

INSPECTION REPORT

**THE MARCHES SCHOOL AND TECHNOLOGY
COLLEGE**

Oswestry

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123584

Headteacher: Mr W G Davies

Lead inspector: Mrs A Wallis

Dates of inspection: 18 – 21 April 2005

Inspection number: 268491

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 – 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1308

School address: Morda Road
Oswestry
Shropshire
Postcode: SY11 2AR

Telephone number: 01691 664400
Fax number: 01991 671515

Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr Arthur Walpole

Date of previous inspection: 22 March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Marches School and Technology College is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-16. It has grown in size over the last 4 years and now has 1308 pupils, making it larger than most schools. The school is located in Oswestry and draws its pupils from this market town and the surrounding rural area. The school has been a specialist technology college for ten years and gained recognition as an Investors in People organisation in 2002. In the last two years it has gained Artsmark, Chartermark and Sportsmark awards. Pupils' attainment on entry is average. The proportion of pupils whose heritage language is not English is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average. The school has an attached unit for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties which is currently attended by 30 pupils. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The numbers of pupils who join the school after Year 7 and leave before Year 11 are low.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
32147	A Wallis	Lead inspector	
9874	M Milwain	Lay inspector	
18676	R Meakin	Team inspector	Mathematics
30941	K Brammer	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
27984	A Whitehall	Team inspector	Science
12356	R Dickason	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31129	J Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design
1759	G Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology
32122	J Straw	Team inspector	History Religious education
28178	J Connor	Team inspector	Modern languages
23499	H Seymour	Team inspector	Music
8329	G Salter-Smith	Team inspector	Physical education Work-related learning
35122	A Beckett	Team inspector	Geography
32229	M Comer	Team inspector	Business education Citizenship
7994	P Weston	Team inspector	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
 Anglia House
 Carrs Road
 Cheadle
 Stockport
 SK8 2LA

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES	17
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	20
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	36

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Marches is a good school with some very good features. It is improving rapidly and has the capacity to improve even further. The school provides good value for money. The headteacher, very strongly supported by the senior staff, provides very good leadership. His vision and determination has been instrumental in raising standards and improving teaching and learning. Robust management systems have significantly improved the school, enabling all pupils to achieve well.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well because teaching is good overall and often very good.
- The clarity of vision, drive and high aspirations of the headteacher have been the catalyst for rapid school improvement in the last three years.
- GCSE results in 2004 were above national averages and well above average compared to those of similar schools.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and behave well.
- Very good use of ICT across the curriculum enhances learning.
- There is very good provision in mathematics, science, geography and history and for pupils in the Learning Development Centre.
- Strategies to improve teaching and learning are well identified but are not being consistently implemented in all subjects.
- There is a small number of unsatisfactory lessons.
- The involvement of pupils in the life and work of the school through seeking and acting on their views is underdeveloped.
- Statutory requirements for collective worship and for the provision of citizenship are not met.

Overall, improvements since the previous inspection have been very good. Standards have risen markedly. With the exception of providing a daily act of collective worship, all the issues identified in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. The inspectors fully endorse the priorities identified in the school's development plan and are confident the school has the capacity to improve even further.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils achieve well. Standards are above average. Pupils enter the school with average standards and build on them effectively to reach above average standards by the end of Year 11. In tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2004 standards were average in English and mathematics and above average in science. These results were average overall when compared to similar schools. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were above average and the proportion of pupils gaining the higher A*-C grades was well above average. GCSE results were well above average compared to those of similar schools. Between 2000 and 2004 results improved at a faster rate than they did nationally. Work seen during the inspection showed that standards are above average by Year 9. By Year 11 standards are above average overall and well above average in mathematics and science. Pupils achieve

well in all year groups. They achieve very well in mathematics, science, history and geography but achievement is unsatisfactory in citizenship. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well in the Learning Development Centre.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Attendance and punctuality are very good. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and behave well.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides education of good quality. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is often very good but there is a small number of lessons where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Strategies to improve teaching and learning are well identified but are not yet being consistently implemented in all subjects. In almost all lessons pupils learn quickly and achieve well. Lessons are well planned and conducted at a brisk pace so pupils become engaged in their learning and work hard. Teachers make very good use of electronic whiteboards to support and enhance pupils' learning.

The curriculum is good and provides a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities that meet pupils' individual needs well. Provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory because the full programme of study is not provided for all pupils. There are very good opportunities for pupils to join in extra-curricular activities and these contribute well to pupils' personal development. Accommodation and resources are very good.

Procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. Overall support, advice and guidance are good. Form tutors forge very good relationships with their pupils. The involvement of pupils in the school's life and work is presently underdeveloped. The school has good links with parents and very good links with the community and with other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and his very clear vision for school improvement has resulted in rising standards and good pupil achievement. He is very well supported by a very committed senior management team who share his vision for improvement. Good management at all levels ensures that this vision becomes a reality and results in a school that is well ordered and has a good learning atmosphere. The governance of the school is good. Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well. The school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of citizenship and collective worship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very largely supportive of the school. The majority of parents feel that their children are making good progress and are well taught. They feel that teachers are very supportive of their children. A small minority of parents feel that the school does not communicate and consult with them sufficiently. Pupils are positive about the school and feel that they are well taught and expected to work hard.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure strategies to improve teaching and learning are consistently implemented in all subjects in order to eliminate the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching and increase the proportion of very good teaching across the school.
- Increase the involvement of pupils in the life and work of the school through seeking and acting on their views.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide the required acts of collective worship for all pupils.
- Ensure that the full National Curriculum programme of study in citizenship is delivered throughout the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are **above average** overall. They are above average in Years 7 to 9 and also above average by Year 11. Achievement is **good** throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2004 were above national averages and well above average compared to those of similar schools.
- All pupils achieve well because they are well taught and have very good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' achievement is very good in mathematics, science, geography, history and in the Learning Development Centre.
- Pupils are underachieving in citizenship.
- Pupils' ICT skills are well above average.
- Standards and achievement are improving quickly in English, art and design technology.
- GCSE results show that some lower and some middle attainers are not making as much progress as other pupils.

Commentary

Years 7 to 9

1. Standards on entry to the school are average overall. Pupils in Year 7 reach average levels in tests in their primary schools at the end of Year 6. This level of attainment was confirmed when inspectors talked with pupils, looked at their work and watched them in lessons. By Year 9 school data indicates that pupils reach average standards overall in tests in English, mathematics and science. Results in mathematics and science are better than those in English with pupils reaching above average levels in these two subjects. These results are an improvement on the previous year although they did not meet the very challenging targets set.
2. In work seen in the inspection standards are above average overall by Year 9 and all pupils achieve well compared to their starting point when they enter the school. Currently, standards are above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They are average or above in all other subjects, except history where they are well above average, and art and citizenship where they are below average. Achievement is good in almost all subjects. It is very good in mathematics, science and history but is unsatisfactory in citizenship. Most pupils have very positive attitudes

towards their work and this is a major factor in contributing to their good achievement. The school has high expectations of its pupils and reviews and evaluates performance data rigorously in order to improve standards further.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.1 (32.6)	33.3 (33.4)
Mathematics	35.8 (35.9)	35.5 (35.4)
Science	34.4 (34.5)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 277 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Years 10 and 11

- GCSE results in 2004 were above the national average overall and the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was well above average. Compared to those of similar schools these results were well above average and indicate that these pupils achieved very well compared to their previous attainment. The proportion of pupils gaining 5 A* to G and 1 A* to G grades was average nationally and also average when compared to similar schools. This indicates that some middle and lower attaining pupils did not progress as well as other pupils.
- Currently standards seen are above average overall by Year 11 and both boys and girls are achieving well. Standards are above average in most subjects but are average in religious education and business education, are below average in art and below the expected standard in citizenship. They are well above average in mathematics and science. Achievement is very good in mathematics, science, history and geography but is unsatisfactory in citizenship.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and those in the Learning Development Centre achieve very well. The recognition and encouragement given to gifted and talented pupils also promotes their good achievement.
- Pupils' standards in English, art and design technology are now improving markedly because leadership and management of these subject areas is at least good and there is a firm focus on improving teaching and learning and raising achievement.
- Pupils develop and consolidate their skills well in both literacy and mathematics as they move through the school. Their skills in ICT are well above average and enhance learning in other 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	66 (63)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (90)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	38.3 (37.2)	34.9 (34.7)

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils behave **well** both in lessons and around school. They show an interest in school life and have a **very good** attitude towards school. The overall spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of the pupils is **good**. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good attitudes contribute significantly to the standards they attain and their good achievement.
- The school has very good systems to promote and support very good attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils' spiritual development is limited by their lack of opportunity for reflection in assemblies and during form time.

