

INSPECTION REPORT

HREOD PARKWAY SCHOOL

Swindon

LEA area: Swindon

Unique reference number: 126465

Headteacher: Mr A Fleet

Lead inspector: Bob Allan

Dates of inspection: 8th - 12th November 2004

Inspection number: 268401

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:	1,243
School address:	Akers Way Moredon Swindon Wiltshire
Postcode:	SN2 2NQ
Telephone number:	(01793) 527 999
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms M Gladman

Date of previous 4th November 2002 inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hreod Parkway School is a larger than average, mixed, non-denominational 11-16 comprehensive school on the north-western edge of Swindon. In 2002, it received the Artsmark award and in 2004, it received Sportsmark and Youth Action awards. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average but has been rising, along with the school's increasing popularity, so that the intake of pupils is mostly of broadly average attainment. Pupils are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds with a majority from the less affluent wards in the borough. They are predominantly of white British background with very few at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school has a broadly typical proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements. Most numerous are those with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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19639	Gill Anderson	Lay inspector	
1085	John Laver	Team inspector	English
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16786	Selwyn Hodge	Team inspector	Science
32252	Deborah Wring	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship
13048	Tony Boyden	Team inspector	History Work-related learning
8530	John Adams	Team inspector	Design and technology
18261	Tony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design
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15971	Mike Pye	Team inspector	Physical education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Hreod Parkway is a satisfactory school with several good features. Teaching is sound so pupils learn and achieve satisfactorily. Leadership and management are good and have brought about good improvement since the last inspection. The school takes effective steps to ensure that all groups of pupils have good opportunities to benefit from its programmes. It provides satisfactory value for money.

THE SCHOOL'S MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ARE:

- Good leadership has secured widespread commitment to improvement.
- Imaginative links with other agencies enable the school to provide extensive support for its pupils.
- The school makes very good provision for work-related learning and offers very good opportunities for activities beyond the school day.
- Below-average levels of literacy and the indifferent attitudes of a significant minority of pupils impede their learning.
- Not enough lessons capture the interest of pupils for learning to be good.
- Punctuality to lessons is unsatisfactory and prevents some pupils from achieving as well as they could.

In 2002, the school was judged no longer to require special measures in order to provide its pupils with an acceptable standard of education. Improvement since that time has been good. Standards have risen, the quality of teaching is better and the leadership and management of subjects have improved. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved, although not sufficiently to meet the statutory requirements for all pupils in Year 11. Accommodation remains unsatisfactory, but a new school is to be built for 2006.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. Standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Standards on entry for most year groups are below average but they are rising, and those of pupils entering the school most recently are broadly typical of Year 7 pupils nationally. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9, continuing in Years 10 and 11. This leads to GCSE results that are below the national average but in line with those of pupils who reached similar levels in national tests for 14 year-olds two years earlier. By the end of Year 9, standards are in line with national expectations in most subjects. They are below expectations in science, religious education and music. Pupils achieve well in English, art and design and design, citizenship, history, geography and physical education. By the end of Year 11, standards are above expectations in history and business education; they are below expectations in science and music. Pupils achieve well in art and design, business studies, citizenship, history and religious education. Pupils do not all achieve the standards of which they are capable in ICT. Those pupils with special educational needs make good progress in specialist lessons and their achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils identified as gifted or talented also make satisfactory progress.

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

Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, **is good**. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory but a significant minority are indifferent to learning, so some pupils do not respond well in lessons or at other times. Behaviour is satisfactory but occasionally a few pupils disrupt the learning of others. Attendance at school is good but punctuality to lessons is unsatisfactory, not only due to time being lost crossing the large site, but also to the deliberate lateness of some pupils.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **satisfactory quality of education** for its pupils. **Teaching is satisfactory** and much is good, or better. The curriculum is satisfactory, with some good and very good features, but it does not meet the statutory requirements for ICT. Pupils are offered a very wide variety of out-of-school activities and a very good programme of work-related learning, so that many older pupils see the relevance of what they do at school. The school provides extensively for the welfare of its pupils, fostering very good relationships between pupils and adults, so that they are well cared for.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Both **leadership and management are good**. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by the governing body and a competent team of senior managers. They monitor the effectiveness of the school well, evaluating provision accurately so as to provide a reliable basis for action to bring about improvements. This is evident in the progress made by the school since the time of the last inspection. Subject leaders are effective. They understand and operate the school's systems well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents express favourable views of the school. It is increasingly popular with them and is now over-subscribed. They recognise the important improvements that have been brought about in recent years and are pleased with the firm and effective action that the school takes to deal with bullying. Some consider that meetings to discuss their children's progress are not efficiently run so that they often do not have a chance to raise matters of concern to them. Pupils enjoy school and in the main appreciate what it offers them. They, and their parents, feel that it is unjust when whole groups of pupils are detained because of the wrong-doing of a few and are unhappy about toilet and changing facilities. Inspectors agree with these concerns.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE ARE:

- raise the achievement of pupils by improving their levels of literacy and attitudes to learning so that they are able and willing to work more independently;
- improve the quality of learning through lessons that capture the interest of more pupils, demand higher standards and are conducted at a brisker pace;
- deal more firmly and effectively with pupils' unnecessary lateness to lessons and with the misbehaviour of those few who disrupt the learning of others;

AND, TO MEET STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS:

- teach the full programmes of study for ICT to all pupils;
- ensure the governors' annual reports to parents are complete; and
- provide a daily act of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

The achievement of all groups of pupils is satisfactory. Standards of attainment are broadly in line with national expectations but literacy skills are below and so hamper the better achievement of some pupils. Many pupils achieve well but a minority, mainly boys in the upper school, do not because they have casual attitudes to their learning and are reluctant to work independently.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In comparison with similar schools, GCSE results have risen, from well below average in 2002 to average in 2003, with a slight further increase in 2004.
- Test results for 14-year-olds in 2003 continue the steady upward trend since the last inspection.
- Standards of work have risen since the last inspection.
- Weak skills in literacy impede the progress of pupils in some subjects.
- Achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards of attainment in science and music are below those expected nationally in Year 9 and Year 11.

Commentary

1. In 2003, national test results at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average, an improvement on recent years. Standards were well above those of most other schools whose pupils had comparable results in tests for 11-year-olds. The trend in recent results has been steadily upward. Results fell back slightly in 2004 but were still above those three years previously, so maintaining the upward trend overall. Between 2001 and 2003, performance in the core subjects was below the national average but the results of both boys and girls in mathematics were close to the respective national averages.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.2 (30.6)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.2 (33.4)	35.4 (34.7)
science	32.4 (30.7)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 244 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- In Years 7 to 9, the standards are in line with national expectations. This is the case in all subjects except science, religious education and music, where they were below national expectations. This represents an improvement since the time of the last inspection when standards generally were below national expectations. Pupils are achieving well in English, history, geography, art and design, physical education and citizenship in Year 9. This corresponds closely to the effective teaching seen in these subjects during the inspection. Achievement in other subjects is satisfactory.
- In 2003, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades of A* to C in the GCSE examinations was below the national average but above that of schools whose pupils had performed similarly in tests for 14-year-olds in 2001 (similar schools). Results fell back slightly in 2004. The proportion of pupils achieving at least one GCSE grade of G or better in 2003 was well below the national average and the average for similar schools. Results rose sharply in 2004 to a level that is estimated by the local education authority to be in line with the expected national average and above that expected of similar schools. This is due to the effectiveness of the school's vocational curriculum and good support for pupils. The average GCSE point scores have been rising steadily, at a rate above the national trend, in recent years. In 2003, the average point score was below the national average but in line with similar schools. The score rose further in 2004 to a level estimated by the local education authority to be above that expected of similar schools.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	43 (30)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	83 (81)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	92 (92)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	29.7 (27.7)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 239 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Achievement represented by the recent GCSE results is satisfactory. In relation to the relevant key issues from the last report, progress has been good, with the school's performance relative to similar schools rising from well below average in 2002 to average in 2003, with a slight further increase in 2004. In 2003, there were no significant differences between boys' and girls' results, although girls made better progress, as their attainment in tests two years earlier was lower than boys'.
- Standards of literacy are below expectations and impede pupils' progress in mathematics, science, geography, religious education and the performing arts. Those pupils who are on special programmes to improve their literacy achieve well. Those with behavioural difficulties are taught how to change their behaviour so that they

can successfully attend lessons and improve their learning. Teachers know well and make good provision for the few pupils whose command of English is weak because it is not their mother tongue. Other pupils in their classes are very welcoming and help them to use English in lessons and elsewhere.

6. In Years 10 and 11, the standards of work seen are broadly in line with national expectations and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards are above national expectations in history and business studies, where teaching is good and pupils achieve well. Standards of work in science and music are below national expectations at the end of Year 11. Considering their standards when starting courses, pupils achieve well in art and design, religious education and citizenship, and boys achieve well in physical education. Achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory in Year 11, as pupils are not all taught the full programmes of study. A significant minority of older pupils have an indifferent attitude to their work and are reluctant to work independently. This is evident in some lessons, in their low rate of completion of homework or coursework, so they do not achieve as well as their targets suggest they are capable.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance is good but their punctuality is unsatisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school cultivates personal development well and has a clear rationale for taking pupils out of lessons for special personal development programmes.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attendance has improved significantly over the last three years and is now well above the national average.
- Pupils' personal development is good.
- Absences from school are rigorously and promptly followed up.
- Unnecessary lateness for lessons reduces learning.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes in lessons but a small number bring with them an indifference to their own learning.
- Technical difficulties prevent the effective monitoring of attendance in some lessons.

