

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST BERNADETTE'S CATHOLIC SECONDARY
SCHOOL**

Bristol

LEA area: Bristol

Unique reference number: 109331

Headteacher: Mrs B McLaughlin

Lead inspector: Deborah Zachary

Dates of inspection: 15 – 17 November 2004

Inspection number: 268459

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:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	753
School address:	Fossedale Avenue Whitchurch Bristol
Postcode:	BS14 9LS
Telephone number:	0117 377 2050
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss M Regan
Date of previous inspection:	December 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Bernadette's Catholic Secondary School is a few miles from the centre of Bristol. It draws its pupils from a wide area within the city and is below average in size. The pupils come from a range of backgrounds and the socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are broadly average. Almost all pupils are white but a very small number are of black, Asian, Chinese or mixed ethnicity. A majority of pupils are of white British backgrounds, but a large minority are of white Irish ethnicity. About three per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language, but only one pupil is at the early stages of learning English. Overall attainment of the pupils who enter the school varies from year to year, from average to below average, and pupils have different standards in different subjects on entry. In addition, national test scores taken in Year 6 show higher standards than the school's own tests of general ability taken very early in Year 7. Few pupils are of particularly high attainment on entry, and a smaller number than usual - about ten per cent - have special educational needs. About two and a half per cent of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Those who need the most help with learning have a range of disabilities, with no one group predominating. However a significant number of pupils, not necessarily with any explicit learning difficulties, do demonstrate a reluctance to settle to work. A low number of pupils start the school after Year 7 or leave before Year 11. At the

time of the inspection, the school had just gained specialist status in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2940	Deborah Zachary	Lead inspector	
19693	Sally Hall	Lay inspector	
22685	Natalie Moss	Team inspector	English
15268	John English	Team inspector	Mathematics
24453	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	Science
32230	Bill Alexander	Team inspector	ICT, business studies
30518	Michael Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design
31779	Viv Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology
22953	Peter Dacombe	Team inspector	French
22590	Robert Castle	Team inspector	Geography, physical education
17530	Mary Cureton	Team inspector	History
31673	John Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Citizenship
16038	Jill Bavin	Team inspector	Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is satisfactory and improving. It has a very hard-working and committed staff, and a good friendly atmosphere. The new headteacher is leading the school well. Teaching and achievement are sound. However, significant numbers of pupils, though well behaved, find it hard to settle to hard work, and this is preventing their progress from being better. The school's systems for dealing with this are not effective enough, but it is starting to improve its management systems as a whole. The school gives sound value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is well led by the senior leadership team.
- There is a good sense of community with very good relationships between teachers and pupils and good care for the pupils.
- The pupils do not easily settle to work and many are late to school; this is partly because the school's rewards and sanctions for hard work and punctuality are not working well, and pupils do not have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they are aiming for.
- Most pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11, but it is satisfactory overall because a significant number of lessons are neither sufficiently challenging nor well managed.
- A wide range of subjects and extra-curricular activities are offered greatly benefiting most pupils, but there is little flexible provision for those for whom GCSE exams are less suitable.
- Not all subjects are led and managed well enough and the school improvement plan is not good enough to support development as it should.
- The school's new specialist status is already improving resources, especially for information and communication technology (ICT).

The school's improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Both standards and achievement are better in a number of subjects, and more good teaching was seen on this inspection. Most issues from the last inspection have been dealt with, and those concerning special educational needs and computers in art have been tackled well. However, more remains to be done to make sure that plans are focussed on raising standards and that pupils are able to drive their own learning forward more independently from the teacher.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Achievement is a judgement of how well pupils are doing. **Pupils' achievement is satisfactory.** Standards are broadly average in Years 9 and 11. Taking account of where the pupils started from, achievement is good overall for the pupils in Years 10 and 11, and it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Pupils with special educational needs, however, achieve well in Years 7-9 because most of the support for them is concentrated there. Their achievement is satisfactory in Years 10-11, where some would benefit from more alternative courses. The achievement of the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is the same as that of most other pupils – good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Achievement is very good in GCSE art and GCSE design and technology but it is unsatisfactory overall in history.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Behaviour is good but attitudes are satisfactory overall, a lower judgement because of the resistance pupils have to working hard. Attendance is satisfactory but punctuality at the start of the school day is not good enough.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but good in Years 10 and 11. Though learning is satisfactory, teachers sometimes teach better than the pupils learn – some classes take time to get going and only learn satisfactorily even when the teaching is good. In a few cases teaching is not good enough to get the pupils to learn – either because it does not challenge or involve pupils enough or because the pupils are allowed to get away with being inattentive. Pupils are assessed appropriately, and assessment is improving rapidly, but at the moment their involvement in learning is not always supported because they are not told systematically enough about how well they are doing and how to improve. There are good links with parents and the community. There are also good links with other schools, and these are still improving because this development is part of the school's new specialist status.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher and the senior leadership team are setting a good direction, and they are well supported by the governing body. Leadership of some subjects is very good but it is too variable and can be unsatisfactory. The school improvement plan does not show priorities clearly enough. It is also not clear on what the listed actions are aiming for, or when they should be completed. Management is satisfactory overall. Teachers are generally supported well, but monitoring systems are not tight enough to improve subjects that need to be developed. Most statutory requirements are met, but a new subject, citizenship, did not appear in all the pupils' reports last year.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views of the school. They value many things about the school, including the teaching and the way the school encourages hard work and maturity. They think the school offers a good range of activities and helps their children to settle in well. Very few disagreed with any of these things and there was very little dissatisfaction with what the school does.

Most pupils are pleased with the school. They feel it is a good school and that they are expected to work hard. Though a small number of questionnaire returns indicated that there was misbehaviour in the school and some bullying, these were not areas of concern in discussions with pupils during the inspection. Inspectors judged behaviour to be good and bullying not an issue in the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve pupils' attitudes to working hard: help them to arrive in school on time and understand better what they are aiming for, and improve teaching where is it unsatisfactory or not fully challenging and interesting so pupils become more involved in lessons.
- Focus the school improvement plan better and improve leadership and management of subject departments where needed.
- Provide a more flexible and interesting curriculum for those for whom GCSE examinations are less appropriate.

and, to fully meet statutory requirements:

- include citizenship in the pupils' annual reports .

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, but good in Years 10 and 11, reflecting the quality of teaching. This pattern of achievement applies to most pupils, including the most able pupils and the small number who speak English as an additional language. However, whilst pupils with special educational needs also achieve satisfactorily overall, they do better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Standards are average in Years 9 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because teaching is good .
- Five percent of pupils leave the school without a GCSE.
- Good quality support for the lowest attaining pupils means that they achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Progress of pupils is sometimes slowed by their attitudes to work.

Commentary

1. Pupils enter the school with standards that are, overall, at the lower end of average. However, this masks quite wide variation between year groups and between subjects. The school tests pupils' cognitive ability on entry through nationally available tests known as *CATS* tests. These show that the year groups contain relatively few very high attainers. They also show that the standards of all year groups other than the current Year 10 have been below average on entry. Some year groups, such as the current Year 8, are close to being well below average in these tests. However, the results of national tests in English, mathematics and science taken by the pupils when they were in Year 6 are all within the average range; albeit, for some year groups, the lower end of the average range. Inspectors judged attainment on entry in some other subjects to be clearly below average. In judging achievement – whether standards are high enough given pupils' capabilities – inspectors considered pupils' abilities and their starting points in the different subjects.
2. The 2003 Year 9 test results in English, mathematics and science were average overall, but pupils did not do as well as would be expected given their standards in their Year 6 tests in these subjects. National data for 2004 is available for mathematics and science but not for English, but an estimate can be made of how well pupils have done. The 2004 tests results indicate average attainment too but an improvement on 2003, and indications are that these results demonstrate better progress for the pupils involved. The trend in results up to 2003 was upwards at a faster rate than that seen nationally, and the upward trend was maintained in 2004. Overall, it is likely that the 2004 year group, the current Year 10, achieved satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9. When the progress of individual pupils is analysed, however, pupils who entered the school with the lowest attainment made the best progress. This is still the situation for pupils in the current Years 7 to 9.

The tables below gives average points scores for pupils. Each level in the national curriculum is given a number of points. Pupils are expected to move on one point every term, so if a school's scores are one point above the national, their pupils are, typically, a term ahead.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.8 (32.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.1 (35.0)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.5 (32.3)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 150 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. The 2003 GCSE results were average against other schools nationally and against schools whose pupils attained in a similar range of scores in their Year 9 tests. However, the school's Year 9 scores place them at the lower end of the similar schools group – many of the schools had pupils who started with higher scores. This means that the school did better than the word *average* implies. The *value added* score that can be calculated for the 2003 Year 11 shows that pupils did better than might have been expected. Results for 2004 were not quite as high as those in 2003, and secure national comparisons cannot yet be made as national data have not yet been validated. However, the results may well still fall in the average band. They are average compared to national 2003 results. The 2004 year group entered Year 10 with lower test results than the 2003 group, and their *value added* score is in fact better than in 2003. All of these results indicate that past year groups have made good progress in Years 10 and 11.
4. These judgements about results are based on the average points scores gained by pupils at GCSE (see table below). When results for pupils of different abilities are analysed, there is some evidence that the lowest attainers are not doing as well as the others. Lower attainers who gain at least five GCSE grades are doing as well as would be expected, but the lowest attainers, the five percent who did not gain a GCSE, are not having their needs met well enough. Although, four percent is typical in national terms, many of these pupils will typically have followed alternative courses leading to some alternative accreditation. This is not the case in the school, where the curriculum and range of accreditation do not cater well enough for the lowest attainers, and only a further one percent gain entry-level qualifications. The gap between the school figures and the national figures is therefore greater than it might appear, although the small size of the year group does mean that individuals can cause quite big variations in percentage terms. A number of lower attainers currently in Years 10 and 11 have little interest in their school lessons, and their achievement is currently not as good as that of their peers. The curriculum is limiting their achievement despite largely good teaching. Conversely, the higher attaining pupils are enabled to study a good range of courses and their achievement is good, in response to good teaching. Pupils who do not speak English as their first language, and who are not at the early stages of English language acquisition, achieve similarly to other pupils.

