

INSPECTION REPORT

OLD BUCKENHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Old Buckenham, Attleborough

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121169

Headteacher: Mr G Hodson

Lead inspector: Mrs J Greenfield

Dates of inspection: 7th - 9th February 2005

Inspection number: 268430

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: 570

School address: Abbey Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mrs J Scrutton
governors:

Date of previous 1st February 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Old Buckenham High School, with 570 pupils on roll, is a small comprehensive school catering for pupils aged 11 - 16. There are more boys than girls in all year groups. The school serves a wide rural catchment area. Numbers have increased over the past five years and the school is oversubscribed. Attainment on entry is broadly average. Pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds, which are not particularly disadvantaged or advantaged. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Nearly all pupils are from White, mainly British, backgrounds. A very small number are of Mixed heritage, mainly Caribbean, African and Asian. No pupil is in the early stages of learning English, but one pupil receives additional support. Four pupils are in public care. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and those with a statement are similar to the national averages. The range of special needs includes moderate and specific learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, speech and communication difficulties, hearing impairment, physical difficulties and autism. The school received a School Achievement Award in 2002 and has Investor in People status. Last year, the proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school at times other than the normal transfer times was broadly average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7070	Mrs J Greenfield	Lead inspector	English as an additional language Citizenship
9189	Mr J Horwood	Lay inspector	
20709	Mr D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English Drama
1033	Mr H Chester	Team inspector	Mathematics
32878	Mr S Goldsmith	Team inspector	Science
23418	Mr R Yates	Team inspector	Art and design
10894	Mr P Reynolds	Team inspector	Design and technology
19530	Ms J Bray	Team inspector	Geography
20247	Mr R Parry	Team inspector	History
14841	Mr M Duffey	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
16042	Mrs P Haes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31660	Mrs M Young	Team inspector	Music Personal, social and health education
4647	Mrs J Evans	Team inspector	Physical education
4372	Mr R Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education
2480	Mrs C Gilder	Team inspector	Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Old Buckenham High School's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Standards are above average and the good teaching enables pupils to learn and achieve well. Pupils' attitudes are very positive, as are relationships in the school. The headteacher has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but the involvement of the senior leadership team in strategic planning and effecting change is unsatisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- although there was dip in 2004, the national test and public examination results have been mostly above the national average and sometimes well above average in the past few years;
- teaching and learning are good overall, enabling most pupils to achieve well, but not all teachers challenge the higher attaining pupils enough or provide pupils with special educational needs appropriate work and support;
- the headteacher has a strong commitment to school improvement but there are weaknesses in strategic planning, in the involvement of the senior leadership team in effecting change, and in the rigorous evaluation of the school's work;
- the school's very positive ethos and high expectations of their conduct helps pupils to become mature and responsible;
- the provision for information and communication technology (ICT), music and citizenship are unsatisfactory and in some instances do not fully meet statutory requirements; and
- teachers assess pupils' work satisfactorily, but assessment information is not used well enough to monitor their progress and achievements, or to report these accurately to parents.

The school has made broadly satisfactory progress since its last inspection in February 1999. Standards have improved, especially those of the boys. Assessment procedures have improved but they are not yet applied consistently nor do they give pupils and their parents enough information on their progress and achievements. Registers are marked correctly. The provision for computers has increased considerably but remains unsatisfactory, and not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. Performance management of staff is not fully established.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' achievement is good, although not in all subjects. By Year 9, standards are above national expectations and most pupils are achieving well. The test results in English, mathematics and science in 2003 were well above the national average and above the average for similar schools, but were not quite as high in 2004. The GCSE examination results in 2004 were in line with the national average and with the results in similar schools,

but lower than the previous year. By Year 11, standards are above the level expected nationally and most pupils continue to achieve well. Standards are high in design and technology, history, German and religious education. They are below the expected levels in ICT and music across the school and pupils' achievements in these two subjects are unsatisfactory. The higher attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. **Pupils' personal qualities are very good, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.** Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils like the school and their attendance and punctuality are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching is good and ensures that most pupils learn and achieve well, although the higher attainers are not always stretched and pupils with special needs do not receive enough help at times. The best lessons are lively and stimulating, and engage pupils' interest and attention very well. Most pupils work productively. There are weaknesses in the use of ICT to support learning. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory but its use to monitor their achievement is inconsistent. The curriculum is satisfactory, with strengths in several subjects but weaknesses in ICT, music and citizenship. Standards of care, health and safety and the support, advice and guidance provided are satisfactory, but pupils' academic and pastoral progress is not monitored systematically. The school's links with parents are satisfactory. There are good links with the community and other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff is satisfactory, but is insufficiently strategic in setting a clear direction for the future development of the school. The school's priorities have not been clearly defined or weaknesses tackled with enough urgency. Middle managers, many of whom are effective role models, are not held sufficiently to account, particularly in the use of assessment information and monitoring and evaluating the work in their areas of responsibility. Governance of the school is satisfactory and improving. However, the governing body does not ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with most aspects of the school. They are especially pleased with the way children are encouraged to become more mature, the good arrangements to help them settle in and the good teaching. Many parents express concerns about the lack of information about progress, the arrangements for consulting them and homework. Inspectors find that the consultation and homework arrangements are satisfactory but the information provided about progress is not. Pupils are pleased with the school. Some identified behaviour and bullying to be a problem, but this was found to be a minority of pupils and the issue is dealt with well by the school. Inspectors could not substantiate the concerns of some pupils that they were not all treated fairly.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- develop a longer-term strategic plan to guide the school's development over the next few years;
- improve the deployment of resources for ICT and ensure that they are used more effectively in all subjects to support teaching and learning;
- monitor pupils' progress and achievements more effectively, set sharper targets for them, and provide parents with clearer information in reports;
- sharpen the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school's work to share best practice and tackle areas of weakness more effectively;
- provide challenging work more consistently for the higher attaining pupils and better support for pupils with special educational needs;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- strengthen the planning, co-ordination and teaching of citizenship; provide careers education in Years 7 and 8 and a daily act of collective worship for all; ensure that the pupils' annual reports, the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents contain all the required information.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is good throughout the school, although not consistently across all subjects, year groups and different groups of pupils. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and of the higher attaining pupils is satisfactory. Standards are above the level expected nationally by Year 9 and Year 11 in most subjects, including English and science, but are below expectations in ICT and music.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of pupils achieve well in most subjects but they underachieve in science in Years 10 and 11, and ICT and music.
- Standards are well above the level expected nationally in history and religious education, but are below the level expected in music and ICT.
- Teachers do not always provide the higher attaining pupils with enough challenging work and, as a result, their achievement is just satisfactory.
- The progress and achievement of pupils with additional special educational needs is satisfactory overall, but it is patchy.

Commentary

1. Pupils' attainment when they enter the school in Year 7 is broadly average. Their performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 was above the national average, and was average when compared with schools with a similar level of attainment on entry to the school. There are no national data available to show how well these pupils performed in relation to their earlier attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 6. The results in mathematics and science were above average and better than the results in English, which are likely to be close to the national average. The performance of girls at the expected Level 5 or above was better than that of the boys in all three subjects and more girls reached the higher levels in English. The results in 2004 were lower than those in 2003, when they were well above average in all three subjects and overall. Between 1999 and 2003, the school's results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend but there are no national data to judge the trend between 2000 and 2004. The school did not meet its targets in any of the three subjects in 2004.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.6 (36.8)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	37.3 (37.8)	n/a (35.4)
science	34.6 (36.3)	n/a (33.6)

There were 114 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In the GCSE examinations in 2004, the overall results were in line with the national average, as were the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C and five or more grades A*-G. These results were lower than those of the previous year, which were well above the national average. The school's results for the pupils' best eight subjects were

average when compared with schools with a similar level of performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9 but were well below average when all subjects are taken in to account. However, these pupils achieved well when compared with their own performance in the tests at the end of Year 9. Between 2000 and 2004, the improvement in the school's results has been below the national trend, although it was above it between 1999 and 2003. The most successful subjects in 2004, with results that were significantly above the national averages, were geography, history and religious education. The results in resistant materials, food studies, business studies, German, music and child development were also above average. They were below average in English literature, French and physical education, and significantly so in drama. The performance of the girls was better than that of the boys when compared with their respective national figures, especially at five or more grades A*-C and at the higher grades of A* and A. The school did not meet its targets in 2004.

Standards in Key Stage 4 at the end of Year 11 in 2004

GCSE/GNVQ	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	50 (73)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (98)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil	39.4 (48.2)	41.4 (40.6)
Capped average point score per pupil	35.8 (43.4)	34.9 (34.7)

GCSE & Equivalent Qualifications	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	50	52
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91	89
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99	96
Average point score per pupil	324.6	340.3
Capped average point score per pupil	292.6	282.8

There were 110 pupils in the year group, 64 boys and 46 girls. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Standards are above the level expected nationally by Year 9, although there are variations across the subjects. In the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, standards are above national expectations and pupils are achieving well in all three subjects. Standards are also above expectations in design and technology, geography, history and religious education; in these subjects, pupils' achievement is good. Standards are in line with those expected nationally in art and design, French, German, physical education and drama. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in French, German and physical education, and good in art and design, as their attainment in this subject on entry to the school is a little lower than usually found. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about achievement in drama. Standards are below average in music and ICT and achievement in both subjects is unsatisfactory. This is due to staffing difficulties in music and a lack of resources in ICT. Standards in personal, social and health education are in line with those expected nationally by Year 9 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. There is insufficient evidence to make a clear judgement about standards or pupils' achievement in citizenship as no lessons were seen and the school does not assess pupils' progress or achievements in this area.

4. Pupils continue to achieve well in most subjects in Years 10 and 11, and standards are above national expectations by Year 11, although not consistently so in all subjects. Standards are above national expectations in English and science and in line with expectations in mathematics. Pupils are achieving well in English and satisfactorily in mathematics. However, their achievement in science is unsatisfactory, as they are not doing as well as their performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9 would indicate, especially pupils in Year 11. At that time, their results were well above average. In other subjects, standards are above the levels expected nationally in art and design, geography and French, and well above these levels in design and technology, history, German and religious education. Pupils are achieving well in these subjects during Years 10 and 11 and very well in German and religious education. Standards are in line with expectations in physical education and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. There is insufficient evidence to make a clear judgement about achievement in drama. As in Years 7 - 9, standards in ICT and music are below the level expected nationally and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards in personal, social and health education are above the level expected nationally and pupils are achieving well. As with the lower school, there is insufficient evidence to make a clear judgement about standards or pupils' achievement in citizenship.

5. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Pupils who have moderate learning difficulties make satisfactory progress as do those with physical disabilities, who are very well supported and included by everyone. The proportion of pupils who need extra support for learning has remained broadly constant in the past four years, but some pupils admitted in the past two years have more complex additional needs, particularly behavioural, emotional or social difficulties and speech, language and communication impairments. Several of these pupils make less progress than they could in overcoming the barriers they face, because dedicated specialist help is limited. Good teaching in some the lowest ability groups generates real enthusiasm and motivates pupils well. Where teachers plan carefully for the lessons in which a learning support assistant is present, those with the most complex learning difficulties achieve well and play a full part throughout. The school has not kept sufficiently close records of pupils' individual progress or analysed carefully enough the information available to pinpoint the areas where progress is unsatisfactory. This is beginning, and two new approaches to support literacy and numeracy are beginning to have a beneficial impact on pupils' achievement and attainment.