Commentary

7. The good attendance is the culmination of sustained, very good improvement. Attendance rates were well above the national average in the last school year. This is partly because of the strenuous efforts made to follow up absence but also because older pupils, some of whom would otherwise be reluctant to attend school regularly, see new courses as relevant to their needs. However, attendance at lessons is less good as some pupils miss them to attend alternative programmes or absent themselves, sometimes at short notice, to seek support. The irregular attendance of some older pupils prevents them from making the progress of which they are capable so their attainment falls below their targets.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.9	School data	1.2

National data	7.2
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National data	1.1
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The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

8. The attendance information system relies on a network that operates unreliably in some areas of the extensive site. As a result, there is often uncertainty regarding legitimate absence from some lessons. This is compounded when pupils take the opportunities to refer themselves to specialist staff during the day.
9. Most pupils are keen to learn and they enjoy lessons. Pupils show very good attitudes to learning in some lessons, notable in history, geography, citizenship and, in Years 10 and 11, art and design. Attitudes are unsatisfactory in music, partly due to the narrow curriculum in that subject. A minority of older pupils are uninterested in their own learning. This manifests itself in their deliberately poor punctuality and their indifferent response to some interesting lessons where they show lack of sustained concentration and reluctance to work independently. They often fail to complete homework or coursework reliably. Pupils have favourable attitudes towards the activities offered after school but their enthusiasm for sports and games is dampened by the need to use unsatisfactory changing facilities. The attitudes of pupils who are taught in small groups on programmes to develop their learning and behaviour are positive. They take a full part in the learning activities.
10. Most pupils behave well and show consideration for others but the behaviour of a small number of pupils is unsatisfactory as it disrupts the learning of others and can cause delay between lessons. This causes some younger pupils to find crossing the bridge over the road that separates the two sites intimidating.
11. Punctuality, particularly in periods two, four and six, is unsatisfactory. The large site means that some time is unavoidably lost. However, a significant minority of older pupils deliberately dawdle so that they sometimes take over twice as long to arrive at their next lesson as other pupils. This delays the start of the main part of some lessons by over ten minutes.
12. The school deals effectively with bullying. The importance of bringing it to adults' attention promptly is regularly stressed and pupils and parents are confident that incidents are dealt with well.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1119	96	0
4	1	0
1	1	0
4	0	0
1	0	0

Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	0	0
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	100	0	0

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

13. The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to reflect quietly, for example, during assemblies, and some tutor times, by considering different themes each week. Visitors to the school encourage pupils to think about issues that have a strong spiritual dimension. Visitors offer individual counselling and group work that helps pupils to develop and mature. Opportunities for spiritual development occur in individual subjects such as religious education, English and history. In other subjects, however, opportunities for reflection are sometimes lost.
14. The school's code of behaviour helps pupils to distinguish right from wrong. Themes for assemblies and '*Thoughts for the Week*' often reinforce the code. Lessons in citizenship cover a large number of topics that have strong moral themes. Work in religious education includes moral issues such as relationships and medical ethics. Other subject areas make a significant contribution to moral development. These include the ethics of business, issues of morality in modern warfare and moral standards and freedom of expression in drama. A small number of pupils do not always respond well to this good provision.
15. Provision for social development is very good. Pupils have many opportunities to develop positive relationships through the societies and clubs that operate in the school. These also help them to develop tolerance and respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others very well. Pupils can take responsibility through the school council, the system by which they provide counselling to other pupils and other activities such as being library assistants. The citizenship programme helps them understand their wider responsibility in society.
16. Pupils have opportunity to appreciate their own cultural traditions through trips out to the theatre, workshops on dance and music in the school itself and other events, such as football activities and theatrical productions. Opportunities for cultural development also occur in other areas of the curriculum. These include visits to France and Germany in modern foreign languages and the study of culture and religions in religious education. Pupils also have opportunities to appreciate the diversity of other cultures through art and design, dance and music. Pupils' appreciation of the multicultural diversity of the United Kingdom itself, however, is not strong.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Teaching is satisfactory and much of it is good. The curriculum is satisfactory and it has many good and some very good features. Leadership and management are good, as they have brought about sustained improvement over recent years.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is satisfactory. Learning is sound and most pupils achieve the standards of which they are capable. However, a significant minority have a casual attitude to their learning and do not respond productively to good teaching. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the best lessons, teachers plan well, encourage their pupils and insist upon good behaviour.
- Teachers do not consistently capture the interest of a significant minority of pupils.
- The range of strategies for teaching literacy in subjects other than English is too narrow to be effective.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and understand the requirements of the examination courses that they teach.
- The quality of marking varies too widely so some pupils are not clear about their progress.

Commentary

17. The quality of teaching seen in lessons varies very widely, from excellent to unsatisfactory. Examples of very good teaching are widespread, being evident in English, mathematics, science, art and design, citizenship, drama, geography, history, religious education and vocational subjects and in the small groups of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers know their subjects well, plan lessons carefully and seek to ensure that all pupils participate in tasks and activities. In the most effective teaching, the interest and imagination of pupils are captured and held so that they work enthusiastically and productively throughout lessons. Teachers keep pupils closely focused on the main objectives by questioning that is targeted to individual pupils and expressed in terms that are clear and unambiguous, so that all pupils contribute ideas. They provide sincere, unpatronising praise, linking their judgements to the requirements of assessment. In this way, pupils acquire a good understanding of what constitutes good work and of how they can improve.
18. Many pupils are keen to do well and show considerable commitment in response to good teaching, so that they achieve well. This is as true of very capable pupils deepening their understanding of literary devices used by war poets as it is of much less capable pupils learning to express their emerging ideas and defend them in debate during a key skills lesson. However, there are a significant minority of pupils who show indifference to their learning. This shows itself in their tardy movement between lessons, particularly when crossing from one site to the other. It is evident in the infrequent completion of homework and their reluctance to invest effort in their GCSE coursework. During lessons, such pupils do not respond well to good and sometimes very good teaching and only work productively under the close attention of the teacher. In barely satisfactory and unsatisfactory teaching, lessons do not offer

sufficient challenge for pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. Planning often does not take full account of the range of pupils' capabilities. Consequently, some pupils struggle unsuccessfully with work that is too hard for them whilst others quickly complete the set task and then occupy themselves in conversation or in distracting others. In some cases, the teaching is dull and uninspiring so that pupils quickly become disinterested and work slowly or only when directly supervised by the teacher.

19. In some subjects, teachers give close attention to pupils' needs for the direct teaching of literacy. For example, they work to improve writing in history and reading in science. However, insufficient attention is given to teaching literacy generally. In some subjects, such as geography and religious education, teachers do not develop skills of extended writing sufficiently. Pupils, especially boys, often find it difficult in mathematics and science to read with understanding. These faculties are addressing the issues. For example, in mathematics, teachers are working to improve pupils' understanding of examination questions, whilst, in science, a literacy consultant is being employed to improve the quality of writing and of questioning. Teachers in modern foreign languages follow guidelines for marking that promote better literacy, whilst teachers in humanities have used external support to improve literacy in history. However, marking throughout the school does not address literacy in a co-ordinated way. Overall, teachers deploy a narrow range of strategies to improve literacy in their lessons. Whilst many emphasise specialist vocabulary, this falls well short of what is required to address the weak literacy of many pupils.
20. Teaching assistants are well trained and competent. They work in partnership with teachers to provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs in lessons. Many are developing specialist areas of knowledge through their links with subject departments. Staff working with pupils who have special educational needs have very good links with outside agencies through which expert advice is gathered. The high quality individual education plans and wealth of other information that is circulated to teachers ensures that they know the needs of pupils with special educational needs well. However, this information is not always used effectively to meet specific pupils' needs in lessons.
21. Small groups of pupils are taught very well mainly because of meticulous planning. Teachers set targets that enable pupils to achieve small steps at a time to grow in confidence as they learn. There are very good relationships between the learning support staff and the pupils. The progress in literacy made by those on specific programmes is very carefully monitored and the results are used to plan the next steps.
22. Assessment is satisfactory but its quality varies across the school. It is better in Years 10 and 11, where the good tracking system leads to realistic grade predictions for GCSE examinations. Pupils in these years generally know how well they are doing and how they can improve their performance in the run-up to GCSE examinations. Although National Curriculum levels are known and generally used well across Years 7 to 9, the inconsistencies in marking within and across departments leads to pupils not being as clear about their progress as they could be. Departments tend to develop their own marking and tracking systems for literacy, leading to a patchy provision that is not always consistent even within departments so opportunities to raise literacy

levels across the school are lost. In the mathematics and science departments, for instance, there are good marking systems but they are inconsistently applied across those departments. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own work effectively in many departments, but this self-assessment is not always supported by helpful comments from the teacher.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 129 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (1%)	21 (17%)	54 (42%)	46 (35%)	6 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. It offers a very good range of vocational courses and a very good programme of extra-curricular activities but does not teach the full programme of ICT to all Year 11 pupils and not all subjects meet their requirements to teach ICT. There is a particularly good extra-curricular programme in sport. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very good programme of vocational courses that enjoy parity of esteem with more academic programmes.
- Many pupils benefit from very extensive opportunities to engage in activities beyond the normal school day.
- Participation in additional classes for completing homework or coursework is low amongst those pupils most in need of them.
- Not all pupils are taught the required programmes of study for ICT in Years 10 and 11.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and there are insufficient resources for some specialist teaching.

Commentary

23. Pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 have a well-planned programme of citizenship, and there is a good programme of personal, social, moral and health education throughout the school. A very good range of opportunities in performing arts and in several vocational and applied courses for older pupils add to the breadth of the curriculum, and this helps in the retention of previously disaffected pupils. However, the provision for ICT is unsatisfactory. All pupils up to the age of 14 follow an ICT course but some pupils between 14 and 16 are not taught the full programmes of study and their ICT standards are not assessed or reported upon. Pupils do not have enough experience of computer-aided design and manufacture in design technology.
24. There is a limited amount of fieldwork for older pupils in geography and a limited amount of ceramics work in art and design. The senior management team is continuing to focus on curriculum development to ensure an appropriate range of courses for all pupils.