In the table below the last line is about point scores. A pupil's point score is calculated by giving each grade at GCSE a set number of points, and calculating the total scored by each pupil.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	56 (41)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (91)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	35.9 (31.4)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 149 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Achievement is good throughout the school in mathematics, ICT and geography. It is very good in Years 10 and 11 in design and technology and art and design, and good in Years 7 to 9 in these subjects. Achievement is unsatisfactory for the small group studying music in Year 11, but that is because their progress has been slow in the past. Their achievement this year is satisfactory. In the current Years 7 to 9, achievement is improving and is now good in the majority of subjects, but it is unsatisfactory in history throughout those year groups, because teaching is not challenging enough. Progress is slowed in a number of subjects by the attitudes some pupils have to their work. In large mixed ability classes, a significant number of pupils do not respond easily even to good teaching, and where teaching is only satisfactory they sit back and do not learn or make progress well enough.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils can be enthusiastic about their learning, but when teaching is mundane pupils quickly lose interest and are reluctant to work.
- Too many pupils are late for school.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to reflect on life and its meaning.
- There is a strong feeling of community and pupils treat others with respect.
- The current range of rewards and sanctions are not used consistently and do not have enough impact on pupils' attitudes to work.

Commentary

- The provision for moral development is good. Pupils behave well around the school and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They are courteous to visitors and careful of others' belongings. Nevertheless, teachers have to work hard to overcome

the attitude of a significant minority of pupils - that *"it's not cool to be a keener"*.¹ Those staff who are successful in generating enthusiasm in lessons give pupils clear messages about classroom routines and have high expectations of good behaviour, whilst creating an atmosphere of mutual respect. They set tasks that are challenging and relevant. Pupils feel confident, try their best and achievement is high. Pupils with special educational needs concentrate well and work hard when receiving specialist help that is well matched to their needs. However, some pupils will not tolerate the dull teaching found in a minority of lessons. At best they are passive and at worst spend most of their time chatting – though not causing major behaviour problems. This disrupts their own learning and that of others, because teachers constantly have to break off to speak to them. Achievement in these lessons is often unsatisfactory.

- The numbers of exclusions from school, though higher than the school would like, are not high for an inner-city school. Exclusion is used when necessary, appropriately for the severity of an offence, and every effort is made to re-integrate pupils on their return to school. The school's behaviour policy largely deals with more day-to-day matters of discipline, but at this level it does not give staff enough specific guidance about rewards and sanctions. As a result, teachers have developed their own methods for promoting good work and behaviour with various degrees of success. Some teachers give merits; others rarely do. Some have devised clear systems of sanctions that are carried out; others only threaten or give sanctions such as half a minute off break. The pupils find this confusing and unfair. The rewards and sanctions are not always valued by pupils and have little influence on their attitudes to schoolwork.

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	543	48	1
White – Irish	124	13	0
White – any other White background	39	2	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	12	2	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	6	5	0
Black or Black British – African	4	3	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0

¹ A local expression for a pupil who is a hard worker

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

8. Spiritual development is good and the school's Christian ethos permeates many aspects of school life. Teachers value the pupils' opinions and successfully develop their self worth. The recent visit from a youth mission team was particularly successful in giving all the pupils good opportunities to think more deeply about their faith and its relevance in their own lives. The Chaplaincy team provides extra and worthwhile spiritual support through activities, times of reflection and pastoral care, and assemblies make a satisfactory contribution to spiritual development. Cultural development is satisfactory. Other faiths are studied in religious education and pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own cultural traditions and those of others.

9. Social development is good. Because of the school's success in supporting and respecting all its members, relationships are very good and a strength of the school. During discussions with pupils, it was apparent that they felt some of the best things about the school were the friendly atmosphere and the willingness of staff to help pupils. Pupils think about those less fortunate than themselves through raising considerable funds for charity and in their actions, for example making up boxes of Christmas presents for children in Eastern Europe. Prefects and members of the school council take their responsibilities very seriously and the latter are keen improve the life of the school. There is high rate of participation in the good range of clubs, and events such as the school productions encourage a sense of community and team spirit.

10. The school's measures to promote good attendance are proving successful and attendance rates for the year 2003/04 have risen to a level that is close to the previous year's national average (2003/4 national data is not yet available). The table below shows the data for 2002/3. The rise reflects the commitment the school has had to improve attendance. However, the school's procedures to promote punctuality are ineffective. On the first morning of the inspection, just over ten per cent of pupils were late for school. Some of this was due to the late arrival of school transport, but the majority of latecomers drifted up the drive with no sense of urgency. These pupils are late for assembly and tutor time and are missing an important start to the school day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.4	School data	0.4
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory. This is primarily because teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory – though both have good features. Care of pupils is good and links with parents, other schools and the community are good too.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; in Years 7 to 9 they are satisfactory and in Years 10 and 11 they are good. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between most teachers and their pupils are very good.
- The specialist teaching of pupils who have special educational needs is good.
- Where teaching is mundane, pupils show little interest in the subject and do not try to get involved.
- Where teaching is very good, pupils show independent learning skills, but these skills are not usually in evidence.
- Though teachers are aware of what pupils can do, this information is not used well enough to help pupils improve and to stimulate their interest in reaching higher standards.
- Few teachers give different tasks to pupils of different attainment levels in mixed ability classes.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 120 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	17 (14%)	62 (52%)	35 (29%)	5 (4%)	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.

11. Teaching is very good in art and design in Years 10 and 11. Some very good or excellent teaching was seen in a wide range of subjects, including English, French, mathematics, science, ICT, design and technology, art and design, music and citizenship. Teaching is good throughout the school in English, mathematics, ICT, geography and design and technology. It is satisfactory overall in most other subjects but is unsatisfactory overall in history. Occasional unsatisfactory teaching was also seen in science, physical education and music.
12. The teaching in Years 10 and 11 was judged as good because a significantly higher amount of very good and excellent teaching was seen. This is reflected in the good achievement of most pupils in these year groups. Subject knowledge is generally strong, which helps teachers to respond easily to pupils' questions or misconceptions. Where teaching was particularly good in these year groups, independent learning was often encouraged through well-structured groupwork, reflection time or thoughtful challenging tasks. Throughout the school most teachers and pupils have very good relationships with each other. There is mutual respect and teachers give praise and try to encourage pupils when they do well. Humour is often used well, and where these very good relationships are combined with a consistent demand for pace and quality from pupils, learning is good.
13. Where learning is not as good as teaching, which is sometimes the case in any year group in the school, it is generally because the teaching is not successful, despite the efforts of the teacher, in getting the pupils to give their full concentration to the lesson. This is usually because either the work is not varied enough or because the teacher is struggling to establish routines that encourage pupils to give their best efforts. Sometimes establishing these routines, such as asking for hands up or even getting pupils to write, takes up time that would otherwise be spent learning. The teacher has no option, in some classes, but to work on this. In a few other lessons learning and teaching were both unsatisfactory. This was sometimes because the same disinterested attitudes were brought to the lesson by pupils, and here teachers did not take sufficient steps to establish conditions under which learning could take place. Pupils left the lesson not only no further on in their learning, but with bad learning habits further ingrained. Other teaching was unsatisfactory because the work was simply not hard enough. Pupils did a low-level task that kept them busy but did not move them forward. A significant proportion of the unsatisfactory teaching seen involved teachers new to the school, and these teachers are receiving appropriate support.
14. The match of work to pupils' needs is an area that is in need of attention in a significant number of lessons. In mixed ability classes, teachers are well aware of the levels of attainment of pupils, and usually do their best to support them or challenge

them as needed. However, pupils seldom spend time in ability groups working on slightly different tasks – it is more common for teachers to have a single objective for all the pupils present. Too often this means that the higher attainers could do more, and the lower attainers have to have more attention in order to help them succeed. Here pupils with special needs or those at the early stages of English language acquisition, when not supported by specialist staff, can struggle. Where classes contain pupils whose attainment levels are less mixed - for example in special needs withdrawal groups or in sets - teaching tends to be better matched. Different tasks for different abilities are still rare, but it is easier to challenge all pupils within a single task because the ability spread is narrower. In special needs withdrawal groups the teaching is good. It is well matched to pupils' needs and pupils have a good trust in the learning support assistants or teachers who take the groups.