Commentary

8. The majority of pupils enter fully into the life of the school. They take full advantage of the very good range of extra-curricular activities on offer, especially in sport, and participate with enthusiasm. Pupils are given an opportunity to take part in competitive sport with other schools both locally and abroad. For example, a school football squad has recently returned from a sporting trip to Barcelona. Discussions between inspectors and pupils from all year groups indicate that pupils have a positive attitude towards their school. They clearly know what they like about the school and what they would want to change. There is a school council that represents each year group but this has not yet had a real impact on the life and work of the school. Those pupils serving on the school council take their responsibilities seriously and show a mature attitude towards their role.
9. Overall the behaviour of pupils is good. In a small minority of lessons, however, where the teacher does not have a suitable range of control strategies, the behaviour of some pupils falls below this standard. Outside lessons behaviour is good and pupils move between lessons in an orderly manner. At break times pupils behave well. During discussions with inspectors, pupils said that when bullying or oppressive behaviour occurs it is effectively dealt with. The school operates a zero tolerance policy towards unacceptable behaviour; as a result there was a large number of exclusions, both fixed period and permanent, during the school year prior to the inspection. However, the number of exclusions has decreased this year.
10. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very good and the attendance rate has improved over the past three years and is above average. Pupils attend school regularly and on time, and the school has effective and rigorous systems for recording attendance and punctuality.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.9

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.4

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.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1284	121	3
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	2	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	5	0	0

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

11. Overall, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good.
12. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils however are rarely given an opportunity for reflection in assemblies and during form time.
13. Moral development is good. Pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong, and they appreciate the firm attitude of the headteacher and his staff towards poor behaviour.
14. Social development is good. Pupils work well together throughout the school in lessons, at break times and in extra-curricular activities. They learn how to work as members of a team. The Duke of Edinburgh Award system gives pupils an opportunity to take part in some form of public service. Through the Comenius Project pupils learn about, and experience at first hand, how societies are organised in countries as diverse as Germany and South Africa.
15. Cultural development is good. Pupils have a good knowledge of their own and other cultures. In geography lessons pupils have studied the effects of poverty on society. In music lessons pupils perform and listen to music from a range of countries. Visits abroad by pupils have enabled them to experience at first hand the culture of countries as wide apart as Slovakia and Barbados.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. The quality of the curriculum is **good** and opportunities for enrichment are **very good**. The care, guidance and support of pupils are **good**. The school's links with parents are **good** and those with the community and other schools and colleges are **very good**.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good** in Years 7 to 11. Assessment of pupils' work is **good** in all years.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and often very good teaching and learning enable pupils to achieve well.
- Very good use is made of ICT to enhance learning.
- Regular and effective school reviews ensure that senior staff are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- Assessment is good throughout the school and is very good in mathematics.
- Strategies to improve teaching and learning are well identified but are not being consistently implemented in all subjects.
- There is a small number of unsatisfactory lessons.

Commentary

16. Good teaching supports good learning and good achievement across all Years 7 to 11. Both parents and pupils are very positive about teaching at the school. Teachers and pupils respect each other and working relationships are very good. Most pupils respond very well to the good teaching they receive. Teachers plan their lessons well and set clear objectives so that pupils know where to focus their learning. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to extend and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace so that pupils are productive and achieve well. Teachers make very good use of ICT and particularly interactive whiteboards to engage the pupils' interest. In most lessons, work is well matched to the needs of the pupils but where teaching is less good some pupils are insufficiently challenged whilst others find the work too difficult.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 129 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (4.7%)	40 (31%)	58 (45%)	21 (16.3%)	4 (3.1%)	0	0

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

17. There is a significant amount of very good teaching and some excellent practice which is characterised by a wider variety of teaching and learning approaches which pupils find more exciting and challenging. In these lessons teachers ask probing questions and expect very high standards regardless of ability. The proportion of very good and excellent lessons has risen slightly since the previous inspection but a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching remains. Senior managers conduct effective departmental reviews and observe lessons so they are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning. Constructive feedback is given to subject departments and teachers are made aware of new approaches to learning. However, these new strategies are not yet implemented consistently enough by all subjects to result in teaching of very good quality overall. For example, in some lessons in

mathematics, science, French and art insufficient time is allowed to review learning so pupils are unable to assess how much progress they have made.

18. Teaching meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs well. Teachers and teaching assistants have a good understanding of the individual learning needs of the pupils and a wide range of teaching activities and resources are used well, in particular ICT. However, on occasions, work is not matched correctly to the ability level of pupils with special educational needs and consequently when this happens some pupils do not achieve as well as they might. The very effective support provided by teaching assistants is an important factor in the good progress normally made by these pupils.
19. The school has a clear assessment policy which is mirrored in department documentation and supported by on-going development and revision. The school is meticulous in collecting data from partner primary schools and has good information about pupils on their arrival at the school. Some departments, such as English, mathematics and science, refine this further by carrying out their own separate tests. In Years 7-9, every pupil is given national curriculum targets based on their previous attainment and these are regularly reviewed and updated according to each pupil's progress in each subject. Pupils know the levels at which they are working and their future targets. These are kept in pupils' planners and parents are able to check progress. Homework is marked regularly and effectively and pupils given advice on how they can improve. However, there are some inconsistencies in the use of assessment in music, modern foreign languages and ICT and some pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not fully understand the national curriculum levels.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** and provides a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities that meet pupils' individual needs well. There are **very good** opportunities for pupils to join in extra-curricular activities and these contribute well to pupils' personal development. Accommodation and resources are **very good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ICT is used very well to improve learning in many subjects.
- Vocational courses provided by a local college serve lower attaining pupils well.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is very good.
- Overall very good accommodation and resources provide pupils with a high quality learning environment.
- The statutory requirement for citizenship is not met although much of the programme is good.
- The statutory requirement to provide an act of collective worship is not met.

Commentary

20. The school provides a good curriculum that enables pupils to achieve well; it has some significant strengths in science, vocational education and in extra-curricular activities. All the main subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and pupils of all abilities have equal access to them. There is a good personal and social development programme, which includes opportunities for teaching religious education, work-related learning and citizenship but there is no coherent planned course for citizenship that ensures that all pupils develop skills of participation and responsibility and subjects across the curriculum are not fully involved in teaching it. The school does not provide collective worship.

21. In English there is a new and well-organised curriculum and early entry for GCSE examinations allows many pupils to gain two GCSE qualifications although better links with drama would benefit the pupils. Design and technology courses are broad and balanced. In mathematics, teaching is very well planned and includes a variety of materials for pupils of different abilities.
22. More than 20 lower-attaining pupils from Years 10 and 11 follow courses at a local college of further education. These courses, in hairdressing, motor vehicle maintenance and child care, lead to vocational accreditation. These courses are increasing in number; they meet the needs of pupils very well and are carefully coordinated with school courses so that pupils are also able to study national curriculum subjects. The curriculum provided for pupils within the Learning Development Centre is very good.
23. All pupils study ICT in all years and all courses, particularly the Business and Communication Systems course and the GNVQ ICT course in Years 10 and 11, have a strong vocational content which makes an important contribution to the work-related learning curriculum. Work-related learning includes good careers education and work experience programmes. Other subjects such as English and ICT contribute well to pupils' preparation for work through providing guidance on writing applications, writing curriculum vitae and preparing for interviews. Pupils appreciate the advice and guidance they receive through their careers education and a good range of additional activities helps them to make sensible choices about their futures at age 14 and age 16.
24. An aspect of curriculum development that is very well managed is the use of interactive whiteboards that in many subjects, especially science and mathematics are used skilfully to improve learning, raise standards and interest pupils.
25. Dance and sports leadership courses are strong features of a good physical education curriculum; the department offers a wide range of team activities that contribute to a very good programme of extra curricular activities that include, for example, links with Africa and with Europe through the Comenius Project, visits overseas and a successful Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme that includes a variety of expeditions. The library and ICT rooms are open regularly for extra study.
26. Accommodation and resource provision are very good overall. Specialist teachers, assisted very well by support staff, teach every subject. Following many recent appointments, staffing levels are now stable. The fabric of the building is maintained and improved to a high standard by the school's site maintenance team. The reception area, hall and dining area promote the pleasant atmosphere felt throughout the school. The facilities for PE and games with the sports hall, all weather area and extensive ground provide the pupils with a high quality learning environment. Some of the English rooms are small and history and modern foreign languages are taught in temporary classrooms. There are insufficient practice rooms for music, a comment featured in the previous report.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils receive **good** guidance and support. The school makes **good** provision for the welfare, health, and safety of its pupils. It has **satisfactory** arrangements for involving pupils in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pastoral care of pupils is good.
- The systems that support the care and welfare of pupils are well founded.
- The teenage advice centre (TICTAC) provides a valuable support service.
- Induction arrangements to Year 7 are good.
- Involvement of pupils in the life and work of the school is not sufficiently developed.

