atmosphere of complete trust.
119. The provision is well organised to develop progressively higher levels of skill and understanding. Careers education is effective and pupils recognise the good quality of the guidance and information they receive. Improvement has been satisfactory since the previous inspection. Citizenship has been effectively integrated into the programme, though work-related learning is in the very early stages of development.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	1

Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal qualities (ethos)	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the head teacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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