15. Assessment of pupils' work and progress is satisfactory overall. Pupils' standards are assessed regularly and most teachers are well aware of what levels are being attained. The most gifted and talented pupils are identified early in their school career. Pupils who have special educational needs are also identified, and their needs appropriately assessed. The needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language are identified well. The weaker parts of assessment are to do with how it is used to improve pupils' work and attitudes rather than the testing and grading of how well pupils are doing. Marking of pupils' work is based on the school's policy though inconsistency exists both within and between departments. In many cases marking does not lead to pupils having a clear understanding of their current standard related to national guidelines. There are examples of good practice, for example in French and in geography Year 11 work, but in many subjects advice when given is often linked to presentation of work and not related to subject-specific skills, so that pupils are not fully aware of what is needed to improve. Many pupils do not have a clear understanding of their current or target grades, although these are stated in annual reports to parents. Pupils are aware of what the class as a whole is trying to learn in lessons, because objectives are shared with them, but the objectives are often quite open and not personal. The use of targets and shorter-term individual objectives is well developed in design and technology and in GCSE art, and here it is paying dividends in terms of pupils' achievement and in terms of the attitudes to the subject that pupils demonstrate.
16. The school has various initiatives that are currently being trialled by some departments. These include the use of *assessment for learning* practices and emphasis on *formative marking* – marking that really helps pupils to improve. Plans are well advanced for the introduction later in the year of a new pupil performance monitoring system based on academic targets. The school's pupil database will be used to determine realistic and challenging targets and be used by departments in order to improve overall standards and to better inform pupils of progress.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, but there is a good range of opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of GCSE courses are provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- There is much less choice for those for whom GCSE examinations are less appropriate.
- Support for learning outside the school day is good in sport, the visual arts and drama.

Commentary

17. The strength of the curriculum lies in the wide range of traditional academic courses offered to pupils. In science, for example, pupils have the option of studying the single, double or triple subject courses. In design and technology a wide range of different GCSEs may be taken, including resistant materials, food technology, textiles and graphics. In modern foreign languages pupils may take French or Spanish or Italian, and these languages, together with German, are also available lower down the school. New subjects are introduced in Years 10 and 11, including business studies and child development. However, the provision for the lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 is lacking in flexibility and the school has not sufficiently explored alternative courses and programmes of study to fully meet the needs of these pupils. A very small number of pupils visit local colleges through individual arrangements, but there have been problems with the attendance of pupils. There is only limited provision for vocational studies in school: the business and communication course is inappropriate and outdated. The school recognises that it needs to develop a much more responsive and flexible approach to the needs of the least able pupils, in order to ensure that they gain more recognised qualifications. The curriculum is at present being reviewed with this in mind, and also in order to plan the implications of the mathematics and computing college status, particularly in science and ICT.
18. Apart from the more formal curriculum planning for Years 10 and 11, the provision for pupils with special educational needs in the school is good. Individual education plans have improved well since the last inspection and learning support assistants and teachers are well aware of their contents. The school is using the funds it receives for special educational needs support appropriately, but limited numbers of support assistants mean that they are not always available in lessons in every department. The curriculum is satisfactory for pupils at an early stage of English acquisition. No extra teaching is received from specialists employed by the local education authority, but this agency helps with initial assessment and regular reviews of pupils' progress. Overall, they are appropriately supported, sometimes in class and sometimes through withdrawal for individual help. The curriculum within English as a whole, however, is not balanced well enough – it needs to cover a broader range of literacy skills.
19. A good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities is available for Years 7 to 11. Involvement in clubs and sporting activities is a strength and some pupils help with organising and supporting events; this makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and helps enhance the positive ethos in the school. Over a quarter of all pupils participate in extra-curricular sport and art clubs, and drama workshops are well attended. Drama activities include dramatic performances in school, at festivals, in the wider community and as part of religious observance. There is a homework club each evening, supervised by staff.
20. Accommodation and staffing are satisfactory overall, and learning resources are good. There are sufficient numbers of qualified teaching staff, though some departments have several teachers new this term. Teaching rooms for most subject areas are now

located together but science is on two levels and in different teaching blocks. Many areas have pleasant rooms of good size and most areas are well decorated. Music accommodation is unsatisfactory. Rooms are too small, large classes limit group work and peripatetic teachers are in a different building. The school hall cannot accommodate all pupils for assemblies. There has been considerable recent investment in mathematics and ICT as a result of specialist status. Interactive whiteboards are used in many specialist areas and there are ICT facilities in technology, art and religious education in addition to the main ICT teaching rooms. The learning zone (library and study area) has been extended and access is now improved throughout the day for pupil use; there is a full-time librarian.

Care, guidance and support

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff show high levels of care and concern for the pupils' welfare.
- Pupils are not always clear about how well they are doing and what they should be aiming for.
- Pupils receive good careers guidance.
- Some Year 11 pupils benefit from a supportive mentoring programme.
- Arrangements for the induction of new pupils are good.

Commentary

21. This is an inclusive school and members of the school community support each other well. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and pupils like the friendly atmosphere where they are known and valued by staff. The heads of year and tutors closely track the progress of pupils' personal development and quickly follow up any problems, particularly with regard to behaviour. Tutors make helpful comments about personal development in the pupils' annual reports. Pupils with special educational needs have very good relationships with their specialist teachers and learning support assistants, and receive good support when working with these staff.
22. Tutors and heads of year keep a satisfactory check on the students' academic progress, particularly through the twice-annual *spotlight* progress review. In a few subject departments teachers are skilled at ensuring that pupils know how well they are doing and give them clear guidance on what they need to do to improve. However, in other subjects little advice is given and this is a hindrance to high achievement. A significant minority of Year 11 pupils who are at risk of under-performing at GCSE are given good support by a team of staff who give valuable encouragement on meeting deadlines and organising revision.
23. Arrangements for the induction of new pupils are good and parents value the way their children settled into school. Year 7 pupils say that they quickly made new friends and tutors are very helpful. Pupils are given good advice and guidance through a useful careers programme, which starts in Year 7 and considers options in Year 9. In Year 11 pupils are clearly encouraged to choose pathways that will either lead to

employment, training or further education. However, it is not made clear to Year 9 pupils that there is some duplication in topics if they choose both business communication and ICT in their options.

24. The school pays due regard to health and safety. A recent health and safety audit has been completed and governors regularly discuss health and safety issues. Risk assessments are in place for most areas, but the school recognises the urgent need to complete the rest. Procedures for first aid are satisfactory. Several members of staff are qualified in first aid and pupils receive good care and attention in a well-equipped medical room. Satisfactory records are kept when pupils are unwell or injured but records are not always kept when medication is given. Members of the senior management team have received relevant training in child protection and they carry out their duties effectively. They ensure that staff receive regular reminders about how to recognise and report any concerns. The school has good arrangements for children in public care.
25. Most pupils feel their views are valued and the members of the revamped school council are keen to improve school life. However, teachers and tutors do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to be involved in setting and reviewing their academic targets.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school offers parents good opportunities to discuss their children's progress, but there are inconsistencies between subjects in the pupils' annual reports, and citizenship is not reported.
- The school is very popular with local Catholic families and parents hold it in high regard.
- Liaison with local support agencies and employers make a valuable contribution to learning.
- The school works successfully with other local secondary schools to share good practice, and is developing beneficial links with its feeder primary schools through its specialist status.

Commentary

26. Through twice-yearly meetings with tutors and subject teachers, parents are given good opportunities to discuss how their children are getting on. Staff also contact parents as necessary to discuss pupils' successes as well as difficulties. The pupils' annual reports are satisfactory. They give parents detailed information about what their children can do and most teachers write helpful advice on what pupils need to do to improve their work. However, there are inconsistencies in the way each subject department presents the information in the report. For example, some use detailed national curriculum levels; others just indicate whether the pupils is working above, below or in line with national expectations. Some use a 4-point scale to score effort;

others use a 3-point scale. This can cause confusion and makes it more difficult to compare performance between subjects. Citizenship was a new subject last year, but, because of an oversight, it was not included in the pupils' reports.

27. The school provides parents with good information about the school. The prospectus, governors' annual report to parents and booklet for new parents paint a clear picture of school life. Newsletters give parents relevant and timely information about future events and parents receive helpful guidance about homework with some good information about the curriculum. Useful meetings and booklets about careers, options, coursework and school trips help parents to become more involved in their children's education.
28. The school is well regarded in the community and all parents and carers have made a positive choice to send their children to St Bernadette's, even though many live a considerable distance from the school. Parents are generally very supportive of the work of the school and a significant minority are actively involved in school life. The school seeks parents' views through surveys and the parents' consultation group works closely with senior staff to discuss suggestions on issues such as the specialist bid and the school development plan. The active parents, friends and teachers association works hard to raise considerable amounts of money for school funds.
29. The school has forged valuable links with local support services and agencies, which provide a very valuable contribution to learning in citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Through established partnerships with employers, pupils are offered beneficial work experience placements, mock interviews and industry days.
30. The strong and beneficial partnerships with local Catholic schools and the sixth form college enable staff to work successfully with colleagues from other schools. They share ideas and offer mutual support, for example in the areas of teaching and learning, resources and gifted and talented pupils. The school also works closely with other schools in the city to share good practice in mathematics and ICT. Staff work with their primary colleagues and Year 6 pupils to ensure that the transfer from one stage of education to the next is as smooth as possible. Through its specialist status the school is building firm foundations to develop its partnership with primary schools, for example by working with primary pupils who are gifted mathematicians.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The work of the governors is good. The headteacher provides good leadership, and the leadership of other key staff is satisfactory overall. Management is satisfactory. Statutory requirements are fully met except the requirement to report on progress in citizenship in pupils' annual reports.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new headteacher is leading the school well and is starting to improve management systems.
- The school improvement plan is not effective enough.