Commentary

27. The school works in close collaboration with a wide range of advisers and external support agencies, all of which make a good contribution to the work of the pastoral support team in the school. Where pupils are found to need additional personal support, this is well publicised to the staff and teachers to enable them to respond appropriately. As a result these pupils are very quickly given the right guidance and support needed to resolve their particular difficulty. The school recognises the need to further develop the role of the form tutor to ensure there is an overview of all aspects of pupils' progress and achievement.
28. The school has suitable systems in place to ensure that the site is a safe place in which to work. Risk assessments for activities both on and off site are rigorously carried out and recorded as a part of the school's overall health and safety procedures. There are suitable systems for child protection in place which comply with local and national regulation. Staff are kept up to date with current procedures and legislation through the staff handbook and newsletters.
29. An important part of the pastoral system is the teenage advice centre (TICTAC). This provides pupils with a confidential source of information on matters of concern to teenagers such as drug and alcohol abuse, smoking and sex education. The centre is staffed by a full-time youth worker who is supported, part time, by health specialists, and a trained counsellor. Those pupils who make use of the facilities and advice offered appreciate the service provided by the centre. In addition to providing an advice service the staff at the centre work closely with the pastoral team in providing support and guidance to pupils with behavioural problems. As a result of this, pupils are provided with high quality professional advice and support.
30. The induction arrangements for pupils joining Year 7 are well organised. The transfer system starts in Year 5 when parents of these children are invited to visit The Marches. There is a series of reciprocal visits by staff from The Marches and the feeder primary schools, which is a strong and well-established part of the transfer process. As a result of these visits individual teachers have a better knowledge and understanding of each other's systems and methods. Pupils from the primary schools visit The Marches and take part in sample lessons; this ensures that when pupils begin Year 7 they feel comfortable in their new surroundings and are well prepared for learning.
31. All pupils have access to specialist careers advice from the Connexions service and over 80 per cent of pupils arrange individual interviews with a personal adviser which they find particularly helpful. The teacher responsible for careers education and

guidance ensures that all pupils receive the guidance they need and pupils with special educational needs receive helpful additional support. A high proportion of pupils, almost 90 per cent, continue in education or training at the age of 16.

32. There is a school council, and a system of prefects has recently been introduced. These arrangements give pupils an opportunity to take responsibility for a range of tasks around school. Pupils are willing to take up such responsibilities when the opportunities present themselves. The school does not however have formal systems for seeking pupil's views to allow them ownership of any changes.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good reciprocal links with the community maximise use of the schools facilities and harness the interests and skills of local people to the benefit of pupils.
- Very good links with other schools and colleges ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education.
- There is no established system for obtaining parents views and ideas about proposed changes to the life of the school.

Commentary

33. Parents are kept well informed about the life of the school through a series of well-produced publications and a very good school website. A parent guide is issued to the parents of every pupil new to the school; this gives a comprehensive range of information about the school. A school newsletter is published four times each year to keep parents up to date with events in school. Parents are kept regularly informed of their child's progress by means of the pupil planner and by annual reports on pupil's progress. There are consultation evenings each year giving parents an opportunity to discuss their child's work with the teachers. The parents of pupils who have special education needs are kept well informed about individual education plans and are invited to attend all review meetings.
34. Parents are provided with a great deal of useful information about the life of the school and the progress of their children. Some parents however feel that they are not adequately consulted before changes are made to the school systems and the inspectors uphold this view. The school does not have in place a regular system for consulting and obtaining parents views about any proposed changes.
35. The school has some excellent facilities that include an all weather pitch and a new sports hall. There is a well-resourced ICT department, and a large assembly hall with tiered seating. These facilities are made available to the community and they are put to very good use. Through the Education Action Zone and Excellence Cluster the school has involved local business well in the life of the school. The businesses concerned provide pupils with the opportunity to gain some work experience, and support the school through their business expertise.
36. Through it's links with teacher training colleges and the Open University the school provides very good facilities for initial teacher training. The teacher training

programme is linked to a continuing professional development programme. This provides staff in the school, and those from other schools within a wide radius, with a range of courses that enable them to expand their professional expertise.

37. The school works in close collaboration with the feeder primary schools to ensure that pupils settle well into school life when they enter year seven. Technology college status, and the additional funds this attracts, enables teachers to share their expertise with several primary schools. This allows them to gain some knowledge of each other's teaching methods. Very good links with local schools and colleges ensures that pupils are given good opportunities to find out about training opportunities and routes into higher education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is **very good**. Good management has led to substantial improvement across the school. Governance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The determined leadership of the headteacher ably supported by senior leaders has led to significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- Rigorous analysis of national test and examination results help the school to focus on the right priorities for improvement.
- Senior leaders have clearly identified good strategies to improve teaching and learning but these are not yet used consistently in all lessons.
- Very good financial control and management has attracted substantial resources to the school.

Commentary

38. The governance of the school is good. Governors have a strong commitment to the school and are now prepared to challenge and question when appropriate; they accept the consequences of difficult decisions. Through regular meetings and a committee structure, they monitor the work of the school and are actively involved in shaping its development. They are well informed and have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, not all statutory requirements are met. The school is not fully compliant with the requirements for a daily act of collective worship and the provision for citizenship does not fully meet statutory requirements.
39. The headteacher sets high expectations and has raised the aspirations of staff, pupils and parents. He has a clear focus on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school and has been successful in raising pupils' achievement at GCSE and improving the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Well-focused leadership has ensured that the school remains popular among parents and retains its reputation for good achievement. The headteacher maintains a strong presence around the school helping to establish the high expectations he sets for pupils and staff.
40. The headteacher has been very successful in improving the resources available to the school and the accommodation, through, for example, the acquisition of interactive whiteboards for all classrooms, the improved entrance hall and the all-weather artificial

pitch, all of which are improving learning, standards and the ethos of the school. The school has made good use of additional funding available through its technology college status, the Education Action Zone and the Leadership Incentive Grant to bring about many improvements. The appointment of a business manager has helped to secure funding for major projects from a number of sources and ensured that finances are very well controlled and managed and a financial deficit has been reduced.

41. The headteacher has built a very effective and supportive leadership group who share his vision for the school. They have very clear roles and responsibilities which include managing subjects and curriculum areas. The robust self-evaluation and annual reviews that senior leaders carry out with subject leaders have helped to focus on priorities for improvement and identify the support they need to achieve the high aspirations and targets set. Close analysis of pupils' performance in national tests and examinations, both at whole school and subject level, identifies where improvements need to be made. Checks on the quality of lessons helps to focus on what elements of teaching need to be improved. However, though checks have been carried out systematically and rigorously, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning remain.
42. Through rigorous self-evaluation activity, the headteacher, senior leaders and governors are well informed of the school's strengths and weaknesses, helping them to set the right priorities using a well-focused development plan. Leadership is not complacent. The recent focus on improving the use of ICT and on setting individual targets for pupils and subjects has resulted in improved standards and higher quality teaching and learning. Performance management of staff has been effective and is linked closely to the schools' main priorities. Leadership and management of subjects are generally strong across the school. Subject leaders share a commitment to improvement and generally contribute well to rigorous self-evaluation.
43. The school's very good improvement has been aided by the very positive attitudes of pupils, the commitment of staff, improved resources and accommodation and a supportive governing body.
44. Barriers to pupils' achievement have been low aspirations of some pupils; difficulties of including all parents in the use of technology to support their children's learning; and difficulties in ensuring pupils who live in rural locations can take a full part in extra-curricular provision.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,453,246	Balance from previous year	119,504
Total expenditure	4,404,058	Balance carried forward to the next	70,316
Expenditure per pupil	3,377		

45. Taking account of pupils' social and economic backgrounds, the good quality of education they receive at below average costs then the school gives good value for money.
46. Specialist teachers assisted very well by support-staff teach every subject and staffing levels are now stable. Newly qualified teachers are supported very well by the thorough induction programme. The school makes a very significant contribution to the

training of teachers through the provision of opportunities for student placement and its very effective mentoring of student teachers. There is a training programme that ensures that trainee teachers have access to a range of teaching experiences. There is a well-organised mentoring system to support these pupils. The teacher training programme is linked to a continuing professional development programme which allows staff to expand their professional expertise well.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related Learning

Provision in work-related learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Courses in ICT, careers education and business studies all make a strong contribution to pupils' work-related learning.
- Work-related learning is well co-ordinated and managed across the school.
- Work experience for all pupils is well organised and extends pupils' work-related learning, though it is limited to one week.
- Pupils do not keep full records of their work-related learning experiences.