6. Although girls have usually performed better than the boys in the national tests and the GCSE examinations, there are no significant differences apparent in their current work across subjects. Girls apply themselves more effectively in mathematics but, elsewhere, boys and girls are achieving as well as each other. The achievement of pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented is satisfactory, but they are not always given work that would challenge them further. The very small number of bilingual pupils achieve as well as the majority of their peers.

7. Pupils' language and literacy skills are sufficient to enable them to contribute well in class and small group discussions and in no subject are they a barrier to learning. They have good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills in lessons, and reading and writing are particularly encouraged in several subjects, such as English, history, art and design, design and technology and religious education. Pupils have a good level of understanding and use their mathematical skills well in many subjects other than mathematics, for example in science, design and technology, geography and history. Some pupils, particularly the higher attainers, are able to use ICT effectively because they develop their computer skills at home. However, weaknesses in the provision for ICT mean that

pupils cannot develop the skills to support their learning across subjects and their competence in using computers is unsatisfactory, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

8. The school's performance has been rising over the past few years, although not consistently from year to year, but suffered a decline in 2004. The evidence shows that standards in the current Year 11 are higher than the GCSE examination results for 2004 would indicate, mainly because of the good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to their work. Although achievement is good overall, some pupils, such as those with special educational needs and the higher attaining pupils, are not achieving as well as they might because their needs are not being met adequately in all subjects. In addition, there are weaknesses in the provision for ICT, music and citizenship. All these issues require firmer action by senior managers in setting clearer expectations, monitoring the provision more rigorously and systematically, and tackling weaknesses robustly if standards are to improve further.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance and punctuality are good. Behaviour is very good, reflecting pupils' very good attitudes and relationships. The number of exclusions is average for this size of school. Pupils' personal development is very good, particularly their moral and social awareness. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships contribute to the school's very positive ethos.
- Attendance and punctuality are good but there is a lack of urgency in pupils' movement around the school during the day.
- Pupils' moral and social development is very good and pupils are very aware of what is expected of them.
- Behaviour and attitudes are very good in most lessons and sometimes excellent.
- The very good spiritual development in religious education is not reflected in other subjects.
- The learning support department makes a very positive contribution to the wellbeing and personal development of many of the most vulnerable pupils.

Commentary

9. The ethos of the school is very positive and pupils work harmoniously together. They like being at the school, where they have to work hard and are taught well. Although they feel trusted, not all think they are all treated fairly. Inspectors found no evidence to support this view. Attendance has been above the national average for many years but there are no systems to encourage improvement. The monitoring of attendance and the completion of registers have improved since the last inspection and are now good. There is very little lateness at school but pupils' movement around the school is leisurely and this often results in a late start to lessons and short assemblies.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.3	School data	0.5
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

10. The behaviour of the older pupils is very good, whilst that of the younger ones is good. In the more stimulating lessons and in assemblies, the behaviour of pupils is often excellent. In a minority of lessons where teaching is less stimulating or not well planned, because of the necessity to use supply teachers, the behaviour of a few pupils is unsatisfactory. No bullying was seen during the inspection and pupils are very clear that if it does occur it is dealt with well. There was no evidence of any racism, either. Most pupils respond well to the merit system and are keen to support their 'House' but sanctions are not always applied consistently. The number of fixed-term exclusions was higher than usual last year, owing to a large number of pupils being involved with one incident. Only one pupil has been permanently excluded in the last four years.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	544	25	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	3	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	9	0	0

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

11. Pupils' attitudes are very good and they improve as pupils grow older and more mature. They work very well in lessons and their relationships with one another and with staff are very good. Pupils are very willing to take on responsibilities, such as becoming peer counsellors, house captains or team captains, or as members of the school council.

12. A long-standing partnership with the local special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties is a striking example of how pupils' values and attitudes are developed and fostered. The project gives groups of pupils in Year 11 the opportunity to work with some pupils from the special school for two lessons each week for several weeks. They act as learning support assistants and mentors, responsibilities they take very seriously. Before and during the project, pupils learn about the range of disabilities and impairment their peers in the special school experience and consider the impact of these. Several learn some basic signing, which they use well with their visitors, leading to some lively exchanges. They learn to judge when and how to intervene, and offer assistance in a sensitive, respectful and skilful way. The combination of very good teaching and the first-rate support provided by the pupils in Year 11, leads to excellent achievement by pupils from the special school. This partnership is an excellent example of community service and educational inclusion in action.

13. Pupils experiencing emotional problems benefit from the study support programme, run closely with the pastoral staff. Some imaginative solutions have been tailored to meet individual difficulties. For example, one young pupil was enabled to attend some lessons with pupils in Year 10 or 11, and they successfully provided alternative, positive role models and gave effective encouragement. However, pupils who find it hard to manage their behaviour and relationships with others, but who do not have a statement, do not always

receive as much support and attention as they need. The behavioural issues surrounding some pupils have been a barrier to their learning, and the disruptive behaviour displayed by some pupils also affects the progress of other pupils with learning difficulties, especially some of the lower-attaining pupils in Year 8. The local education authority's behaviour support service provides valuable advice, and has recently re-organised its programme to provide a full morning of support in school each week.

14. The school is aware of the importance of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils and the impact it has on their progress, attitudes and achievement. However, there is no co-ordinated approach to the planning, teaching, monitoring or evaluation of these aspects of the curriculum. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The religious education syllabus and its teaching provide very good opportunities for enhancing pupils' spiritual awareness, but there are not enough opportunities to do so in most other subjects. Pupils respect the beliefs of others and have a clear understanding of them. Where opportunities are provided for reflection and discussion of spiritual matters, pupils clearly value the views of others and most are willing to share their thoughts and feelings.

15. Pupils are very aware of right and wrong actions and have a clear knowledge of what is expected of them. Their moral development is very good, as is their social development. The school provides considerable opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and develop their social awareness and understanding. Most subjects contribute effectively towards developing pupils' social skills. For example, pupils work very well together in lessons and teachers provide many opportunities for them to express their views in pairs, groups and general discussion. Pupils are self-confident, and are developing very well as responsible members of the school community. Pupils are aware of their own cultural heritage and that of others. Their cultural development is satisfactory. They have a sound knowledge of their own culture but there are missed opportunities in many subjects to raise pupils' wider cultural awareness. Pupils show respect and tolerance in their relationships. However, departments do not do enough specific planning to ensure that they prepare pupils to live in an increasingly multicultural society. The very positive ethos within the school and the very good relationships amongst pupils and staff provide a very effective environment in which pupils can grow and mature into sensible young adults.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good throughout, enabling pupils to learn well and make good progress in most subjects. Although satisfactory overall, there are undue variations in the quality of assessment. The curriculum is satisfactory but does not fully meet statutory requirements for citizenship and ICT in Years 10 and 11. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The range of extra-curricular and other activities to enrich the curriculum is good. Procedures for the care, welfare and safety of pupils and for providing them with support, advice and guidance are satisfactory but the school does not do enough to monitor their academic and personal progress in a systematic way. The arrangements for involving pupils and seeking their views are satisfactory. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory and links with the community and with other schools are good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good and this enables pupils to achieve well in most subjects. There is a higher proportion of good or better teaching in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 - 9. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory, although its quality and effectiveness are inconsistent both within and across subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationships between teachers and their pupils ensure that learning takes place in a positive and productive atmosphere in most lessons.
- Although most teachers plan their lessons well, teaching materials and learning activities do not always match the range of attainment within each class.
- Teachers do not always give pupils enough information and guidance on how they can improve their work.
- Teachers do not always make the best use of the knowledge, understanding and expertise of their learning support colleagues.
- Teachers do not make enough use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

16. The quality of teaching and learning is good. There is a higher proportion of good and very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 - 9. This picture is broadly similar to that found at the time of the last inspection, although there is a slightly higher proportion of less than satisfactory teaching. In music and French, some of the teaching is unsatisfactory and occasionally poor and, as a result, pupils do not learn as effectively as they might. The table below indicates the quality of teaching across the school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 108 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (4%)	25 (23%)	51 (47%)	23 (21%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)

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

17. The teaching is good in all year groups and in most subjects, including English, science, art and design, design and technology, geography and physical education; it is

also good in mathematics and personal, social and health education in Years 10 and 11, and history and ICT in Years 7 - 9. Teaching is very good across the school in religious education, and in history and German in Years 10 and 11. In addition, there are examples of very good and sometimes excellent teaching in other subjects, such as English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, French, physical education, child development and personal, social and health education. Other than in music, the teaching in the remaining subjects is satisfactory. Only in music is the teaching less than satisfactory. This has been due to the difficulties experienced by the school in employing suitably qualified staff to cover the long-term absence of the subject leader. There is insufficient evidence to make a clear judgement about the teaching of ICT in Years 10 and 11, as little takes place as part of subject teaching and learning.

18. Several common elements distinguish the more effective lessons from those that are satisfactory or less than satisfactory. In the more effective lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge very well to plan a variety of challenging tasks and activities to interest and motivate pupils and to meet their specific needs. However, not all teachers, even in the more successful lessons, always ensure that the tasks stretch the higher attaining pupils enough. Teachers plan their lessons very carefully, ensuring that the learning objectives of the lesson are clearly identified and that lesson time is used effectively by setting time limits for tasks. They also share these objectives with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and use some time at the end of the lesson to review carefully pupils' learning and progress. This strategy enables them to plan subsequent lessons well and gives pupils a clearer idea of what they have learned in the lesson. Teachers use a range of approaches to help pupils to learn, including an appropriate balance of individual, group and whole-class activities, opportunities to engage in some research, and sharp questioning to make pupils think, reflect and make connections with earlier learning. Teachers often make very skilful use of questioning. In such lessons, pupils listen well, respond with enthusiasm and engage in lively exchanges with one another and with their teachers. They also make great strides in their learning and achieve very well. Many of these features are missing from satisfactory lessons.

19. The relatively less successful lessons have some shared characteristics. For example, starter activities to lessons are sometimes too long and, frequently, little or no time is left at the end of the lesson to review learning or to indicate what is to happen in subsequent lessons. Planning is often not as detailed and the activities are not matched carefully enough to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs or to provide more demanding tasks for the higher attainers. Pupils identified as gifted and talented comment that they are not being challenged enough in many subjects and lessons. This is borne out by the evidence of teachers' planning, which does not always identify specific work for these pupils. The biggest weakness in less successful teaching is the slow pace of lessons, the mundane activities provided for the class and the teacher's low expectations of pupils' response and quality of work. In some lessons in mathematics, for example, pupils do not have enough opportunity to provide their own explanations to solving problems. The main weaknesses in the less than satisfactory lessons are the poor management of pupils' behaviour, the teachers' low or unclear expectations of what pupils are expected to do and work that does not meet the interests and needs of the pupils.

