

INSPECTION REPORT

THE KING'S HIGH SCHOOL

Pontefract

LEA area: Wakefield

Unique reference number: 108275

Headteacher: Mrs J A Craig

Lead inspector: Mr J Clark

Dates of inspection: 17 to 20 January 2005

Inspection number: 268489

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 to 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1044

School address: Mill Hill Lane
Pontefract
West Yorkshire
Postcode: WF8 4JF

Telephone number: 01977 723535
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Mr U Murray OBE
governors:

Date of previous 25 January 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The King's High School is an average-sized comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11-16. It is located on a single site close to the centre of Pontefract in Pontefract North ward from where it draws about half of its pupils. Though mixed, the area is broadly one of social disadvantage. Numbers have steadily increased in recent years and the school is regularly oversubscribed drawing its pupils from a wide area. Only a tiny minority of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and all pupils have English as their first language.

The attainment of pupils on entry is broadly above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average as is the number of pupils with formal statements. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average.

In partnership with another Pontefract High School, it has made a successful bid for specialist college status in mathematics and computing.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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18676	Mr R Meakin	Team inspector	Mathematics
30941	Mr K Brammer	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
21866	Mr D Tracey	Team inspector	Science
14841	Mr M Duffey	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31129	Mr J Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology
35122	Mr A Beckett	Team inspector	Geography Leisure and tourism
4355	Mr F Earle	Team inspector	History Religious education
28178	Mr J Connor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
11975	Mrs T McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music
12985	Mrs S Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The King's High School is a good school. Standards are above average and pupils achieve well, both academically and in their personal development. Pupils' attitudes are very good and their behaviour is good. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is ably supported by an effective senior leadership team and very effective governing body. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very good leadership of the headteacher has ensured that the staffing difficulties experienced during the past two years have not had a lasting effect on the achievement of current pupils.
- Pupils are very happy with what the school provides and their very positive attitudes, combined with the good teaching they receive, underpins their good learning.
- Achievement should be higher in science, religious education, music and physical education (PE) and in design and technology (Year 9) and in information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 11.
- There are very effective systems in place for the care and guidance of all groups of pupils.
- Vocational education, including work related working (WRL) and links with local businesses, is very good.
- Marking and assessment practice are inconsistent across subjects.
- Outside of lessons pupils have very good opportunities to enhance their learning.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The school has made good progress on the issues identified in the previous report. Support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is now good. Standards in design and technology, though not yet as high as in most other subjects, have improved to average in Years 7 to 9. Statutory requirements are now met in ICT, religious education and the governors' annual report to parents. Although toilet facilities remain unsatisfactory for older pupils, new facilities have been provided for younger pupils.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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 good. Attainment on entry is rising and is above average in Years 7 and 8. Pupils in Years 9 to 11 joined the school with average attainment. In 2004, the school failed to meet its challenging GCSE target and pupils obtained average results compared to the country as a whole. When compared to similar schools pupils appear to have significantly underachieved. Fewer than half of GCSE subjects obtained at least the national average for the proportion of A* or A grades. The schools own analysis of the 2004 results indicates an improvement in English but a decline in science. Until 2004, boys

achieved well compared to boys nationally but in 2004 results dipped and their results were only average. However, these results were adversely affected by staffing difficulties that resulted in pupils being taught by a large number of temporary and supply teachers, a significant barrier to pupils achieving good results. Current standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average and higher than last year's GCSE results might indicate. In view of their average

starting points, pupils' achievement in reaching these above average standards is good. They are achieving well because staffing has stabilised and the good teaching they now receive, complemented by their very good attitudes to learning, is enabling them to overcome the difficulties experienced in the last two years. Currently boys are achieving as well as girls.

No national data for the national tests taken in Year 9 in 2004 is available. In the national tests taken in Year 9 in 2003, results were above average. They were well above average in mathematics, and above average in English and science. The school met its target in Year 9 in 2003. Current standards of work in Year 9 are above average and given their average starting point on entry to the school, all groups of pupils achieve well. In mathematics, standards are well above average and in English, science and ICT they are above.

Achievement in science, ICT, music, design and technology, religious education and physical education is only satisfactory because teaching, whilst satisfactory overall in these subjects, is not yet strong enough to raise standards higher. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

Pupils' personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their moral and social development is very good and their cultural development good. Whilst their spiritual development is satisfactory, more could be done to enhance spiritual awareness in most subjects. Pupils have very good attitudes and behave well both in lessons and around the school. The standard of uniform is exemplary. Attendance, which was below average in the last academic year, has shown a big improvement since September.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Pupils learn well because teaching and learning are good. Teachers know their subject very well and plan interesting lessons that motivate pupils to want to learn. Teaching and learning are very good in English, geography and art and design. Assessment overall is satisfactory. The results of assessment are well used to set targets, and good systems are in place to track pupils' progress, including the progress of SEN pupils. However, there is inconsistent use of assessment in a minority of subjects and in physical education it is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is good and enables pupils to achieve well both academically and in their personal development. Vocational education and WRL are very well developed and careers guidance is good. Very good opportunities exist for extra-curricular activities. The care the school takes of its pupils is very good. Links with parents are good; links with the community and other schools and colleges are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher provides very good leadership and a purposeful sense of direction. She has successfully steered the school through a difficult period. Management is good. A small but effective senior team, recently enlarged, has provided good support. At subject level, leadership is at least satisfactory in all subjects and good or very good in more than half. Governance is very good. A very effective governing body is making a significant contribution to the work of the school not least by ensuring all statutory requirements are in place.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have a high regard for the school. They fully support school rules and policies, for example, with regard to uniform and homework. The overwhelming majority of pupils like this school and value the support that teachers and support staff provide.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise achievement in science, music, religious education and physical education in all years and in ICT in Year 11 and design and technology in Year 9.
- Improve the consistency of marking and assessment practice across all subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement overall is good for all groups of pupils. Current standards of work are above average in Year 9 and Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2000 to 2003 both boys and girls consistently achieved better results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 than pupils nationally.
- Boys achieve well above average results in English and mathematics at the end of Year 9 and do significantly better than boys nationally.
- Results of national tests in 2003 and 2004 indicated underachievement at the end of Year 11.
- By Year 11, standards are well above average in English, geography and art and design because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Literacy skills show good improvement in the first three years.
- Achievement for pupils in all years in science, music, religious education and physical education, and ICT (Year 11) and design and technology (Year 9) although satisfactory, could be raised further.
- Pupils with SEN and those identified as able, gifted and talented achieve well but higher-attaining pupils did not achieve as well as expected in GCSE in 2004.

Commentary

1. Based on their end of Year 6 test results and the school's own tests, Year 9 pupils who took their national tests in 2003 joined the school with average attainment. Their results in the 2003 tests were above average. Results were well above average in mathematics and above average in English and science. 2004 results in English were an improvement on 2003 but results in mathematics and science were not as good. Between 2000 and 2003 results improved at a faster rate than results nationally and the school successfully met its target for 2003. Over the three years 2001-2003, boys did better against all boys nationally than girls did against girls nationally, particularly in English and mathematics where boys achieved well above average results.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.4 (36.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	38.1 (37.3)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.2 (34.6)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 212 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Current standards in Year 9 are above average and pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make good progress as they move through the school. Standards in mathematics are well above average. In science standards are above average but achievement is only satisfactory because pupils are capable, with better teaching, of achieving similar standards as mathematics. Pupils' literacy skills are well above

average by Year 11 due to strong leadership in the promotion of high literacy standards and the many opportunities pupils have in lessons for reading and extended writing. Mathematical skills are above average particularly in data handling. Pupils' ICT skills are average and are used effectively in most subjects.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	52 (50)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (92)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	288.2 (35.1)	282.8 (34.7)

There were 201 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- GCSE results in 2004 were average. In 2003 and 2004 results declined from the high point of 2002 when they were above average. The trend of improvement in these two years has been below the national trend. Compared to similar schools' results and pupils' Year 9 test results, pupils did not achieve as well as they should have. 2004 results were well above average in English, English literature, geography and art and design. They were above average in mathematics and music, average in science and physical education, below average in history and drama and well below average in ICT. In the majority of subjects the proportion of pupils achieving the higher A* and A grades was below the national average. Current standards of work are above average because staffing is now more secure, with fewer temporary or supply teachers than in the previous two years. With good teaching and learning, pupils are making good progress in lessons and are well on the way to making up ground lost in the previous two years. Taking into account their average attainment on entry, their achievement in attaining above average standards by Year 11 is good.
- By Year 11, pupils are achieving very well in English, geography, and art and design. They are achieving well in mathematics, history, French, drama, citizenship and design and technology. In all other subjects, including science and ICT, their achievement is satisfactory.
- Pupils with special educational needs usually attain the standards that their teachers expect of them and often do better than expected in GCSE examinations. Their progress overall matches the good progress of other groups of pupils. They achieve well in relation to their standards on entry to the school because they receive good teaching and good support from teaching assistants. Pupils from ethnic minority groups achieve as well as other pupils.
- Provision for gifted and talented pupils is very good and systems are in place to identify pupils and monitor their progress. The achievement of gifted and talented pupils is very good in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography and physical education. In music, however, they are not sufficiently challenged. Extra-curricular provision for talented pupils is very good in PE. Pupils in French and science can take advantage of lectures at higher education institutions and in ICT pupils can take GCSE at the end of Year 10. The school recognises the contributions of their talented pupils through 'Fantastic Person' awards.
- In 2004, the percentage of pupils gaining the top A* and A grades was lower in all subjects except English, English literature, mathematics, geography and design and technology.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are very good. Their behaviour and personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Attendance was below average last year but is greatly improved this year.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy school and are conscientious.
- They relate very well to each other and their teachers.
- Pupils develop very good awareness of moral and social values.
- There is no whole-school policy to help teachers develop pupils' spirituality.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003-4 was 91.5%