Commentary

47. All Year 10 pupils benefit from a well-planned programme of work experience that takes place for one week in the summer term. An effective partnership between the school and the local Education Business Partnership helps to find placements to suit all pupils and it supports the school in carrying out essential checks in preparing the work experience placements. Pupils are all well prepared by the school to gain the most from work experience. A thorough review of the experience helps pupils to reflect on what personal qualities and attributes they have used and developed through the experience.
48. A small number of Year 11 pupils take part in part-time extended work experience, alongside continuing their education in school. These pupils are well supported by both the school and the local Connexions service. Between 20 and 30 pupils follow vocational courses at the local college of further education in Years 10 and 11 gaining a range of vocational accreditation. Pupils have good opportunities to experience workplace settings, for example, in hairdressing, motor vehicle maintenance and child care. A good number of these pupils intend to carry on their study in the courses they have chosen after the age of 16. Though making a strong contribution to pupils' learning about and for work, business and vocational courses held in school provide limited direct contact and first hand experience of work places and business.
49. A very well-planned programme of careers education and guidance is taught as part of the personal and social development course from Year 7 through to Year 11. The programme helps pupils to recognise and develop skills and personal attributes that will enable them to succeed in work and to recognise the vast range of work activities available. In a Year 8 careers lesson, pupils worked through a series of activities in the 'Real Game' that helped them to have realistic aspirations in terms of economic well being, lifestyle and likely career paths. In a successful Year 10 lesson, pupils collaborated well in groups through discussion and problem solving activities to match

person and job specifications improving their understanding of the skills, qualities and qualifications needed for various careers.

50. A number of other subjects make a key contribution to how much pupils learn about work and are prepared for work. Almost all pupils in Year 10 and 11 follow the business and communications course which prepares pupils well in understanding the business use of data bases, and issues relating to data protection, health and safety and management. Design and technology develops an awareness of business through, for example, consideration of mass production techniques. Though subjects provide many good and relevant experiences they are not always identified as work-related learning and pupils miss the opportunity to record their success in this area of learning. Though pupils keep progress files to which work experience has contributed, there is currently no formal approach to help pupils to keep a record of their achievement across work related learning activities.
51. Work-related learning is well co-ordinated and managed across the school. A clear policy for work related learning is in place and a recent audit has identified where activities contribute to pupils' work related learning showing that all areas of the non-statutory guidance are covered. The audit has helped the co-ordinator and senior leaders to focus on areas for improvement, for example, the need for subjects to be more explicit in identifying where work related learning activities are taught.

The Work of the Learning Development Centre

The school has a designated unit for pupils with special educational needs called the Learning Development Centre and there are currently 30 pupils who are attached to this unit. This provision is **very good** and consequently pupils achieve as well as they are able.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Learning Development Centre is organised efficiently and managed very well.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of pupils' needs and because of this, usually plan lessons at the correct level to enable pupils to progress in their learning.
- Personal and social development is very good because of the high quality of personal relationships that pupils have with staff.
- Pupils' self-esteem and independence are developing very well.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils behaviour.
- Use of interactive whiteboards and information technology skills are used very well to aid pupils' learning.

Commentary

52. The Learning Development Centre subject leader has a strong sense of direction and an infectious drive for improvement and constantly reviews performance and evaluates the effectiveness of teaching. All staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and personal objectives and have ready guidance and support. Target setting and monitoring of achievement is very well established for individual pupils.
53. The Learning Development Centre provides a supportive, secure learning environment combined with interesting activities. This results in pupils trying hard to succeed in lessons. Underlying this success is the high-quality personal relationships that pupils form with staff. Teachers and teaching assistants take great care to

understand the physical and emotional needs of their pupils. As a result, pupils gain in confidence and achieve to the very best of their ability in all subjects. Pupils benefit from very well thought out teaching methods to improve, in particular, their skills in literacy. The difficulty of work in all lessons is carefully matched to their needs. As a result, they thrive on the challenge and put great effort into their learning.

54. Teaching and learning is of a very high standard with pupils also benefiting from exceptionally high quality teaching from main school subject specialists. The overall response of pupils to this teaching is always good and on occasions excellent. Teaching assistants play a very important part in the success of the Learning Development Centre. The assistants work very closely with teachers, often in a team-teaching approach, are well trained and informed about how best to meet the needs of the pupils. Staff have high expectations of pupils' and there are very good procedures to monitor pupils' behaviour.
55. The curriculum is very good. Pupils have full access to the National Curriculum programmes of study through a wide range of rich and relevant activities which meet the particular needs of these pupils very well. In the previous inspection there was no provision for Food Technology to be taught but this is now in place. Assessment of pupils' needs and the monitoring of their progress are very good, making provision for these pupils a strength of the school. The very good accommodation, suitably adapted to meet the needs of pupils, along with the very good staffing and resources allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. ICT provision is very good, in particular the provision of interactive whiteboards has greatly enhanced presentation of lessons and is used increasingly well by both staff and pupils.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership is driving up standards and achievement.
- Pupils achieve well because of their positive attitudes and very good behaviour.
- Standards in national tests for Year 9 are below those in mathematics and science.
- There are some weaknesses in pupils' writing.

Commentary

56. In 2004, results in standard tests for Year 9 were average. Girls outperformed boys, as they do nationally. Overall, pupils do less well in English tests than they do in mathematics and science. Standards in GCSE English were slightly above average, but below average at grades A* and A. They were average in literature, although one in five pupils attained the top two grades. Subject performance comparisons show that pupils do less well in English than they do in some of their other GCSE subjects.
57. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average. They were average when these pupils entered the school, therefore they are achieving well. Speaking and listening skills are above average because pupils use talk to share, develop and extend their ideas in all lessons. Reading is also above average; and teachers work hard to develop pupils' comprehension skills and encourage them to read for pleasure. Writing standards are average overall. There are some weaknesses in sentence construction, vocabulary and spelling as well as in close analytical skills, especially when examining how writers use language to influence their readers. Standards are above average in Year 11, where pupils also achieve well. High attaining pupils write confidently, use a wide and mature vocabulary and show good argumentative skills. In all years, writing to describe is better than writing to inform or explain.
58. Pupils' positive attitudes to English, good teaching and the many enrichment opportunities provided by the high quality extra curricular programme, contribute well to their good achievement. All pupils regularly use computers to improve their writing and research skills and a range of individual mentoring, booster, catch-up and coursework classes has been introduced to augment lessons. Additionally, an early GCSE entry policy in Year 10 is ensuring that nearly all lower and middle ability pupils leave school with pass grades in the two English subjects. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well because of very good individual support and lessons which are clearly planned to meet their identified needs.
59. Teaching and learning are good overall. There is some very good teaching in all years. This is designed to make learning enjoyable and is well matched to pupils' needs; therefore they behave well and are eager to learn. In these lessons, teachers clearly identify the skills and understanding to be developed and fully involve pupils in

evaluating their own learning. Teachers have successfully researched how boys learn and how to motivate them; consequently, they have high expectations of them and use a range of suitable methods. A notable feature of all teaching is the competent and sometimes imaginative use of interactive whiteboards. This engages and involves all pupils very effectively. In the less successful lessons, insufficient time is given to plenary sessions: hence learning is not fully consolidated and pupils' progress and future needs not evaluated. Pupils' test and examination data are well used to set targets but, whilst marking is positive, not all teachers refer to national curriculum level or GCSE grade criteria in their lesson planning or comments on work, therefore some pupils are not shown exactly what they need to do to improve.