20. Most teachers manage their classes well, although there are some occasions where pupils are disruptive because the teachers' expectations are too low and their classroom management skills inadequate. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are mostly positive, which leads to pupils' engagement with the tasks and productive learning. Most teachers highlight key words related to their subject areas and use subject-specific

language effectively to extend pupils' understanding. However, in modern foreign languages, teachers and pupils do not use the foreign language often enough in lessons. Teachers are implementing some of the recommendations of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy in their lessons but not with any great consistency within some departments. Homework is generally used well to support learning. Teachers use a good range of resources to support their teaching and pupils' learning. In most subjects, the main area of weakness is in the limited use of ICT to support teaching and learning. In the majority of lessons, pupils apply themselves productively to their work and successfully extend their knowledge, skills and understanding about the topics they are studying. Teachers prepare them well for their GCSE examinations. As a result, pupils make good gains in their learning, enabling them to achieve well.

21. Although satisfactory overall, there is too much variation among subject departments and between individual teachers in their approach to meeting pupils' additional educational needs. The most successful lessons involving learning support staff are presented to pupils as a professional partnership, described by one pupil as having two teachers to hand. In several lessons, learning support staff make effective and timely interventions to support pupils or keep them on task. In others, however, support staff have little or no prior information about what is to be covered or how best they might support identified pupils. Some teachers plan lessons in which there are very few opportunities for support staff to play a meaningful part in helping individuals and groups.

22. In science and design and technology, teachers make consistently good provision for pupils with additional needs and individual teachers in other subjects adopt lively and engaging strategies that capture the attention of the least capable pupils, giving them opportunities to play a full part in each section of the lesson. The best practice makes full use of adapted materials, reviewed for readability and clarity of instruction. There are lessons, however, where a significant group of pupils are unable to follow an information handout or keep up with a complex series of fast-paced activities.

23. The quality of assessment, including the marking, of pupils' work is satisfactory, although there are inconsistencies both across and within subjects. It is good in English, mathematics, history, art and design, and modern foreign languages. However, it is unsatisfactory in geography and in the resistant materials area within design and technology, and poor in ICT and citizenship. Elsewhere it is satisfactory. Teachers mark work regularly in most subjects but in too many instances, the marking is supportive and encouraging rather than diagnostic and constructive. At its best, as for example in some of the work seen in English, mathematics, art and design, food technology, history, modern foreign languages and religious education, teachers give clear pointers to pupils on what they need to do to improve their work. They also link this guidance very closely to the National Curriculum's level descriptions and GCSE criteria. This approach gives pupils a better understanding of how well they are doing and what more they need to do to reach the higher levels.

24. In general, many teachers are only in the early stages of implementing some of the recommendations of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and using assessment systematically as a tool to help them know more about pupils' learning and progress. This means that some of the planned work does not always meet the needs of pupils with different needs or levels of attainment, even in classes that are grouped by ability. In those areas where assessment practice is consistent and effective, pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve and have specific targets for improvement. However, this approach is not common across all subjects.

25. The main weaknesses in assessment result from the variations in practice and a lack of consistency of approach across subjects. This is also evident in the lack of specific information about pupils' progress and achievements or clear targets for improvement included in the reports sent to parents. Many subject leaders are not monitoring departmental practice with sufficient rigour to iron out variations in approach. Senior managers are not doing enough to check the consistency of assessment practice across the school or to ensure that the examples of best practice apparent in the school are shared.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory, with strengths in some areas but weaknesses in others. Opportunities for enrichment are good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have an open choice of option subjects, but there are few vocational opportunities for lower attaining pupils and some statutory requirements are not met.
- Some subjects offer a broad curriculum, together with a range of enrichment activities to support learning.
- The personal, social and health education programme contributes considerably to pupils' moral and social development.
- The provision for ICT in Years 10 and 11, music in Years 7 - 9, and for citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation is excellent in science, but cramped and congested classrooms in some other subjects restrict what can be taught in lessons.

Commentary

26. The curriculum meets most, but not all, statutory requirements. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with drama, in Years 7 - 9. About half the year group in Year 9 study two modern foreign languages, French and German. The curriculum choice in Years 10 and 11 is confined mainly to traditional GCSE examination subjects but also includes the provision of ASDAN courses. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow courses leading to GCSE qualifications in eight or nine, and occasionally ten, subjects. A small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend vocational courses at the local college. These help prepare pupils for employment when they leave school. All pupils study French in Years 10 and 11 as part of a compulsory core of subjects and a small group of pupils in Year 10 study German in addition.

27. The school has reviewed its curricular provision since the last inspection but some weaknesses remain. The school does not fulfil the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship, nor does it provide careers education for pupils in Years 7 and 8, a requirement since September 2004. Not all strands of citizenship are covered equally or coherently, and the school has not reported pupils' progress in this subject to parents, as it is required to do. Pupils use computers in various subjects in Years 10 and 11, but the school does not monitor with sufficient rigour their competence in using them and how often they do so to support their learning within subjects. This means that the school does not know if statutory requirements are being met or whether pupils' skills are being developed

systematically. This was a key issue identified during the last inspection and progress in this area has been unsatisfactory.

28. The curriculum is good in English, mathematics, science, art and design, history and religious education, as there is a variety of provision to suit the needs of all pupils. Activities are linked together and topics are well chosen to broaden pupils' understanding of aspects of their learning. However, this careful planning is not evident in other subjects. For example, in citizenship and physical education, the scheme of work is not planned carefully enough to make sure there is an equal emphasis on all aspects of the subject or to ensure that skills and experiences are developed in sufficient depth. There are also weaknesses in the curriculum for music in Years 7 - 9. The timing of the school day means that pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not receive the recommended amount of time for the curriculum. This was noted in the last inspection report.

29. The ASDAN course available in Years 10 and 11 fulfils a valuable function for pupils who opt for it. The school uses it appropriately by making use of the range of awards available, including those designed for more capable youngsters. Pupils enjoy the practical activities and are quick to appreciate the relevance of many of the challenges they undertake. They recognise the potential benefits in terms of readiness for work and further study, and the fact that a wide range of pupils join the course is seen by many as an advantage. One pupil described how much he enjoyed the chance to work with others in his year group whom he had not been able to work with before, as they came from different groups. Others identified the teamwork as their favourite element, and they all show mature attitudes towards their learning and to each other.

30. Very few pupils are studying for entry level qualifications or similar accredited courses. The changing profile of pupils admitted suggests that the school may need to consider a wider range of qualifications and accreditation for the youngest pupils with special educational needs as they approach Year 10, as a full suite of GCSE coursework and examinations may well prove to be beyond their capabilities. The number of pupils in Year 11 able to attend college-linked courses or take part in planned work-related learning activities is very small. The learning support department has good links with the Connexions service but those with the special educational needs department at the local college of further education are less well developed.

31. Personal, social and health education is well planned and seen as a vital way to support the development of the whole pupil. Due attention is paid to sex and relationships education, and alcohol and drug misuse within the programme. A number of joint initiatives with members of the local business community give pupils an understanding of the possibilities of work and study when they leave school. At the moment, these activities are restricted to a minority of pupils, but those who participate feel more self-confident when attending interviews and speaking about their plans for the future to their peers. The effectiveness of the wider provision for work-related learning in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.

32. The school offers a broad and varied programme of creative, cultural and physical activities to enrich the curriculum for pupils of all ages and the provision is good. They include recreational and competitive sport, activities in art and design, drama workshops and productions, the school band, workshops and other musical events, theatre and exhibition visits, local, regional and foreign trips, homework clubs and an enrichment club for gifted and talented pupils. Participation in sport is good and it has increased considerably through inter-house matches, school fixtures, local leagues and competitions. Activities in music have been constrained more recently because of staffing difficulties, and there is no structured provision for ICT. Pupils also participate in numerous

competitions based on the house system, including sport, chess and a school quiz. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme for pupils in Years 9 - 11 continues to flourish. The majority of activities are well supported, especially after school, given the high proportion of pupils who travel to and from school by bus.

33. There are enough qualified staff to teach the curriculum and although some do not always teach their main subject, subject leaders provide them with good support and guidance. In addition, there are satisfactory levels of support staff. Resources to support learning are generally satisfactory. However, there is a lack of access to computer equipment for all pupils, and the main computer rooms are too small to accommodate a whole class. Learning resources for pupils with special educational needs are limited and access to computer equipment is unsatisfactory at present. The range of software and applications that support pupils with communication impairments and those with physical disabilities is very limited.

34. Accommodation is satisfactory. It is excellent in science, giving plenty of space for pupils when they are doing practical work. However, many classrooms are cramped and too small for the number of pupils in each class. This is particularly so in music and modern foreign languages. As a result, teachers are unable to vary the way they teach their lessons. Accommodation for the learning support department has been re-organised and it is now more flexible and appropriate for the range of work the department does.

Care, guidance and support

Standards of care, health and safety are satisfactory. Pupils are given satisfactory support, advice and guidance, but their academic progress and personal development are not monitored systematically. Arrangements for the transfer of pupils from primary schools are good. There are satisfactory arrangements for involving pupils in the school's work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils relate very well to their teachers, with whom they have very good and trusting relationships.
- Procedures for the smooth transfer of pupils from primary schools are good.
- Not enough advice and guidance is given to pupils to help them set targets for their academic improvement.
- Individual education plans are not used effectively to support and guide pupils with special educational needs.
- Pupils receive good guidance as they move through the school enabling them to make well-informed choices about their future beyond school.

Commentary

35. Pupils' views about the school and the care, support and guidance they receive are generally positive. They value the education they receive, the range of extra-curricular activities offered and the supportive environment in which they learn and develop. The induction processes to the school and support for new pupils are well structured, enabling them to settle into school quickly. This level of care continues as they progress through the school, with information readily available to help pupils make important decisions.

36. There are good induction arrangements for pupils entering Year 7, including the sharing of information from the primary schools, well-organised exchange visits and involvement in a number of activity days, such as the arts day with other local schools and a science day in the school. A group of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have been trained by 'Childline' to act as peer mentors. This makes a good contribution to helping new pupils settle in to the school.

37. Pupils feel confident that staff, form tutors and heads of house know them well, although they are less confident that their progress and achievements are monitored and assessed effectively. Support for pupils' academic and personal development is compromised by the lack of communication between the school's pastoral and academic systems and overall, it is unsatisfactory. The use of assessment information to support pupils' progress varies between subjects. Form tutors are not informed of their pupils' targets in the different subjects. This means that there is no mechanism to provide form tutors with an overview of pupils' progress to enable them to monitor and support them more effectively. The balance of responsibilities between heads of house and form tutors is unclear and this militates against the effective monitoring of pupils' progress. Half-termly assessments concentrate only on pupils' attitudes and effort rather than on their progress and achievements. This was raised as an issue in the last inspection report and still has not been addressed. Despite this, the pastoral system, provided through form tutors and heads of house, provides a sense of stability and ensures pupils have members of staff to whom they can turn if needed.

38. The use of individual education plans to set subject-specific targets for learning has not been addressed vigorously enough. Insufficient progress has been made on this issue, which was identified during the last inspection. Since September, the new special needs co-ordinator and her team have worked very hard to rectify the position regarding annual reviews for pupils with a statement of special educational need and the writing of targets for other pupils on the special needs register. The co-ordinator has drafted targets and advised subject staff but, during the inspection, there were few examples of teachers planning work specifically to meet the targets or of pupils actively working towards their targets during lessons.