25. The school has a good range of programmes to help to support pupils with learning, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Although the quality of this work is monitored, insufficient data has yet been gathered to show how this has affected the pupils' attendance at lessons and its impact on their learning.
26. The school has planned well and developed a very good extra-curricular programme. Pupils are encouraged to choose from a very wide range of activities at the end of the school day. The programme offers leisure activities, work support and additional lessons. In addition, subjects such as physical education provide sporting fixtures and inter-house activities. Trips to theatres and music and dance presentations take place. Little is provided in geography. The ambitious programme is at a developmental stage, and this is reflected in the disappointing attendance rates of pupils at some activities.
27. The vocational curriculum brings together different aspects of provision very well. It incorporates employer-led activities, well-structured programmes of work experience and careers guidance, specific aspects in personal, social and health education and citizenship programmes, applied GCSE and other vocational GCSE courses and alternative programmes linked specifically to developing personal skills and preparation for working life. The work-related learning and vocational curriculum co-ordinator maintains a very effective oversight of all of these elements.
28. The range of vocational options has captured the interest of pupils who might otherwise have gained little from school beyond the age of 14 and helped virtually all of them to move on to college courses or work-based training at 16. The pupils value these programmes because they can take a core of GCSE subjects while opting for a programme more directly based on preparation for work and for adult life in general. Teachers, college lecturers and employers testify to their improved attitudes and behaviour. Vocational courses recruit pupils seeking alternatives to GCSE options as well as pupils who find a selection based only on GCSE courses too much of a challenge.
29. There is close liaison between all people involved in pupils' welfare and progress during the recruitment and induction process for vocational courses. The school's vocational trainer maintains close links with the college and business representatives involved in aspects of individual pupils' programmes. There is thus good oversight of pupils' progress and potential problems are quickly dealt with. These arrangements also help the future planning of provision by the various partners.
30. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The school is housed on two sites, some distance apart, on either side of a busy road. This seriously disrupts some lessons because pupils arrive late and occasionally wet, having travelled from the other site. It also reduces the efficiency of the school, as many resources need to be duplicated or moved between sites. The buildings are difficult and expensive to maintain. Despite the challenging nature of the current accommodation, the school continues to invest a significant proportion of its funding on improvements and maintenance to ensure the best possible environment for its pupils. Since the last inspection, two laboratories have been refurbished, good rooms have been provided for ICT and good use made of space to provide specialist rooms to support the wider curriculum. A number of toilets have been refurbished, but others remain in poor condition. Lack of specialist accommodation for dance and drama and insufficient specialist accommodation for

science reduce learning opportunities. The geography rooms are too small for the groups using them and there is no single base for some subjects, such as mathematics and citizenship. Work surfaces for food technology are badly worn and hard to clean and accommodation is not conducive to high quality work. A new school building is planned for 2006.

31. Resources are unsatisfactory. They are good for science and for mathematics, where pupils have access to good textbooks and graphic calculators, and for physical education. However, resources are unsatisfactory for dance and drama, where poor facilities for ICT, video and lighting reduce the pupils' opportunities. General resources for ICT have improved significantly since the last inspection. However, the poor provision of computer equipment for specialist applications in design and technology and music results in teachers being unable to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

The school looks after pupils' welfare, health and safety well. It provides them with good support, advice and guidance and involves them satisfactorily in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with other agencies are used very well to support the school's provision.
- Pupils are very confident that they have a good and trusting relationship with one or more adults in school.
- Good systems for tracking pupils' progress towards their detailed targets form the foundation of effective support, advice and guidance.
- Good induction arrangements for pupils ensure that Year 7 pupils settle quickly and they are enthusiastic about their new school.
- Consultation with pupils is limited and mainly through the school council.
- The standard of toilets and changing accommodation is poor.

Commentary

32. The school gives high priority to pupils' individual care. Extensive support is available through imaginative planning, ensuring that all pupils feel very well supported. The induction arrangements for pupils from primary school are so successful that Year 7 pupils settle quickly and are enthusiastic about their new school. There are very good arrangements for the most vulnerable pupils coming into the school from primary schools. Pupils' needs are known because the learning support staff liaise very closely with primary schools. Learning mentors support the transition well, supporting all groups to take learning forward. Bullying is not an issue because the school takes it very seriously and pupils and parents are confident it is dealt with effectively.
33. The school works closely with health, family support and social services and uses an effective network of mentors from local businesses, academic mentors and specialist professionals to provide a very good level of individual care, particularly for its most vulnerable pupils. The programmes are based on evidence of the benefits to such pupils in other leading institutions. Many of these pupils miss formal lessons, sometimes referring themselves, to take advantage of these services. As a

consequence, they do not achieve all they might in the short-term but the school is monitoring pupils' overall personal development alongside their academic achievement to evaluate the long-term benefits of these programmes.

34. Child protection procedures are very reliable. A great strength of the school is the quality of liaison with other agencies to support its own work. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory overall but there is room for improvement. The unacceptable changing accommodation damps enthusiasm for sport, particularly for girls.
35. The school is developing good systems for personal support. Academic and personal monitoring fully involves the pupils through tracking and good use of targets. There is comprehensive pastoral support for pupils with special behavioural needs or who are vulnerable in other ways. Extensive and imaginative support contributes to the school's good attendance figures and to the lack of permanent exclusions.
36. The very wide range of procedures to help pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties ensures a high level of personal care. Pupils are usually involved very well in deciding the arrangements for their own support and teaching. All pupils with statements of special educational needs attend their annual review meetings.
37. The school consults pupils through the school council, whose members cite improvements that have come about as a result, but there are few other opportunities for pupils to take initiative or develop their independence.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and the community are good. Links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is now oversubscribed, reflecting parents' increasing confidence.
- Links with the primary schools from which most of its pupils come are very good so that new pupils feel well supported and rate their new school well.
- Very close liaison with local colleges in a wide range of areas supports the work of the school very well.
- Links with the community enrich teaching and learning.

Commentary

38. Improvements in the school's reputation have resulted in more applications from parents to send their children than places that the school can offer. The school has a clear policy of working in partnership with parents and makes particular efforts where there are extra concerns, such as special educational needs. Links with parents are at their strongest where they involve their own children.
39. Parents receive the information they require about the school and their children's progress through, for example, meetings and reports. There are formal and informal

opportunities to talk to teachers. The school consults a parents' council and responds to their suggestions. Younger pupils rate the use of the school planner very highly, as do their parents, so that these parents feel well informed. Annual reports are satisfactory, although targets are not sufficiently focused. Parents are supportive of the school and a small parent-teacher association works hard. Some parents give extra support for English. A pilot family literacy project involves parents and pupils.

40. The school has productive links with the community which make a particularly good contribution to the varied extra-curricular programme valued so much by pupils. Productive and well-managed links with external organisations add significantly to the diversity and quality of pastoral care. Partnerships are managed systematically so that the school can tap into skills and resources to enrich its programme of care. Regular outside visits strengthen the curriculum.
41. Information about pupils is transferred smoothly between primary schools and Hreod. This supports the good transitional arrangements so that Year 7 pupils are confident in their new school. The school works closely with partner schools to share and adopt best practice. Paired observations are used to analyse and improve teaching. The departments of design and technology and modern foreign languages have strong productive links with a local school that is nationally recognised for its exemplary practice.
42. Staff work hard to ensure that parents and carers of pupils with statements of special educational need are involved in their annual review meetings, and almost all parents attend. Individual education plans have targets for adults to support their child at home.
43. The school has very good links with further and higher education, which provide courses that highly motivate pupils. Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 on the vocational programme have access to provision at Swindon College in such areas as motor vehicle engineering and childcare. A very small number, at risk of exclusion, benefit from the opportunity to complete their full-time education at the college. The link is strengthened by a learning centre which was developed on the school site in partnership with Swindon College and the Learning and Skills Council. The college seeks to improve its provision further with 'taster' courses in Year 10, leading on to NVQ-accredited training in Year 11. The school, in common with a number of other local schools, takes part in the 'Closer to Home' project where pupils with behavioural problems benefit from options such as first aid, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and sports coaching awards, on the campus of the local university.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led and well managed by a strong team. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Breaches of its statutory duties mar the governing body's otherwise good and sometimes very good work. The school does not comply with the full requirements of the National Curriculum for ICT in Year 11; there are some omissions in the information provided for parents; and the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good.
- Whole-school improvement planning is well-integrated with department planning, based on thorough reviews of performance, and leads to well-focused, effective action.
- Punctuality to lessons is not effectively monitored.
- Imaginative financial planning and management have enabled the school to recover from a serious budget deficit at the same time as expanding its provision for the care and welfare of its pupils.
- Systems for professional development and management systems are sufficiently robust to accommodate changes of key leaders without reduction in the momentum of improvement.
- The governing body has not ensured that the school teaches the required programme of ICT to all of its pupils in Year 11 and there are other minor breaches of statutory requirement.

Commentary

44. The far-sighted leadership provided by the headteacher, capably supported by a strong senior team, has inspired a widespread commitment to improvement. A down-to-earth understanding of the processes by which aspirations are realised by effective action drives good management. This has resulted in rising standards of achievement, better quality of teaching and learning in all years and improvements in the management of subjects. The governing body is closely involved in effective strategic planning and has played an important role in the school's improvement. Whilst provision for ICT does not meet statutory requirements, there are good plans to overcome this in the next school year.
45. Leadership in mathematics, religious education, geography and citizenship is very good. Although the day-to-day operation of the department is good, leadership and management of ICT are unsatisfactory insofar as they have not secured full statutory provision for all pupils. This situation is shortly to be rectified. In all other areas, leadership and management are good and represent a clear improvement since the last inspection.
46. Procedures for monitoring the quality of the school's provision are good. They enable the school to evaluate itself with a good degree of reliability. Consequently, the governing body has good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The development planning cycle, to which the governing body contributes well, is coherent and very closely linked to performance reviews. Along with good business management, this produces imaginative and very cost-effective provision of special programmes for the care and support of pupils.
47. Managers follow up their monitoring with effective action to redress weakness that they uncover. Clear expectations are well understood, so that new members of the senior team can quickly and seamlessly continue the established effective systems. However, although monitoring of performance data is very effective, senior managers have not realised the extent of indifference that a few pupils have to the procedures intended to ensure punctuality to lessons. Punctuality falls within the next priority for improving the consistency of the school's procedures.