60. Leadership is very good. The new subject leader is an excellent role model who strongly promotes a shared commitment to the raising of standards and achievement. Management is good. This reflective and innovative department regularly evaluates its own performance and shares best practice, and is constantly looking for ways to improve even further. Rigorous systems have recently been put into place, communication is very good, new schemes of work, which all teachers follow, have been introduced and underachievement firmly tackled. Team responsibilities are appropriately delegated, teaching carefully monitored, priorities for development clearly identified and new staff well inducted. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards and achievement are rising; the curriculum is now very good and there is much greater consistency between teachers when recording and assessing pupils' work.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. Standards of English language and literacy skills across the curriculum are at the national average in Years 7-9 and above average by the end of Year 11.
62. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall. Inspectors saw the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, in which learning objectives are clearly stated and planning reflects a three or four part lesson structure, in several lessons. However, opportunities for pupils to reflect on and consolidate their learning, both during and, particularly, at the end of lessons, are not always taken, or too little time is given to them. The understanding and use of specialist vocabulary in each subject are usually well taught, but pupils' punctuation, spelling, vocabulary and style are not always corrected in all subjects. Some departments, such as history and religious education, regularly provide prompt sheets to guide pupils' responses and to help them to structure their written answers and essays. The "Early Birds" breakfast session is well planned to help sixty Year 7 pupils with low levels of literacy to improve. However, because fewer than twelve of these pupils attend regularly, the majority does not make the progress it would if the lesson were part of the timetabled curriculum.
63. All departments are provided with pupil information, such as spelling and reading ages, to help them with their planning and to assess pupils' progress. Literacy is managed well in those subjects which ensure that the development of skills is an integral part of their teaching and departmental discussions.

Modern Foreign Languages

French was inspected in depth and German was sampled. In the two German lessons observed teaching was good, promoting good learning and leading to above average standards.

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Standards are above average.
- Lessons are well planned and structured so that most pupils achieve well.
- Teachers use information and communication technology well to support learning.
- Teachers do not always consolidate learning effectively.
- The range of teaching and learning styles is not sufficiently broad to cater for the complete range of learning needs.

Commentary

64. In 2004 the proportion of pupils gaining the expected National Curriculum levels in modern languages at the end of Year 9 was well above average. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are above average. Higher attaining pupils can produce extended complex writing, referring to three time-frames. Given their average levels of prior attainment, pupils achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils.
65. The percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades in GCSE French in 2004 was just above the national average. Girls performed better than boys. There was an improvement over 2003, when results were below average.
66. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Pupils can use a wide variety of vocabulary and structure, express personal opinions and refer to a range of time-frames. Higher attaining pupils can use complex structures with confidence. Errors of structure and pronunciation do not usually interfere with communication. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.
67. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers plan and structure lessons well. They use ICT well to support learning. They share clear learning objectives with pupils. They use the target language judiciously to give pupils a good model to imitate. Lessons proceed at a good pace with a variety of activity and working context. In such lessons, pupils are engaged and motivated and learn well as a result. Teachers do not always consolidate learning effectively. Sometimes the range of teaching techniques is not broad enough to cater for the needs of all pupils. The two foreign language assistants are effectively used to help develop pupils' speaking skills.
68. The leadership and management of the department are good. There has been greater stability in the department in recent years, and the subject leader has been able to establish an effective team. Documentation supports teaching well. There is greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning, and expectations are higher. The department collects a good deal of pupil performance data and is working towards a more sophisticated use of this information to improve standards still further.
69. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Thanks to the greater stability in staffing, improvements in resourcing and making more appropriate

qualifications available to pupils, standards have increased. The quality of teaching is more consistently good, and the department has the commitment and capacity to improve still further.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership provides the subject with clear educational direction and results in shared, high expectations and aspirations amongst the team of mathematics teachers.
- Very good teaching and learning results in pupils achieving very well from their starting points.
- GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average.
- Most pupils have a positive attitude to the subject so that lessons are harmonious and purposeful.
- Pupils are not sufficiently involved in the development of ideas and assessing their levels of progress.

Commentary

70. In 2004 GCSE results were well above the national average and eight out of ten pupils attained grades A*-C, compared with five out of ten nationally. Almost half of pupils attained grades A*, A or B and the overall mathematics results of both boys and girls were significantly higher than in other subjects. Overall results in the end of Year 9 national tests were at the national average compared with all schools and in line with schools with pupils of similar prior attainment.
71. Current standards of work in Year 9 are higher than indicated by previous national test results and are now above the national average. This reflects the quality of improved schemes of work and teaching strategies. Pupils study the same topics at levels appropriate to their needs and highest attaining pupils are on target to attain the higher National Curriculum levels. Some lower and average attaining pupils have difficulty retaining their knowledge and skills and this is sometimes exacerbated by a lack of structure and logical format in their written work. Similar pupils have difficulty with recall in preparation for GCSE examinations. Current Year 11 pupils' written work is well above average. There are no specific areas of weakness in different aspects of the subject. For example, all pupils competently construct algebraic graphs. Lower attaining pupils accurately plot coordinates to draw straight line graphs, average attaining pupils competently draw the graphs of quadratic functions, whilst highest attainers include a range of trigonometrical functions in their repertoire.
72. Observations indicate that pupils make very good progress in lessons. Analysis of written work shows that this level of progress is sustained over a period of time. The progress of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 reflects the quality of improved schemes of work and teaching strategies. Pupils sustain the momentum of progress into Years 10 and 11 so that the cumulative effect results in well above levels of achievement. In short, their overall achievement is very good and generally exceeds that typically observed.

There are no discernible differences in the work of boys and girls and pupils with special educational needs make similar progress as their peers.

73. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have high expectations of conduct and work and pupils relate very well to their teachers. As a result there is mutual respect between teachers and pupils so that lessons are conducted in a harmonious and purposeful atmosphere. Learning with understanding is fostered in most lessons because teachers involve pupils in the application of their prior learning to the investigation of new ideas. In some lessons, however, involvement is restricted to a limited number of pupils so that learning for many pupils is relatively passive which limits their full understanding of new ideas. This weakness is most pronounced in the final stage of lessons when opportunities are missed for teacher and pupils to jointly assess the match of learning with lesson objectives and what is needed to promote further improvement. Thorough preparation and planning, which include the use of correct vocabulary, and the imposition of challenging time limits that engender a brisk pace, are characteristics of all lessons and reflect teachers' very thorough subject expertise. Work is well matched to individual needs and this enables pupils to sustain very good levels of interest and concentration. Very good use is made of ICT to enhance understanding. Assessment is very good and procedures are used effectively for tracking student progress, setting targets, and evaluating and monitoring performance.
74. The quality of leadership of the subject, by example and infectious enthusiasm, is very good and promotes a positive team ethos. It provides a clear sense of direction and this is reflected in the high levels of expectation of standards of work and behaviour. Consequently, there is vibrancy and a shared commitment to raising standards. Appropriate targets, both short term and long term, are in place and good practice is routinely disseminated. Monitoring and evaluation of performance, both formal and informal, is used well to identify strengths and weaknesses.
75. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching, use of ICT and the GCSE results. The department has the capacity and drive to sustain further improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. Pupils' competence in mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum is above average. Although the promotion of mathematical skills does not have a high profile in every subject there are no instances of weaknesses in mathematics impeding progress in other subjects. Pupils' facility to construct and interpret data and use a range of graphs supports learning in many areas and particularly in science.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-planned and structured lessons challenge all pupils so they achieve very well.
- Very good leadership and management form a good basis for continued improvement.
- The high standard of the schemes of work supports improvement.

- Teachers do not review enough the effectiveness of pupils' learning in the lesson.
- Working relationships between teachers and pupils are good and support learning well.