39. Careers advice is well structured and pupils take advantage of the resources available and support from the advisers linked to the Connexions service. Procedures for child protection are satisfactory. The designated teacher for child protection is well trained and provides annual training for all adults who work in the school. Health and safety requirements are carried out effectively within the school, including regular inspections, testing of equipment and fire drills. The governing body carries out its responsibilities through the premises committee, who are actively involved. Although the school follows the local education authority's guidelines on risk assessments, they are not explicitly referred to within the current procedures. Welfare provision in the school is very good. The school has a well-equipped medical room and employs a school nurse. However, the administrative

arrangements for the monitoring of attendance do not require staff to contact parents on the first day of unexpected absence to confirm pupils' safety.

40. The majority of pupils like the school and think they are treated fairly and with respect, and most feel that there is an adult to whom they can go to if they have a problem. Most feel they are consulted and that the school is interested in their views. The school council meets periodically and there is an established flow of information back to tutor groups. However, their current remit has been limited to the provision of such items as new water fountains and rubbish bins, and many pupils are unaware of what their representatives do. The school does not actively consult pupils or involve them in important decision-making discussions.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has satisfactory links with parents but good links with the community and with other educational establishments.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Local businesses provide good opportunities for work experience.
- The pupils' planners are used well to maintain regular communication with parents.
- Pupils' progress reports, the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are all unsatisfactory.
- The Friends' Association provides good support to the school.
- The school works well with the local primary schools and with post-16 providers.

Commentary

41. Responses to the parents' questionnaires and at the parents' meeting indicate that parents are very pleased with most aspects of the school. They are extremely pleased with the high expectations staff have of pupils, the induction arrangements and the good teaching, and they believe that their children like school and that they are encouraged to become mature. The only areas of concern are about the behaviour of some pupils, homework, the degree of consultation with parents and the information they receive about their children's progress. A number of parents made individual comments, many of which were very positive about the school. These comments were considered by the inspection team and contribute to the findings of the report.

42. The reports sent to parents are unsatisfactory as they fail to provide enough information about pupils' attainment and achievement for parents to be able to help their children improve. Furthermore, parents find the information they receive confusing, especially as the half-termly reports comment on attitudes and effort and the annual reports refer to the level at which the pupils are working. The information on how pupils could improve is very limited and meaningful targets are seldom provided. The school does not meet statutory requirements to report ICT for Years 10 and 11 or for citizenship. Both the governors' annual report and the prospectus omit some information required by law.

43. A very good feature in the school is the priority given to checking the pupils' planners to ensure that pupils are using them appropriately and that parents sign them each week. These planners are a good means of communications between parents and the school. Parents also have ready access to the heads of house and the tutors. All parents have at least one formal opportunity to visit the school each year but there are very few

opportunities for finding out about the actual work their children do at school. A very effective Friends' Association raises funds and supports the school with activities such as running the school shop. There are no regular formal consultations with parents although parents can contact the school to express individual views.

44. Good links with other schools and colleges in the area ease the transfer of pupils. The local primary schools work closely with the school but some of the contributory schools further away have limited contact. Many post-16 providers come into school to talk to pupils about opportunities. The very good link with a local special school is of considerable educational and social benefit to the pupils of both schools.

45. For a rural school, there are good links with local industry that support the curriculum, for example, by providing work experience opportunities and supporting pupils with a design exercise in school. Members of the local Chamber of Trade also support a work project for pupils who need extra encouragement. Other links with the community include working with a local group on issues such as recycling and providing a printing facility for the local church.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is satisfactory, but is insufficiently strategic. Management is satisfactory. Governance of the school is satisfactory and improving. However, the governing body does not ensure that the school complies with all statutory requirements with regard to the provision of a daily act of collective worship, citizenship, careers education in Years 7 and 8, the content of the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents, and in the pupils' annual reports.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school does not rigorously evaluate and monitor its work in a way that permits effective strategic planning.
- The arrangements for the performance management of staff are incomplete.
- The governors' understanding of the strengths and weakness of the school is good.
- Performance data are not used well enough to monitor pupils' progress or to set individual targets.
- The newly-appointed co-ordinator has made an excellent start to improve aspects of the provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Staff have not received enough training and guidance to ensure that they meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs in lessons.

Commentary

46. Since the last inspection, the governing body has developed a good understanding of its own role and the strengths and weaknesses of the school through its participation in a governors' training programme. Communication between governors has improved and they are now providing greater challenge to the school, including senior managers. They have not yet taken on the full range of their strategic duties to set priorities and policies for future development and to identify challenging goals for improvement. They have not ensured that the school meets all statutory requirements.

47. The headteacher has a clear view of the changes that are necessary to improve the quality of provision across the school. He also has a good understanding of the need to re-define leadership roles and responsibilities in order to create cohesive teams that can set

strategic targets for the school. The senior leadership team welcomes initiatives and is committed to raising standards but does not rigorously evaluate the school's performance or demonstrate the capacity to effect change with a sense of urgency. They do not work closely as a team. Neither do they have a shared understanding of the school's priorities for development nor the strategies required to move the school forward.

48. Middle managers are good role models for pupils and many have clear and purposeful development plans for their curricular areas. Leadership at this level is satisfactory. Leadership is good in English, mathematics, science, art and design, history and personal, social and health education, and very good in modern foreign languages and religious education. It is unsatisfactory in design and technology, as there is no head of the subject, and in citizenship, and very poor in ICT. Elsewhere it is satisfactory, although there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about leadership in music because of the absence of the subject leader. Heads of department are not held sufficiently accountable for the work of their departments, which is a weakness in the school's systems.

49. Since the last inspection, the leadership team has not given enough priority to securing the improvements in provision for pupils with special educational needs that were identified at that time. Staff training and development in this aspect of teaching has been limited and, as a result, practice in meeting special educational needs throughout the school remains variable. The leadership team's own monitoring and performance management of staff, and the governors' scrutiny failed to identify some important weaknesses. However, the appointment of a new special needs co-ordinator has already made a significant difference. Her leadership and management of the intensive process of securing improvement are excellent and a great deal has been achieved in a very short time.

50. The school day runs smoothly, clear procedures are followed and it is an orderly environment. The provision for the professional development of staff and the support of new staff is satisfactory. Procedures for the performance management of staff have been in abeyance and are still not fully operational. With the appointment of a data-manager this year, systematic information is available to monitor pupils' performance. It is not yet used consistently to track the progress of individual pupils or to set them challenging targets. The school does not do enough to review and evaluate the quality of provision across the school so that it can identify and tackle areas of weakness quickly and firmly. Departments are using a self-evaluation scheme developed by a local education authority but there are no systems for helping staff to implement it effectively and the outcomes are not being monitored. Overall, the school's systems for self-evaluation and using performance data are unsatisfactory.

51. The management of the school's finances is satisfactory. There are good systems to manage the budget on a day-to-day basis. The principles of best value are applied to spending on services and purchases involving larger sums of money. The school's senior administrative officer provides regular and accurate reports for the headteacher and the chair of the governors' finance committee. These three monitor the budget and keep the governing body informed. Budget forecasts indicate the likelihood of a significant budget deficit in the next and subsequent financial years but there is no agreed strategy to remedy this. The management costs of the school are very high but the principles of best value have not been applied to the school's management to secure improvement. Funding provided by the school to supplement the delegated funding for pupils with a statement of special educational need is low when compared with similar schools and limits the amount of external specialist support for pupils that the school can buy in. Overall, based on the standards attained, the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' good achievement, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,783,856
Total expenditure	1,786,271
Expenditure per pupil	3,207

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	54,845
Balance carried forward to the next year	52,430

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

What is the effectiveness of work-related learning?

52. The effectiveness of work-related learning (WRL) is satisfactory. The deputy headteacher, who has oversight of this feature of the curriculum, initiated a number of events to develop pupils' skills for enterprise and employability before it became a statutory requirement. In partnership with several large commercial, retail and professional organisations, the school arranges an event called 'Workwise'. Over three days, people who work in these organisations raise the self-image and self-confidence of pupils through a number of exercises. Pupils speak very positively about how this experience has benefited them in preparing for the future and in giving them greater awareness of what employers look for when they select employees. However, this programme is limited to 30 pupils in Year 11. Another venture involves all pupils in Year 10 working with representatives from local industry over two days on a production and marketing project. Pupils work in teams designing and making a 'chocolate box', and market their product to a panel of judges, who make the choice of a winning team. The ASDAN course contributes well to the learning of pupils who have special educational needs or who attain at lower levels. The course develops their inter-personal skills for working with different groups for specific tasks that are relevant to relationships in the work place.

53. Pupils in Year 10 participate in work experience over a two-week period. This is organised effectively and contributes well to learning through work. Pupils receive good preparation through a presentation to which parents are invited, and through their personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils' preferences about work placements are noted by the Connexions service, who administer the scheme, but pupils may also make their own arrangements where they have a suitable contact. Teachers visit pupils at their place of work to check that the experience is worthwhile or if there are problems. Pupils keep a diary of their experience and write a report that contributes to their coursework in English. They also prepare and make a short speech on their work experience to other pupils. A small number of pupils learn about work through vocational courses leading to a NVQ in catering or engineering at City College. Extended work experience is arranged for a few pupils for whom a full-time academic curriculum is unsuitable. For example, one pupil works for two days on a local farm.

54. There is no formal policy on WRL. The deputy headteacher has conducted a survey of contributions made by subjects to this aspect of learning. For example, as part of their personal, social and health education programme in Year 11, pupils devise a daytime television show that they have to sell to a television executive. This provides them with some insight into the skills required for work in the media industry. At this stage, there has not been a detailed audit to provide a firm basis for co-ordinated planning of WRL across the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department's shared commitment to improvement has led to good achievement for both boys and girls.
- Lessons are well planned and managed, so pupils are fully engaged in their learning.
- Pupils are given good opportunities to learn from each other.
- The subject is led well and strategies for improvement are effective.
- Monitoring is unstructured and insufficiently rigorous.
- Pupils are not always given specific advice on how to improve.

Commentary

55. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above the national average and above those for similar schools. Girls did much better than boys. In 2004, the overall results were lower and close to the national average, with a decline in the proportion of girls gaining the highest grades. Standards of pupils' current work in Year 9 are above national expectations. Since these pupils' attainment on entry to Year 7 was typical for their age, they have achieved well. Nearly all pupils are articulate and speak in sentences. They listen well to the teacher and increasingly well to each other. Reading aloud is clear and fluent, and they write well-illustrated character studies and commentaries on the books they read. The most capable pupils are able to comment perceptively on the effect of language, imagery and rhythm in *Macbeth*, and all pupils know the story well. In their original writing, most are able to adapt their style to suit different purposes and readership. There are no obvious differences between the standards attained by boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers know them well and some receive additional support in lessons.

56. In 2004, the GCSE examination results in English were in line with the national average. The performance of girls was above average and the boys' performance below average. In English literature, the results were below average for both boys and girls, but the department's inclusive approach means that the proportion of pupils entered was much higher than nationally. Standards of pupils' current work by Year 11 are above the level expected nationally and their achievement is good. Pupils speak with confidence and listen to each other's ideas with respect. They are able to trace themes such as evil in *Macbeth* and social injustice in *An Inspector Calls*, supporting their views with close reference to the text. Some are less confident in commenting on poetic techniques, falling back on writing about the content of war poetry. The most talented pupils produce original writing of a very high standard, balancing character, plot and theme in narrative writing, and using a broad vocabulary to create very effective description.

57. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in Years 7 - 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 as they mature into young adults. They arrive promptly and ready to work. Boys

and girls work together increasingly well in paired and group activities. Most are keen to learn and they are pleased when they do well. Older pupils improve their work through redrafting in response to comments from teachers and fellow pupils.

58. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen; several lessons were very good and a few were excellent. Well-planned lessons enable pupils to take part in a good variety of activities that build on previous skills and knowledge. Objectives are shared with classes so they know what they are expected to do and learn. In the best lessons, these objectives are reviewed at the end but, in many, the planned review is rushed or omitted so that learning is not consolidated. Pleasant and purposeful relationships lead to positive responses from both boys and girls. Effective management and clear time limits make most lessons very productive, but in a few, the starter activity takes too much time. Teachers' good knowledge of the subject gives pupils confidence in them. Pupils are given good opportunities to learn from each other in research and group activities. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is good. Marking is regular and encouraging but pupils are not always given specific advice on how to improve. Other forms of assessment, including self-evaluation and comments from classmates are effective in helping pupils to improve their writing.

59. The curriculum is broad and balanced from Year 7 to Year 11. Pupils study a wide range of literature and non-fiction texts, using a good variety of approaches. Reading material is well suited to pupils' capabilities. Appropriate attention is given to language work for those who find writing difficult. Although pupils are encouraged to use computers at home, there are few opportunities for whole classes to enhance their work with ICT. By encouraging pupils to explore serious topics in their reading and writing, English makes a valuable contribution to their personal development as young citizens.

60. The subject is well led and staff share a commitment to improvement. Clear priorities have been established and effective strategies put in place to improve learning, for example, by adopting the best features of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. The head of department provides a very good role model to teachers and pupils. Management is satisfactory. The scheme of work is accessible both to the core team and to non-specialist teachers, who are given helpful advice. Resources are well organised. The amount of time given to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is limited, however, and the process lacks rigour. From a strong position in the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. Standards and achievement have risen in Years 7 - 9 and maintained in Years 10 and 11. Good attitudes, teaching and leadership are still features of the English department.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. Standards of literacy are above national expectations in most subjects, and in no subject is low competence a barrier to learning. The whole-school policy gives clear guidelines to subject departments on what they should be doing to promote literacy skills. Most subjects display key words and students' written work. There are good opportunities for speaking and listening in many lessons. Reading and writing for different purposes are particularly encouraged in English, history, art and design, design and technology, and religious education.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are some high standards and achievement in German and amongst the higher attainers in Years 10 and 11, especially in written work.
- Some very good teaching challenges and motivates pupils to achieve well.
- Some unsatisfactory and poor teaching is characterised by poor planning and weak classroom management.
- There is some underachievement, especially among the higher attainers in Years 7 - 9.
- The head of department provides very good leadership.
- There is very little use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

62. Standards in French and German are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. This is a similar picture to that found in the teachers' own assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2004. Writing skills are well developed, as the result of extensive teaching of grammar and vocabulary. Pupils' ability to understand spoken French or German is weaker because teachers do not use them enough in the classroom. There is not enough opportunity for pupils to speak the foreign language themselves and their pronunciation is often poor. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving satisfactorily, but the higher attainers are not being fully stretched in speaking and listening.

63. In the GCSE French examination in 2004, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was in line with the national average. These results represented a sharp decline from the previous year, especially for the boys, and a reverse of what had been a steadily improving trend. The proportion attaining the highest grades of A* and A was only half the national average, whereas it was double the national average in 2003. Nevertheless, all pupils gained a pass grade and did better in French than in many of their other GCSE subjects. In German, all six pupils gained at least a grade C, maintaining the high levels of previous years. On average, both boys and girls did better in German than in any of their other GCSE examinations.

64. By Year 11, standards in French are above national expectations. Pupils are doing better than the GCSE examination results last summer suggest, because they are working harder in the run up to this year's examination. Writing is strong across pupils of all capabilities, with very good use of different tenses, complex sentence structure and a rich fund of vocabulary and expressions. Achievement is generally good for all pupils and the higher attainers achieve very well. In German at the end of Year 11, standards are well above the level expected nationally and achievement is very good. Pupils express themselves very well in speaking and writing, engaging in high-level conversations with good pronunciation.

65. In French, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In German, teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. The content of lessons is very challenging in the main. When well taught, the advanced grammar and

vocabulary produce high standards and the swift acquisition of knowledge and skills, particularly in written work. There is often a clear objective to the lesson, tackled through a variety of interesting activities, which inspire enthusiasm and lead to steady and productive learning. Project work in Year 9 is used as a foundation for the GCSE work and the high-quality coursework in Years 10 and 11 prepares pupils well for A-level study. Some good resources are exploited effectively, especially in German, to stimulate and motivate pupils. Homework is appropriate, consolidating and extending class work. Much of the homework is marked thoroughly using National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, so that pupils know how well they are doing. Helpful comments point the way forward.

66. Other lessons are not as well planned: their pace is slow and the activities are mundane. Pupils respond with apathy at best and a small minority are disrespectful and disruptive. Some pupils, including some higher attainers, do not take care of their books, which can be untidy and torn. In Years 7 - 9, teachers do not always fully adapt the work to the needs and abilities of all pupils, especially the higher attainers. There is little use of computers to assist learning, as teachers have found the facilities inadequate and poorly maintained. Several classrooms are too small to accommodate the group and pair work that would stretch pupils more fully.

67. The leadership of modern languages is very good. The head of department constantly reviews progress and has built a good team spirit. She leads by the example of her very good teaching, strong commitment and firm discipline. Management of the department is good. A good formal assessment system has been created and data are used to establish motivating targets for individual pupils. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have generally been maintained and, over the last few years, there have been some very good results in both French and German. The good progress in Years 10 and 11 has continued, underpinned by the very positive attitudes to learning of the majority of the pupils. Teaching and learning remain satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership sets a clear direction for the subject.
- Assessment is effective in enabling pupils to know where they are doing well and where they need to improve.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to offer their own explanations or to work collaboratively on problems.
- There is insufficient application of ICT in teaching and learning.

Commentary

68. The results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above the national average but slightly below the results in schools with a similar level of attainment on entry. The results were well above the national average in 2003 and in line with schools with a similar level of prior attainment. The test results have improved over the last four years. By the end of Year 9, standards are above national expectations. Pupils develop good skills and understanding of number and algebra, shape, space and measure. However, they do not gain sufficient experience of, or skills in, the application of ICT in mathematics.

69. In 2004, the GCSE examination results were close to the national average and to the average for similar schools. In 2003, the results were well above the national average and were very high in comparison with the results in schools with similar levels of prior attainment. In both years, the results of girls were better than those of the boys. A lower proportion than the national average attained the highest grades of A* and A. Although the results have fluctuated, the trend over four years has remained static. By the end of Year 11, standards are in line with national expectations. Average and higher attaining pupils apply number well and have a good understanding of geometry and statistics. Higher attainers work well in algebra. Lower attaining pupils have limited numeracy skills but work well on basic concepts in number, shape and measures, and statistics. All pupils have insufficient understanding of the application of ICT in mathematics.

70. Pupils' achievement is good in Years 7 - 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. There are no significant differences between the achievements of different groups of pupils in the earlier years. However, some girls show a greater degree of application in Years 10 and 11 and make relatively better progress. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, particularly with the help of learning support assistants.

71. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is satisfactory in Years 7 - 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Individual lesson plans are well constructed and teachers match the work to the attainment of the pupils. Most lessons are taught at a good pace but the pace slackens in some, leading some pupils to lose interest. Teachers give clear explanations and most involve pupils through questioning and discussion. However, in some lessons, there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to provide their own explanations. Most lessons end with a summary, but these do not always consolidate the learning well enough. Teachers use textbooks and homework books effectively and some make good use of teaching resources, such as individual whiteboards, that help to engage all pupils in the learning. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has led to improvements in teaching, but teachers are not using the full range of resources available to build on the learning that pupils have established in Year 6. Teachers do not make sufficient use of ICT in their teaching, nor enable pupils to apply this to their learning. Pupils listen well and contribute when asked. They work well together when invited to do so but there are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to work in pairs. Most work is presented well in books, and coursework in Years 10 and 11 shows evidence of independent study.

72. The achievement of pupils is promoted by the good use of assessment. Pupils are tested regularly and this is followed by self-evaluation by the pupils so that they know how well they are doing and where they can improve. Some marking of work gives helpful comments on how to improve, but this is not consistent across the department. Targets for improvement are regularly agreed with pupils. The provision of an additional GCSE examination course in statistics extends the curricular opportunities for higher attaining pupils in Year 10. This course is taught outside the school day in collaboration with a neighbouring specialist mathematics school. An intensive additional revision programme is provided, leading up to the GCSE examinations.

73. The leadership of the department is good, providing clear direction for the subject. The head of department provides a good role model in his own teaching. The monitoring and assessment of pupils' attainment and progress are very strong aspects of the work of the department. Evaluations of the strengths and areas for development are good but development planning is insufficiently detailed to ensure continued progress, especially in the development of teaching strategies. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The results of the national tests in Year 9 have improved considerably. Assessment has improved and better use is now made of the analysis of performance data to raise standards. Although the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and good in many lessons, there is a lower proportion of good or very good lessons than previously.

Mathematics across the curriculum

74. The development of pupils' numeracy skills is sufficient to enable them to have full access to the school's curriculum. The school does not have a policy for numeracy across the curriculum, nor is numeracy made explicit in the planning of other subjects. However, pupils are able to apply their numeracy skills well in several areas. In science and geography, pupils collect data and display this in graphs. They apply their understanding to the analysis of different line graphs and use formulae in science. Pupils use measurement and carry out calculations in design and technology. In history, pupils use graphs, charts and time-lines. In most of these applications, pupils have a good level of understanding and are able to apply their knowledge to good effect.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are consistently good in all lessons.
- Teachers have high expectations and provide challenging work to extend all pupils.
- The achievement of pupils in Years 7 - 9 is good but it is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers do not always give enough information to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.
- The use of ICT to support pupils' learning is underdeveloped.

Commentary

75. The results of the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above the national average but were below the average for schools with a similar level of attainment on entry. However, this is a change from the picture between 2000 and 2003. During that period, the results were consistently well above the national average and improving at a faster rate than the national trend. The proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 or higher was broadly average in 2004 and were above the national average at the higher Level 6 or above. Current standards are above the level expected nationally by Year 9. As their attainment on entry to Year 7 is broadly typical for their age, pupils' achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve equally well.

76. The GCSE examination results were in line with the national average at the time of the last inspection. The results have improved consistently since then. They were above the national averages between 2001 and 2003, but fell in 2004, when they were in line with the national average. Even though pupils' results in science were in line with their results in other subjects, their performance was lower than expected when account is taken of their performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9. Standards of pupils' current work are above national expectations in Year 11, but lower than might be expected when account is taken of their well above average results in the tests at the end of Year 9. Pupils' achievement overall is unsatisfactory. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. The achievement of pupils from different ethnic heritages and those with special educational needs is satisfactory.

77. Teaching is good and in some lessons, it is very good. The proportion of very good teaching is greater in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 - 9. Pupils' learning is good because teachers make the lessons interesting, as well as matching the work closely to pupils' learning needs. Teachers' high expectations of their pupils are evident in all of the work that they undertake. One notable example of this is the routine requirement for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to write their own notes on the activities they undertake. However, this

has an associated problem. Although they receive advice from their teachers about what is expected and have the benefit of commercially produced course notes and revision guides to help them, the notes made by some pupils are cursory and do not provide a helpful summary of what they are expected to learn.

78. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. The monitoring of pupils' progress by the use of test scores at the end of each topic is a suitable approach. However, teachers' practice is inconsistent. Pupils complete an assessment test at the end of each topic but the test results are not provided to them in a form that gives them any useful information on their attainment to help them understand how well they are doing. All teachers mark pupils' work regularly and comply with the school policy of commenting on presentation and effort. Some teachers provide additional encouraging comments but most do not provide pupils with information to help them improve their understanding of science or the accuracy of their written work. Basing their future work and examination revision on inadequate notes from the work they have completed is limiting the achievement of some pupils in Years 10 and 11.

79. Despite the improvement in the teachers' access to ICT facilities and in pupils' access to computers outside lesson times, the particular advantages of this technology are not being exploited. Although the opportunities for its use are clearly identified in the schemes of work, teachers do not use ICT effectively to support pupils' learning.

80. Leadership of the subject is good. The teachers work as an effective team, sharing a common purpose and commitment to raising the attainment of all pupils. Whilst the head of department does not have any formal mechanisms for gathering evidence about the quality of teaching and learning within the subject, the team works together closely in developing schemes of work, reviewing the contents of teaching topics and moderating the marking of GCSE coursework assignments. The management of the subject is good. The subject is well organised with a very good range of teaching resources. A coherent procedure for monitoring pupils' progress is being introduced to the pupils. Accommodation is excellent, with one new laboratory and three having been refurbished in the last year. As standards, the quality of teaching, leadership and management have all improved, the progress of the subject since the last inspection has been good and it has the capacity to improve further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good teaching in Years 7 - 9 despite the poor deployment of resources and the unreliability of the network.
- Pupils behave well and are well motivated.
- Pupils' learning is unsatisfactory over time because they have to share computers.
- Assessment procedures are not in place, which is limiting pupils' progress.

- Leadership and management of the department are very poor and are affecting standards.

Commentary

81. Pupils enter Year 7 with varying experiences in using ICT, but their attainment overall is in line with expectations of pupils of this age. The assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2004 showed that pupils' attainment was well above the level expected nationally. These assessments are too generous and are not confirmed by inspection evidence, which shows that standards by Year 9 are below national expectations. Pupils in Years 7 - 9 share computers in all lessons and do not complete individual assignments. The frequent failure and unreliability of the computer network makes the saving and printing of work difficult so that teachers are unable to assess work routinely. As non-specialists, they also lack experience in assessing work accurately against national standards. These weaknesses limit the achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, because the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding is not monitored and they have no idea how to improve or make progress. Their achievement is, therefore, unsatisfactory.

82. Pupils do not take any examination in ICT in Years 10 or 11 and do not have specific ICT lessons. The work they undertake using ICT in subjects varies and is not monitored. Any progress they are making is not reported to parents. In subjects where pupils have the opportunity to use ICT, standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils use a limited range of software appropriately to improve their learning and present their work, but their achievement overall is unsatisfactory as few subjects provide enough opportunities for them to use and evaluate the necessary range of ICT tools in their work. As a result, standards by Year 11 are below the level expected nationally. Those of lower attaining boys are well below average and their achievement is poor, because they have difficulty remembering basic skills, which leads to a lack of motivation when they use ICT.

83. Teaching in Years 7 - 9 is good in difficult circumstances. Teachers are non-specialists but plan their lessons well in line with the National Curriculum programme of study. They maintain very good control, set high expectations and motivate pupils well. Consequently, pupils' learning is satisfactory in the short term because of their good behaviour and motivation. However, it is unsatisfactory over time because they have to share computers, their work is not assessed and they have little opportunity to consolidate their skills because of the way work is stored and presented. There is insufficient evidence to make a clear judgement about teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11.

84. Leadership and management are very poor. No one has responsibility for leading the teaching of ICT as a specific subject. Non-specialist teachers lack support and guidance and the quality of teaching is not evaluated. The arrangements for assessing pupils' work are poor. Pupils' work is not monitored or assessed effectively, especially in Years 10 and 11. There are no coherent or constructive plans to remedy the unsatisfactory deployment of resources, which is the major factor undermining achievement in Years 7 - 9. Cross-curricular provision remains unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. This was a key issue at the time of the last inspection and continues to be a weakness because pupils have little opportunity to use ICT effectively. Improvement since the last inspection has been poor. Although the school has increased the number of computers, provision remains poor and standards have not risen.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. Although pupils have restricted access to computers in school, many, particularly the higher attainers, are able to use ICT effectively in subjects because they develop their computer skills at home. There has been little improvement in the use of ICT in subjects since the last inspection. Although computers are available and the computer suites can be booked, they are underused because no suite has enough computers to cater for a whole class. This, together with the unreliability of the network, is undermining teachers' confidence in using ICT. The co-ordination of ICT across subjects is poor and pupils' work is not monitored or assessed to form part of the overall assessment of their progress. Good use is made of ICT in religious education to research topics and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Although ICT is used in English and history for research and word-processing, and increasingly in science as a teaching resource, its use is not extensive. In design and technology, ICT is used satisfactorily across a range of topics, including nutrition in Year 10 and the use of charts and graphs in Year 9, but some hardware is not used because of the unreliability of the network. The use of ICT is unsatisfactory in other subjects, and it is not used well to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The GCSE examination results are well above the national average and standards at the end of Year 9 are above those expected for the pupils' age.
- Pupils respond enthusiastically to good teaching, and the achievement of boys and girls is good.
- Assessment is not used to show pupils what they must do to improve or to set them challenging targets.
- The department does not monitor the quality of its work or plan strategically for improvement.
- Fieldwork and ICT skills are not developed sufficiently in Years 7 - 9.

Commentary

86. The attainment of pupils on entry in Year 7 is typical for their age but their general knowledge of places and environments is weak. Teachers' assessments show that they exceed the standards expected for their age by Year 9, with girls outperforming boys at the higher levels. This is confirmed by work seen in class and in their books. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is good. Pupils develop good skills in map work, use technical terms well and have a good understanding of the factors that influence migration patterns.

87. In 2004, the GCSE examination results were well above the national average at grades A*-C, a level of attainment which has been consistent for the past three years. Results in geography are among the highest in the school and the standard of coursework based on the local area is particularly good. Many more boys than girls opt for the subject but a higher proportion of girls attain the highest grades of A* and A. Standards of work by Year 11 are above those expected at this stage in the course. Pupils' achievement by the

end of Year 11 is good. They have a good understanding of the factors that give rise to the changing physical environment as well as the changing patterns within urban areas.

88. Boys achieve as well as girls in all years and contribute enthusiastically to discussions, particularly about topics chosen to capture their interest such as crime patterns and the business operations of football clubs. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory but the work is not sufficiently targeted to meet the needs of individual pupils. The achievement of higher attaining pupils is satisfactory but they are not always given tasks that are demanding enough.

89. Teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge. They plan well-structured lessons with varied activities and resources. Lessons start at a brisk pace but not enough time is left at the end to reflect on the lesson's objectives. Questioning techniques are particularly well directed to stimulate pupils' interest. As a result, pupils learn well. The use of homework to extend learning is good and teachers frequently give constructive oral feedback to the whole class. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is unsatisfactory overall, although satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Written comments do not tell pupils clearly what they have to do to improve and available data are not used to measure progress or to set challenging targets for individual pupils.

90. Pupils develop satisfactory literacy skills through the reinforcement of key words. There are many opportunities for discussion but little evidence of extended writing or individual research. The good teaching of numeracy skills results in the accurate use of a range of graphs and charts in all years. Fieldwork and ICT are not integrated into schemes of work and there is not enough use of subject-specific software. The selection of world-wide case studies contributes well to pupils' cultural development.

91. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory, as is improvement since the last inspection. The subject leader, who also has pastoral management responsibilities, has re-written the schemes of work to ensure a balanced curriculum. However, these do not identify specific opportunities for developing literacy and numeracy skills, or indicate how tasks are to be set to meet the needs of individual pupils. The departmental development plan has clear goals for raising standards, including extending the use of ICT and fieldwork. There are insufficient links with the whole-school plan and it does not include time-lines for completion of tasks or detailed costs. There is little monitoring of the work of the department or evaluation of how to raise standards further over the next few years.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and they attain high standards by the end of Year 11 because teaching is very challenging.
- Pupils' motivation is high and contributes to their good achievement.
- Enthusiastic leadership and teaching, together with successful examination results, make history the most popular subject chosen by pupils in Year 10.
- Girls perform better than boys in GCSE examinations and the difference is much greater than found nationally.
- Not enough use is made of ICT as a resource to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

92. The assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2004 showed that a higher proportion of pupils than average reached the expected level for pupils of this age. Girls performed much better than boys. Teachers consider that boys were less proficient in developing their written answers, although they were good orally, and girls tended to research at a greater depth than the boys. Current standards are above the national expectation by Year 9. Pupils recall knowledge accurately to answer questions and apply it well to decision-making tasks. Lower attaining pupils have difficulty with spelling and punctuation, so they do not always express their understanding of history precisely in writing.

93. In 2004, the GCSE examination results at grades A*-C were significantly better than the national average. Girls did significantly better than average at the higher grades of A* and A, and boys were above average. Current standards suggest that these high standards are being maintained and they are well above the level expected nationally. Pupils show very keen analytical skills in interpreting evidence of past events, such as the Cuban missile crisis, using a contemporary cartoon as a source. Pupils make good progress from the start of Year 7, when standards are in line with expectations, and they achieve well in Years 7 - 9. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11. Whilst boys do not attain as well as girls, the school's data show that they achieve better than girls in relation to their earlier attainment. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their targets. The most capable historians achieve well through tasks that allow them to excel.

94. The quality of teaching and learning overall is very good. It is good in Years 7 - 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, the use of time is very carefully planned and good quality sources of evidence attract pupils' attention. Questioning is sharp and rapid, but pupils of all capabilities are skilfully encouraged to answer. Lessons bubble with lively exchanges as pupils test out their opinions, and teachers challenge them to support these with evidence. Much attention is given to the meaning of subject-specific words, and teachers develop pupils' listening skills through dramatic readings. Homework reinforces learning well. For example, pupils in Year 9 had to list the persuasive techniques to use in a speech for recruiting soldiers in the First World War. Assessment is good throughout. Pupils appreciate the advice given on how to improve their work, which is regularly marked, and they know their levels and grades from periodic assessments. Many lessons in Years 10 and 11 focus on how to answer different types of examination questions. Pupils use marking criteria to improve their answers. Where teaching is less effective, but satisfactory, pupils are not always adequately prepared for tasks. In a lesson in Year 7 on the murder of Beckett, a number of pupils were unclear how to use a source of evidence, so they became inattentive and did not learn effectively. History makes a good contribution to pupils' social, moral and cultural development.

95. The head of history provides good leadership, sets high professional standards, and delegates responsibilities appropriately. Management is satisfactory. Lesson observation within the department does not take place, so that teaching and learning are not monitored. Recent procedures for gathering data are good, and the information generated is beginning to be used to inform decision-making. Unreliable hardware in the school frustrates a greater use of ICT to support learning. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the GCSE examinations are well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good and contributes very well to pupils' achievement.
- Very good leadership and good management ensure that pupils are offered a wide curriculum.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Not enough is done to monitor the work of teachers.