48. The leadership of special educational needs is very good. The co-ordinator is open to innovation and looks at best practice elsewhere. She is working hard with her staff to influence the work of subject teachers so that they plan for every pupil's individual needs. The management of special educational needs is good. Specialists and many teachers share a clear understanding of what it means to have special educational needs in the school so that teachers recognise when pupils have made enough progress for support to be no longer needed. The learning support teachers monitor and support the work of subject teachers. The department is efficiently organised and well managed.
49. The recruitment and professional development of all staff are very well managed. A number of effective recruitment strategies have been used. Senior managers have visited Northern Ireland on a successful recruitment drive. The school has good links with local teacher trainers, and has recruited staff through its own graduate training programme. Continuing professional development is well linked to the improvement plans of individual departments and, through them, to the school's overall development plan. Induction is thorough and positive for both newly-qualified and experienced staff who are new to the school. Experienced staff are encouraged to remain in the school by the opportunity to undertake special projects. The school is now part of the local framework for the professional development of teachers and is becoming a formally-designated training school.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,569,588
Total expenditure	4,413,848
Expenditure per pupil	3,594

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-101,769
Balance carried forward to the next year	53,971

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German were inspected in full in Years 7, 8 and 9 and sampled in Years 10 and 11. In the two lessons and the work seen in Years 10 and 11, higher-attaining pupils were starting to produce increasingly complex and accurate written work in French or German, using a range of structures. Lower-attaining pupils have weaknesses in their grasp of basic vocabulary and in their pronunciation. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and this encourages participation in lessons. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to language learning and this has contributed to the recent improvement in standards in languages.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well by the age of 14.
- Teaching is good, and successfully engages most pupils when in lessons.
- A significant minority of pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 underachieve as the result of frequent absences, negative attitudes towards learning and a reluctance to work independently of the teacher.
- There is good leadership and management of an improving department.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Test and examination results

50. In 2003, the results of Year 9 pupils in national tests were above the national average, and well above the average for schools where pupils were of similar prior attainment. The results were better than those in mathematics and science. The unvalidated results in 2004 were similar, part of an improving trend in English. In

2003, the percentage of pupils in Year 11 attaining grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations was slightly below the national average, with boys' results lower than those of girls, although results in English were above the school average. The unvalidated results of the 2004 examinations were similar, although the gap in results between boys and girls was wider than in 2003.

Standards and achievement

51. Standards are in line with national expectations in Year 9 and Year 11. However, the standards achieved by a significant number of boys are below expectations, especially in Year 11. Standards in the current Year 10 are relatively higher than in Year 11. Throughout the school, standards of speaking are below expectations. Many pupils have a limited range of vocabulary and find it difficult to make extended oral or written responses. Standards in reading vary widely, with more able pupils reading confidently, but many lower attainers reading without sustained accuracy or fluency. Standards of writing are mostly above expectations, despite some weaknesses in accuracy and spelling and unsatisfactory presentation. Achievement is satisfactory. Although the current Year 7 joined the school with standards in line with expectations, pupils in the current Year 9 did not, and these pupils, of all levels of ability, achieve well, although girls to a greater extent than boys. Achievement of pupils by Year 11 is satisfactory. Although many older pupils, especially girls, achieve well, a significant minority of boys underachieve, due to frequent absence, negative attitudes towards learning, and a limited capacity to work independently, for example, when trying to complete GCSE coursework. A substantial number of pupils do not complete homework. Pupils from ethnic minorities, those with special educational needs, and those identified as gifted and talented do not achieve at a significantly different rate from other pupils.

Teaching and learning

52. Teaching is good and learning is good in Years 7 to 10. The learning of pupils in Year 11 is only satisfactory because of their negative attitudes, often outside the classroom. The teaching is most effective when lessons are conducted at pace and teachers present pupils with appropriate challenges, encouraging them to work independently and using resources well. This was seen at its best when Year 10 pupils were actively engaged throughout a lesson in collaborative work on *An Inspector Calls*, largely independently of the teacher, who nevertheless monitored progress. The teaching is less effective when the start of lessons lacks sufficient focus, there are insufficiently high expectations, or the teacher directs activities too closely, limiting learning. The learning of some pupils is also restricted by weaknesses in basic language and literacy, although teachers work hard to address these.

Leadership and management

53. Leadership and management are good. The faculty leader has evaluated provision well and has a clear vision for further development. The use of assessment to raise standards is a strong feature. There is good monitoring within the faculty. Since 2002, standards have risen, the stability of staffing has improved, and strengths in teaching and assessment have been sustained. Therefore, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

54. Standards of language and literacy throughout the school are unsatisfactory. Speaking skills are below average and, whilst pupils are often keen to answer questions in class, many find it difficult to make a presentation or a sustained response. Weak

listening skills sometimes detract from the quality of learning in performing arts. Pupils are not very adept at debate in religious education lessons. Reading standards are often below expectations, although some form tutors encourage reading in tutorial sessions.

55. The school has made it a priority to improve standards of language and literacy and is developing training for staff. However, the co-ordinator, whilst providing support for departments, is not primarily responsible for monitoring and literacy issues are largely left to faculties. Consequently, there are still inconsistencies in practice throughout the school, and this has a negative effect upon standards.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership has fostered a shared commitment to improvement amongst staff and pupils.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to language learning.
- Marking does not always give pupils clear guidance on how to improve.
- There is a lack of creative activities in some lessons and an over-reliance on the French or German course book.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Assessment and examination results

56. In 2003, results of teachers' assessments in modern foreign languages were well below the national average. However, in 2004, teachers' assessments indicate a significant rise in standards. In 2003, GCSE results in both German and French were well below the national average. However, GCSE results in both languages in 2004 show a significant improvement and standards seen in lessons reflect this rising trend.

Standards and achievement

57. Standards of work seen in Years 7, 8 and 9 are broadly in line with national expectations. Achievement is satisfactory in French and German and, in most lessons, boys achieve as well as girls. The pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress when the work is matched to their individual targets. Higher-attaining pupils are beginning to use different tenses and are able to adapt language to a range of topics. However, in some lessons, they are not stretched to their full linguistic potential.

Teaching and learning

58. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory or better, high expectations of both behaviour and learning lead to pupils concentrating well. Teachers use probing questions to encourage pupils to think more deeply and they circulate well to check

pupils' understanding and to offer support. This encourages pupils to work out the meanings of vocabulary for themselves, using their prior knowledge productively. Where teaching is less effective, the pace of lessons is slow, there is a lack of stimulating activities and an over-reliance on the course book. In these lessons, pupils do not make sufficient progress. Pupils are proud of their written work and keen to contribute by speaking in lessons but teachers do not require pupils to use French or German routinely. Assessment is satisfactory but targets are too general for pupils to have a clear idea of how they might improve the quality of their work.

Leadership and management

59. The department is led by a committed linguist whose vision and team approach have raised the profile of languages in the school. Results and pupils' progress are analysed well and strategies are in place to raise achievement. This, coupled with the regular monitoring of teaching and learning, has led to the rise in standards. Assessment is satisfactory with regular, scheduled formal assessments and most pupils know the level at which they are working. However, marking quality varies too widely and does not give sufficient guidance to some pupils on how to improve their written work. Whilst the long-term planning is good, there are insufficient creative activities in lessons.
60. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards are now rising owing to improvements in the quality of teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils towards their learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the faculty is very good, with vision and a strong drive for improvement.
- Teaching and learning are good overall but inconsistent, varying from excellent to unsatisfactory.
- Assessment is good, with an effective system for tracking individual pupils' attainment and progress, yet targets lack specific mathematical content.
- Although standards are rising, particularly for the more able, negative attitudes and absence from lessons affect the achievement of some pupils.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
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Progress since the last inspection	Good
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Commentary

Assessment and examination results

61. At the end of Year 9, in 2003, the results in the national tests were equal to the national average, and well above the average for schools with similar prior attainment (similar schools). The results in 2004 were just below the national average, but equal to the average for similar schools. They were equal to results in English, but above those in science. There is no significant difference over time between the results of boys and girls at the end of Year 9. In 2003, the proportion of A* to C grades in the GCSE examinations were close to the national average, with boys achieving equally to boys nationally, although girls were well below the national girls' figures. In 2004, GCSE A* to C grades declined to below the national average. All pupils are entered for GCSE, more than the national figure, yet the A* to G grades percentages are above the national averages. In 2003, the proportion of pupils who achieved a grade of A* to C in GCSE statistics was above the national average. This rose to a very high level in 2004 when all pupils who were entered achieved a grade of A* to C.

Standards and achievement

62. Standards and achievement vary with the quality of teaching, the attitudes of pupils and their attendance, as well as with their previous experience and prior attainment. Standards are in line with national expectations, and achievement is satisfactory. There are many gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding that hinder them from making connections between aspects of mathematics and links with other subjects, and slows the learning in lessons. Many pupils resort too readily, and often inappropriately, to using calculators because they do not recall simple number relationships. Development of investigation skills is hampered by weak numeracy. For example, pupils working on gradients of straight lines found difficulty using negative numbers in algebraic expressions. Data-handling is dealt with well in mathematics, although such knowledge, understanding and skills do not always transfer to work in other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well where teaching assistants are able to give them extra help. Weak attendance and lack of punctuality often create continuity problems for the teacher and the rest of the class.

Teaching and learning

63. Teaching and learning vary from excellent to unsatisfactory. Teaching is most successful where thorough preparation of good quality materials enables pupils to learn quickly, and a variety of activities are structured to guide learning. Most teachers give clear explanations of tasks and have high expectations of pupils. They use effective questioning techniques that involve all pupils. The best teachers also have the flexibility to react positively to pupils' responses and adverse situations. In some lessons, teachers do not stimulate pupils' interest and sometimes fail to build on pupils' questions to develop interesting points. Unsatisfactory features of teaching are confused or laboured explanations, a slow pace, and limited learning experiences. Most teachers circulate well, instantly assessing pupils' achievement, and often use individual whiteboards for checking on pupils' understanding and skills. Praise is frequent, with constructive comments on pupils' work. Targets are set for improvement, although these are often not sufficiently subject-specific and many pupils do not yet understand exactly how to improve. Homework is set after every lesson. It is usually relevant and is often reviewed at the beginning of the next lesson: a good practice, although not all pupils complete homework conscientiously.