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.1	School data	1.4
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

8. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and they participate in large numbers in the wide range of activities available to them. They are keen to do well and most co-operate well with their teachers. Pupils get on with each other and staff very well and are mutually supportive. Those in responsible positions such as 'blue ties' and buddies carry out their duties in a mature and trustworthy manner. Almost all pupils make good progress as independent learners and in becoming self-confident. The large majority of pupils behave very well but the standard of behaviour of a very small minority does not meet expectations. The very large number of exclusions last year was accounted for by approximately nine per cent of the pupils. The school's behaviour policy is very strictly applied and has been instrumental in substantially reducing the number of exclusions this year to date. The pupils confirm that the number of incidents of bullying is few and that it is effectively dealt with when reported. Attendance was a little below average last year, when the school was without an attendance officer for much of the time, but has been running at above average since September 2004. Pupils' punctuality is good. Although the proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is tiny, they are very well integrated into the school.
9. Pupils with special educational needs usually have very good attitudes towards their work. They are fully integrated in classes and generally behave well. They enjoy taking part in the wide range of out-of-school activities that the school provides.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1023	193	0
7	0	0
1	0	0
4	0	0
2	0	0
4	0	0

Black or Black British – African
Chinese

2
1

0	0
0	0

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

10. The personal development of pupils is good overall. Their spiritual development is satisfactory. Statutory requirements for collective worship are met but the quality of experience is inconsistent. Occasionally, Thought for the Day either does not take place in some classes, or is not well done.
11. Collective worship for year groups is good. The spiritual quality of assemblies is tangible and provides pupils with very good opportunities for reflection and prayer. In several subjects, such as English, music and art and design, teachers are sensitive to the opportunities presented in lessons and make a valuable contribution to pupils developing their own set of values and beliefs. In religious education pupils develop an appreciation of other faiths and values. More could be achieved across the school as a whole, however, and in most subjects teachers are missing opportunities because there is no whole school policy to guide them.
12. Moral development is very good. High standards of honesty and integrity are expected of pupils. Teachers insist that pupils behave responsibly, having regard to the feelings of others and taking responsibility for their own actions. The vast majority of pupils meet these expectations and are clearly learning right from wrong. Practical moral concern is shown in the ready response made to appeals for charity, many of which pupils choose themselves and for which they organise events. For example, during the inspection, pupils were raising an impressive amount of money, through voluntary giving, for the Tsunami appeal. Teachers' very good relationships with pupils are good examples of the principles the school promotes in respecting others.
13. Social development is very good. The school has a clear sense of community and pupils are encouraged to work cooperatively in lessons and take part in shared activities, for example, in the very good range of extra-curricular activities the school provides. Good opportunities exist for pupils to exercise leadership and take responsibility, for example, through the Buddy scheme, as Year Councillors or librarians. They are learning the skills of active participation in social life very effectively. The teachers and other staff, by their example, help pupils develop qualities of thoughtfulness, independence and self-respect. The personal, social and health education programme provides good opportunities for pupils to understand and debate social issues such as drug and alcohol abuse.
14. Pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils are encouraged to explore the values and assumptions of their own culture and that of others, for example, when celebrating Martin Luther King day and reflecting on the history of the struggle of black Americans to achieve equal rights. There are good opportunities to participate in events of a literary, dramatic or musical nature. Pupils are encouraged to develop an international outlook, particularly in Africa, and their achievement in this area was recognised in 2004 when the school was awarded International School status. Consideration of other cultures, particularly African culture, is very well developed in English, music and art and design. In religious education pupils develop an appreciation of religious beliefs and values of cultures other than their own, such as Hindu culture and Muslim culture. However, this multi-cultural dimension is not well developed across the school as a whole.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Pupils learn well because teaching is good. The curriculum is good. Pupils are very well cared for and supported. Links with parents are good; with the community and other schools and colleges they are very good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in English and art and design in all years, and in geography in Years 10 and 11 resulting in well above average standards in these subjects by Year 11.
- Teachers know their subject well and can communicate their expertise in ways that help pupils learn more effectively.
- Lesson planning is of high quality and ensures time for learning is used very effectively.
- The methods used to ensure all groups of pupils learn equally well are weak in a small number of subjects.
- The teaching, assessment and progress of SEN pupils is good.
- There are weaknesses in marking and assessment in English, mathematics, science, ICT and PE.
- Aspects of teaching in ICT, design and technology (Year 9), religious education, music and physical education are not strong enough to enable pupils to achieve better than average standards.
- There is good use of homework to support learning.

Commentary

15. Teaching is good overall. It is at least satisfactory in all subjects. Consequently pupils' learning overall is good and they achieve above average standards in Years 9 and 11. In English, art and design and geography (Years 10 and 11) teaching and learning are very good. Teaching in these subjects is characterised by teachers setting challenging, exciting work that makes demands on pupils and encourages them to want to learn more. In English and art and design, for example, teaching encourages pupils to make their own decisions and to develop a sense of curiosity, probing for new ideas and forms of expression. Consequently their learning in these subjects is very good. Overall, teachers know their subject very well. They communicate to pupils an enthusiasm for learning. Pupils respond by working hard and cooperating fully, learning new skills, developing their ideas and acquiring new knowledge and understanding in the subjects they study. Planning is very good. Teachers work hard to plan lessons that are interesting but challenging and set tasks that ensure that the time available for learning is used to the full. Pupils are well managed and teachers insist on high standards of behaviour. In science, ICT, PE, RE and music and, for Year 7 to 9 pupils, design and technology, teaching is only satisfactory chiefly because the methods teachers use to ensure the different groups of pupils in the class learn equally well are not focused enough. Too often, all pupils, regardless of ability, are asked to do the same work. Unlike in English, for example, pupils are not encouraged to work independently of the teacher and the work set is very much teacher directed. Homework is used effectively in the vast majority of subjects to support and extend the work in the classroom. The teaching and learning group, set up to promote and share good practice, has had a positive impact in improving the quality of teaching.
16. Pupils with special educational needs learn well overall because they want to succeed and because in the vast majority of subjects teaching styles and learning materials are carefully matched to their needs. Pupils gain confidence through the good relationships that exist in the classroom, and through the effective support they receive from teaching assistants and their fellow pupils.
17. The assessment and marking of pupils' work is satisfactory overall and has improved since the previous inspection. In most subjects assessment is used well and pupils are

regularly tested and the results used to set targets, for example in English in Years 10 and 11, French and drama. In PE, assessment and the marking of GCSE theory work is unsatisfactory. In the majority of subjects the results of tests are shared with pupils and give them a focus for improving their subsequent work. Marking practice across subjects is inconsistent. In

mathematics and science it is of variable quality but in art and design, French and design and technology, it is used effectively. Assessment procedures for SEN pupils are good. All statutory requirements for pupils with formal statements of SEN are met and the SEN team keeps accurate, well-organised records of pupils' progress right up to GCSE entry. Targets in individual education plans are in place but are not sufficiently focused to measure short-term improvement.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 115 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	21 (18.3%)	58 (50.4%)	33 (28.7%)	3 (2.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The school's curriculum is good overall. Opportunities for enrichment, including the programme of extra-curricular activities, are very good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for vocational courses and WRL in Years 10 and 11, through very good links with local colleges, is very good.
- Pupils benefit from a very good programme of enrichment activities, particularly in sport and music.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory in music and drama and restricts how teachers can teach and how effectively pupils learn; pupils with physical disabilities do not have full access to all parts of the school.
- There is good provision for SEN pupils.
- There is an above average number of computers to support pupils' learning.