Commentary

96. By Year 9, standards are above the expectations set out in the local agreed syllabus, which is an improvement since the last inspection. This represents good achievement, given pupils' attainment on entry to the school, which are broadly in line with expectations of pupils of this age. Pupils are able to make good links between their knowledge of religious principles and their everyday experiences. They show good skills of investigation and interpretation. The results in the GCSE full course examination in 2004 were significantly above the national average, with almost all pupils gaining grades A*-C. In the short course examination, the results were above the national average. This was a very good performance, as almost all of the remainder of the year group sat the examination. By Year 11, standards are well above the level expected nationally in the GCSE examination courses. Pupils extend their knowledge and understanding of how they can learn from religion and apply it in their lives. They make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of religious concepts and are achieving very well. Pupils have very good opportunities to question and explore their own attitudes in depth.

97. Teaching and learning are very good and have improved since the last inspection. The teachers' very good use of discussion and questioning allows pupils to express their opinions and form clear judgements about religious and moral issues. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is very good. There are plenty of opportunities provided to enhance these aspects of pupils' personal development and these are exploited very well. Pupils have a clear respect for the views, faiths and traditions of others. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good because they are provided with effective support. The use of key words and subject-specific language enables pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills well. Pupils make good progress because of the teachers' very good knowledge of the subject and their awareness of pupils' individual needs. The teachers' effective teaching methods, coupled with high expectations and challenge, enable all pupils to make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of religious and moral issues. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. Books are marked on a regular basis and marking is thorough and constructive. Homework is used well to extend pupils' understanding and to encourage individual research. Pupils use their skills in ICT well for research purposes.

98. Leadership is very good. The head of the department has a clear view of the needs of the subject. She has been very successful in developing a strong team approach, receiving very good support from the other teachers, none of whom is a specialist. The subject is managed well and is characterised by very good planning. However, not enough is done to monitor the work of teachers, as the subject leader does not have enough time to

develop this aspect owing to the extent of her other commitments. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above national expectations by Year 9 and are well above expectations by Year 11.
- Teachers know their subject well, have high expectations and control their classes well.
- Pupils are keen and interested and have very good attitudes to their work.
- The approach to assessment is inconsistent across the subject.
- Pupils' experiences lack coherence because there is no subject leader.

Commentary

99. When pupils begin in Year 7, their capability in the subject is in line with expectations for their age. Teachers' assessments indicate that a very much higher proportion of pupils attained the expected level by the end of Year 9 in 2004. However, the evidence shows that these assessments were not reliable as methods of assessment are inconsistent across the subject. Standard of pupils' current work by Year 9 is above the level expected nationally. Pupils have a good understanding of the design process and work safely and accurately with a range of materials and food. Drawing skills are taught well. The ability to draw well helps pupils to develop their ideas and to plan in detail how they will make the products they have designed. Pupils' achievement is good in the first three years at the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they are given good support to improve their literacy skills.

100. In 2004, the GCSE examination results at grades A*-C were well above the national average. The school enters fewer pupils for GCSE design and technology courses compared with other schools. However, pupils' achievement in these courses is good because they are taught effectively. Current standards are well above average by Year 11. Pupils use their design skills well and record the development of their ideas in detailed folders of coursework. Their practical work is carefully made, giving attention to detail and to its presentation or finish. However, pupils' ICT skills are not developed sufficiently in the GCSE examination courses. Pupils respond well to the challenging targets they are given and are willing to revise and re-submit their work to improve their marks. They have very good attitudes to their work.

101. The quality of teaching is good and in many lessons, it is very good. As a result, pupils learn well. Teachers plan well-timed lessons effectively, ensuring that pupils have good access to resources to support their learning and that the majority of learning takes place in safe, practical lessons. Teachers have very good control and high expectations of pupils' behaviour. However, there are inconsistencies in how teachers assess pupils' work and assessment overall is unsatisfactory, although it is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In food technology, the assessment practice is very good because teachers have identified specific assessment activities in each unit of work and make these clear to the pupils, in

addition to giving them the assessment criteria written in a way that they can understand. Teachers include targets for improvement when they return assessed work to the pupils. In other areas of design and technology, assessment is unsatisfactory as it does not relate to the levels of the National Curriculum or give pupils information or targets to help them improve. The systems are not good enough to provide reliable information about standards by the end of Year 9. The quality of learning is good at both key stages. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to work with food and resistant materials, where they learn to build up their skills and experience, and develop their ability to work independently very well.

102. The leadership of design and technology is unsatisfactory because the experiences provided for pupils lack coherence. At present, food technology and resistant materials are seen as two separate subjects rather than as different areas of study linked by the common concepts of designing and making. This weakens the pupils' overall experience. Management is unsatisfactory because of the variation in the methods of assessment and their effectiveness. This is a barrier to evaluating the department's work, managing teachers' performance and improving standards further. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The workshops have been refurbished but there are insufficient resources for pupils to use computer-aided design and manufacturing techniques to improve their work.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Drama

103. It is not possible to make an overall judgement on provision or pupils' achievement as only three lessons were sampled in drama, one in each of Year 8, Year 9 and Year 11. By Year 9, standards are in line with national expectations. Most pupils have a positive attitude to drama and they are keen to perform. They work well with each other, although usually in single-gender groups. On a few occasions when they use ordinary classrooms for practical work, the lack of space impedes their learning. In Year 9, the most talented pupils showed above average originality and skilful characterisation when working on forum theatre for the first time. In Year 11, standards of preparation and performance are in line with national expectations for a GCSE examination group. They work particularly well in mixed-gender groups when required. They show interest in each other's work and make constructive evaluations. Recent GCSE examination results have been below the national average, with pupils gaining low scores on performance skills. The department is now concentrating on focused teaching of performance technique. The teaching is good and pupils make good progress in lessons. The teachers' expertise is well used to model and guide pupils towards improved technique. Relationships are cordial and pupils clearly enjoy their drama. Lessons are well managed and enable pupils to build on their existing skills. The accommodation for drama is adequate. The studio is a good space but lacks lighting and flexible staging, so limiting the opportunities for theatre studies. Recent extra-curricular drama has been restricted to performance by option groups and occasional lower school workshops, but regular theatre visits are attracting increasing numbers of pupils.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the level expected by Year 11.
- Teaching is planned well and the department works effectively as a team.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to the subject are very good.
- The assessment of pupils' work is good.
- Provision for and the use of ICT to support teaching and learning are limited.

Commentary

104. The assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2004 showed that a higher proportion of pupils gained the expected levels. Pupils' skills in art and design are below the level expected on entry to the school but, through good teaching, standards are in line with national expectations by Year 9. Pupils in Years 7 - 9 are achieving well. In 2004, the GCSE examination results were in line with the national average at grades A*-C and were well above the national figures at the highest grades of A* and A. Girls do better in examinations than boys, although many boys achieve well because of the well-planned lessons. Many pupils with learning difficulties attain above average results in examinations. Standards of pupils' current work are above the level expected nationally by Year 11. Their achievement is good. A very good balance is maintained between large and small-scale work, ceramics, sculpture and painting. Practical skills are developed well and pupils take part enthusiastically in lessons. Skills in literacy are taught systematically, for example, through the use of annotated sketchbooks. Pupils read, write and speak confidently about their work and that of the wide range of artists they study. The studios are spacious and a specialist ceramics room has a significant impact on the standard and quality of work produced.

105. Because of the good teaching, boys achieve well and there are no significant differences evident between the attainment or achievements of girls and boys. One of the reasons for this is that pupils are taught very much as individuals. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress at all stages. Older pupils use design folders and sketchbooks, which are very well presented and researched. Teachers' high expectations ensure that presentation skills are of a very good standard and pupils produce excellent written support material and annotations of their own work. Painting is a strength of the department, although many pupils also use clay and card with confidence and skill. Designing for clay-work is less well taught, and opportunities are missed to develop presentation skills in addition to drawing skills. The emphasis throughout the department of a personal response to topics produces a wide variety of work. This was evident in the work of a Year 8 group, for example, who achieved good results in their self-portrait with badges, influenced by the artist Peter Blake.

106. The teaching is good and planning is strong. Schemes of work are well prepared and plans are always clear. Lessons are planned to meet the needs of pupils with varying levels of attainment, including those identified as gifted and talented. As a result, pupils learn well. In Years 7 - 9, pupils develop practical skills well and use pencil, paint and pastel with confidence and skill. Consistent class management across the department ensures that time is not wasted on maintaining order. Pupils concentrate well on their work and behaviour is very good and often exemplary. Very good teaching about the work of artists ensures that skills are taught systematically across all areas. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural, moral, social and spiritual development, evident, for example, in some Year 11 work on '*What do we need?*' and '*What feeds the soul?*' Lessons are very productive, with many pupils making rapid progress. This occurs where the teachers' demonstrations of skills, processes and techniques assist learning. Colour

work is especially strong. As a direct result of good demonstrations, pupils use paint with confidence and skill to very good effect.

107. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. This is particularly evident in the giving out and collecting in of materials. Many pupils visit the art rooms at break, lunchtime and after school to carry on with their work. Pupils visit a wide range of venues, such as the Royal Academy summer exhibition and the Tate Modern, in addition to the Sainsbury Centre in Norwich.

108. Leadership and management are good. The head of department runs the department well on a day-to-day basis and has good strategic vision, for example in the proposals to develop ICT. Joint planning takes place with all the staff, who work very well as a team. Assessment procedures are good, as are the monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress across year groups. Internal standardisation of levels and grades takes place, ensuring that pupils are informed about their progress and levels of attainment. Accommodation is good but resources for ICT are unsatisfactory. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Although the GCSE examination results have declined, the proportion of pupils attaining the highest grades of A* and A has increased. Satisfactory progress has been made in the teaching of literacy in line with the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. This is starting to have a positive effect on teaching and learning. It is an improving department where the pupils enjoy their art and do well.

Music

Provision in music is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do well in GCSE examinations because they are very able instrumentalists.
- Standards of pupils' work in Years 7 - 9 and their achievement are not good enough.
- Frequent changes in staffing mean pupils do not enjoy music, as lessons often fail to interest them.
- Teaching rooms are too small for music lessons.

Commentary

109. The head of department was absent during the inspection. Temporary teachers taught lessons to all pupils. The department was unable to provide any evidence of learning for pupils in Years 7 - 9, as there are no workbooks or recordings of practical work.

110. According to the assessments undertaken by teachers, a much higher proportion of pupils than found nationally attained the expected levels at the end of Year 9 in 2004. This level of performance is not matched by work seen during the inspection as pupils have significant gaps in their musical skills and knowledge. Pupils do not use musical language correctly or understand how to compose and improvise music in different styles. This means that standards in Years 7 - 9, including pupils who are identified as gifted and talented or as having special educational needs, are below national expectations and lower than those reported at the time of the last inspection. Their achievement is unsatisfactory. Only a small number of pupils were entered for the GCSE examination in 2004. However, the majority attained grades A*-C, maintaining standards that have been similar for the last three years. It is not appropriate to make comparisons with national data because of the small number of pupils taking the examination. Pupils do well in the performing aspect of

the subject, gaining good marks in the Associated Board examinations. Those who learn instruments in school receive good support from their teachers, who help them to prepare for the examination. Standards of work of the current pupils in Year 11 are below the level expected nationally, and their achievement is unsatisfactory.