Leadership and management

64. Leadership provides clear vision for the future expressed in the coherent improvement plan. The faculty head analyses performance thoughtfully and seeks the views of teachers, pupils and parents. The assessment system is good, with detailed recording of every half-term test and tracking of progress of individual pupils and teaching groups. External examination results are analysed thoroughly and relevant action taken. Policies and procedures are clearly defined. Monitoring of teaching takes place regularly but has not yet led to action to deal with inconsistencies in teaching, learning and achievement. Schemes of work are well structured, but need to include greater guidance on teaching and learning methods, opportunities for citizenship, and work-related learning, as well as the spiritual and cultural dimensions of mathematics. Management is good. The accommodation is unsatisfactory and creates difficulties

for teachers and pupils alike, with many very late starts to lessons. Since the previous inspection, standards have risen, many developments have taken place and overall improvement is good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory and help pupils learn in most other subjects. The mathematics faculty teaches number skills well, with frequent practice in mental, written calculation, and data-handling and a strong focus on statistical presentation. Interpretation of census results in a history lesson was successful, with good statistical coursework on the Swindon Railway Village. In geography, there is unsatisfactory use or teaching of graphical skills, for example, in percentage pie charts. A numeracy policy has been produced that lays out procedures for the use of calculators. All schemes of work should have numeracy prompts, but this has not been carried out by all departments so there is insufficient development or monitoring across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high expectations and determination of the head of faculty are bringing about improvements in the subject.
- Teachers provide good support and encouragement in lessons.
- Most pupils enjoy the subject and show interest.
- Teaching does not make sufficient demands on all pupils.
- Too little use is made of ICT.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation is having an adverse effect on teaching and learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below national expectations	Below national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Good with very good features
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Test and examination results

66. In 2003, results of the science tests at the end of Year 9 were below the national average but they were higher than in the previous year. Results were average for schools where pupils have similar prior attainment. There was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. In 2004, results were lower than in

2003, although the overall upward trend of recent years continued. Boys performed better than girls. In 2003, results of the GCSE double-award science examinations were well below the national average. Boys attained higher results than girls. In 2004, results were much lower than the previous year. Boys' results declined considerably.

Standards and achievement

67. Work seen during the inspection demonstrates that standards are higher than in last year's tests and examinations. An increasing number of pupils have satisfactory understanding of scientific ideas. However, many still experience problems learning new concepts since they find it difficult to recall earlier work. A significant number of pupils have weaknesses in literacy which cause them to misread scientific texts. Boys' written work, in particular, lacks precision, which restricts their achievement in examinations. Most pupils respond well in lessons and are keen to learn. However, because many rely on teachers telling them what to do, they fail to develop their own ideas enough. This reduces pupils' success in conducting scientific enquiry. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 show little enthusiasm for the subject and give up too easily. Higher-attaining pupils often make good progress, but a few do not because they have poor listening skills. Since teachers ensure that pupils are well involved in lessons, there is no particular difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to that made by other pupils because teachers provide good support and encouragement.

Teaching and learning

68. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and some lessons were good or very good. This is an improvement on the last inspection in 2002. Pupils' learning is satisfactory because teachers structure the work effectively and explain ideas clearly. However, in weaker lessons, a lack of suitably demanding activities prevents pupils gaining better understanding. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject, but, due to inexperience, a few are not sufficiently aware of the standards pupils should be attaining. In the best lessons, good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop understanding and skills by working together on scientific problems. Where teaching is less good, expectations are too low and insufficient attention is given to pupils' individual needs. Some lessons are slow to start due to pupils arriving late. The planned activities at the beginning and end of these lessons are not then effective. Assessment is satisfactory. Pupils receive better help to improve their work than at the time of the last inspection. However, there are still inconsistencies in marking. Homework is set regularly, but often fails to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding enough. Too little use is made of ICT, either to present pupils with more stimulating learning experiences or to provide familiarity with scientific applications of ICT.

Leadership and management

69. The head of faculty has high expectations and provides a very good role-model for other staff. This is having a positive impact on teaching and learning. Development plans are well constructed and focus appropriately on improving classroom practice. The management of the faculty is satisfactory. Although monitoring and evaluation of

teaching are improving, there are still inconsistencies in teaching which need to be addressed. Curriculum provision is satisfactory but schemes of work are not reviewed sufficiently regularly by all staff. The technicians provide good support but unsatisfactory accommodation limits what can be offered and reduces the quality of teaching and learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

This is an improving department and much has been achieved since the previous inspection. However, this does not quite meet with requirements.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- GNVQ results are just above the national average.
- Pupils show good attitudes to the subject and are well motivated.
- Marking is helpful and informative to pupils and this supports learning well.
- Provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not do ICT at examination level is unsatisfactory.
- Standards of attainment of pupils following the GCSE Applied ICT course are well below the national average.
- Improve the use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Unsatisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Assessment and examination results

70. In 2003, teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were above the national average. In 2004, results fell back. The GNVQ Intermediate results in 2003 were above the national average but dropped slightly in 2004. Results in the GCSE Applied ICT course were well below the national average in 2003 and remained at a similar level in 2004. However, they have improved considerably since the previous inspection.

Standards and achievement

71. Pupils enter the school with standards in ICT that are in line with national expectations and maintain this level so achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 9. Results of teachers' assessments in 2003 do not match the standards of current work seen. Pupils master skills in desktop publishing and the use of spreadsheets and they can set up a database and perform simple mail-merge procedures. They present information using specialist software as well as acquiring basic skills in using 'on screen' control software. They use digital cameras and scanners to record their findings and use the Internet to research information. At the end of Year 11, standards in specialist ICT lessons are in line with national expectations. However, provision for those not following examination courses is unsatisfactory as they have too few opportunities to develop their ICT skills to a satisfactory level so overall achievement of all pupils by the end of Year 11 is unsatisfactory. Years 10 and 11 pupils doing examination courses learn to use the examination marking criteria to ensure each aspect of their coursework is complete. They develop confidence and increase their competence in ICT. All these pupils show good attitudes to their work and good relationships provide a good environment for learning.

Teaching and learning

72. Teachers plan structured lessons and their good knowledge of the subject supports pupils well. The use of a structured examination programme by the school ensures that pupils acquire the relevant knowledge and skills. Teachers provide good individual support for pupils in lessons, which ensures that all pupils receive help in their learning. However, the range of strategies they use to meet the individual learning needs of higher-attaining pupils is limited. Teachers do not set specific targets for these pupils in lessons so that the rate of their progress is modest. Teachers use data-projectors well to demonstrate processes and reinforce learning in

lessons. However, teachers do not use them well in order to teach small groups of pupils experiencing common difficulties. Assessment is satisfactory. Good marking supports learning well and helps pupils to know what they have done well and what needs to be improved. However, some teachers' assessments in Years 7 to 9 do not correspond closely with the standards of work seen. Teachers encourage co-operation in lessons and this leads to good relationships and attitudes to learning.

Leadership and management

73. Several aspects of the management of the department are good. The subject leader has established good procedures and planning in the subject which have resulted in improved standards in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. There is now a shared commitment amongst staff to further improvement in standards. However, the co-ordination of provision of ICT for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are not following an ICT course is unsatisfactory. Many are taught aspects of ICT in other courses but this is not monitored to ensure the requirements are met, nor is their work assessed as it should be. There is very good technician support, which contributes well to the daily management of the resources in the school. The ratio of pupils to computers in the school is now closer to the national average. There has been considerable investment to improve the standard of accommodation and resources and this has contributed well to raising standards. The department has developed a range of initiatives such as a networking course open to pupils who are gifted and talented and to members of the community. This is good provision to support pupils in their work at lunch times and after school.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

74. The use of ICT by pupils in subjects across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There has been good development in history and business studies. The use of ICT in English, mathematics, art and design, geography and religious education is satisfactory. It is unsatisfactory in design and technology and science and poor in music, dance and drama.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

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- The attainment of Year 11 pupils is above national expectations and they have made good progress in their learning.
- GCSE results have risen significantly in recent years to close to the national average in 2004.
- Good leadership and management give a clear purpose and direction to teaching and to the content of pupils' learning.
- The boys' standards are significantly below those of the girls, largely as a result of poorer English standards.
- There is too much variation in the quality of marking standards of English and presentation; and pupils are not given specific advice on how they might improve their work.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	Above national expectations

Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Assessments and examination results

75. In 2004, the results of teachers' assessments made at the end of Year 9 were below the national average. The girls' results were higher than the boys', and this was particularly marked in the higher grades. The results were broadly similar to those in the previous year. The gap between girls' and boys' attainment narrowed overall but increased for the higher grades. The results in 2004 showed satisfactory improvement in relation to the pupils' attainment in Year 7. The GCSE results in 2004 were a significant improvement on those in 2003, with A* to C grades much closer to the average of the previous year's national statistics. However, the better grades largely reflected very good improvement in the girls' performance. There was a much less marked improvement in boys' results and some decline in the number of boys gaining the highest grades compared with the previous year. The progress made by most pupils was satisfactory in relation to their results at the end of Year 9.