Commentary

18. The curriculum has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. In addition to all national curriculum subjects, pupils in Years 7 to 9 study one of two foreign languages, and all classes have a weekly drama lesson. Boys do not have the opportunity to learn dance in Years 7 to 9, which restricts their opportunity to achieve high standards in this area. The vocational curriculum for Years 10 and 11 pupils is very good and includes vocational GCSE courses in business studies and leisure and tourism, which are taught in school, and in engineering and health and social care, taught at Wakefield College. In addition, NVQ courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy and ASDAN accredited courses are available for pupils for whom an entirely academic curriculum is not appropriate. A small number of pupils take up extended work placements, and receive learning support in mathematics and English.
19. Links with local colleges in providing accredited vocational courses are very good. During the inspection it was possible to talk to pupils and lecturers in engineering, health and social care and hairdressing and beauty therapy courses. Sample lessons were observed in health and social care and in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Lessons are well planned, and course work is properly completed and marked. In one

lesson, individual interviews took place in which the pupil's work was assessed. Pupils are highly motivated and respond well to the challenge of learning new skills.

20. Provision for WRL is good. Vocational courses are proving successful and the school monitors the outcomes of new initiatives very carefully. Pupils react positively, and instances of disaffection have decreased. In all subjects, WRL is included in all schemes of work, and aspects are taught as part of the personal and social education course in all year groups. The school is now working to extend the WRL initiatives further to ensure that pupils at all levels of ability are included.
21. Links with local businesses are well established. All pupils in Year 10 have two weeks' work experience, and two Industry "Taster" Days take place annually for pupils in Year 11. Pupils are given opportunities to attend an "Army Day" and a careers convention.
22. Opportunities for pupils to continue their learning outside of normal school hours are very good. A wide range of activities is on offer and these are well supported. An extensive programme of high quality sport is matched by broad and varied opportunities to develop creative and cultural interests. In English, for example, book and reading clubs and competitions in writing, poetry and debating supplement pupils' classroom learning. In music, the proportion of pupils who have instrumental tuition is twice the national average.
23. The provision of accommodation and resources is satisfactory. The number of well-qualified teachers is sufficient to teach all subjects of the national curriculum. They are sensibly deployed and all staff have an appropriate range of skills and experience to teach. Difficulties with recruitment and long-term staff absence, experienced in the last two years, have now been largely resolved though temporary teachers are still engaged in some areas. For example, there is no subject team leader in science. Since the previous inspection the school has significantly increased the number of support staff and provision is now good. Resources are generally adequate for all pupils. They are good in English, history and information and communication technology. There is a relatively high ratio of computers to pupils. However the number of interactive white boards, which would facilitate better teaching, is low. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. However, in music and drama, accommodation restricts the methods teachers can use to help pupils learn and pupils with physical disabilities do not have full access to all parts of the school. Accommodation is very good in science. Outside areas are good and well maintained. The interior is pleasant and welcoming. Many very good displays of pupils' work enhance the learning environment. The learning resource centre contributes well to pupils' education. However, the number of books it contains is below average for the number of pupils in the school.
24. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for through effective grouping arrangements, good classroom support and courses that are designed to meet their particular needs. Well-focused small group sessions help pupils to improve their literacy and mathematical skills and pupils gain social confidence when integrated in larger groups for practical subjects such as art and design, design and technology, drama and physical education. In Years 10 and 11 the life management skills course enables pupils to prepare for the world of work and to take responsibility for practical projects. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the needs of pupils. Resources in the learning support department are good but the accommodation is unsuitable for wheelchair access.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils are looked after very well and they receive very good support and guidance. They play a full part in all aspects of school life.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils feel safe and valued because of the way they are cared for.
- They receive very good information about their progress.
- Substantial academic and personal support is available to pupils at all levels.
- Transfer arrangements from primary schools are very good.

Commentary

25. Relationships between pupils and their teachers and helpers are constructive, respectful and trusting and pupils have confidence to request help with their work and about personal matters.
26. The arrangements for transfer from primary school are very good. Pre-transfer liaison is very strong. Each pupil has an individual transition plan, and on transfer, pupils are helped to gain confidence and reassurance by an older buddy scheme. Very good curriculum links exist with primary schools that help pupils settle in more readily when they start high school. Sports coaching programmes, performing arts group visits and French and Spanish lessons taught in primary schools all help pupils' continuity of learning between phases.
27. Pupils know that their views matter. Processes for seeking pupils' views on important issues that affect them directly are very effective. As well as school council opportunities, independent consultants have been engaged to survey what pupils think on important matters, such as the methods they prefer teachers to use to help them learn more effectively. They influence most matters of school life that directly affect them, for example, being involved in the appointment of new staff.
28. Extra help is always available, for example with homework and revision, from teachers and mentors, some of whom are parents. Pupils with particular difficulties receive very good support. Looked after children each have an individual educational plan and "postcards home" keep parents and carers fully informed.
29. Comprehensive arrangements for health, safety and child protection are in place and very well implemented. Teachers and other staff are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are carefully supervised in a safe environment at all times. Pastoral care leaders and tutors provide very good continuity of care. External specialist agencies provide relevant services to the school. The school exercises commendable care and protection for pupils in all categories.
30. The marking of work and the progress tracking system enable pupils to have a good understanding of how they are achieving in most subjects. Planners are used very well to record achievements and targets and pupils are generally clear about what they have to do to improve and to attain their desired examination results. However, in some subjects assessment does not clearly identify what pupils have to do to improve and aspects of marking are weak in mathematics, science and ICT.
31. Procedures for health, safety, child protection and looked after children are well implemented. Pastoral care leaders and tutors provide very good continuity of care. External specialist agencies provide relevant services to the school.
32. Good advice and guidance are given regarding subject choices and opportunities beyond the school. Pupils are able to sample vocational courses at a college of further education. A Connexions service provides good advice regarding career paths.
33. The school gives good guidance and support to pupils with special educational needs. The systems for identifying and monitoring pupils in need of extra help are very efficient and teachers are given clear information on particular needs and support arrangements as well as

useful advice on suitable learning activities. Some of the targets on pupils' individual learning plans are too general and are not sufficiently precise for staff to form an accurate appraisal of pupils' short term progress. Support staff, including mentors, work together very effectively, and are committed to the well being of the pupils in their charge. The school's excellent partnership with the local support services enables pupils to benefit from specialised help when necessary.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership between school and parents is good. Links with other schools and the community are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Educational links with other schools contribute very well to learning.
- Visits and community involvement enrich pupils' learning and personal development.
- Parents think well of the school and they are well informed about pupils' progress.

Commentary

34. Parents are pleased with the quality of education and care that is provided. They are provided with good information about their children's progress and more than adequate opportunities to consult with teachers. Communications are good although the school correctly recognises that technology is not yet effectively used and parents could receive more guidance about how to more effectively support their own children. Newsletters regularly reflect the life and work of the school. Parents contribute well to pupils' learning through planners and some, unusually, by mentoring. Parents' views are taken account of via an externally organised audit and well-attended forums with the headteacher. The school arranges varied experiences for primary pupils in sport, performing arts and modern languages. Connections with other schools extend to Europe and Africa. The school works very closely with a partner secondary school, sharing vision, expertise and resources very effectively. Arrangements with colleges of further and higher education are very good, offering support for mentoring in school and preparation for the next stage of pupils' education or career. Very good links exist with universities through the school's graduate teacher programme.
35. Numerous visits, including visits abroad, supplement learning and contribute to pupils' personal and cultural development. Links with the community are very good. Employers and an industrial organisation provide advice, support and experiences in preparation for life beyond school. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 undertake practical work at a local special school as part of their WRL course and social skills are developed through links with local businesses, for example, through visits to local restaurants. Involvement with a local hospital, hospice, senior citizens organisation and local charities provide pupils with community care opportunities.
36. The school has a good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents contribute to reviews of their children's progress and are pleased with their children's achievement. The strong links with local primary schools and colleges result in transitional arrangements that are very effective, so most pupils settle confidently into new routines when they move from one phase of education to another.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. Leadership of the school by the headteacher is very good and the leadership of key staff is good. Management of the school is good. Governance of the school is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher ensures that the school community understand the goals they are working towards.
- The governing body has been very effective in helping the school move forward.
- The leadership and management of SEN provision is good.
- Whilst the quality of middle management is very good in some subjects there are weaknesses
- The leadership team provides effective support to the headteacher, staff and pupils.
- Financial management is good.

Commentary

37. The very good leadership of the headteacher, and good support from the senior leadership team, subject team leaders and pastoral staff, are important factors in the school's success. The headteacher provides inspiring leadership. Her clarity of vision and high aspirations has enabled the school to make significant progress in its recent development. During the last two years, when unavoidable staff absences created immense difficulties in some subject areas, the school has kept its sense of purpose and is now back on track with rising standards and achievement. The headteacher is very accessible to parents, consults widely, for example through open forums, and is willing to listen and act on parents' concerns. She is clear about where the school needs to develop and planning both in the short and long term is very good. Weak areas have been identified and changes in staffing brought about to affect an improvement. In subjects with weak results, extra support and monitoring have been put in place. Effective teams such as the teaching and learning group and continuing professional development group have been created and have had a major impact on maintaining and improving standards of teaching and learning. Leadership is willing to listen to pupils' concerns and act upon them. Staff share a common purpose, grounded in the school's mission statement "Success for All".
38. The quality of leadership throughout the school is good. Overall, subject team leaders are committed to pupils achieving high academic standards and pastoral heads to the pursuance of excellence in pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Leadership and management are very good in English, geography and art and design, and good in history, design and technology, citizenship and drama. In French, leadership is very good and management is satisfactory. Leadership is good and management satisfactory in mathematics and science. Whilst leadership and management are satisfactory in ICT, music, PE, and religious education they need to be more effective in improving teaching and aspects of marking and assessment, in order to raise standards and achievement further.
39. The school runs smoothly and efficiently because good management systems are in place for pupils and staff. A cycle of self-evaluation and review is well established and has resulted in improvements in a number of key areas, not least in better curriculum opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Results of national examinations are carefully analysed to ensure pupils are achieving as highly as possible and targets are set for improved performance. Performance management is used effectively to bring about improvement, and arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers and teachers' professional development are very good. The school has recognised the opportunities afforded by the Workforce Remodelling agenda and plans for its

implementation are well underway. The management of subjects is good overall and very good in English, art and design and geography.