111. Pupils' learning in all year groups has been affected significantly by frequent changes of teacher. It is not possible to give an overall judgement about the quality of teaching and learning of pupils in Years 7 - 9 as little evidence was available during the inspection, and there were no recordings or workbooks. In the small number of lessons seen, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory. There is no detailed plan for lessons so pupils are being given written work that lacks structure and musical purpose. Accommodation for music is poor as rooms are very cramped, which restricts what can be taught in lessons. Pupils struggle to hear themselves when using keyboards and, as they often repeat work, they become bored by the lack of challenge. From the one lesson seen in Year 10 and discussions with pupils in Year 11, few can use musical language competently or understand how to compose music with complex harmonies and imaginative rhythms. Few have started to compose their second piece of coursework and there is a lack of suitable computer programs to help them notate their pieces. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning overall are unsatisfactory. However, one good lesson occurred with pupils in Year 10. In this lesson, pupils were effectively challenged because careful planning meant that they were offered a range of musical activities that were closely linked together. Their achievement in this lesson was good.

112. The prolonged absence of the head of department means that no judgement can be made about leadership and management. There is no documentation or information available to show how pupils' work is assessed and reported to parents. There is no strategic direction apparent for developing music within the school. Although some pupils receive instrumental tuition and there is a school band, extra-curricular activities in music are constrained because of staffing difficulties. Improvement since the last inspection has been poor. Standards are lower, the quality of teaching and learning is worse, and issues identified at that time have not been addressed. However, the school is working hard and using every possible external support in order to remedy and improve the current staffing difficulties.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils respond well to the teachers' high expectations and, as a result, attitudes to learning, behaviour and participation are very good.
- Lessons are well planned, managed and organised and teachers develop very good relationships with the pupils.
- The good extra-curricular sporting provision is well supported and participation has improved.
- The lack of a head of department affects the quality of strategic planning.
- An over-emphasis on games limits the time available to cover other areas of activity in Years 7 - 9 and not all pupils study two areas of activity in depth in Years 10 to 11.
- ICT is not used effectively to enhance teaching and learning.

Commentary

113. Standards by the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. These standards do not match the assessments undertaken by the teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2004, which showed that a lower proportion of pupils than expected attained the expected level. Inspection evidence shows that these judgments were too harsh and do not reflect current standards. Since September, the department has reviewed its assessment procedures and, as a result, it is able to monitor and assess pupils' achievements more accurately. By the end of Year 11, standards in the core programme are in line with national expectations. The GCSE examination results in 2004 were below the national average at grades A*-C and were lower than in previous years. Girls did not perform as well as boys and no pupils gained the highest grades of A* and A. Staff changes during the course contributed to the decline in standards.

114. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school and their achievement is satisfactory in relation to their attainment on entry. In Years 7 - 9, lessons were observed in games and health-related exercise. By the end of Year 9, pupils become more expert in their skills and techniques and in applying these to different activities. Pupils perform games skills with increasing confidence and control. Rugby is an improving game in the school and standards in Years 7 and 8 are above average. Pupils in Year 7 are able to set up a successful ruck, and pupils in Year 8 tackle safely and keep possession of the ball. Health-related exercise extends the physical education programme and pupils understand the importance of preparing the body before a physical activity as well as the benefits of taking regular exercise and keeping fit.

115. By the end of Year 11, standards are in line with national expectations in the core programme and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. There were no opportunities to observe GCSE practical and theory lessons during the inspection. Pupils perform skills with increased consistency and control in competitive games and in trampolining but the short units of work limit their ability to develop more advanced tactics and skills. Pupils do not achieve as well in activities when non-specialists teach them. However, in hockey, pupils are taught by knowledgeable hockey players and make good progress. When pupils are involved in planning, performing and evaluating their work, their achievement is very good. In table tennis, for example, pupils made significant progress through planning, selecting and refining a practice to improve their accuracy and movement.

116. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The specialist teachers are knowledgeable and confident in teaching a range of physical activities. Lessons are well planned, managed and organised, with a good balance of learning activities, although lessons do not always end with a cooling down. Teachers have developed very good positive relationships with the pupils. Pupils enjoy physical education and are highly motivated by the enthusiasm of their teachers. Their attitudes to learning are very good. They respond well to the teachers' high expectations and, as a result, behaviour and participation are very good. In all lessons, pupils demonstrate good social and co-operative skills. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in the curriculum and achieve well. Pupils identified as gifted and talented are encouraged to extend their skills in extra-curricular clubs and school teams, but in lesson they are not always sufficiently challenged to further their knowledge and skills. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. It is good in lessons as teachers give immediate feedback to individuals, groups and to the whole class, clearly identifying the aspects of a skill they need to work on to improve further.

117. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff in the department work well together as a team; they are good role-models and give generously of their time to extra-curricular activities. Day-to-day management and organisation are effective. Although satisfactory, the assessment procedures have been reviewed and are being developed further. The lack of a head of department is hampering strategic planning. As a result, documentation, including the department handbook, risk assessments, and schemes and units of work, has not been updated, nor has sufficient attention been given to the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, the use of data and continuing professional development are also areas that require further attention.

118. Games dominate the curriculum in Years 7 - 9, greatly reducing the amount of time allocated to other areas of the programme. In Years 10 and 11, not all pupils have the opportunity to study two areas of activity in depth and the units of work are not long enough to develop more advanced skills and tactics. There are no opportunities to study vocational qualifications. Extra-curricular provision is good and participation has improved greatly. There are school teams in the major sports and pupils compete regularly in inter-house competitions, sporting fixtures and events. A small number of pupils compete locally and regionally in football, rugby and cross-country.

119. The school is part of the Schools Sports Partnership Programme to develop and increase sport opportunities in the primary schools. However, this takes away the only female specialist and role-model for girls in the department for two days every week. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Unsatisfactory indoor facilities continue to limit the skills and activities taught and whilst the department has benefited from refurbished changing rooms, it is at the expense of losing the departmental office.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

120. Business studies in Years 10 and 11 was sampled. The standard of pupils' written work is above national expectations, reflecting recent GCSE examination results, which have been above the national average. The presentation of work is good, and includes the use of word-processing and photographs. In the one lesson seen in Year 11, the quality of teaching and learning was unsatisfactory because of inadequate methods and resources, leading to unsatisfactory achievement.

Child development

121. The GCSE examination course in child development was sampled. Two lessons were seen. Standards are above national expectations and almost a third of pupils entered for the examination in 2004 gained the highest grades of A* and A. The quality of teaching is very good because the teacher knows the subject very well and generates a very high level of interest and a commitment to work very hard from the class, which includes both boys and girls.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Year 11 have good attitudes to the subject.
- The current arrangements do not enable pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding systematically.
- There are no procedures to assess pupils' progress and their achievements or arrangements to report these to parents.
- The work of tutors is not monitored to ensure consistency in the teaching of the subject and in the experiences that pupils receive.

Commentary

122. It is not possible to make an overall judgement about standards or pupils' achievement by Year 9 or Year 11 as only two lessons were seen, both in Year 11. In both lessons, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of some of the issues relating to consumer affairs and human rights. They are able to discuss their views sensibly with others in pairs and small groups, and then share these views with the rest of the class.

123. The teaching in both lessons was good but there is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement about teaching and learning. In one lesson, the teacher's approach set a positive tone to the lesson and ensured that it got off to a quick start. The lesson's objectives were identified clearly and the teaching approaches enabled pupils to share their ideas well to extend their understanding about consumer issues. In the other lesson, pupils were given good opportunities to work independently in researching information about Amnesty International on the Internet, although some of the lower attaining pupils needed more help as their ICT skills were not very strong. There are no assessment procedures to inform teachers' planning or to determine how well pupils are doing. There is no evidence that pupils undertake any written work in citizenship lessons. This makes it difficult for teachers to track pupils' progress, their understanding and their experiences.

124. The curriculum is unsatisfactory. Citizenship is taught as part of the personal, social and health education programme and topics relating to citizenship are included mainly as individual lessons for each year group. However, these are scattered across the year rather than taught as a planned and coherent module of work. This means that there is no clear link between the three strands of citizenship, and so it is difficult for pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in a systematic way. Pupils have opportunities to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship through the school council and community service, but these elements are not integrated into the programme of study for citizenship.

125. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator provides materials for tutors to use but there is no monitoring of the quality of provision or of teaching and learning. The lack of suitable assessment procedures means that pupils' progress and achievements are not reported to parents in the annual reports as required. Citizenship was not a required subject at the time of the last inspection but the school has made unsatisfactory progress since it became a statutory requirement in 2002.

Personal, social and health education

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The course is carefully planned in order to cover all requirements but pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not receive careers education lessons.
- The programme makes a considerable contribution to pupils' moral and social development.
- The leadership and enthusiasm of the subject co-ordinator ensures that pupils enjoy these lessons.

Commentary

126. Discussions with pupils and other evidence indicate that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are at the expected level by Year 9 and that their achievement is satisfactory. In Years 7 - 9, all classes are allocated one period a week for personal, social and health education. In the topics covered in these lessons, and through the additional opportunities provided by the school, pupils' skills to make informed choices, take on additional responsibilities, form positive relationships with one another and play an active part in school life are developing satisfactorily. By Year 11, these skills have been consolidated and pupils have developed greater confidence and the self-awareness needed to equip them for adult life, further learning and work. In Years 10 and 11, two periods a week are allocated for this aspect of the curriculum. Pupils' achievement during this time is good. By Year 11, their knowledge, skills and understanding across the areas included in the programme are better than those usually found in pupils of this age. Their skills and awareness are reflected on a daily basis in the very good quality of relationships in the school and pupils' very positive attitudes to work and to each other.

127. During the inspection, it was only possible to observe one lesson for pupils in Years 7 - 9. In this lesson, the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory. This evidence, together with evidence from discussions with pupils, shows that teaching and learning in Years 7 - 9 are satisfactory. Several lessons were seen in Year 11. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils approach a range of topics in a constructive and mature way because teachers ensure that discussion is at the heart of their learning. The very good working relationships in lessons enable all pupils to consider sensitive and controversial issues properly. Pupils in Year 11 work alongside pupils from the local special school during a unit of work in food technology, when they play an active role in teaching and supporting the learning of others. This is a long-standing and successful arrangement between the two schools and gives pupils an understanding and awareness of how to support boys and girls with learning difficulties.

128. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and management of this area. Materials are carefully chosen and revised regularly, recently in conjunction with the head boy and head girl, to ensure they are suitable to meet the changing needs of all pupils and to reflect local and world events. The programme gives appropriate attention to sex and relationships education and alcohol and drug misuse. Careers education is provided in Years 9 - 11 but the school has not yet included it in the programme for pupils in Years 7 and 8 as required by law. The co-ordinator has not been able to monitor how other members of staff teach personal, social and health education, which is a weakness in ensuring consistency of approach across tutor groups and also in ensuring that the work and pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding build systematically from year to year. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. The programme has developed to meet changing needs and pupils understand the importance of living in a harmonious community. The personal, social and health education programme contributes significantly to pupils' moral and social development.

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	4
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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