- Subject leadership and management are very good in some areas, but are unsatisfactory in others.
- Teachers are supported well, but monitoring of teaching and leadership has not been rigorous enough.
- The governors support and challenge the school well, and they are well led.

Commentary

31. The governing body set a clear strategic direction for the school with a focus on inclusion and care for the individual. Through committee members, they have a clear understanding of specific strengths and weaknesses of the school, for example in relation to overall standards in the school. Both individuals and the whole governing body are willing to challenge and debate with the headteacher and senior managers, but they understand the role governors and ensure that intervention is within appropriate limits. The chair is very knowledgeable about the school and leads very ably. Though a minor statutory requirement is not met, this was an oversight related to a stage in the development of a new subject rather than an indication of weakness at governing body level.
32. The headteacher had been in post for two months at the time of the inspection, and a new deputy head is due in post next term. The headteacher is already leading the school well. She and the interim senior leadership team had already identified the majority of the areas for improvement before the inspection. She has a clear focus on raising standards and has high aspirations for the school, and this came through clearly in the documentation supplied to the team. For example, the need to improve pupils' attitudes and the need to improve achievement in Years 7 to 9 were clearly identified. The headteacher has started to implement more formal management systems, which she correctly sees as a priority, to ensure that all subject departments take a full part in self-evaluation.
33. The members of the interim leadership team offer the headteacher good support and individuals make a strong contribution to the leadership of the school. One member of the team, for example, is very skilled in data analysis, though at the moment there is a lack of expertise amongst some subject leaders, and even the other senior managers are less familiar with the nuts and bolts of this process than is typical. The deputy head works closely with the headteacher to inspire and motivate staff, and to identify the direction of the school. He, together with another leadership team member, was highly influential in the successful bid for specialist status.
34. The special needs co-ordinator also has responsibility for pupils who speak English as an additional language, and he is leading both areas well. Both he and the deputy co-ordinator have quite heavy teaching loads, and their management is satisfactory. Subject leadership varies from very good – in the case of art and design and design and technology – to unsatisfactory in the case of English, where the curriculum planning has not kept up with national changes. History has satisfactory leadership, because the direction is being set with the support of a member of the senior leadership team, but the management of the subject is unsatisfactory because it is not having enough impact on improving teaching. Where leadership is good, subject leaders have clear plans, based on identified areas in the school improvement plan, usually with targets that can be measured. Teachers in these departments are working together and have a good focus on raising standards. The overall school improvement plan, however, is not a useful tool for improving leadership. Though actions are grouped under broad areas, there are no clearly identified priorities. A big target such as *improve value added measures to 100+* comes at the end, with no greater priority than more minor tasks. There are no deadlines, and some targets are too open for

those responsible to be clear on what would represent success. This makes it harder for departments where management or leadership are weaker to write their own effective plans.

35. Day-to-day management is sound and financial management is satisfactory. Though there was a high carry forward of money in both April 2003 and April 2004, this was appropriately for improvements to accommodation, specifically this year to do with the specialist school bids. The principles of best value are soundly applied. Data is used well at senior leadership level and in some departments to identify where improvement is needed, but managers in other departments lack the skills to analyse performance well. In some departments self-evaluation is superficial, but a new coherent schedule for monitoring activity and the recording document produced by the headteacher should help. The formal performance management of teachers is satisfactory, but support staff do not yet take part in a formal system. Professional development, recruitment and retention are well managed, and most teachers receive a good deal of informal support. However, the strategy for improvement to teaching and management has until very recently been restricted to support – whether internal or from advisors – and there is little evidence of the use of target setting and monitoring of improvement where there are weaknesses.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,722,117	Balance from previous year	189,157
Total expenditure	2,660,488	Balance carried forward to the next	250,786
Expenditure per pupil	3,561		

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is satisfactory; statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Careers education and guidance are good and work experience is managed well.
- There are relatively few vocational options for pupils and flexible learning opportunities are limited.
- Local business and the community contribute well through industry days and trial interviews.
- The school's vision for the development of WRL is limited and no audit of the curriculum has taken place.

Commentary

36. Pupils benefit from work placements, business links and links with local colleges and schools. All Year 10 pupils have a two-week period of work experience and individuals can take up further placements on a daily or weekly basis. Provision is well managed by the school and it ensures that health and safety requirements are met. Pupils reflect on these experiences and say that they found them really valuable.

37. The school has developed an increased flexibility programme for some pupils in Years 10 and 11. College links enable some pupils who are at risk of exclusion to remain in school and most continue with GCSE courses. Pupils acquire a range of skills and vocational qualifications. At present this programme is available to few pupils and it is evident that others would benefit from extended vocational opportunities. Two applied GCSE courses, in business and ICT, are open to pupils through the option system. Some departments, including design technology and business studies, make a contribution to WRL but the potential for contribution from other subject areas has not been explored as yet.
38. In Years 8 to 11 careers education is being taught in designated weekly lessons with citizenship and PSHE; Year 7 pupils have a lesson every two weeks. A variety of activities are planned but limited time is available for them because of the other pressures on available time. Careers and further education guidance is good because of the quality of support from Connexions and the good management within the school. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work toward the *Bristol Achievers Award* and this has a valuable work-related and careers element. Industry days and careers events provide valuable information for pupils who attend.
39. Pupils in Year 9 are able to talk about skills for work, for example teamwork, with confidence and when questioned they understand about the importance of reliability and punctuality. They have some understanding of health and safety at work and the persistence of child labour in some parts of the world. However, reinforcement of this knowledge is lacking because opportunities to extend their understanding, for example in humanities and physical education, are not being taken. Year 11 are very clear about the importance of training or further education and those questioned were confident about their choice of college or employment after completing GCSE. They are given clear advice on how to complete applications and are well prepared for trial interviews with local business and community representatives.
40. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Links between the school and the community are used well but the school does not yet have a clear understanding of the potential for vocational and work-related learning.

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 was inspected in full and is reported below. The report combines commentary on English language and English literature as these subjects are usually taught together. French was also inspected in full and is reported below. Spanish and Italian were sampled through a study of examination results.

41. As well as French, pupils begin a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9. Spanish, Italian and German are offered, with both Spanish and Italian continuing to GCSE. This is good curriculum provision. In 2003, just under half of the pupils entered for **Italian** gained A*-C grades. Provisional results for 2004 show a very significant improvement with 85% of pupils gaining A*-C grades. All of the pupils entered for **Spanish** in 2004 gained A*-C grades. This represents good achievement for these pupils.

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and is sometimes very good. However, learning is no better than satisfactory because of some pupils' lack of interest.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory, hampering pupils' further achievement.
- The curriculum is not sufficiently well balanced to cover all necessary styles and genres.

Commentary

42. Current standards in English are average in Year 9 and also in Year 11. This is reflected in the 2003 and 2004 test results at the end of Year 9. The 2003 results were, however, below those of similar schools, largely because of the small proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. Results at GCSE in 2003, both for English Language and Literature, were also in line with the national average, and fell slightly in 2004. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, and showing signs of improvement as a result of the implementation of the national strategy for this age group. Achievement is also satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, but progress could be more rapid with improvement to the curriculum and more specific use of assessment to target where pupils need to improve.
43. Pupils' speaking skills are varied. Although they are usually willing to offer contributions to class discussions, a significant minority either find it difficult to express themselves with coherence or do not speak in a sustained manner. Reading skills are generally sound and many pupils read fluently, although not always with full

comprehension of what they read. Many pupils accomplish much sustained written work, but few are able to write in a wide range of styles for different purposes, especially those in Years 10 and 11. This is because schemes of work are insufficiently developed to give balance to the curriculum for Years 7, 8 and 9 and for the breadth of literacy skills demanded by the new GCSE syllabus. Although the emphasis placed on the teaching of literature is laudable, it inhibits the practice of the other styles and genres that form part of the examination requirements.

44. Not all pupils' standards are improving as fast as they should be, because of the limited use made of assessment, the lack of interest in school work demonstrated by a significant minority of pupils and the resultant lack of completed coursework. The lack of interest, together with the disruption it causes to other pupils, means that teachers have to waste much time in controlling disaffected behaviour, and learning is sometimes not as good as the teaching. There is some good and very good teaching throughout the school. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is always good – they use literature well in the form of novels, stories, plays and poems to improve speaking and comprehension skills. Lessons are planned well, providing stimulating 'starter' activities and using a wide range of approaches and methods. Lesson objectives are made clear, so that pupils know what they are expected to achieve in lessons and these targets are reviewed at the ends of lessons to assess pupils' learning. Teachers use questioning skilfully to persuade as many pupils as possible to participate actively in lessons. Teachers show much patience in their good encouragement to pupils to try to help them achieve their full potential and in the efforts they make to engage pupils in lessons. Work is well and constructively marked, so that pupils are clear about how they can improve. However, higher attaining pupils are not always offered enough challenge, particularly in Years 10 and 11. They are not always encouraged to work with independence and to research for themselves. In Years 7 and 8, mixed ability classes suffer from a lack of specifically graded work to suit all abilities and needs. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils who do not speak English as their first language are adequately supported by their subject teachers. However, there are not always sufficient learning support staff in lessons to ensure that they are fully engaged and learning as well as they might.
45. There has been little significant improvement since the last inspection and the leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. Teaching is successful because of the efforts of individuals rather than because they are well managed. The head of department serves as a good role model for staff and pupils in her teaching, but there has been too little revision of the curriculum and schemes of work are often too far out of date to match present requirements. Teachers are provided with too little support and have no opportunities to share good classroom practice in dealing with poor attitudes. Analysis of performance data is not yet firmly established - the department is still in the early stages of full self-evaluation. Improvement in the quality of provision for the subject since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The problem of boys' under-achievement has not been adequately addressed and expectations of oral and written language have not moved forward at a satisfactory rate.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