Commentary

77. The results of the GCSE examinations in 2004 were well above average. Results at the end of Year 9, in the national tests in 2004, were above average. In work seen standards are above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11. Achievement in Years 7- 9 is good and in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Boys' achievement is similar to that of girls and pupils with special educational needs and gifted or talented pupils achieve well. These high standards are mainly due to very good teaching. The skills involved in investigations are taught well from Year 7, forming a firm base for the above average standards seen in GCSE coursework. Pupils' use skills in ICT well.
78. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall with two excellent lessons and no unsatisfactory teaching. Tasks are matched well to the needs of the pupils. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, structure their lessons well and put forward challenging ideas at a brisk pace. There is a widespread, effective use of interactive whiteboards providing a powerful additional teaching technique which is well developed by the teaching staff. For example, in one lesson, the function of specialist cells was illustrated clearly and an animated sequence showed Year 9 pupils how white blood cells engulf a microbe as part of the defence mechanism of the body. Scientific ideas are presented in an interesting manner so as to promote effective understanding by the pupils. Pupils are given the opportunity to learn independently but these skills are not developed strongly enough. Classes are managed well. Pupils respond with interest, behave well and co-operate fully with the teacher and each other in small group work. Learning objectives are stressed strongly, but the endings of lessons are sometimes hurried and do little more than review the main content. Therefore, the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of learning is missed. Pupils' work is corrected and marking is encouraging, and shows the pupils how to improve. Assessment is effective in relating pupils' current level or grade to their target.
79. Leadership and management are very good. Leadership is ensuring the drive to improve standards in each year is focused clearly and is shared by the teaching and non-teaching staff. The schemes of work are of a very high standard and provide a coherent, complete structure, thus enabling effective lesson plans to be produced. The department works very well as a team, assisting each other and sharing good practice. The support staff make a significant contribution to the effective management of the laboratories and to the effectiveness of the teaching. The department has made good improvement since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in Year 9 tests and in Year 11 examinations are above average.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent.
- Records of marks are very thorough and are used well to set targets.

- The curriculum and its vocational content are very well organised and meet the needs of pupils well especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Resources and accommodation are very good.

Commentary

80. Results in the tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above average. In Year 11 GCSE examination results were above the national average; for the GNVQ course results were very high. In lessons seen and in pupils' records standards in Years 9 and 11 are above average. Standards of literacy and numeracy are above average and pupils ICT capability is well above average.
81. Pupils' achievements are good overall. They are very good when teachers have high expectations, the pace of the lesson is fast and teachers follow very good curriculum planning expertly. In a minority of lessons teachers allow pupils to work too slowly and work is not explained carefully so some pupils do not learn enough.
82. Overall teaching in all years is satisfactory. A significant amount of the best teaching is very good because it provides demanding opportunities for pupils of all abilities to work independently and learn very well. However, the quality of teaching across the subject is inconsistent and in a small number of lessons teaching is unsatisfactory. In some lessons, where this is the case, the negative impact on pupils learning is limited because they have access to high quality resource materials which enhance their learning. In Years 10 and 11 applications of ICT in business contexts are used particularly well so that pupils understand the importance of spreadsheets and databases. Pupils assess their own work especially in the GNVQ course but assessment information is not used during lessons to allow pupils to set their own targets for improvement.
83. Leadership and management are good. Records of marks are very thorough; they are displayed in classrooms so that pupils are well informed about their targets. The curriculum is very well organised, the teaching programme is regularly reviewed, new courses have been introduced and the school network is used very effectively to organise the high quality teaching materials that are used. Teaching groups have been reorganised to ensure that recent staffing difficulties have not led to a decline in standards. Teaching and learning are monitored and good practice is promoted, although this has not yet resulted in consistently good quality teaching across the subject. Resources and accommodation are both very good, the department has clear and well-chosen priorities for improvement and standards are rising.
84. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils follow a taught ICT vocational course in Business and Communication Studies so that the National Curriculum requirement for ICT is met for all pupils and results are improving. Flexible arrangements allow some pupils to spend extra time on ICT and gain a GNVQ qualification. Interactive whiteboards are used very effectively to add pace and interest to lessons so that learning improves. Pupils regularly assess their own work and this is managed well, particularly in the GNVQ course in ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

Pupils' ICT skills are well above average and are applied and extended very well in other subjects. Resources are very good; there are interactive whiteboards in almost every

classroom and many teachers make expert use of them by increasing interesting opportunities for pupils to work independently and improve learning. This is done particularly well in English, mathematics and science and in geography where ICT is used imaginatively. However, in science the laptop computers are old, in French ICT is not used in Year 10, and access to computers is limited in both French and art. In science and design and technology, data loggers and CAD/CAM equipment are used very well and ICT courses make a very good contribution to the work related learning programme. Many departments make very good use of the school network to organise teaching materials and to make them available to pupils. Investment and development work in ICT is very well managed and makes a significant contribution to raising standards.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

- Teachers have consistently high expectations of GCSE pupils which leads to very good levels of achievement and promotes good attitudes and relationships.
- Very good leadership provides a clear vision for continued improvement.
- The range of teaching methods used is not yet broad enough to encourage more active learning by pupils.
- Very good use of ICT increases access to learning for pupils with special educational needs.

Commentary

85. GCSE results in 2004 were in line with the national average. Girls' results were better than those achieved by boys, but both girls and boys achieved well below the national average in the higher A* and A grades. In 2003 GCSE results were well above average and pupils achieved better results in geography than almost any other subject they took. Assessments for the present Year 11 indicate that pupils will also achieve well above average results next year. The 2004 results therefore represent a dip in pupils' attainment. Analysis by the department indicates that this may be due to some pupils finding the higher tier examination paper too demanding. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were slightly above national averages.
86. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average and pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 9 the more able pupils demonstrate their understanding of how different attitudes to Fair Trade in this country impact on the lives of people in other countries. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are able to offer reasons for environmental change. The standards of work seen in Year 11 are well above average, and the achievement of these pupils is very good. Overall, pupils achieve very well from their average starting point in Year 7 to their well above average attainment in Year 11. All pupils make very good progress in understanding the interactions between human and physical processes.
87. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The best teaching observed was to pupils in Years 10 and 11. Common features of the best teaching are expert subject knowledge, very good planning, consistently high expectations and enthusiasm for the subject. This motivates pupils to work hard, achieve well and it promotes good relationships in the classroom. Where learning is good rather than very good there is

over-reliance on teacher directed tasks and less opportunity for pupil-centred independent learning. This restricts opportunities for the more able pupils to extend their learning. There are examples of very good use of ICT to enhance learning. This is particularly effective with less able pupils and those with special educational needs whose access to learning is made easier by the visual impact achieved through skilful use of interactive whiteboards. This type of approach can be developed further to broaden the range of teaching methods in order to continue to encourage pupils to think for themselves.

88. The leadership of the department is very good. The subject leader of humanities and the head of geography are new in post but have quickly established a clear vision to continue to improve standards and the quality of all pupils' learning experiences. This is supported by a clear strategic plan that is regularly monitored and informed by best practice through links with national networks. Geography has a high profile in the school with high recruitment at GCSE level. The department is managed efficiently with good arrangements in place to monitor lessons and ensure the quality of teaching and learning. Overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection because teaching and learning and the achievement of all pupils have improved.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Vigorous, enthusiastic teaching is leading to very good learning.
- GCSE results are above average overall and well above average for boys.
- Standards in Years 7-9 are rising rapidly because pupils enjoy their work and achieve very well.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are reluctant to take responsibility for their own learning.

Commentary

89. GCSE results were well above average in 2004. Results for grades A* and A are above average. Results are on an upward trend. Pupils taking the certificate entry level for history achieve very well, gaining the highest grades. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average and show very good achievement for pupils compared to their starting point which was below average.
90. In work seen standards are well above average at the end of Year 9 and pupils' achievement is very good. The standard of work of the pupils who have chosen to study history for GCSE is above average and they achieve very well compared to their starting points at the beginning of Year 10. The subject is popular, more pupils than average choose history at GCSE and gain better results than they do in many other subjects. The pupils develop important skills for history at an early stage. They know how to compare and evaluate sources and understand how and why events in history have been differently interpreted. For example pupils in Year 8 are able to make secure judgements in comparing the legality of the trials of Charles I and Louis XVI. Pupils who are gifted and talented regularly complete extension work and those with special educational needs are very well supported by work matched to their needs and the encouragement and help of teachers and teaching assistants.

91. Pupils achieve very well throughout the school because they are very well taught and enjoy the syllabus developed by the department. Teachers have expert knowledge, use questioning techniques very effectively and set exciting and challenging tasks which fire pupils' imaginations. The very good attitude of pupils and good humour of the teachers ensure that learning is enjoyable. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards to good effect. Assessment is used effectively to enhance and promote learning and pupils know what they need to do to improve. Teachers promote good literacy skills and pupils have many opportunities to express their views. Lessons are very well planned with a wide range of activities so that pupils are fully interested and engaged. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 tend to be passive learners and are reluctant to begin to take responsibility for their own learning and revision.
92. Leadership and management are very good. Teaching and learning and homework are regularly reviewed. The department has very good plans for future development and the capacity and ambition to improve further. Improvement since the last inspection has been good in every respect.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising in Years 7-9 and pupils achieve well.
- Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to enhance learning.
- Marking and assessment are used well to help pupils achieve.
- Teaching and learning are good, although in a minority of lessons the pace and rate of progress slackens.
- Less time is allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11 than is recommended in the agreed syllabus.