Standards and achievement

76. A combination of good teaching and pupils' application results in pupils of all abilities achieving well. Many pupils enjoy history and work with commitment and persistence to improve the standards of their work. The work of both younger and older pupils shows, for instance, a steady and marked improvement in analytical skills over time as well as in qualities of historical understanding. Despite some pupils having poor standards of English, a majority develop greater confidence and competence from Year 9 onwards to write at length with greater authority and accuracy.
77. In the current Year 9, the pupils respond well to the emphasis their teachers place on the significance of different kinds of evidence and the importance of historical imagination in understanding the people and events of the past. Hence, the pupils show good understanding in their writing about conditions on the slave plantations or in the English industrial towns of the early 19th century. Their generally accurate grasp of historical fact is well displayed in enthusiastic contributions to class discussion. The most able also create good computer presentations and audiotape resources to demonstrate their grasp of topics. However, a substantial number of pupils, mainly boys, find it hard to commit their thoughts to paper or to write at length.
78. The standards of current Year 11 pupils are above national expectations; and in some cases, well above. The most able draw on good factual knowledge and understanding to analyse and draw out the importance of historical evidence. For instance, they accurately and confidently relate medical knowledge in Roman times to the overall context of Roman society and contrast medical practice then with what they have previously learned of Ancient Egyptian and Greek medicine. Their ability to understand historical trends is well demonstrated, too, in their grasp of the trends in Irish history over the past two centuries. Pupils occasionally lack sureness of touch in analysing what they know. However, a minority of pupils, again generally boys, find it difficult to write coursework of the necessary length, with the result that they are underachieving in this respect. The department is accordingly promoting strategies to counter this. In response, in the current Year 10, some pupils already display

considerable skill in interpreting and analysing information about the American West in the 19th century.

Teaching and learning

79. Lessons encompass a variety of activities which help pupils to learn in different ways. The teachers have used national guidance well to provide stimulating activities to begin lessons and to review learning at the end. The best lessons progress at a good pace with pupils responding well to the teachers' high expectations of behaviour and achievement and responding appreciatively to the individual support they are given. They work purposefully on their own, in small groups or in whole-class sessions and plan presentations on PowerPoint and through other sources with great enthusiasm and care. Those who find written work particularly difficult are given resources that help them to write relevantly and in the right time sequence through prepared frameworks. The pupils' work is marked accurately and they are strongly encouraged to discuss as a class what they might do to improve its quality. However, the teachers' written feedback does not always provide sufficient guidance as to how work might be improved, particularly the standards of English and presentation.

Leadership and management

80. The team of teachers work well together. The subject leader has encouraged them all to monitor pupil grades and other data regularly in order to assess the quality of education being offered and to pinpoint strategies for its improvement. The result has been a considerable improvement in provision over the past four years. Currently, the teachers are putting heavy emphasis on helping boys to improve their coursework. Whilst the pupils' work is marked regularly and accurately, there is no common strategy for improving the accuracy, style and presentation of their written work. Computers, visual aids and classroom displays provide further effective ways of helping pupils to learn in a stimulating and successful way. Since the 2002 inspection, improvement has been good, particularly in respect of a general rising trend in attainment.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 10 is improving rapidly.
- Very good leadership and management are bringing about radical changes in the department.
- Good teaching ensures pupils' interest and leads to good achievement.
- Cross-curricular links are not well embedded in the schemes of work.
- There is no programme of fieldwork or other outside investigatory work to support the curriculum.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
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Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Test and examination results

81. In 2003, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A* to C in GCSE was well below the national average, but the percentage gaining grades A* to G was in line with the national average. Results were also significantly below the average for other subjects in the school and there was no improvement in 2004. At the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments show that the percentage of pupils gaining National Curriculum Level 5 and over was above the national average, but the percentage gaining the higher levels was below. Percentages in 2004 improved considerably, doubling the figures of previous years, which reflects the new style of teaching introduced into the department in that year. Differences between boys and girls at both GCSE and Year 9 were less than the differences reported nationally.

Standards and achievement

82. The standards of work in Years 7 to 9 are in line with national expectations overall and, in some lessons, these expectations were exceeded. For example, Year 9 pupils used sophisticated language to ask questions about the differences in quality of life between a less economically developed country and the United Kingdom. Standards in Year 10 are above national expectations, almost without exception, following on from these pupils' very good results in the Year 9 assessment of teachers. Their books are full of detailed notes and clear, informative diagrams showing a positive approach to their learning. However, the work of Year 11 pupils is below expectations. They suffer from a lack of interest and show little faith in themselves, and an inability to work independently. In all years except Year 11, pupils work with enthusiasm, listening well and contributing coherently to lessons, co-operating with their teachers and their peers. It is this personal involvement that leads to the good achievement apparent in almost all lessons. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well because they are well provided for in the planning of most lessons and their needs are well understood by their teachers. In all year groups, a number of pupils would be able to develop their skills more quickly if they were better at reading and writing but because of the teachers' careful planning of the work, this does not hold them up significantly. The development of the required numeracy skills is not, at present, structured into the schemes of work and weakness in calculation and using graphs are holding up learning.

Teaching and learning

83. In several of the lessons seen, teaching and learning were very good, and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The best lessons are characterised by very good planning that takes into account pupils' different styles of learning, so that all have an equal opportunity to achieve. Through well-structured tasks, pupils learn to think for themselves and to frame geographical questions for investigation. Teachers assess pupils' progress well, through targeted questioning in class and regular marking of books, and a system has been established to collate all assessment data so that individual progress can be tracked. In the less successful lessons, didactic teaching fails to challenge pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, in a lesson about the relationship between coastal geology and erosion, pupils were shown a video instead of being given the relevant maps and shown how to work out for themselves what was happening. Pupils use ICT to present some of their assessed work but, at present, the potential of the technology is not being fully exploited through the schemes of work.

Leadership and management

After a long period of low standards, the department is now under the leadership of a newly-appointed head of department supported by a strong head of faculty. They share a vision of a high-achieving department that enables all pupils to fulfil their potential. To this end, they are working to change provision and teaching styles and to raise expectations. This work is already showing positive results through the growing interest and commitment of the pupils, which in turn is leading to good achievement and rapidly improving attainment. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been good and the capacity for future development is excellent.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, as teachers are enthusiastic and committed to improvement.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their work.
- Some lessons have insufficient content drawn from world religions.
- Effective monitoring is hampered by the accommodation.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Commentary

Examination results

84. In 2003, GCSE results were below the national average. Around 30 per cent of the pupils gained the higher grades of A* to C. Around 94 per cent gained the grades of A* to G. The results have shown an improvement in 2004, with around 40 per cent of pupils gaining the grades of A* to C and 97 per cent gaining the grades of A* to G.

Standards and achievement

85. At the end of Year 9, standards of attainment are below national expectations, though not significantly so. Pupils are familiar with many aspects of world religions, including the concept of holy books. Pupils are also familiar with the more philosophical issues of world religions, such as life after death. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the practices of world religions are stronger than their knowledge and understanding of the central beliefs that lie behind them. Pupils can use ICT in their work. Based on the levels at which they come into school and their current levels, the achievement of the pupils is satisfactory. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. In Years 10 and 11, the standards of the work seen during the inspection are in line with national expectations. Pupils talk meaningfully about many moral issues, including relationships and the developing world. Their knowledge and understanding of some of the religious perspectives on these issues are less well developed. Pupils can use ICT in some of their work. The achievement of pupils is good as a result of the demands made on them in the lessons. The attainment of girls is better than that of boys. In all years, pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress.

Teaching and learning

86. Teaching is good and sometimes it is very good. All lessons are well planned and they include an interesting range of activities to reinforce learning. Lessons are calm and pupils work hard so learn productively. At times, a faster pace would enable more learning to take place in the time available. In some lessons, the content drawn from world religions is not strong and the learning tends to have more of a general focus or to revolve too much around moral and social issues. Overall, however, teachers' expertise is good and they ensure that pupils learn well about Christianity and other world religions. Information and communication technology is used in some of the teaching. Homework is set and there is an active and well-developed system of assessment. The teaching makes a good contribution to pupils overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Leadership and management

The performance of the department is well monitored and the progress of the pupils is carefully tracked. The head of department has accomplished much during her time in the post. Progress since the last inspection has been very good, particularly in raising the pupils' perceptions of the subject. The department is well staffed and resourced. Classroom accommodation is satisfactory. However, the distances between classrooms hampers management.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Departmental planning is guiding improvements well.
- Training and support for less experienced staff is improving teaching and standards are beginning to rise.
- Subject leaders have vision and energy and they are determined to improve provision.
- The high turnover of staff has had an adverse impact on standards.
- Standards of computer-aided design and manufacture are below national expectations.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	satisfactory

Commentary

Examination results and assessments

87. In 2003, results of assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards were close to the national average, but that few reached the higher levels of attainment. Results improved in 2004, with more pupils reaching the higher levels. In 2003, GCSE results were below the national average and pupils generally failed to do as well as in most of their other subjects. Standards were highest in food technology and graphics. In 2004, the standards were lower and fewer pupils studied the subject. However, pupils generally did as well as in their other subjects. In resistant materials and graphics, they did better than in the previous year, but they did less well in food technology.

Standards and achievement

88. By Year 9, the pupils have good knowledge and skills of manufacturing in a range of materials. They plan their making well, adapt their products in the light of experience and generally work confidently. The pupils' making skills are often better than their design skills, particularly amongst the boys. They research well, successfully identifying criteria and possible ideas. However, only the higher attainers produce detailed work. Also, the pupils' evaluative skills and their ability to communicate their thinking as products develop are below national expectations. Pupils in Year 11 are likely to achieve the expected standards in their coursework in both resistant materials and food technology if they maintain their current progress. In Years 10 and 11, in the absence of the specialist teacher, it was only possible to inspect a sample of work in graphics. The work seen indicates that pupils have yet to achieve the standards of which they are capable and that they are not currently as far advanced with their coursework projects as they should be. Pupils' attainment in computer-aided design and manufacture is well below national expectations across the whole subject.

Teaching and learning

89. The quality of teaching and learning varies between the teachers. It is almost always satisfactory but there are too few lessons where it is good or better. There has been a large turnover of staff in the past two years, which has had an adverse impact on standards. The current team varies greatly in experience but successful training is being provided by experienced staff and by a partner school, which is successfully extending the teachers' expertise. The team are enthusiastic and work well together and they are consistently raising standards. Assessment is satisfactory. Pupils are clear what they should do and learn in lessons and teachers often use assessment well to help pupils know what they have achieved and how to reach their targets. Most lessons have good pace and variety, and consequently, pupils are well motivated and invest sufficient effort to learn productively. However, in a few instances, low level disruption impedes learning.