46. The school is well aware of the need for the teaching of literacy to be widespread throughout other subjects and has taken appropriate steps to develop this. Many of these measures, through the action taken to promote them by the co-ordinator for literacy, currently the deputy headteacher, are beginning to have an appreciable effect on whole-school literacy. Already, there is some good practice evident in the use of key word lists, connectives and techniques for improving spelling in art, music, design and technology and drama, as well as in English. An audit is about to be made of all departments, in order to put together a whole-school working party to raise the profile and use of literacy further. Unfortunately, there is little money available to finance the training of teachers, so that, so far, the focus on literacy across the curriculum has had to be under the umbrella of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Teachers are now becoming aware of the demands and advantages of literacy in their own subjects.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Thorough teaching of grammar is helping higher attaining pupils to write creatively.
- Pupils do not always have enough opportunities to practise speaking French and develop their fluency and confidence.
- Pupils behave well because of the high expectations set by teachers.
- Too many pupils do not complete homework tasks on time.

Commentary

47. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was below the national average. The 2004 results were similar in terms of pupils reaching A*-C grades but with a significant improvement in the average points score. More pupils gained the higher A*, A and B grades.
48. Standards seen during the inspection broadly reflect the examination results; though below average, they do confirm a trend of improvement. In Years 10 and 11 there are examples of good extended writing with accurate and sometimes ambitious use of tenses. Pupils, especially in the higher sets, use their knowledge of grammar to write creatively on a variety of topics, imagining for example what their teachers might choose to do on an ideal holiday. Pupils in middle and lower sets find it harder to accurately apply the grammar rules they have learned. In Years 7 to 9, standards are a little below the national average. By Year 9, pupils in higher sets are developing their knowledge of tenses and are producing some good quality extended writing. In the middle and lower sets, however, pupils' standards in speaking are below what is expected for their age; their oral contributions are often quite brief and lacking in confidence. Overall achievement is satisfactory, but achievement in lessons in Years 10 and 11 is good. There have been recent changes of staff and the signs are that progress is now accelerating.
49. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, pupils learn well because they are actively engaged in the lesson through techniques such as choral work, pairwork, groupwork and games.

For example, pupils in Year 10 worked very well in groups to produce arguments for and against living in the town or country, discussing and drawing on a source in a textbook. The introduction of new vocabulary and grammar is done well. Teachers use a lot of French and the new content is explained clearly. However, in about half of the lessons seen, and especially in Years 7 to 9, pupils did not get enough opportunities to practise this language for themselves and develop fluency and confidence in speaking. This is holding back levels of attainment and achievement. Marking is good overall and is particularly effective in Years 10 and 11, where detailed diagnostic marking, using a system of codes, helps pupils to reflect upon their work and make improvements.

50. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and have established a good set of ground-rules that they implement consistently. Pupils are expected to listen attentively and to follow classroom routines for asking and answering questions. Although pupils behave well, their attitudes to learning are more variable. Too many pupils are not completing the homework expected of them, and in some cases their effort in the classroom is lacklustre. This is holding back their progress, especially in Years 7 to 9. Merits are used as a reward for good effort and participation in some classes, but this practice is not consistent.
51. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Documentation is detailed, helpful and supportive. The subject leader is a good role model and has led the development of new initiatives such as the new framework for modern languages teaching. The development plan acknowledges the need to continue raising standards, but its potential impact is reduced because it lacks clear success criteria and because it does not focus sharply enough on developing learning strategies. There has been good improvement in achievement and in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement are steadily improving.
- The teaching is good overall but there is insufficient planning for the subject to be taught as a problem-solving activity.
- The department is well led and managed, and the teaching staff are well qualified and hard working.

Commentary

52. Standards in mathematics are broadly average in the current Year 9, and above average in Year 11. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, 73 per cent of the pupils attained the expected level 5, which was in line with the national average, but was low compared with the average for schools whose pupils scored similar results in the corresponding tests at the end of Year 6. In 2004 the results were better, confirming a sustained improvement over the last five years. Eighty per cent achieved level 5, which is above the national average and is likely to be above the average for similar schools. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, 60 per cent of the pupils gained a grade A*-C, which was above the national average. This was an exceptionally good result for this particular year group. In 2004, 51 per cent of the pupils gained an A*-C, which, although not as good, still reflects an upward trend over the last five years, and was broadly in line with the expectations for that particular year group.
53. Achievement is good overall in all year groups, although a few pupils do not always make as much progress as they should. This includes some of the middle attaining pupils in many of the sets, whose misconceptions are not recognised and corrected quickly enough. More gifted and higher attaining pupils would make more progress if they were challenged more, and set work, at least some of the time, at a higher level than the rest of the class. Achievement is good because most of the teaching is good, and many pupils have a good attitude to work. The pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers, due to their inclusion in the appropriate, slightly smaller sets, and additional personal support from their teachers and learning support assistants. There is a minority of pupils with a poor attitude to work, who achieve less than they should because they spend their time in lessons avoiding work and pursuing their social interests.
54. The quality of teaching is good overall. The quality of learning closely matches this. All the teachers are competent mathematicians and explanations of key processes are clear and use precise and accurate language and notation. Relationships with the pupils are mostly good, creating a calm and orderly atmosphere where the pupils listen intently and get down to work quickly when set tasks to do. However, in a few classes there are small groups of pupils who threaten to disrupt the lesson. Patient management by the teachers ensures that this usually does not affect the progress of the other pupils, although it does not always ensure that the pupils concerned adopt a more helpful attitude. Planning is sound, but insufficient account is taken of the need to provide additional work for particular groups of pupils, for example the more able in the class. Support for pupils with special educational needs is often good. There is not enough planning for a problem-solving approach to learning mathematical processes. The three-part lesson structure is often well used to provide pace and variety to the lessons, and to practise numeracy skills. In lessons with weaknesses, the pupils are

not given a clear context or purpose for the work, and so they learn the mathematical processes without really understanding the underlying concepts. In a few lessons, the teachers do not have a systematic way of checking the pupils' understanding of the concepts and processes being taught, and as a result the work is sometimes either too difficult or too easy, and some pupils' misconceptions are uncorrected.

55. Leadership and management are good. The head of department provides clear direction for the work of the department, and is readily available for support. Assessment of the progress of individual pupils is good, but is not yet adequately referenced to the criteria for achievement of particular levels. The department is well organised and resourced. It has recently been provided with new ICT equipment, and most of the teachers are beginning to use interactive whiteboards to considerable effect. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, taking into account the impact of the successful bid for specialist school status and the department's contribution to this.

Mathematics across the curriculum

56. Standards of numeracy are generally in line with national expectations, and enable pupils to apply number skills and knowledge satisfactorily in subjects across the curriculum. No instances were seen in this inspection where shortcomings in numeracy limited learning in any subject, but neither were there any instances where numeracy was used especially effectively to enhance learning. From the scrutiny of pupils' work, it is evident that in science and design and technology there is satisfactory application of numeracy knowledge and skills to support learning. There is limited evidence that pupils' numeracy is developed in subjects other than mathematics. In mathematics lessons in Years 7 to 9, the starter activity is often used to improve numeracy skills, although more could be done in the main part of the lesson to continue to develop strategies and number knowledge, particularly for the lower attaining pupils, whose numeracy could be better.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have above average attainment in GCSE examinations when compared to similar schools.
- The department is well led and managed and there is good use of pupil data to monitor progress.
- A proportion of less able pupils have a poorly developed learning ethos that leads to low interest in lessons.
- Clear and accurate notes in pupils' books contribute to their examination success.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of marking and advice given to pupils on how to improve.