Commentary

92. Current standards in Year 9 are above average and all groups of pupils achieve well. There is substantial good quality written work in pupils' books which challenges pupils and helps to raise standards. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average.
93. GCSE results for the full course option group in 2004 were in line with the national average. More pupils than average gained results at A* or A and all pupils gained a certificate. Achievement is good. Results have been in line with, or just above, average for the last 4 years and show a steady trend. Work seen in books shows that pupils gain good insight into the religions they study, reflect upon what they have learned and make comparisons. Pupils benefit from thorough marking that encourages and challenges them and from very effective support for their coursework.
94. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 following the general non-examination course in religious education reach average standards. Their achievement is satisfactory. Despite good teaching, too little time is given to the subject for pupils to achieve well.

95. Teaching and learning are good. The team of non-specialist teachers are ably supported with well-devised lesson plans. In all lessons pupils are effectively managed and they behave well. Most lessons engage the pupils' interest successfully so that they learn well. In a minority of lessons the pace slackens so that progress is slower. Lively and very effective use is made of the interactive whiteboards as well as the interesting range of resources created by the department. There is a strong emphasis on specialist vocabulary and a good range of writing, including diaries, letters and reports which promote literacy and thus raises standards.
96. Leadership and management are good. All the teachers share the same vision and are keen to promote learning and raise the profile of the subject. Regular monitoring of lessons and marking ensures that pupils have the same opportunity to do well. The department has fully embedded the use of assessment levels which helps pupils to understand and monitor their own progress.
97. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The curriculum and resources have improved through multi-faith topics and outside visits and visitors and there is now a subject specialist. However, the time allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11 has not increased sufficiently.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall GCSE examination results have improved steadily since 2002 and are now above the national average.
- The impact of ICT is beginning to show in improved standards of work.
- Pupils bring good attitudes to their work as a result of the good and often very good relationships with teachers.
- In Years 7 to 9 basic design and communication skills are not taught consistently across all areas.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not consistent and does not provide pupils with sufficient information about their progress.

Commentary

98. GCSE results overall in 2004 were above average and almost two thirds of pupils attained the higher grades. These results show significant improvement compared to those in 2003 and represent good achievement compared to their attainment at the end of Year 9. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average but these assessments were a little over-generous.
99. In Years 7 to 9 pupils make good progress in the various disciplines within design and technology and, by Year 9, standards of work are average. This represents good achievement compared to their starting point when they entered the school. Making skills are well developed through a broad range of projects, but design and communication skills are less well developed. Pupils' work in a range of materials is not always guided consistently through the stages of design to establish secure

competence in research, analysis, development and communication techniques. They do not therefore always recognise and use the skills acquired in earlier work when tackling the increasing demands of new and more complex situations. In some instances pupils were allowed to repeat drawings at the expense of exploring a range of solutions, and therefore not developing their design fluency.

100. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average and pupils achieve well. During the inspection some examples of good work were seen in Years 10 and 11 in all areas of the subject. High attainers produce work that shows detailed research, good design skills and techniques, and consideration of the views of clients. The impact of ICT is beginning to show in improved standards of work. Where the work is weaker it is mainly due to limited presentational skills, little development of ideas or incomplete work; pupils tend to rely too much on logos and imagery from magazines, and when this is the case, the outcomes are less valid.
101. Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. In the most effective lessons, enthusiastic teaching motivated pupils. Teachers manage pupils well and their high expectation of behaviour creates a positive attitude in pupils. Good use is made of ICT in teaching and this helps learning. More emphasis needs to be placed on developing pupils' literacy skills and spelling and grammatical errors are not always corrected. Lessons where teaching was satisfactory had some good features, but the focus for the lesson was often directed towards the task at the expense of developing learning to the depth and breadth expected.
102. Leadership and management are good. The head of department provides effective vision for the subject and has a clear view of the department's strengths and areas for development. Technical and administrative support is effective in the smooth running of the facilities. The department makes a valuable contribution to the school as a specialist technology college through its links with industry.
103. Improvement since the last inspection is good because standards have continued to rise and ICT provision is strengthening the links between the material areas. The department has overcome considerable difficulties and is now well placed to improve further.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected in depth and drama was sampled. Two drama lessons were observed, one in Year 7 and one in Year 11. Standards of work seen represented very good achievement given the below average ability of pupils on entry and the limited time available for the subject in Years 7 to 9. Teaching and learning were very good.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- This rapidly improving department is well led and managed.
- Standards have risen and continue to rise.
- The pupils' drawing skills and use of sketchbooks for experimentation and investigation are not yet good enough.

- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to talk about and evaluate their own and their classmates' work.

Commentary

104. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average. These assessments are generous. The GCSE results were average in 2004 and much better than in 2003. At the last inspection although the boys' results were well below average.
105. Standards of work seen in Year 9 and Year 11 are below average but improving. From Year 7 pupils use sketchbooks to research art and artists including African and Australian art. The pupils find it difficult to express opinions when writing about artwork. Drawing skills are improving although pupils do not use line well enough to show space, form or texture. Recognising their limited knowledge of art when they enter school, achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Year 11 pupils continue to collect imagery and prepare compositions in sketchbooks but their investigations are lost when they overwork their studies. There is an over-reliance on imagery from books and the Internet. Practical skills are much improved and the work is ambitious in scale. There is an emphasis on finished work at the expense of development work. The teachers know their pupils well and the curriculum allows pupils to develop their practical skills. The achievement of all pupils at the end of Year 11 is satisfactory.
106. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships are very strong although pupils rely on their teachers for guidance more than is usual. Lessons begin with an explanation of the well-planned work and teachers then circulate, using their good subject knowledge to prompt and assess pupils' progress. The ends of lessons are less well planned and opportunities for pupils to discuss their achievements are sometimes missed. The teaching of drawing and use of sketchbooks for experimentation needs further development. Learning was unsatisfactory in a Year 9 lesson because the pupils lacked the necessary skills to complete the set work and the behaviour of a minority of boys was not well enough managed to prevent them interfering with their classmates' learning. The assessment of pupils' work is used to set targets for improvement.
107. Leadership and management are good. Three teachers, including the subject leader are recent appointments and teamwork is already strong. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly and teachers contribute to subject developments. There is considerable capacity to continue the recent rapid improvements. Planning and schemes of work are good and the strategy of limiting the range of processes within the curriculum has speeded learning. Difficulty accessing computers and specialist software makes full delivery of the National Curriculum difficult. The work displayed in the public areas of the school creates a learning atmosphere. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen and there is a greater focus on teaching the basic elements of art.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average.
- Good teaching is helping pupils to make progress.
- Good pupil teacher relationships are fostering a positive attitude to the subject.
- The shortened lunch break has led to some decline in extra curricular work.
- There are too few practice rooms to support curriculum work and instrumental playing.
- Work is not always matched to pupils' ability.

Commentary

108. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average. Compared with other schools, the groups were comparatively large and contain a significant majority of boys. These results represent good achievement for the pupils concerned. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 indicate standards above average and this also represents good achievement.
109. The work seen from the current Year 9 however, is only average. This is in part because of a shortage of lesson time this year. Pupils achieve well compared to their starting point when they enter the school. In Year 11 standards are above average. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress, though for some, this is restricted by limited practical ability.
110. In Years 7 to 9 there is an appropriate emphasis on practical work through which pupils develop an understanding of technical vocabulary and gain experience in performing and shaping their own musical ideas. Singing and pupils' use of ICT is under developed at this stage and too little attention is given to music from the western classical tradition and the British Isles. There is some lack of confidence in the use of notation. This needs a more systematic and on going approach in order to develop more secure reading and performing skills.
111. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and pupils are handled in a pleasant, supportive manner. These factors are having a positive impact on motivation and learning. Work, however, is not always sufficiently carefully matched to the needs of pupils, particularly where skills are insecure, so their pace of learning is slower.
112. The leadership and management of the department is good and shows a clear understanding of what is required to move the department forward. There has been a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards have been maintained and there is good provision for instrumental teaching. There has, however, been some decline in extra-curricular activities following the shortening of the lunch break. The inadequate practice room accommodation is a continuing handicap and cause for concern. In spite of these problems, there is a strong basis for growth and development to take the department forward.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in physical education are consistently well above average.