Leadership and management

90. The progress made in the subject reduced significantly after the last inspection. However, good progress has been made since the current head of department and her deputy were appointed. Even at this early stage, improvements in standards are evident in all years. The department now has a shared commitment to improvement and a good action plan is being energetically pursued. Monitoring systems identify underachieving pupils but insufficient use is made of data to track pupils' progress or the effectiveness of teaching. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory and are having an adverse effect on standards and on food hygiene. Limited access to computers for specialist applications reduces opportunities for pupils to develop the required expertise.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected in full. Drama and dance were sampled. The arts faculty is strong. Leadership has provided a clear sense of teamwork amongst teachers

who might otherwise be isolated in small departments. The range of arts options in Years 10 and 11, the very good enrichment activities, the links with organisations such as Swindon Dance, and the skills of the teachers in the school combine to promote a very positive picture of the importance and value of the arts in our society. As a result, participation in practical activities and the sizes of GCSE classes are increasing. This increase is despite the unsatisfactory accommodation and resources for the arts subjects. For example, the young dancers, who are enthusiastic, creative and collaborate maturely, do not have a room with mirrors or bars or a sprung floor. Aspiring actors have no black out facilities, no dedicated performance space and very few lights.

Two drama lessons were sampled during the inspection, in which the quality of learning and progress was spoiled by the immature behaviour or attention-seeking of a small number of boys. In a Year 9 lesson, standards of improvisation were below expectations. A Year 8 lesson provided opportunities for discussion of everyday human behaviour, including drugs abuse, depression, homosexuality and problems in the home. The good teaching in this lesson helped the pupils to talk extensively and without embarrassment. In a Year 10 expressive arts lesson, the very good pace and variety of activities provided by the experienced teacher resulted in very good responses from a low-attaining group. Pupils showed that they were able to work well in pairs, collaborating and supporting in equal measure, when challenged with high expectations. The exploration of status through observation and use of body language provided a stimulating and rewarding task for all the pupils who responded with some memorable performances.

Art and design

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

Strengths and weaknesses:

- The quality of teaching is good and occasionally very good; pupils achieve well as a result.
- Pupils are generally positive towards work and behave well in lessons, which supports a relaxed and productive atmosphere for learning.
- The leadership and management of the department are good and staff have appropriately high expectations of standards of work.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory; display space is limited and storage is poor, leading to a cluttered and unattractive environment in which to work.
- The curriculum, though well balanced, lacks breadth and innovative developments.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Assessment and examination results

91. In 2003, results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were above the national average. Results were broadly similar in 2004. They showed no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A* to C in 2003 was in line with national averages and higher than that for schools with pupils of similar prior attainment. Results in art and design were the best in the school. There has been a steady upward trend over the past four years and a narrowing of the gap between boys and girls. Provisional results for 2004 indicate a sudden fall partly brought about by inaccurate assessment that affected the marks of all pupils for that year. The department also recognises that the very large cohort in 2004 contained a significant number of low achievers. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the department is well-placed to recover its strong position. The good quality of teaching and learning, the positive attitudes of pupils and the strength of the departmental team are key factors in this judgement.

Standards and achievement

92. Taking their skill and knowledge of art and artists that they bring with them on entry to the school, pupils make good progress to achieve the standards that they do, both by the end of Year 9 and on GCSE courses. Pupils learn to draw from observation before beginning to work with different media or study the styles of different artists. However, this contextual work is not emphasised enough so the standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are not as high as teachers' assessments suggest. Pupils enjoy their work and are encouraged well by their teachers in a productive studio atmosphere. In Years 10 and 11, pupils show a high degree of technical quality in three-dimensional work but research is not sufficiently broad and annotation of work is weak.

Teaching and learning

93. The quality of teaching and learning is good and planning is very good. Teachers have a good command of their subject and teach with enthusiasm and commitment. Their enthusiasm, along with their high expectations of good behaviour, lead to a relaxed, but purposeful atmosphere for learning. Pupils apply themselves well and make good progress in lessons, improving their technical skills and developing imaginative approaches to their work. This was clearly seen in the mask-making project in Year 11, where some large-scale, individually interesting work was being undertaken. Occasional challenging behaviour is not always dealt with effectively and the department would benefit from some training in dealing with such behaviour. Pupils with special educational needs are known well and are sensitively supported, enabling them to make the same good progress as others in their classes. Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers have a sound understanding of the expectations for standards at the end of Year 9 and on GCSE courses that guides their teaching.

Leadership and management

94. The department is well led and managed. Under the present leadership, the department has made good progress since the previous inspection. The most recent examination results have been carefully analysed and steps taken to ensure that standards remain as high as they have been in recent years. Teachers work well together in a supportive and encouraging way, developing very good relationships in the department and playing a key role in the faculty of arts. The faculty has just introduced an examination course in the expressive arts, which utilises skills from all the art disciplines. Performance data is analysed and used effectively to monitor the progress of pupils, but the day-to-day marking system is not implemented with sufficient rigour. Consequently, guidance for pupils is not always clear and well targeted. The department is not playing a full part in assessing the literacy skills of the pupils. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Although spacious, it lacks storage and is cluttered as a consequence. It is poorly maintained, has limited display space and is not an inspiring environment in which to work. The curriculum is sound, but lacks breadth. The use of computers for manipulating digital images is developing well, but opportunities to explore a wide range of media and processes are limited.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided for the pupils.
- Teachers work hard to overcome the adverse impact of unsatisfactory accommodation and resources.
- Teachers strive to promote equality of opportunity so that all groups of pupils participate productively in lessons.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation and resources, together with poor ICT provision, inhibit access to a full curriculum and have an adverse effect on the quality of presentation of work, listening within the classroom, and the appeal of music to pupils.

- The poor punctuality of some pupils often reduces lesson time by up to ten minutes.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below national expectations	Below national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

COMMENTARY

Assessment and examination results

95. In 2003, teachers' assessments were below the national average. Girls' results were close to the national average for girls but boys' results were clearly below the national average for boys. GCSE results were well below the national average. However, they were in line with targets set by the department and they matched the school average for all subjects. The number of pupils currently following GCSE courses is much larger than in previous years.

Standards and achievement

96. Considering their prior attainment when entering the school in Year 7, pupils make satisfactory progress through to Year 9. Pupils in all years use keyboards well, although they are not given enough opportunities to read music from staff notation. Their music vocabulary develops well and is reinforced by suitable wall displays of key words. Achievement, whilst being satisfactory, is adversely affected by the negative attitudes some pupils have to the subject and challenging behaviour of a few pupils. The shabby accommodation and well-worn resources make it difficult to present the subject well and improve attitudes.

Teaching and learning

97. In the best lessons, good teaching captures the interest of pupils so that they work hard to attain the objectives set by the teacher. Interesting initial activities are followed by a good variety of activities, conducted at a brisk pace. Teachers present inspiring demonstrations that motivate pupils well. Weak teaching is characterised by planning that fails to provide for the range of pupils' capabilities so that those who have a good aural sense or those who are familiar with formal notation find the work too easy while others struggle. Pupils' lateness to lessons is disruptive and adversely affects learning in some lessons. The lost time means that stimulating or interesting aspects of the lesson are curtailed and cannot be explored properly. For instance, the late arrival of a group of Year 10 pupils interrupted a promising exploration of the influence of Rastafarianism in the music of Bob Marley, resulting in a shallow treatment of its spiritual aspects. Visiting teachers from the Swindon Co-operative make a good contribution to teaching and learning.

Leadership and management

98. The music department is part of the arts faculty and benefits from the good leadership of a newly-appointed head of that faculty. There is already a clear vision for the faculty and the role of music and musicians within it. Changes in the management of the subject have brought about improved planning and introduced different courses. There has been, as yet, insufficient time to evaluate their effectiveness. Following a period of neglect, the music department now has the capacity to improve. However, improvement is hampered by unsatisfactory accommodation and resources. Rooms are uninspiring and acoustically poor. There are insufficient classroom percussion instruments and listening equipment. The keyboards are old and the lack of access to computers and music software limit the opportunities for pupils to perform and present high quality work. These unsatisfactory features reduce the appeal of music as a subject. This appeal exists, largely, due to the range of activities for pupils at the end of the school day when, for example, pupils can play in rock bands, perform in instrumental ensembles and sing in choirs. Music benefits from the many outside links being developed by the arts faculty.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management have created an effective and committed team.
- The good achievement in Years 7 to 9 results from good teaching.
- The very good programme of extra curricular activities encourages good participation in sport.
- Assessment of attainment in Year 7 does not provide a secure basis for evaluating progress.
- There are inconsistencies between teachers regarding the reinforcement of learning objectives, the use of modern technology and support for literacy in lessons.
- Pupils' evaluation of their own and others' work needs development.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with the national expectations
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Assessment and examination results

99. Teachers' assessments show that attainment at the end of Year 9 is above the national average. The lack of a reliable initial assessment in Year 7 and the emphasis on skills in teachers' assessments result in some pupils being assessed at higher levels than their performance merits. In 2003, GCSE results were in line with the national average. In 2004, results fell, with boys performing better than girls.

Standards and achievement

100. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well, given their attainment on entry to the school in Year 7. Pupils acquire some good skills in rugby, dance and badminton. A number of individuals participate in sports at local and county levels. Boys' skills are generally more advanced than those of the girls, with many more boys benefiting from participation in sporting activities after school. Pupils do not evaluate their performance effectively. They support each other but do not convey opinions about techniques or tactics clearly. In all years, pupils know how to warm up properly but their knowledge of rules and their use of space in team games are not as well developed, particularly by girls. Pupils following the GCSE course achieve satisfactorily. For example, they learn to relate diet to performance but do not apply their knowledge to the real world confidently. Some pupils' weak literacy results in spelling and grammatical errors, and reluctance by them to write in detail.