Commentary

57. Students' Year 9 test results in 2003 were above the national average. Test results have been increasing at a faster rate than that nationally and compared to the national picture, science results were better than English or mathematics. In 2004, although there was a smaller proportion of higher level passes, results closely matched teacher expectations. This suggests that achievement was satisfactory.
58. The 2003 GCSE results for both double and single science courses were well above the national average for these courses. However, the relatively large number of students entered for the single science course, as opposed to double science, means that the standards are not as high as they seem. The aggregate (A*-C) pass rate for the science courses is just above the national average, which still represents good achievement. In 2004, although results fell sharply, this weaker year group attained largely as expected.
59. The quality of work seen from pupils in Years 9 and Year 11 is broadly average, with the triple science sets reaching higher standards. These older pupils confidently performed a titration in order to calculate the strength of a solution and coped well with chemical equations. In other classes pupils were able to use scientific key words and basic concepts to explain observations. This indicates at least satisfactory achievement from most pupils, apart from a minority of less able older pupils who had little motivation for academic work. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
60. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with better teaching seen in classes in Years 7 to 9. Some good lessons were also seen with older groups. Lessons are well planned by specialist teachers who have good subject knowledge. Teachers use a variety of techniques to engage pupils' interest with a good match of material to pupils' ability. Relationships are generally good, although a minority of classes contain pupils who do not value opportunities presented in lessons. Here levels of learning are diminished despite the best efforts the teachers usually make. Very occasionally, teaching in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory when teachers do not consistently use the sanctions available. Pupils with special educational needs are well known to teachers, who provide adequate support, enabling these pupils to make steady progress. The quality of pupils' notebooks is a strength of the department. Presentation is good with clear and accurate notes that provide a good core of information and contribute to pupils' examination success. Although work is regularly marked, inconsistencies exist in the advice teachers provide to pupils on how to improve. End-of-topic tests, however, provide pupils with information on their current standards. Data collected from tests are well used in the department to guide staff on pupils' achievements and the success of the teaching.
61. Leadership and management are good. The experienced department leader is well supported by another key post holder and other staff who are all contributing to the success of the department. There is a clear vision for the department and new initiatives have been introduced to meet identified needs. Consideration is being given to the introduction of a new modern GCSE course to make science more relevant to all pupils. Teachers work as a mutually supportive team with a sharing of good practice encouraged. Appropriate guidelines, policies and systems exist for supporting the teaching. However, the development plan requires additional work in order to provide evaluation and success criteria. The work of the laboratory technicians is valued and

ensures that lessons are well resourced. However, servicing of the laboratories is made difficult due to their location in different teaching blocks and is a particular problem in bad weather. Satisfactory improvement has been made on points identified in the last inspection. These include greatly improved Year 9 results, a greater focus on developing pupils' literacy needs and encouraging more pupils, particularly girls, to study double science. The improvement of teaching has been held back by staffing difficulties, but with the arrival of three new staff this term all vacancies are currently filled.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good in all years, with some very good features.
- Effective questioning by teachers helps to develop pupils' subject knowledge and understanding.
- Very good use of resources, particularly interactive whiteboards, enables teachers to provide effective demonstrations that help pupils to make judgements.
- Assessment is not informative and marking fails to provide guidance on the next stages of pupils' learning.
- Pupils are often unaware of how to improve upon their current GCSE grade or national curriculum levels.

Commentary

62. The number of pupils achieving A*-C grades at GCSE in 2003 was broadly average, though in 2004, the percentage of pupils gaining 5+ A*-C grades fell, reflecting standards that were just below the national average. Standards seen in the current Year 11 show a slight rise, being average again. In the vocational ICT course pupils' coursework demonstrates their ability to use different software packages. They can use spreadsheets and databases to evaluate and analyse results by using appropriate graphs, tables, and search and sort facilities.
63. In 2003, teachers' national curriculum assessments of pupils were also average. They improved in 2004, though current standards in Year 9 are average. Pupils' ICT skills on entry to the school are below average, with pupils from different primary schools having had differing experiences, with varying areas of strength and areas in which they need more practice. In Years 7 to 9 pupils' achievement is good in ICT and this is maintained in Years 10 to 11. Pupils soon become confident users of ICT and they are quickly able to use the school network to save and retrieve their work from their own files. The national Key Stage 3 strategy has been successfully introduced in Years 7 to 9, where all pupils have discrete ICT lessons. In Year 9, pupils are able to understand flow diagrams by using appropriate symbols in preparation for controlling a variety of automatic applications. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented is satisfactory.
64. Teaching and learning are good with some very good features. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to question, motivate and challenge pupils in order to extend

their knowledge and understanding of ICT terminology. In a Year 7 lesson on questionnaires, the adept questions used by the teacher enabled pupils to understand and identify the different samples of people required for different questionnaires. Teachers use interactive whiteboards very well for demonstrations, lesson outcomes, teaching objectives and for summarising work. Pupils enjoy using the interactive whiteboards and more opportunities should be provided to develop this further. In a Year 8 lesson on flow charts, the teacher demonstrated the structure of the flow chart to control the lights and foghorn of a lighthouse. Pupils responded by identifying the additional decision box needed in order to make the lights flash on and off. Teachers engage pupils at the beginning of lessons with short starter activities and then introduce main activities very clearly, often with effective PowerPoint presentations.

65. In order to challenge students, appropriate tasks should be provided for students with special educational needs and for those identified as gifted and talented. Too often, teachers rely upon the same task rather than tasks that are clearly targeted at pupils of different abilities. In a small number of lessons in Years 8 and 9, learning was hindered by the attitudes of pupils to their work despite the effort made by the teacher. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are frequently unaware of their predicted national curriculum levels or their predicted GCSE grades. As a result many do not understand clearly what they would need to do to get a better grade. This is impacting upon the number of students achieving the higher GCSE grades. Marking across all years is inconsistent. It needs to be informative so that pupils are aware how they could improve upon their current performance.
66. Leadership and management of ICT are good. The curriculum leader has a clear vision for the direction of the subject, as he was instrumental in securing the school's specialist status. However, the success criteria and resource implications need to be clearly identified in the department improvement plan and should be clearly linked to the specialist school plan. The planned introduction of an ICT lesson for all pupils in Years 10 to 11 is likely have an impact upon raising ICT standards. The three technicians provide effective support and they play a key part in the smooth running of the systems. The department should now focus upon a coherent assessment system for ICT across all years.
67. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school is well resourced; there has been much investment in ICT equipment, leading to the current computer-to-pupil ratio of 1:3.4, and a number of departments have interactive whiteboards. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 now have one lesson of ICT each week and the accredited GCSE course is gaining in popularity. Teaching and learning have improved. These improvements are beginning to have an impact upon raising standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

68. The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. The recent curriculum audit identified that many departments use ICT. However, this was not fully reflected in the work seen or lessons observed during the inspection. In design and technology, pupils use appropriate software for their design work and presentation of coursework. This department has created very good user guides to develop pupil understanding of the software. In business studies and religious education, teachers use interactive whiteboards well for demonstrations, presenting information and sharing the lesson objectives with pupils. Individual subjects make very little contribution to the final assessment of ICT in Year 9. A more coherent approach to assessment of ICT across the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is required if subjects are to make a valid contribution.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management are promoting improvement in standards and achievement.
- Teachers make good use of fieldwork to support learning.
- The department development plan does not have sufficient success criteria to effectively evaluate the progress the department is making.
- Teaching is good, but could involve students in their learning better.

Commentary

69. Pupils join the school with a wide range of geographical experiences and with below average standards overall. By Year 9 standards in geography are average; however, given the starting base, pupils are achieving well. Teacher assessments of standards of Year 9 last year were well above average; higher than the evidence of the inspection showed. Many pupils use technical words correctly, like *scale*, *location* and *de-forestation*. These are indicators of average standards in geography. By Year 11 standards are above average, which represents good achievement from these pupils' prior attainment. The skills of analysis, developed in Year 9, are successfully built upon in Year 11 as pupils working in small groups consider the services needed for a successful urban area. Many pupils very successfully argue their reasons, confirming the above average standards. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average.
70. Overall, teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11. Specialist geography teachers have a good geographical knowledge and apply it well in their teaching. Their good knowledge enables lessons to be well planned with appropriate objectives, which are shared with pupils. Teaching does not always involve students in their learning, constraining independent learning. This makes pupils too dependent on teachers' directions to reach higher standards by Year 9. For example, most pupils successfully

label, shade, and use titles, key and scales when so directed; however, not all pupils remember to use them independently in their work. Long and short term planning is good. This ensures consistency of coverage but staff need more help about ways to present work to different groups of pupils; for instance, interactive tasks which could provide different levels of challenge within the class. Teachers and LSAs encourage pupils well through good questioning, as seen in a Year 11 lesson on urban development in Sao Paulo. This enabled pupils to successfully compare and analyse with the Burgess model of urban development. Written work is checked regularly and the marking is usually good but could be more evaluative to help pupils to know what they need to do to improve further. Year 11 pupils receive good help in structuring their examination answers and are shown how they can improve their marks. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, receive good support from their teachers and their peers. In lesson time lack of access to computers constrains some of their investigative work that needs to be undertaken. Pupils' books show effective use of diagrams, charts and maps to illustrate their work, but very little evidence of using computers. However, many pupils' coursework makes effective use of ICT.

71. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is giving good clear vision for the development of geography with strategies to improve standards further. Close monitoring of pupils' work is having a positive impact on standards and achievement, but new procedures for assessment have yet to impact upon raising standards. The department development plan is a list of actions that need doing without enough refinement to really move self-evaluation a stage further. For example, it does not have success criteria to effectively evaluate the departmental progress. However, since the previous inspection improvement has been good. GCSE standards have improved. Improved fieldwork opportunities successfully help to give pupils first-hand experiences. There is a strong commitment to raising standards in geography.

History

Provision in history is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 but do not reach high enough standards in Years 7 to 9 because expectations are not high enough.
- Management of the subject is unsatisfactory, as is teaching overall.
- Pupils do not take an active enough part in learning.

Commentary

72. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was below the national average, and broadly in line with the previous year. Results were similar this year. Standards of current pupils have made some improvement. Although they remain below average, this group of pupils are achieving well given their starting points. Their good achievement is primarily because the teaching in Years 10 and 11 is better than the teaching in Years 7 to 9.