40. Governance is very good. Governors are committed to the school, have taken relevant training and are well informed about the school's performance and provision. They play a vital role in determining the direction of the school and the overall planning processes. They ensure that statutory requirements are met. They involve themselves well by challenging aspects of the school's results and operations and each one is assigned as a critical friend to a department or aspect of the school's work where they provide very effective support and encouragement.

41. The quality of leadership and management of special educational needs is good. The acting coordinator and the team leader responsible for the life management skills course in Years 10 and 11 work together well. They have a strong sense of purpose and a clear vision for future development. They receive good support from the designated governor. Statutory requirements in relation to pupils with statements of special educational need are met, and the specific grant is used appropriately. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The number of support staff has been increased and provision is now good. The school is responding well to the challenge posed by the increasing number of pupils who come into the school with significant learning needs.
42. The management of the school's financial affairs is good. Principles of best value are applied well. Appropriate use is made of funding for pupils with SEN. Current barriers to an improvement in standards are unsatisfactory accommodation in music and drama.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	326,857
Total expenditure	340,559
Expenditure per pupil	3,148

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	60,185
Balance carried forward to the next	(76,830)

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Overall, provision for English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Speaking and listening skills are well above average.
- The proportion of pupils gaining A* at GCSE is very high.
- Very good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes ensure they achieve very well.
- Some teachers do not use assessment information well enough in Years 7 to 9.
- Leadership is innovative and enthusiastic.

Commentary

43. Results in tests for pupils aged 14 were above the average attained by pupils nationally in 2003, having been well above in 2002. Unconfirmed results for 2004 indicate an improvement on 2003. Girls regularly outperform boys. However, in national gender comparisons since 2001, boys' results are further above the average attained by boys than are the girls' results when compared with the average attained by all girls. In GCSE English in 2004, results of both boys and girls were well above the national average. They were also well above in literature, but less than half of the pupils was entered for this examination. The proportion of pupils gaining the top grade of A* in both English and English literature was well above average.
44. Standards of work seen are above average in Year 9 and well above in Year 11. Speaking and listening skills are well above average in all years. Pupils talk confidently about a wide range of issues as well as the topics and themes they are studying. They clearly explain and justify their opinions and are prepared to modify them as a result of group or class discussions. Reading skills improve to well above average in Year 11. Pupils practise their deductive and inferential skills in most lessons and all but the lowest attainers can easily read a variety of texts to obtain information. In the newly introduced GCSE media studies course, pupils already show a good understanding of media concepts. Narrative writing is well above average in all years; it is lively and original and often shows flair and creativity, especially in the effective use of figurative language to enrich descriptions. Lower attaining pupils, especially in Years 7 to 9, have problems writing to inform and explain and do not readily distinguish between standard and colloquial English.
45. Year 9 pupils entered the school with average standards and their current above average standards represents good achievement. By the end of Year 11 standards are well above average. This represents very good overall achievement by boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds, including pupils identified as gifted and talented and higher-attaining pupils. Those with special educational needs are very well supported by teaching assistants and individual needs are clearly met in teachers' lesson planning. High attaining pupils are effectively challenged, both by teachers'

questioning and activities designed to extend them further. Achievement is strongly helped by pupils' very positive attitudes, and daily motivation and guidance from their teachers. Additionally, new curriculum plans help Year 7 pupils settle in quickly, provide regular library lessons in Years 7 to 9, and a good range of information and

communication technology and media activities for all. In Year 11, all pupils now study both GCSE language and literature and, in Year 10, all take language and media studies or literature. Considerable benefits also come from such activities as regular theatre trips, visiting writers, book fairs, poetry and writing competitions, drama, debating and the Reading Club.

46. Teaching and learning are very good overall and particularly strong in Years 10 and 11. This is because teachers expect high standards of behaviour and work. They plan carefully to meet all pupils' needs and use a wide range of methods to involve them actively in their own learning. Homework is used effectively. Lively, stimulating, challenging and enjoyable teaching encourages pupils to make their own decisions, to be inquisitive and confident. However, not all teachers make effective use of national curriculum level information when planning and marking work in Years 7 to 9. Consequently, their pupils are not shown exactly what they must do to gain higher levels. In Years 10 and 11, the use of assessment information to set pupils' targets and to help them to evaluate their own work and progress is impressive.
47. The leadership and management of this comparatively new and enthusiastic team of English specialists are very good. The staffing difficulties experienced in the previous year have not been allowed to affect results or achievement. Leadership sets a fine example of commitment, innovation and dedication. Responsibilities are appropriately delegated; teaching regularly monitored, new staff well-inducted and departmental development priorities clearly identified. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Pupils with special needs now receive high quality support and, because teaching is consistently at least good, standards and achievement have risen. Lesson planning is very good in Years 10 and 11 and, since September 2004, the new curriculum offers two GCSE courses to all pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. Standards on entry are above those found nationally. Most pupils speak, read and write well for their age. They have a wide vocabulary and are conscientious about the presentation of their work. Speaking and listening skills are above average throughout the school, but in a few subjects, such as history, religious education and design and technology, they are underdeveloped. Most departments provide regular opportunities for reading and extended writing. Much writing is technically accurate and pupils use and understand each subject's special vocabulary well. Because overall provision is good, pupils achieve well and attainment is well above average by the end of Year 11.
49. Overall, teaching is good. Most heads of subjects monitor literacy planning and teaching, but there are a few inconsistencies across departments, such as in the quality and usefulness of correcting. The librarian, English staff and subject team leaders, together with parent and pupil mentors, provide high quality help for pupils with specific literacy needs, and are also working to promote a reading for pleasure culture across the school. Overall there is very good leadership and strong management of whole school literacy.

Modern foreign languages

French was the main focus subject for the inspection. Spanish and German were sampled. In the Spanish and German lessons good teaching promoted good learning. Pupils' achievement was good in both languages.

Overall, provision in modern languages is **good**.

French

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use assessment information very well to help pupils improve.
- The range of specific teaching strategies for particular groups of pupils is insufficiently broad.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge, good planning, and good use of time are producing a good response from pupils and leading to above average standards in lessons.
- ICT resources are unsatisfactory.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils and among pupils are very good.

Commentary

50. In 2003, the percentage of pupils reaching expected National Curriculum levels in Year 9 was broadly in line with national figures. Girls performed better than boys, and better than girls nationally. Current standards of work in Year 9 are above average and pupils achieve well. Pupils are able to refer to past, present and future events; they can take part in structured conversations and give personal opinions; they can write short paragraphs using extended complex sentences. Their achievement is good.
51. In 2004, the percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades at GCSE in French was below the national average but was a small improvement over 2003 and in line with the national trend. Boys performed below the average for boys nationally, and girls' performance was broadly in line with girls nationally. The gap between the genders is wider than the national gap. The proportion of pupils gaining A* and A grades was below the national average. Overall, French was one of the subjects that performed less well compared with other subjects. Standards seen in Year 11 are above average and overall, pupils achieve well. They can produce extended, coherent pieces of writing referring to different time frames, expressing and justifying opinions. They can deliver oral presentations and engage in extended conversations. Standards are higher than 2004 GCSE results might have suggested because staffing issues have been resolved. In addition, the comprehensive assessment procedures introduced by the subject team leader is setting pupils targets and showing them how to improve their work.
52. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and no time is wasted on non-learning activities. They know their subject well and use target language judiciously so that pupils learn effectively and accurately. Effective use is made of homework to support learning. Lessons are well structured and levels of challenge are generally appropriate. However, the tasks set do not always take into account the different needs and aptitudes of the pupils in the class, for example, higher-attaining pupils or pupils with special educational needs, and are not always sufficiently focused on individual needs. Relationships in lessons are very good, and a positive climate of mutual respect exists. Consequently pupils work hard with concentration and application and learn well.
53. Leadership in the subject is very good. The team leader is a relatively recent appointment, and inherited a situation in which instability of staffing was undoubtedly having a negative effect on standards and results. There is a relentless focus on driving up standards, and a clear vision for the future of the subject. Much has been

achieved in a short time, introducing a thorough and constructive range of assessment procedures, monitoring the quality of teaching both formally and informally and involving pupils in the process. A strong team ethos is evident in the department. Management of the subject is good. Comprehensive schemes of work, which are appropriately pitched and sequenced, support teaching well. Clear systems have been introduced which enable teachers to share good practice and help pupils improve through better knowledge of examination requirements. These have yet to feed through into improved results.

54. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. As a result of the recent unstable staffing situation the department has been unable to sustain consistently good results. There has been some improvement in the provision of extended reading, and opportunities for pupils to use ICT, although these are currently restricted by out-of-date resources.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Pupils make good progress in acquiring new knowledge and skills.
- Pupils are not sufficiently involved in the development of ideas and exploration of new topics in discussion sessions.
- Relationships are very good and are reflected in pupils' very positive attitudes.
- Monitoring is not ensuring consistency of provision and the routinely sharing of many examples of good practice.
- There are weaknesses in marking and assessment policies and practice.

Commentary

55. In 2003, overall results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. As a result of staffing difficulties, results dipped in 2004 after a trend of improvement above the national average. The 2004 GCSE results were above the national average and significantly higher than 2003. In particular, the proportion of pupils obtaining A* and A grades was greater than that seen nationally and represented an upward trend over the previous four years. The overall GCSE grades attained by most boys and girls were significantly higher in mathematics than in their other subjects. In both Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations, the relative performance of boys and girls over recent years has fluctuated and there is no consistent difference in performance.
56. Current standards of work in Year 9 are well above average. Pupils' grasp of mathematical concepts is good and enables them to use their prior learning in the development of new ideas. Analysis of pupils' work and lesson observations indicate that they make good progress, both in individual lessons and over time. This represents good achievement for both boys and girls. Pupils achieve well because of good teaching, improvements in planning and the positive impact of national strategies. Standards of work in Year 11 are above average representing good achievement from their Year 7 average starting point. Pupils meet common topics at levels appropriate to their needs. For example, all pupils calculate angles and lengths in a variety of contexts whilst higher-attaining pupils and pupils identified as gifted and talented competently apply the sine and cosine rules at levels required to attain the highest GCSE grades. The quality and quantity of work of average and below average attaining pupils is greater than that usually observed. However, some pupils have difficulty with recall of their learning and this is exacerbated by a lack of structured setting out of written solutions. Overall, there are no discernible differences in the work of boys and girls. The results already obtained in GCSE modules indicate a further rise in the proportion of pupils on track to attain the higher A* and A grades. In all years, pupils with special educational needs make good progress and receive good

support from teaching assistants. Gifted and talented pupils achieve very well. Homework is used effectively throughout.

57. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Generally, teachers have high expectations of both work and behaviour and this is reflected in the very good relationships and mutual respect between teachers and pupils and between pupils. Consequently almost all lessons

are conducted in a harmonious and purposeful atmosphere that promotes good learning. Preparation and planning are thorough and reflect teachers' good subject knowledge and expertise and the positive impact of recent national strategies. Except for a small number of isolated cases, where the negative behaviour of a few pupils strains the teachers' pupil management skills, pupils' sustain very good levels of concentration. The least effective part of lessons is in discussions. This is because pupils are not sufficiently involved in the question and answer sessions even though, when given the opportunity, they display good speaking and listening skills. Consequently, the potential for pupils and teachers to jointly assess learning and develop ideas and explore new topics is not fully realised. The quality of the marking of pupils' work varies and there is a lack of consistency in routine grading and recording. This limits the impact of successful and high profile target setting for tracking pupils' progress and the speed with which any instances of underachievement are identified. The use of ICT to support learning is satisfactory.

58. The leadership of the department is good. In spite of some unavoidable staffing difficulties experienced in the previous two years, the quality of leadership has clearly laid solid foundations for maintaining the good levels of performance. Current strategies and support are successful in minimising the impact of recent staffing difficulties. Management is satisfactory. The existing team of teachers is effective, but monitoring is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistency of provision and the sharing of many examples of good practice. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is good and includes a significant rise in performance in public examinations.

Mathematics across the curriculum

59. Pupils' competence in mathematics in all Year groups is above average. In a range of subjects above average data handling skills are used effectively to analyse and illustrate information. Competence with formulae, graphs, measurement and shape is above average and supports learning in science, art and design and technology. Although the use of mathematical skills is not promoted in every subject there are no instances of weaknesses impeding progress in other areas.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strategies for improving standards are good and are beginning to work.
- Teachers and support staff work well together as a team.
- Teachers manage their classes well.
- Difficulties with recruitment have led to temporary staffing arrangements.
- Day-to-day marking in Years 7,8 and 9 could be more effective.
- The proportion of pupils gaining higher A*/A grades is below the national average.

Commentary

60. National Curriculum test results in Year 9 in 2003 were above average compared to the country as a whole but below average in terms of what might have been expected from pupils' prior attainment. Test results in 2004 fell significantly, particularly at level

6, due in part to temporary staffing arrangements. Pupils in Year 11 in 2004 took a variety of GCSE courses including Double Award and separate sciences. Results overall were broadly in line with the national average for grades A*-C and A*-G but well below average in terms of higher A*/A grades. Results in 2003 were similar and indicated that pupils performed better in their other GCSE subjects than in science.

61. Current standards of work in Year 9 are above average. This represents satisfactory achievement. For example, higher-attaining pupils have a very secure knowledge and understanding of light and its properties. They can explain successfully why light changes direction when it goes from a less dense to a more dense medium such as glass. Standards in Year 11 are also above average. This represents an improvement on the most recent GCSE results and is a result of more stable staffing and more effective teaching and learning strategies. For example, higher-attaining pupils can explain the difference between polar and geo-stationary orbits. Lower-attaining pupils can give some uses of satellites in these types of orbit. In chemistry there is an increasing understanding of atomic structure and its relationship to chemical reactions. These standards represent satisfactory achievement. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall; they make good progress in lessons where they receive support from teaching assistants and mentors.
62. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although no unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection, the proportion of good teaching was less than that seen nationally. However, teaching and learning have improved recently due to the timely intervention and support of departmental and school management. Lessons are generally well planned so that it is clear to pupils what they are to learn. Pupils' behaviour is good so that work is generally more productive. There is an insistence on high standards of behaviour that is leading to better work in class and higher standards. However time management at times is weak, resulting in pupils making slower progress than they might. Some starter activities could be more relevant to the main activity and more emphasis placed on developing pupils' independent learning skills. Although pupils' work is regularly marked in Years 7,8 and 9 it could be more effective if it indicated the level that pupils were working at and how they could improve.
63. Leadership of the department is good. Although there is currently no subject team leader, the headteacher has a clear vision for the future. Strategies for improvement, for example ensuring that GCSE coursework is secure and schemes of work are appropriate to pupils' needs, as well as a more effective team of teachers and support workers are improving standards in the subject. Despite there being no subject team leader in place, management of the department on a day-to-day basis is satisfactory. Technical support has improved and is making a significant difference to the department's work. Since the previous inspection improvement has been satisfactory. The department is in a good position to move forward.

Information and communication technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes.
- Good resources and technical support.
- Good extra support given to pupils by teachers.
- Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 do not benefit fully from teachers' marking and assessment.

Commentary

64. Results of teacher assessment in 2004 for Year 9 pupils indicated average attainment. Results were an improvement on 2003 but were still average overall. Pupils enter the school with average ICT skills. Current standards of work in Year 9 are above average representing good achievement for pupils of all abilities. Pupils demonstrate above average standards when completing basic tasks in word processing, creating power point presentations, using spreadsheets and using computers for control. They have good design skills when using PowerPoint for presentations and can create interesting slides inserting text, pictures and movie animation.