Teaching and learning

101. Pupils learn well because good lesson planning and effective management of pupils result in orderly and focused lessons. Pupils work well in small groups, building on the secure knowledge their teachers have of the subject. Pupils are expected to work hard and benefit from some good, knowledgeable feedback, particularly in theory. Learning is less effective where teachers miss opportunities to involve pupils in evaluation of their own and others' work. Not all teachers routinely review learning at the end of lessons so pupils miss the opportunity to consolidate their learning. Teachers do not always identify or correct mistakes in pupils' spelling, punctuation or grammar. Assessment is satisfactory. The procedures are good but pupils have insufficient knowledge of levels to enable them to identify ways of improving their work.

Leadership and management

102. Standards have been maintained as a result of some good monitoring and senior management links. Internal communication is effective and members of the team work well together, analysing assessment data together, for example. Development planning is well linked to whole-school issues. More work is required to establish the use of modern technology in lessons, and increase the participation rates and achievement of girls. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory with standards being generally maintained. There is a very good extra-curricular programme, reflected by the Sportsmark Award. Schemes of work do not identify expected levels of work and where best to teach aspects like citizenship. Aspects of accommodation remain problematical with poor changing facilities that contribute to girls' negative views of the subject.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The business studies course was inspected in full. Other vocational courses and work-related learning were sampled. Work was analysed and lessons were seen in health and social care, leisure and tourism, and work analysed in child development. Work of pupils following other work-related programmes was analysed, lessons seen and discussions held with pupils.

Work-related learning

103. Arrangements for work-related learning are satisfactory. Different aspects of provision are well managed and co-ordinated. All pupils engage in work experience, take part in employer-led activities and benefit from a good careers education programme. Pupils following the school's 'applied curriculum' value the combinations of school-based, college-based and work-based components of their studies so that they demonstrate improved attitudes and behaviour as well as improved achievement.
104. The standard evident in the health and social care work of Year 11 pupils is in line with national expectations and shows good progress in acquiring knowledge of personal fitness and healthy diet, the distinct health needs of different client groups and the range of National Health Service provision. However, many find sustained analytical work difficult and make relatively few suggestions for improvement to health provision.
105. The standards of Year 11 leisure and tourism pupils' work are below national expectations, although they make satisfactory progress relative to their attainment at the beginning of the course. In the leisure and tourism lesson relating to marketing a tourist attraction, the pupils worked hard to meet the coursework deadline but most failed to link what they had learned to their general understanding of marketing strategy. Teaching conveyed high expectations of pupils in terms of work and behaviour.
106. The majority of the Year 11 pupils are producing work of an average standard on the child development course. However, the work of a few pupils is held back by poor literacy. Nevertheless, the majority of pupils have made good progress, writing at length about topics such as child abuse and the role of play, and integrating examples of children's' work into assignments.
107. Two further work-related programmes, the *Applied Curriculum Programme* and the *Vocational Package*, were sampled. The *Applied Curriculum Programme* is accredited and the pupils work to develop a range of personal, social and work-based skills alongside subjects such as English, mathematics, science and ICT. Most of the pupils have special educational needs. In 2004, pupils achieved a high success rate, with over a third of pupils gaining the Silver award and two thirds of the remainder, the Bronze award. A significant number of current Year 11 pupils have already made very good progress to complete the Bronze award and have moved on to Silver. Nearly all the pupils work hard to improve their written work and there has been notable improvement in their ability to write at length and to use computers. In the lesson observed, they worked well with the teacher in a challenging lesson on 'unjust accusations'. The school-based element of the *Vocational Package* is part of a broader programme involving college links and work experience and pupils have

developed good skills in preparing for the workplace and in developing their curriculum vitae. The programme is intended for pupils with a range of academic attainment, including some who prefer to link a core of GCSE courses to more direct experience of the world of work.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 11 are above average national expectations and show good progress in learning.
- There has been a steady improvement over time in girls' examination results to above average in 2004.
- The quality of teaching is good and ensures that the pupils learn well and show initiative.
- The boys' standards are below those of the girls.
- There is an occasionally slow pace to learning in some lessons which combine a number of changes between individual and group work.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 11
Standards	Above national expectations
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Assessments and examination results

108. In 2004, the first year the pupils sat the GCSE Applied Business examination, one of the girl pupils was identified as being in the top ten National Business Studies Achievers. Compared with the previous year's GCSE results, there was an improvement in the overall pass rate but a sharp decline in boys' performance. The girls' A* to C grades were well above average, with about a quarter of them gaining B grade and above, but the highest grade attained by boys was C and few managed that level. Overall, the results represent good achievement and compare favourably with those of other local schools.

Standards and achievement

109. The standards of attainment in Year 11 are above national expectations. The standards reached by girls are higher than those reached by boys. The most able pupils have good knowledge and understanding of topics such as the role of people in

business organisations, the practice of job recruitment and the functions of different parts of a business. They relate business theory very effectively to practice in the real world. Most pupils have a very sound knowledge and understanding of topics but their written work is sometimes less thorough and consistent in standard. They find it harder to express their opinions when, for instance, they are asked to suggest ways of improving customer service. A small number of pupils, mainly boys, struggle to raise their coursework above the superficial level. They find it difficult to use technical vocabulary in their writing or to draw out examples of practice to illustrate what they say. There is a broader range of ability in the current Year 10. Some pupils produce work of a high standard but a greater proportion of pupils find it difficult to produce sustained written work. Most of the older pupils have made good progress in their learning. They are keen to improve the quality of their coursework. As the course has progressed, they have steadily improved their ability to carry out independent research and to use the information gained to illustrate their work with specific and relevant examples of business practice.

Teaching and learning

110. The vast majority of pupils respond well to good lesson planning, teachers' high expectations of achievement and behaviour and good individual support when they are experiencing difficulties. They work purposefully and learn effectively, either independently or in a group. The lessons begin briskly as the result of short, stimulating opening activities and the clear explanation of objectives. However, pace can occasionally slacken. For instance, in a lesson on the theme of industrial disputes, considerable time was taken to accommodate the progress of some slower pupils when transferring from individual Internet research to group discussion of the findings. The pupils make good use of computers to present their coursework and have made good group presentations with PowerPoint. They research information from the Internet effectively. Assessment is good. Pupils' work is marked regularly and accurately and their achievement owes much to the advice given by their teachers on how they might improve their work.

Leadership and management

111. Business studies are well led and managed. The subject has a good range of teaching resources and is well equipped with computers. The teachers work together well as a team. Pupils' work is regularly and systematically monitored and a significant effort has been made to develop common teaching strategies, resources and marking approaches to improve pupils' performance further. For instance, a range of strategies is currently being used to improve the motivation and performance of pupils, mainly boys, whose coursework is below standard. The vast majority of pupils find the subject stimulating and are pleased to have opted for it. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good, particularly in respect of attainment.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship was inspected in full and personal, social and health education was sampled. Two lessons of personal, social and health education were seen, and one linked assembly and tutor period which were following through the theme of 'good and evil'. In one lesson, the teaching was good and in the other it was very good. Pupils learned well as the

teacher planned activities well and led discussions sensitively. Pupils responded well and reflected productively on their own personal development. The majority showed maturing attitudes towards issues such as diet and loving relationships, even within the span of the lessons.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes are very good; they are very interested in the subject.
- Pupils achieve well from a low knowledge base.
- Teaching is good and leads to good learning.
- The subject is very well led by a co-ordinator who understands all the requirements.
- The management of the cross-curricular aspect of the subject is not sufficiently strong.
- The scheme for assessing and recording pupils' work is not yet well enough developed.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	No evidence

Commentary

Standards and achievement

112. No groups taking the half-course GCSE have so far been examined so there is no relevant data to report. Although assessment using the official criteria is only partially developed, work being done in all year groups indicates that the criteria are being met by the majority of pupils. Pupils can work co-operatively in pairs and groups, can research information by surveying local people and by using the Internet, and can present their findings both orally and in posters and reports. They have a developing awareness of local and national issues, and are willing participants in community activities. For example, one group of Year 10 pupils is organising a 'Fair Trade' coffee stall in partnership with the local Co-operative store. Lessons always provide for the full range of pupils in the class so that all achieve equally well.

Teaching and learning

113. Teaching in citizenship lessons is often very good but teaching of citizenship topics in other lessons is not as strong. Specialist teachers are skilled in leading discussions

and directing learning on sensitive issues such as race and conflict. They also engage the interest of pupils in such topics as banking and local government very well, so that time is not wasted in the classroom persuading reluctant pupils to learn. Questioning to stimulate discussion is targeted at each pupil in turn so that nobody can escape giving and developing their opinions. Communication skills are planned for appropriately. Pupils' oral communication is good and, as much of the work is discussion-based, weak writing does not hold up progress to a significant extent. Opportunities to participate in the community are carefully structured, even though they are ultimately organised by the pupils. When citizenship is taught in other subjects, many teachers are not so aware of the requirements of the citizenship curriculum and frequently fail to specify that citizenship is being taught in their lessons, so that pupils' learning about citizenship is not clearly focused.

Leadership and management

114. Citizenship is managed in conjunction with personal, social and health education and the scheme of work identifies separate units relevant to each separate subject. All pupils have one lesson per week. Elements that appear across the curriculum have been audited and are being taught by subject staff. In Years 10 and 11, a half GCSE is offered as an option, which is taken up by approximately 50 per cent of the pupils, and this is taught in an additional lesson per week. The management and monitoring of all these strands is a complex task and, at present, there is not enough control over the elements being taught across the curriculum. The assessment scheme is not fully developed and individual pupils' achievements in citizenship are not recorded in any one place. Leadership of the curriculum area is very good. The citizenship co-ordinator and the co-ordinator of personal, social and health education are both dedicated to the success of the subjects and share a strong vision for the future. They are well suited to leading other subject staff and to developing their own subjects further.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	3
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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