73. Pupils are not achieving well enough in Years 7 to 9, particularly higher attaining pupils. School assessments show consistently low standards over the last three years, and the standards of current pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are below average. The proportion of pupils reaching higher levels is very low. Pupils are not achieving well enough because tasks and teaching materials in lessons do not provide enough challenge to every pupil, especially those of higher ability. Expectation is low and teaching is unsatisfactory for these year groups. In a lesson on trade in the Roman Empire, for example, pupils in Year 7 were able to list a number of articles traded, but were not encouraged to consider who got the better deal and why – to look for reasons behind the facts. Time is wasted on labelling maps, and colouring charts and diagrams. Pupils do not learn the vital skill of note-taking adequately, too often copying from the board or pasting teachers' notes into their exercise books. Skills of organisation and communication are supported by glossaries, but there is too little access to word processors to enable pupils to present their work to a high standard. Marking is conscientious, but pupils do not always know what to do to reach the next level of attainment.
74. The teaching seen in Years 10 and 11 was good. In a Year 11 lesson on the Cold War, the pupils achieved well in response to knowledgeable teaching in which techniques of revision and essay writing were systematically addressed. Expectations were much higher than for the younger pupils. In this lesson, good, specific help was given in note-taking. Explanation was clear and held the pupils' interest. Skilful questioning made them think on their feet as they considered the reasons for the Potsdam and Yalta agreements and pondered the difference between the content and intention of both conferences. Lack of support for independent learning and wider reading, however, proves a barrier to achieving the highest levels for many pupils. Provision for active learning is a weakness across the school. There are too few activities such as group discussion for pupils to develop their collaborative learning skills. Pupils do not learn well enough independently because they do not read widely. Their skills of historical enquiry are inadequate because there are not enough structured opportunities for them to use CD-ROMs and the Internet to supplement their learning. The breadth and depth of the curriculum, although adequate, are constrained by lack of time, although a recent trip to Chepstow Castle consolidated pupils' learning about the Middle Ages.
75. Leadership of history, in collaboration with the head of the humanities faculty, is satisfactory. Lines of responsibility are clear and teamwork effective, which recent improvements in accommodation have helped to facilitate. There is further capacity to make improvement. A unified approach to lesson planning within the humanities takes good account of national teaching strategies. Deficiencies in assessment are beginning to be successfully tackled but there is still much to do. Management of history is, however, unsatisfactory, because not enough is yet being done to monitor pupils' performance in order to improve teaching and learning. There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Clear routines and high expectations ensure good attitudes to learning.
- There is very good joint leadership of the department, and some very good teaching takes place.
- Very good support and use of assessment mean pupils are fully involved in learning.
- Higher attainers could be better challenged in Years 7 to 9.
- Computer-aided manufacture is not developed enough.

Commentary

76. In 2003 the GCSE results were well above average. Boys' results were well above average and girls' above average overall, but both boys and girls achieved results that were well above average for A* and A grades. In 2004 the GCSE results maintained the high standards of 2003 in all design and technology courses, with exceptional performance in resistant materials. Pupils often exceed their target grades in design and technology, and curriculum choice in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
77. Current standards in Year 9 are average with some work above average. Attainment on entry is below average in terms of prior design and technology experience, so this represents good achievement overall. However, too few pupils achieve level 6 or above and higher attainers are not as well challenged as lower attainers. Good work was seen in the letter rack project in Year 7, where good isometric drawings and use of colour were used when developing ideas. The Year 9 project on salad servers showed very good analysis of the design brief and good presentation of ideas. Where the work is not as good, presentational skills are weaker, both graphical and written, ideas are not explained, and work is incomplete and contains spelling errors. Current standards in Year 11 are well above average and achievement is very good. Very good work was seen in electronics, using the Internet for research in the burglar alarm project. In textiles very good work looked at shapes, colours and textures for a 1930s themed clothing project. Weaker work shows incomplete evaluations, a limited range of research and generally poorer presentation. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and use ICT well to improve presentation, and the use of ICT, including computer-aided design, is a strong feature of pupils' work. The use of computer-aided manufacture is not, however, fully developed and facilities for this are rather limited.
78. The quality of teaching and learning is good with some very good and some satisfactory teaching seen. Good subject expertise, good use of resources, good assessment of pupils' work and high expectations are some features of the best lessons. A Year 9 lesson increased pupils' learning considerably when designing and making electronic dice. Pupils' understanding of complex processes was good. In a Year 11 food technology lesson pupils developed practical skills to a high standard when preparing food dishes under test conditions. Where lessons are not as good there can be slower pace, and pupils off task or rather noisy when working. A strong feature of all lessons is the brisk start to engage pupils in their learning and good questioning to reinforce understanding. All teachers have high expectations and pupils know what is expected of them. The clear routines and high expectations of both work and behaviour are key to the maintaining of the good attitudes to work that pupils show in this subject.

79. The two heads of department work closely together and provide very good direction for the subject. They have established a very good work ethic in the department, partly through the commitment and time staff put into supporting and helping pupils. Assessment procedures are good and pupils know the levels at which they are working. Self-assessment is also a good feature of the process. Targets are set for each module of work and standards expected are displayed in all rooms. This very good use of assessment to involve pupils in their learning is another reason that attitudes are good and interest high, and is one reason why good teaching is leading to very good achievement in some year groups. There is no technician help in the resistant materials area at present and limited help in the food technology department, but teachers are working hard to make sure this is not having an impact on pupils' achievement. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Examination performance and achievement have significantly improved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected and are reported in full below. Drama was sampled.

80. In **drama**, all pupils entered for the GCSE examination achieved grades A* - C in 2003, although results were slightly lower this year. Teaching in the two lessons seen was good. Planning was a strength. The teacher showed very good knowledge of drama and the requirements of the GCSE examination. Thoughtful, well-targeted and highly enjoyable activities allowed all pupils to make good progress in theatre skills in Year 8 and very good progress in Year 10. Pupils collaborated effectively to plan, rehearse and present improvisations and scripted pieces. They readily and effectively evaluated their own work and that of others. They took direction well, and rapidly settled into routines of working. The very good quality of classroom relationships helped learning and fostered self-confident presentation. An exceptionally good range of extra-curricular activities supports provision - *A Midsummer's Night Dream* was in rehearsal during the week of inspection.

Art and Design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCSE examinations are significantly above the national average, showing very good achievement.
- The use of sketchbooks for research and development in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- Teachers and pupils enjoy very good working relationships and pupils benefit from personal tuition and guidance.
- Further development of assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 relating to national levels would further improve the learning climate.
- Accommodation is inadequate for courses with such a range of media choice and limits further development.

Commentary

81. The proportion of students gaining higher grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 2003 was well above the national average. A third of pupils achieved A* or A grades. Although boys performed less well than girls, their scores were still well above the national average, with rising trends in recent results.
82. Teacher assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2003 showed standards to be above average. Standards in the current Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement for many pupils in relation to their knowledge, understanding and skills when they entered the school. Lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils apply themselves purposefully to their work and are supported well in lessons. Pupils of all abilities research and develop their art and use line and tone effectively in their drawings. Work shows greater perceptual depth when pupils use first-hand observation as a basis for study.
83. Standards in the current Year 11 are well above average. This represents very good achievement over the two years of the course for the majority of pupils. This is a direct result of assessment procedures that ensure pupils have opportunities to discuss their achievements and set targets for future development. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and benefit from personal tuition and guidance. Good matching of tasks to capabilities ensures that average and more capable pupils are sufficiently challenged. Pupils are given good scope to demonstrate their personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other cultures through the work they produce. Sketchbooks are used well for research and pupils' work shows some influence of important movements in art and design or of particular artists.
84. The quality of the teaching and learning is good overall, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Very good teaching was observed when pupils were actively engaged in debate about their work and were clear about their intermediate learning objectives. Teachers are aware of the capabilities of their pupils and often meet their needs through very good quality individual tuition. They use their knowledge and expertise to very good effect and lesson preparation is good. However, in Years 7 to 9 assessment procedures are not used well enough to inform pupils of the levels they are working at or what they need to do to improve.

85. The leadership of art and design is very good. The teachers work very well as a team and have very good subject knowledge and expertise. Taught skills are enhanced by opportunities for pupils to make contact with artists and art work both in and out of school. The management of the department is very good and schemes of work and departmental policies provide very good guidance for staff, so that consistency is ensured throughout the department. The work of the department is well monitored through classroom observations and work sampling. However, the absence of full technical support restricts the range of media activities taught. In addition, large class sizes in Year 9 restrict the range of materials used and this has an adverse impact on teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, as a result of good teaching and clear leadership within the department. GCSE results have improved significantly, together with pupils' knowledge and understanding of artists and the use of ICT and sketchbooks for research and development.

Music

The provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils did well in the 2003 GCSE examinations.
- Music does not yet have a high enough profile in the school, and the new staff have not yet had time to settle as a team.
- Some pupils show little interest in the subject and few participate in extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils are achieving better in lessons now than they did in their 2004 GCSE examinations, and much teaching is enthusiastic.

Commentary

86. Standards in the GCSE examination in 2003 were well above average with most pupils gaining A* and A grades. In 2004 there was a sharp drop in results to the other end of the spectrum, indicating that achievement was not good enough. This term there has been a complete change of staff for the subject. In the current Year 11, standards are below average. Pupils can perform to each other in groups reflecting the wide ability range within the class, but find difficulty composing chord sequences. They are learning satisfactorily in lessons but have not made enough progress in the past and are not as far on as they should be, given the standards with which they entered the GCSE course. Achievement by Year 11 is therefore judged unsatisfactory.