65. GCSE results in 2004 were well below average and significantly lower than in 2003. Girls achieved slightly better results than did boys. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher A* and A grades was half the national average. Current standards seen in Year 11 are average overall. Given pupils' average attainment on entry pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards in presenting and communicating information are above average. Pupils' awareness of the social, economic, ethical and moral issues surrounding the use of new technologies is average. Lower attaining pupils struggle with the theoretical aspects of the course, particularly when having to complete coursework. In Year 10 all pupils take a GCSE course. They are benefiting from a change in examination syllabus and from having had weekly classes in ICT in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils in Year 10 are making good progress in examination work and improving their knowledge of the world of work. Consequently standards seen in Year 10 are above average.
66. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good classroom management skills and maintain positive relationships with their pupils. Consequently pupils behave very well and enjoy learning. Lessons are well planned with an emphasis on pupils analysing and evaluating their work. However, because of the way their work is stored and marks recorded, pupils do not receive enough feed back on how well they are doing in order to improve, and their progress is not sufficiently monitored. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject. They have a good understanding of GCSE examination requirements and are generous in the time they offer to pupils outside of lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11, where pupils can improve their performance through help and support with coursework projects.
67. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A good team spirit has been established and there has been good improvement in resources, technical support, the use of control technology and the time allocated to ICT since the previous inspection. Resources are now above average. For a school of this size, the school has an above average number of computers. The quality of technical support is good. Teachers are beginning to make use of data to analyse performance and set targets but the monitoring of pupils' work, and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and how pupils learn, whilst satisfactory overall, could be more regular and thorough.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

68. Overall, pupils have average ICT skills which they use competently across subjects. They use data logging effectively in science. In design and technology there is good use of ICT in most aspects of the subject. In geography and leisure and tourism, pupils use ICT for research, presentations and graphing. In English, pupils use word processing and desktop publishing to complete coursework, to create display work and to research projects using the Internet. SEN pupils use an independent learning system to effectively to improve their basic skills. In all other subjects, with the exception of art and music (in Years 7 to 9) where ICT is underused, the use of ICT is satisfactory. There has been good improvement in the use of ICT to support learning across subjects since the previous inspection. All teachers have laptops and are more confident in using ICT in the classroom. Resources have improved, particularly in mathematics, science and design and technology.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are taught the basics of geography very well.
- Discussion skills are well developed.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils encourage very good attitudes to the subject, motivating pupils to high levels of achievement.
- Lessons are creatively planned and skilfully taught so that pupils approach their work with enthusiasm and enjoyment.
- Marking in Years 7 to 9 could be more helpful in showing pupils what to do to improve their work.

Commentary

69. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average and consistent with previous years results; they were the best in the school. Overall, pupils did better in geography than in their other subjects. Although girls out-performed boys in 2004, boys did better than boys nationally. The proportion of pupils who achieved the higher A* and A grades was twice the national average.
70. Standards of work in Year 9 are above average and pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, achieve well. Pupils receive a good grounding in basic geographical skills, knowledge and understanding. They use scales confidently to calculate distances and plot cross-sections. Pupils learn to consider issues, for example health and living conditions in shantytowns, from different perspectives in small group discussions. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have good discussion skills and can contribute to a high level of debate. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are well above average and pupils' achievement is very good. Pupils are able to discuss their work in detail and write accurate explanations of the reasons for earthquakes and tsunamis and their impact on human settlement. They have a very good understanding of technical vocabulary which they use confidently and accurately. Between Years 7 and 11 pupils' achievement is very good, particularly for higher-attaining pupils and those identified as gifted and talented.
71. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 where pupils have a better understanding of how well they are doing and what they have to do to succeed. Work is focused on examination requirements and pupils are keen to succeed. Consequently they learn very well. Common features of the best teaching are expert subject knowledge and very good planning, with resources skilfully employed to encourage pupils to develop awareness of geography in current affairs. ICT is used well in Years 10 and 11 to produce high quality coursework. Marking in Years 7 to 9 is regular but does not always provide informative feedback to pupils on how they could improve. The results of teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 are shared with pupils and used to set targets. The consistent implementation of the positive discipline programme has led to high standards of behaviour and mutual respect within lessons. Relevant homework is regularly set.
72. The leadership and management of the department are very good and are providing a clear vision for the future development of the subject. There are very good systems in place for performance review and assessment. Whilst monitoring overall is good, more emphasis on lessons in Years 7 to 9 would ensure the quality of teaching and learning continues to sustain pupils' good achievement in these three years.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good: examination results have risen from average to well above average.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of boys in Year 11 has improved and is now good.
- Analysis of results is good and is used well to set subject targets for improvement.
- Teachers sometimes spend too long talking at pupils.
- Higher-attaining pupils have good extended writing skills.
- Lessons are interesting and well planned.
- Targets for improvement do not give sufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.

Commentary

73. Standards in Year 9 are above average. Pupils can describe key features of the periods they study, make links between the past and the present and give reasons to explain causes and consequences. They are weaker at the independent evaluation of historical sources. Girls' written work is generally of a higher standard than boys. Higher-attaining pupils, both boys and girls, write well and at length. Pupils are making progress in acquiring new knowledge and skills and their achievement is good. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs matches that of their peers because of good support from teaching assistants and appropriate activities set in lessons.
74. GCSE results in 2004 were below average. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher A* and A grades was lower than average. Boys performed poorly but girls' results matched the national average for A* -C grades. A significant number of pupils did less well than predicted. This was mainly due to failure to complete course-work. The results have been analysed and new procedures put in place to ensure course-work is completed in time.
75. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average. This improvement is due to good teaching, which is focused clearly on raising standards, and to good management, which is effectively implementing the changes indicated. Pupils can apply subject knowledge to their analysis of written sources and are developing good study skills. They are weaker in oral work and often lack confidence in explaining in lessons what they are able to write about in essays. Boys' standards have improved significantly and among higher-attaining pupils there is no significant difference between boys and girls. Most pupils are making progress in their knowledge of history, in the ability to use sources and in their written work. Achievement is good for both lower and higher-attaining pupils. Good support enables pupils with special educational needs to play a full part in lessons and their achievement is good.
76. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' good subject-knowledge enables them to plan lessons that develop pupils' understanding and skill, setting them challenging but interesting tasks. Pupils are diligent in their work and are positive in their attitude. Where teaching is only satisfactory, the pace of the lesson is slow, teachers spend too much time in explanation and do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to express and defend their own opinions. Assessment is regular, often detailed, but targets for improvement do not always indicate clearly what pupils must do to improve

and there is some inconsistency in their use. Homework is set regularly and supports pupils' learning in the classroom.

77. Leadership is good. The subject team leader has identified clear targets for improvement, particularly at GCSE, and is providing effective leadership to an enthusiastic team. The staffing difficulties experienced in the previous year have been successfully resolved. Management is good. Good analysis is been made of pupils' GCSE performance from which targets are set and plans to raise standards put in place. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in the range and quality of resources available to pupils and in the use of ICT.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

- The subject is making a distinctive contribution to pupils' spiritual development.
- Targets to help pupils improve their work are not clear enough.
- Pupils can express their own views and opinions about important questions of justice and morality.
- Written work lacks detail.

Commentary

78. GCSE results in the full course in 2004 were below average. Girls' results were average and boys' below average. The proportion of pupils from Year 11 entered was below average. Results in the short course were average. These are particularly commendable results since more than three quarters of the year group took the examination and their attainment on entry to the school was average.
79. Standards in Year 11 are average overall. In the Year 11 full course standards are below average. Pupils have a basic knowledge of the ethical teaching of the religions they study but have difficulty in explaining this clearly and applying it to the moral issues they discuss. They are stronger at expressing personal viewpoints but written work is often short and lacks sufficient detail to present convincing arguments for and against the views they hold. Numbers are too low to make any significant comparisons between the standards of boys and girls. Standards in the Year 11 short course are average. Most pupils can explain their own views clearly but are less secure in discussing the ethical teaching of the religions they study. The written work of girls is usually of a higher standard than boys, but this is not the case with higher-attaining pupils. Most pupils are making progress in understanding the influence of belief on behaviour and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the good support they receive from teaching assistants.
80. Standards in Year 9 are average and match the expectations of the agreed syllabus. Most pupils can express clearly their own views about ethical questions but are weaker at drawing out and applying the teaching of religious traditions on these issues. The written work of girls is of a higher standard than that of boys. Most are making progress in understanding the complexity of moral choices and their achievement is satisfactory. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and where there is support from teaching assistants it is good.
81. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned to engage the interest of pupils and introduce them to a range of moral questions. They are less effective, however, in helping pupils to explore the range of religious teaching and practice that relate to these issues. Where teaching is only satisfactory teachers over-explain points and the pace of lessons is slow with insufficient variety of activity. Where teaching is good, high expectations and challenging but interesting tasks result in pupils making good learning gains in knowledge and understanding of religious issues. However, there needs to be more of this good teaching if standards are to improve. Pupils' good attitudes support their learning and they attend lessons willing to learn. Pupils' work is regularly marked but targets for improvement are not clear enough and do not reflect the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

82. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The curriculum now meets statutory requirements but the scheme of work needs to be reviewed against the requirements of the agreed syllabus in order to bring it up to date. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Staffing difficulties

experienced over the past two years have now been overcome. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development through encouraging pupils to reflect on the beliefs and values of people of different faiths, and helping pupils understand how different religions value and promote fairness and justice.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Design and technology was inspected in Years 7 to 9; textiles was the focus area for inspection in Years 10 and 11.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Lessons are well planned.
- Tasks are set that do not always take into account the needs of individuals.
- Assessment procedures help pupils learn.
- In Years 7 to 9, pupils' completed work often lacks originality because the link between designing, personal investigation and making, is sometimes insecure.
- Between Years 7 and 11 pupils achieve well.
- Accommodation in electronics restricts the methods teachers can use to help pupils learn.