87. Teachers' own assessments in 2003 and 2004 were that standards were above average by the end of Year 9. Work seen during the inspection indicated a more average profile in Year 9. In Year 9 pupils can discuss the elements of music when listening to extracts of film music but they were less secure playing the James Bond theme music themselves with melody and chords. Pupils are unused to listening to each other perform and find difficulty in appraising work using musical terms. The cramped accommodation and large classes in Years 7 and 8 mean that groupwork is very difficult and this limits improvement. However, Year 9 pupils benefit from very

favourable class sizes, and this is helping them to get plenty of help from the teacher, listen to each other and learn quickly. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory.

88. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. The department benefits from the work of the music technician. Generally teachers show good subject knowledge, are enthusiastic and use homework effectively to reinforce classwork, though tasks are not always sufficiently mapped out for pupils or targeted to pupils' abilities, especially in practical work. However, there is evidence of a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching where behaviour is not adequately dealt with in a consistent way. Teachers are not exploiting a number of ways in which pupils' interest in the subject - and therefore attitudes to the subject - could be improved. For example, pupils are not involved enough in their own learning: they do not have enough opportunities to appraise their own work, nor is assessment used well enough to tell them at which levels they are working and how to improve their work. Extra-curricular music is very much in its infancy and few pupils attend.
89. Leadership and management are undeveloped at present, because staff are so new and all are part time (including a shared head of department role). Because of this no overall judgement is made; teachers have rightly concentrated in establishing sound teaching, and so there has been little time to set the necessary management structures in place. However, improvements to co-ordination and strategic planning should now be a priority. Schemes of work and assessment strategies are under review. The department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection in terms of standards and pupils' achievement. The provision is judged satisfactory because of the sound and better teaching and learning now taking place for the large majority of pupils. The department is improving and there are positive signs for the provision of music in the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment is insufficiently advanced to monitor and support pupils' progress.
- The good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils, especially the talented pupils, to extend their learning.
- Younger pupils are learning to evaluate their own performances well, but older pupils show less interest in this.
- Not enough time in lessons is spent on skill acquisition and development.

Commentary

90. Pupils arrive at school with a wide range of experiences of physical education. Their standards are below average overall. By Year 9 pupils' standards are average, which represents good achievement. In lessons seen pupils demonstrated competence in gymnastics, dance, netball and football. They are beginning to learn about the importance of body tension in gymnastics and the importance of control and quick passing of the ball in games. Teacher assessments of standards in Year 9 last year were higher than the evidence of the inspection showed. In football, most Year 7

pupils successfully control the ball using three touches before passing, but only a few show the skill of one touch control. Spatial awareness within a simple game is limited - for example in a Year 8 girls' netball lesson, the ball mainly tracked down the centre of the pitch. To raise standards, basic skills need to be more progressively developed so that they can be more effectively used in games.

91. By Year 11, standards in the core physical education programme are average and pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Most know the reasons for warming up prior to physical activity; they lead a simple warm-up but do not always challenge themselves sufficiently. In badminton, Year 11 pupils understand the importance of stance and footwork but few apply it in simple game activities. Not all the present GCSE pupils are well motivated to undertake the theory aspect of the course, whereas they like the practical aspect. Scrutiny of pupils' GCSE files and classroom work shows standards to be below average - a consequence of low literacy levels. However, practical work seen in a badminton lesson was average. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average. Achievement by this small sample of pupils was as would be expected from their prior attainment. However, the 2004 results are not as favourable as those gained in 2003.
92. Overall, teaching and learning are good, but in Years 10 and 11 they are satisfactory. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers; their subject knowledge helps the pupils to develop a depth of understanding in the subject. Lesson planning is effective throughout the school and objectives are set and shared with pupils. Teachers usually have good expectations of behaviour and performance. In Years 7 to 9 the teachers have established good routines that allow them to get pupils involved in the evaluation of their own work. They do this through good questioning that draws on their own strong subject knowledge. Satisfactory teaching in Years 10 and 11 is linked to immature behaviour and pupils who do not want to settle to work. Pupils just want to take part rather than improve their performance. This makes it much harder for teachers to make the progress they do with the younger pupils. In a minority of lessons the pace, rigour and challenge of the physical activities were not sufficiently demanding. In lessons, teachers need to use a wider range of activities and teaching methods to meet the needs of all abilities of pupils. More time needs to be spent on skill acquisition and particularly skill development into competitive situations, so that all pupils improve their skills, which they can use successfully in different games. As yet, computers and digital cameras are not used sufficiently to support teaching and learning.
93. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Good teamwork routines and organisation enable the department to run smoothly. Teachers encourage pupils to participate. This is well reflected in good levels of pupil participation in extra-curricular sport. About one third of the pupils take part; there are strengths in rugby and netball. However, regular and systematic observation of teaching is needed to share and develop good practice within the department. The department development plan identifies appropriate targets but does not use pupil outcomes as a tool for measuring success; neither are financial or time costs shown. At present, assessment procedures are satisfactory but they are not used well enough to make pupils aware of the progress they are making, or to support involvement and improvement. Courses in Years 10 and 11 do not meet the needs of all pupils. Overall, the department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Standards and the

quality of teaching have been maintained but facilities have improved and now permit a greater range of activities to be taught. However, better use could be made of the double lessons to further improve curriculum breadth.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good use of ICT and ICT resources, which are integrated into the course.
- The business communication course lacks challenge and some pupils are following courses that overlap too much.
- Pupils are not clear enough on what their GCSE targets are.

Commentary

94. 2003 results for Year 11 were well below the national average - reflected by the number of pupils achieving A*-C grades. There was no significant improvement in standards in 2004. From the work seen in Years 10 and 11, standards are now below the national average. Pupils of different abilities choose to follow the course, and taking starting points into account achievement is satisfactory.
95. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some good features. Where teaching is good, it has good pace; pupils are engaged and participate willingly. However, where teaching is satisfactory, the teacher relies too heavily upon worksheets and the lesson is too teacher-dominated, resulting in a lack of focus and interest from some pupils. This hinders independent learning, and in addition there are not enough opportunities for pupils to work together. The data projector is used well. In a Year 11 lesson on motivation, the teacher demonstrated Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This helped to reinforce pupils' knowledge on the motivation theories. However, some pupils were unaware of the significance of the hierarchy and were unable to link the term to other business contexts. In addition, they relied too heavily upon the information provided by the teacher and they would have benefited from undertaking research about the motivational theorists and sharing their findings amongst the group. In a Year 10 business communication lesson, there was too much emphasis on low-level skills. Pupils had spent time developing their keyboard skills using 'typewriting drills'. In addition, the word processing tasks were not set in a context and they lacked challenge.
96. Pupils are unaware of their GCSE targeted grades and this impacts upon standards as very few pupils achieve the higher GCSE grades. Information about what pupils can do should be used early in Year 10 to set challenging targets so that pupils quickly become aware of their target GCSE grades. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented is satisfactory. However, to improve achievement more emphasis should be given to different tasks that cater for pupils of different abilities.

97. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department is well organised and the head of department has a clear rationale for improving standards. However, there is duplication of content between the business courses and across the ICT course. In a Year 11 lesson, two pupils were undertaking a database task that was similar to one on their GCSE ICT course. This duplication of work was not used to the pupils' advantage and it failed to reinforce learning. The recent introduction of the vocational GCSE in business studies caters for pupils of all abilities. However, the duplication of provision means that there is potential confusion when pupils make their curriculum choices in Year 9.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship was inspected in full and is reported below. PSHE was sampled.

PSHE is well planned and is taught in regular weekly sessions alongside careers and citizenship. Health education is particularly strong because of the very effective use of outside agencies that work closely with the school.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good use is made of outside agencies, and links with careers and PSHE are good.
- Curriculum planning is incomplete; other subjects are not identifying citizenship elements or contributing to assessment.
- Tasks and resources do not always match the learning needs of pupils.

Commentary

98. Standards are average throughout the school. Discussion with pupils indicates that they have satisfactory levels of knowledge about becoming informed citizens and that their skills of enquiry and communication are sound. They are achieving as they should because citizenship is taught with PSHE and careers in weekly lessons and overall planning for these sessions is effective. However, many other lessons contain elements that would support learning and assessment in citizenship but these are not identified. There is no planning to show where the essential elements of citizenship education are taking place beyond the designated sessions, where time for citizenship is limited.
99. Teaching is satisfactory overall and the very effective use of outside speakers sometimes results in excellent learning. In the most successful lessons pupils discuss issues in groups and use a range of interesting resources. In some lessons achievement is affected when the work is not sufficiently challenging or is not well matched to the ability of pupils. Teaching assistants help pupils with special needs to contribute well but they are not present in most lessons. Learning is satisfactory overall. Some tasks are assessed and pupils evaluate their own progress. In Years 10 and 11 pupils work towards the *Bristol Achievers Award* at different levels. Assessment

procedures are satisfactory overall but they are not clearly identifying levels of attainment.

100. Pupils complete identified written work and they do discuss important issues. Those questioned are clear about our responsibilities, for example obeying laws, although they are vague about our parliamentary system and know little about the European Union. In Year 11 individual pupils show a good level of knowledge about equal opportunities and Year 9 they understand human rights issues. A Year 7 pupil was able to give a clear explanation of voting procedures because of the recent elections for the new school council.
101. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to participate in citizenship-related activities. It contributes to a range of charities and local and wider community links are well developed. Pupils take a range of responsibilities around the school to ensure that the school community works effectively. A group in Year 9 are starting to prepare for the magistrates competition. The library has a range of useful books but no newspapers for pupils' use.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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