Commentary

83. Standards of work in Year 9 are average. Pupils' designing skills have improved since the previous inspection and are now above average. Pupils' folios contain careful records of design briefs, research and ideas. Their investigative skills are below average. Pupils' finished work does not always reflect their designs, and folios fail to explain the reasons for the changes. Pupils make good use of computers to present their work, develop designs and manufacture prototypes. Overall their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enter school with very limited knowledge of design and technology but their standards of work in Year 11 are above average and their achievement is good. Pupils identified as gifted and talented and higher-attaining pupils do very well. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. GCSE results in textiles in 2004 were above average and similar to recent years. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher A* or A grades was above the national average. Research in textiles is often innovative and centred on popular fashion and pupils have above average design skills. However, their use of technical vocabulary to discuss or explain their work is only average.
84. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and present their subject well, generating interest and cooperation. The basic skills of technology are well taught with clear guidance on the safe use and care of tools and equipment. Lessons are well planned with clear introductions and demonstrations. However, in Years 7 to 9, not enough thought is given to providing work specifically matched to the needs of the different ability groups within the class. Also in these three years, the ends of lessons are less well planned for and often over-run without opportunities for pupils to reflect on their progress. Teachers circulate in lessons very well, prompting and encouraging pupils, which helps maintain pace and productivity. The assessment of pupils' work is good although spelling errors occasionally go uncorrected. Information from assessment is used to track pupils' progress and provide a

clear view of how well they are doing. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 because pupils have greater independence to develop their own ideas. Marking and assessment are focused on examination requirements and pupils are told clearly what they have to do to improve their work.

85. The department is well led and managed. Subject documentation and the analysis of the subject's performance are very thorough and focused on raising standards. Whilst accommodation is satisfactory overall, the electronics room is too small for large classes, making group work activities difficult to manage. Resources are satisfactory but the equipment used in resistant materials is out of date. Ventilation in the food room is inadequate, especially in warmer weather. Resources for learning are average overall except for computer-aided design and manufacturing resources, which are below average.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Drama

Provision for drama is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement are rising since the introduction of the new national curriculum.
- Pupils show confidence and imagination in their presentations.
- Facilities are inadequate and inhibit pupils from reaching higher standards.
- Drama contributes well to students' social, moral and cultural development.
- Writing skills are weak in comparison to pupils' performing skills.

Commentary

86. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were below average. No pupils entered attained an A* or A grade. Two thirds of the pupils entered were girls. In previous years only small numbers were entered and it is not possible, therefore, to discern trends over time.
87. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average and are rising now that all pupils have a weekly lesson. Pupils soon learn that drama is a discipline; consequently, they listen, concentrate and respond enthusiastically to an imaginative range of tasks, confidently devising presentations using a range of basic drama techniques. Ensemble work is good in Year 9, though some pupils are unaware of the impact of voice, facial expressions and body language on audiences.
88. Overall, standards are average in Year 11. High attaining pupils display above average acting skills and a strong awareness of place, occasion and audience. However, although they have a secure understanding of dramatic terms, they are not thorough enough when writing. The writing of middle and lower attaining pupils is often descriptive, rather than analytical, and contains few references to dramatic styles and theatrical conventions. Inadequate written responses, rather than performance skills, lower many pupils' overall standards.
89. Good achievement in Years 7 to 9 is helped by pupils' enjoyment of drama and the emphasis on specific skills and self-evaluation in the recently introduced National Curriculum. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11 given pupils' below average

standards at the end of Year 9. Standards are improving as teachers target pupils' writing skills. Drama makes a worthwhile contribution to all pupils' social and moral awareness, by considering issues such as bullying and homelessness. A full programme of school productions and theatre visits provides valuable performance opportunities and experiences, as well as considerable cultural enrichment. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good in-class

support and make good progress. However, because there is only one drama studio, many lessons are taught in unsuitable classrooms. This limits the range of dramatic experiences and the opportunities for pupils to use technology in their work and puts a ceiling on what pupils can achieve.

90. Teaching and learning are good. Classes are well managed and pupils have frequent opportunities to devise, solve problems and be creative. All lessons cover important areas of trust and teamwork and pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own and others' performances in an objective, supportive and positive way. This fosters self-confidence and esteem and pupils learn from each other. Characterisation and presentation skills are well taught, but there is yet insufficient emphasis on writing skills or dramatic styles, conventions and traditions. The performance part of the national curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is thoroughly covered, but not the making and responding elements. New teaching plans are helping to redress this.
91. Leadership and management are good. The small team of committed specialists shares the infectious enthusiasm and energy of the new team leader. Self-review and development planning are good and assessment information is well used to set class targets. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Schemes of work and an assessment policy are now in place and there is no longer any unsatisfactory teaching: however, GCSE standards have declined and facilities are inadequate.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject.
- Pupils' sketchbooks demonstrate high quality work.
- Very effective use is made of digital cameras.
- Very good leadership and management are helping to raise standards.
- Restricted access to computers limits pupils' ability to develop their skills using specialist computer software.

Commentary

92. Standards of work in Year 9 are above average and given pupils' below average standards in Year 7, their achievement is very good. Sketchbooks are used from Year 7 for basic colour theory and investigation of line, tone, shape, colour and the work of other artists; they demonstrate high quality. Experimentation into methods and materials and pupils' written analysis of their work are only average. Drawing is central to pupils' work but few draw to collect particular information about light or space, preferring to use drawing as another way of making a picture. GCSE results in 2004 were well above average and amongst the best in the school, showing a significant improvement on 2003 and since the previous inspection. The proportion of A grades was above average but there were no A* grades. Current standards of work in Year 11 are well above average and pupils' achievement is very good. Bold, colourful, ambitious compositions, of high quality, are a feature of pupils' work and they can relate their work to that of famous artists, including Hockney and O'Keefe. There is very good use of digital photography to record portraits that pupils then work on to reflect the subject's interests or personality. However, too few pupils use computers to generate or manipulate imagery. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because teachers match the work they set to pupils' needs.

93. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and present their lessons with sensitivity, generating industry and very good attitudes. Consequently pupils learn well. Lessons are well planned and begin with clear, often compelling demonstrations of the set work and pupils are quick to respond. Teachers have high expectations of industry and behaviour and those who are reluctant to conform are quickly challenged. Teachers increasingly place the responsibility for progress with the pupils themselves thus pupils' skills in learning from each other are strong. Composition and the exploitation of colour and decorative texture are very well taught but there is insufficient teaching of drawing to collect particular information about light or space or tone. There is not enough use of computers or specialist software to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of how new technology can be harnessed to enhance design and simplify implementation. The assessment of pupils' work is good. Pupils know how well they are doing and, especially in Years 10 and 11, know how to improve. Teachers use the information from assessment to recognise and strengthen weaknesses in the curriculum and to set pupils targets for improvement.
94. Pupils' achievements and their examination successes are a clear demonstration that leadership and management are very good. There is strong teamwork and ambition to raise standards yet higher. Subject documentation is thorough and centred on raising attainment. The accommodation is increasingly cramped as the department's success attracts more pupils. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have risen and achievement, leadership and management are now very good.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Gifted and talented musicians are not challenged enough; they could achieve more.
- Pupils' attitudes are very positive.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation restricts what pupils can achieve.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have no opportunities to use computers.
- Numbers learning to play musical instruments are almost twice the national average.
- The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are very good.

Commentary

95. In the GCSE examination in 2004, two-thirds of those entered obtained A-C grades and results were above average. Results have declined slightly over recent years, because of changes in the requirements of the syllabus and interruptions to staffing.
96. Standards in Year 9 are average and achievement is satisfactory. The varying experience with which pupils enter the school is quickly consolidated. Pupils develop a good technical vocabulary with which to appraise the music they listen to. They sing enthusiastically, but do not support or project the sound properly. Although most pupils in Year 9 can read notation and locate notes on the keyboard, they are unable to develop fluent technique because working surfaces are cramped and keyboards have to be shared.
97. Standards in Year 11 are above average. Because groups are smaller, pupils' different needs are more readily fulfilled. Many pupils are highly competent instrumentalists, performing above the level required for the examination. Most have good listening skills and a good technical vocabulary, and more able pupils have good aural skills. Pupils of higher ability compose musically attractive, often memorable, pieces. However, pupils of lower ability have difficulty in developing ideas imaginatively. Pupils who play by ear frequently find general

musical knowledge difficult to remember. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in music lessons, but pupils who are gifted and talented are not sufficiently challenged, and their achievement is satisfactory rather than good. Achievement overall is satisfactory.

98. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers are well qualified and know their subject well so that what pupils learn is accurate and relevant. Lessons are thoroughly planned, and conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect as a result of the very good role models provided. Not enough attention is given to providing different challenges for pupils of different abilities, with the result that the good progress made in Year 7 is not sustained at the same rate in Years 8 and 9 and the challenge for pupils who play instruments is not always high enough. At times, the pace of lessons slows down. Computers and specialist music software are not used enough to help improve pupils' composition and performing skills.
99. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department is part of the recently created Performing Arts faculty, and its leadership and management team, some of whom are newly appointed, has not yet developed a clear, corporate identity. Day-to-day operations run smoothly, but there is a need for structured development planning, and more specific integration of the assessment system with schemes of work to ensure that all pupils are suitably challenged. The accommodation remains unsatisfactory, and is adversely affecting achievement in Years 7 to 9. Classroom percussion instruments are very good, but there are too few sophisticated keyboards, and the computers are rapidly becoming obsolete.
100. Approximately 200 pupils have instrumental lessons that are helping raise individual and group standards. Various ensembles meet regularly, and school performances reach a very high standard of musicianship, encouraging and motivating pupils to sustain their high level of performance.
101. With minor fluctuations, standards are similar to those during the previous inspection. The department is now well placed for further development. Improvement is satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is enthusiastic and knowledgeable.
- The quality of pupils' GCSE theory work is significantly lower than their practical work.
- Very good opportunities exist outside of lessons for gifted and talented pupils to do well.
- Teacher assessments are insufficiently rigorous.
- Pupils' very good attitudes lead to high levels of participation in lessons and extra-curricular sport.
- Self-evaluation skills remain below average.
- Risk assessments are incomplete.

Commentary

102. Standards in Year 9 are average which represents satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' starting points on entry. Many pupils achieve above average standards in team games. Boys and girls achieve well in basketball. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported, and achieve as well as their classmates in gymnastics. For all pupils, skills in evaluating and improving their performance are underdeveloped.

103. The 2004 GCSE results were above average, as they were in 2003. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher A* or A grades was below average. Only a small number of pupils were entered. Current standards in Year 11 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards are above average in the practical aspects of the GCSE course, well illustrated by girls in aerobics, and boys in football. This represents good achievement. However, in the theoretical aspects, standards are well below average as confirmed by the Year 11 mock GCSE results, and achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards in the core curriculum are average, and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Achievement in extra-curricular sport is very high, reflected in pupils' successes in a range of sports at county, regional and, sometimes, national level.
104. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Enthusiastic, knowledgeable teachers motivate pupils and manage them well. High standards are expected and received, well illustrated by pupils' very good levels of participation, dress and behaviour in lessons and extra-curricular activities. It is the level of challenge, together with the pace of lessons that separates the good teaching from the satisfactory. The best teaching and learning occurs when pupils are challenged intellectually, as well as physically, with high expectations for them to improve performance, as seen in girls' basketball. Where teaching is satisfactory, it lacks this strong focus on quality and improvement, and pupils are not rigorously challenged to do even better. There is insufficient planning for the development of pupils' literacy and mathematical skills. Pupils still do not have sufficient opportunities to learn how to evaluate and improve performance, as reported in the previous inspection. The marking of pupils' GCSE theoretical work is unsatisfactory. There are not enough systems in place to ensure that pupils are making progress.
105. Rapid staff changes have recently taken place. Current leadership is satisfactory, maintaining continuity while supporting three new staff. The work of the department is well documented, and a good improvement plan is in place. An extensive extra-curricular programme, run by highly committed staff, provides very good opportunities for all pupils, especially the gifted and talented, to excel in sport. However, the curriculum is not fully inclusive because boys cannot study dance. Assessment procedures are in place, but they require standardisation. In 2004, teacher assessments in Year 9 and GCSE examination predictions were over generous and unrealistic. Health and safety risk assessments in physical activities are incomplete. The school is achieving the aim of the national strategy for all pupils to receive at least two hours a week of quality physical education. However, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory because GCSE results have fallen, and there are still not enough opportunities for pupils to learn and practise evaluation skills.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

106. The school offers a good range of vocational courses. The vocational focus for the inspection was leisure and tourism. Work in business and communication systems was sampled. One lesson was seen in Year 11. Teaching and learning were good and pupils are achieving well. Standards are average. A number of vocational courses take place at local colleges of further education. Three subjects were sampled. The GCSE engineering course is well planned for and includes an intermediate NVQ qualification. Attendance on the course is good and pupils are making good progress. Sample lessons were observed in health and social care and in hair and beauty therapy. In these two areas, lessons are well planned, and course work is properly completed and marked. Individual interviews take place in which the pupil's work is assessed. Pupils are highly motivated and making good progress. It was not possible to judge the quality of teaching and learning on these courses but provision is relevant to pupils'

needs and offers opportunities for pupils to gain qualifications that will eventually give access to higher level courses in colleges of further education.

Leisure and Tourism

Provision in leisure and tourism is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching encourages and motivates pupils.
- Pupils have a good understanding of business principles.
- Good use is made of ICT to support learning.
- Leadership roles need to be more clearly defined.

Commentary

107. Leisure and Tourism was introduced in 2002 as an option to provide vocational study opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11. It leads to a double award vocational GCSE qualification and started with an option group of nine pupils, six of whom achieved pass grades C to E in 2004. This was good achievement for a group whose standards in English and Mathematics were below average.
108. The option has quickly grown in popularity with eighteen pupils currently in Year 11 and forty-two in Year 10. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average. Pupils have a good understanding of marketing principles which they can apply to their own business ideas. From samples of work seen pupils are able to provide simple and brief explanations of the importance of customer service to the success of a business in the leisure industry. This is good achievement for pupils with weak literacy and mathematical skills. Pupils achieve well because of good teaching that stimulates their interest and keeps them motivated.
109. Teaching and learning are good. Maximum use is made of ICT, providing pupils with the opportunity of using their ICT skills to produce graphical analyses of data the pupils have collected. Good use is made of group work to develop collaborative skills and extend speaking and listening skills through presentations. Coursework is well presented reflecting the very good attitudes pupils develop to the subject. They recognise the relevance of the topics studied to their future lives and consequently develop a genuine concern that encourages good mutual relationships with staff.
110. Leadership is satisfactory. Current arrangements share responsibility for the subject between two members of staff. This has served the development of the subject well so far, but more long-term arrangements will need to be put into place to ensure clarity of vision for the future as option groups grow in size. Management is good with good arrangements for curriculum development and assessment.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

111. The main focus of the inspection was citizenship. It was not possible to see any lessons in personal social and health education (PSHE) which is taught as part of the life management skills course by form tutors and enhanced through religious education, science and visiting speakers. An examination of workbooks, school policies and discussions with pupils and teachers indicated that statutory requirements with regard to sex and relationships education, drugs education and careers are fully met. Careers education is well planned for. Options preparation in Year 9 is good and pupils are fully aware how their choices may affect their career decisions post-16.

There are good work experience opportunities for all pupils in Year 10. PSHE makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development and there are planned opportunities to develop pupils' communication and inter-personals skills. There is an effective partnership with local community representatives, including community police officers, who visit the school at least once a week, nurses and other health care workers.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' involvement in active citizenship is good.
- Pupils are keen to learn because teachers make the lessons interesting and challenging.
- Pupils make a valuable contribution to the assessment of their work.
- Not all subjects have citizenship issues in their curriculum planning.

Commentary

112. Citizenship is taught within the life management skills programme, which was introduced at the beginning of the current school year and is taught by form tutors. Standards are above average throughout the school and pupils, both boys and girls, achieve well. In Year 9 most pupils have a clear understanding of a citizen's rights and responsibilities and are well aware of different ways in which views are formed and expressed. They take part willingly in discussions and listen to each other attentively. Most pupils in Year 11 have a good understanding of global issues relating to development in the Third World and they work very effectively in groups. Pupils identified as gifted and talented show good leadership skills in guiding the discussions.
113. A strong area of achievement in citizenship is students' active involvement in the many activities that the school provides for their personal development. They respond very well to these opportunities, showing responsible attitudes to themselves and others. They greet visitors with assurance and are very good ambassadors for the school. Students of all ages become members of the School Council, and raise considerable sums of money for a range of charities, both national and local. They take part enthusiastically and confidently in school presentations, outside visits and in sports activities. A weaker area of achievement is the limited amount of knowledge and understanding of citizenship gained by pupils through the subjects of the curriculum. The reason that standards are not higher in this area is that teachers do not make pupils clearly aware of the connection with citizenship in the themes of the lessons, and pupils do not make the link themselves.
114. Teaching and learning are good. Form tutors know their pupils well and good relationships in the classroom encourage pupils to venture ideas and join readily in the different activities. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils at the outset to set a focus for learning, and lesson planning is effective in striking a good balance between prescribing and guiding work. Pupils are given a variety of tasks that develop both team skills and independent learning. Teachers' skilful use of question and answer techniques enables pupils to recall previous learning accurately and then to relate it to the work of the lesson. The final plenary session gives pupils experience in evaluating what they have achieved. Assessment of pupils' progress is good. A formal assessment scheme is in place with effective and perceptive contributions from pupils themselves.
115. The quality of leadership and management in the subject is good. There is a clear sense of purpose and the careful preparation for the introduction of the new course has ensured that the form tutors are confident in teaching the different areas of study,

so they make an effective team. Good quality resources have been built up. Suitable priorities for development have been identified, for example, the provision of further staff training in order to improve the inconsistent contribution made to citizenship by other curriculum subjects.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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