- Pupils achieve well in National Curriculum physical education and in GCSE dance because good teaching has high expectations of pupils and relationships with pupils are good.
- More than one third of pupils benefit from a very good programme of extra-curricular activities.
- Though good overall, not all teaching displays consistently good features.
- Though assessment is used well in GCSE, systems for National Curriculum physical education are less well developed.

Commentary

113. By Year 9 standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. Pupils develop competence in health-related knowledge and understanding and in their ability to evaluate performance because these are taught in most lessons throughout the year. The very good programme of extra-curricular activities helps around one third of pupils achieve above average performance across a wide range of sports, dance and gymnastics. The short length of time that some activities are taught restricts progress in performance, for example, tennis.
114. By Year 11 standards are above average and pupils' achievement continues to be good. GCSE results in physical education have been consistently well above average in recent years. Strengths lie in pupils' practical performance and well planned personal exercise training programmes. GCSE dance results in 2004 were average and have improved since the last inspection. Pupils achieve good levels of performance in the set study and in composition because they are committed to rehearsal and benefit from good teaching. Well over half of pupils take a GCSE course in either physical education or dance and a good proportion of pupils succeed in gaining the Junior Sports Leader Award. A small minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11, more often girls than boys, do not take a regular part in all activities and their progress is held back.
115. There is no significant difference between the achievement of girls and boys. Pupils identified as talented benefit from opportunities to compete at a high level in local and county competition in many sports. Pupils' awareness of other cultures is broadened through tours abroad for dance and major sports. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because teachers are aware of their needs and adapt activities accordingly. Pupils in the Learning Development Centre achieve very well, enjoying lessons and improving performance and the ability to work with others. Teachers create a very supportive atmosphere that builds self-confidence and independence and recognises each individual's personal and learning needs.
116. Teaching and learning are good overall and help pupils to achieve well. Good relationships, high expectations of conduct and performance and good discipline, based on respect, set a positive atmosphere in which pupils are happy and want to learn. Lessons are well planned and structured and taught at a good pace so that pupils are physically active, progressively challenged and build up confidence in their improving skills. Teachers are knowledgeable and there is a good focus on learning the technical language of the subject. In some lessons there is too great a reliance on teacher-led activities and not enough opportunity for pupils to work independently, make decisions and solve problems and so higher attaining pupils are not always fully challenged. ICT is used well to support GCSE dance lessons and structure GCSE theory lessons; its use has not been fully exploited to develop pupils' ability to analyse

performance. In GCSE work, assessment is used well so that pupils know how well they are doing and exactly what they have to do to improve. Though pupils' progress is assessed in National Curriculum lessons, the criteria for good performance are not always made clear to pupils.

117. Very good leadership and good management have led to good improvement since the previous inspection; GCSE results have improved and above average standards have been maintained. Leadership sets a positive example and is firmly focused on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Regular analysis of examination results and checks on the quality of lessons help to focus on the right priorities, though pupils are not fully consulted as part of this process.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school provides a range of vocational courses for Years 10 and 11 at the local college of further education in hairdressing, motor vehicle maintenance and child care. None of these courses could be sampled during the inspection. The school offers a course in GCSE Business Studies, which was inspected in depth, and a vocational course in Business and Communication which is referred to in the ICT report.

Business Studies

Provision in Business Studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Support for lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs has resulted in good overall pass rates at GCSE.
- The subject increases pupils' employability by providing well for their work-related learning.
- Lower-attaining pupils' language and analytical skills need to be improved for them to reach the higher grades.
- Pupils use ICT skills effectively to enhance research and coursework.
- Business links need developing to enrich pupils' learning experience.

Commentary

118. 2004 GCSE Business Studies results, though significantly below average at grades A* to C, were broadly average overall, with a higher than average number of passes at grades A* to G. Pupils performed as well as in other subjects, the 2004 and previous years' results reflecting the department's open access policy and changes in the ratio of examination to coursework. Current Year 10 and 11 pupils, boys and girls, are reaching average standards and achieving satisfactorily. Relative strengths are the higher-attaining pupils' effective analytical skills, for example, in successfully evaluating the risks of setting up a chosen business, their superior language skills, and their good ICT and research skills. Relative weaknesses are the lower-attaining pupils' less accurate written expression, spelling and punctuation, their less effective analytical skills, and their more limited research.

119. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory overall; though, in one lesson observed, pupils' learning of a difficult topic, business ratios, was not helped by planning which did not consider the different needs of a mixed ability class, and by the resulting

negative attitudes of some pupils. However, the generally enthusiastic, knowledgeable and up-to-date teaching of topic areas such as enterprise culture and business start-up captures the pupils' interest, leads to accurate and often substantial, well-researched coursework, and makes a good contribution to pupils' work-related learning. Pupils' attitudes are mostly positive and their understanding and application of key business terms are sound. Because ICT is thoroughly incorporated in lessons, pupils' assured ICT skills allow them effective use of the Internet to research business web sites and therefore to develop their independent learning skills; and they are able to give questionnaires, advertisements and balance sheets, for example, a professional finish. Original research is less well developed. Pupils' work, including homework to reinforce and extend learning in lessons, is marked regularly and pupils know their target grades, the progress they are making, and what needs to be improved. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are closely supported and make good progress.

120. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. Standards, assessment and homework are properly monitored; and comprehensive curriculum review has led to more appropriate accreditation for pupils in 2005/6. ITT candidates are well facilitated. However, visits and speakers are needed to give pupils greater first-hand experience of modern business practice.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school provides programmes in personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHE). Citizenship was inspected in depth. The school's PSHE programme is a good one, well organised and with major strengths in sex and drugs education and careers. Pupils' learning experience is further enhanced by the good use made of the valuable links the school has with external agencies such as the Youth Service, the Careers Service, and the Armed Forces. Health professionals hold a very effective teenage advice clinic on site and supervise the pupils who act as peer mentors. Five PSHE lessons were observed: one each in Years 7, 9, and 11, and two in Year 10. Of these, two were very well taught, two were well taught, and teaching in one was satisfactory. Work seen in these lessons and other inspection evidence, including a discussion with pupils, strongly indicate that standards reached are average by Year 9 and above average by Year 11 and that pupils are achieving satisfactorily by Year 9 and well by Year 11. The pupils' generally mature outlook and courteous behaviour suggest that PSHE is making a good contribution to their personal and social development.

Citizenship

Overall provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Statutory requirements for the National Curriculum are not fully met.
- Assessment is in place which now follows the whole-school policy.
- Standards are below those expected and pupils are underachieving because they do not learn the full subject.
- The school's rich tradition of school and community service provides many potential opportunities for active citizenship.
- The subject is not effectively co-ordinated, and curriculum, standards and assessment are not monitored rigorously enough.

- Insufficient time is allocated for teaching citizenship.

Commentary

121. Citizenship is taught partly in discrete lessons through personal, social and health education (PSHE) with which it shares a very crowded time-table, and partly through other subjects. Because of this, insufficient time has been given to teach the first two elements (knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens and skills of communication and enquiry) in the detail and depth required of a National Curriculum subject. The supporting subjects have failed to accommodate this new subject and delivery of the first two elements is therefore still largely implicit and contains misconceptions, pupils often being unaware that they are studying a distinct subject. As yet, there is no planned programme for the third element which ensures that all pupils develop their skills of participation and responsible action, and reflect on their experience of active citizenship. Consequently, in Years 7 to 11, pupils' knowledge and understanding of citizenship are patchy and incomplete. The relatively small amount of written work seen, including extended writing, further confirmed that standards of pupils' work are below those expected for their age and they are underachieving by the end of Years 9 and 11.
122. In contrast, a very impressive wider agenda of school and community initiatives, sometimes involving many pupils, shows that the school is producing good citizens. Pupils elect representatives to the school council, take part in the Junior Sports Leadership Challenge, help out on parents' evenings, act as confidential peer mentors or "buddies" to younger pupils, and raise substantial sums of money for worthy causes, for example, the county air ambulance, the World Land Action Trust, and the recent Tsunami Appeal. These should be drawn on when the school devises its active citizenship programme for all pupils.
123. No overall judgement can be made about teaching and learning, since so little teaching was seen; nonetheless, in one very good Year 10 lesson observed on the General Election, teaching was stimulating, enthusiastic and consistently challenging and drew high quality responses from the pupils. Assessment is in place and is being improved and refined.
124. Although the current leadership is committed to citizenship's full implementation, management is unsatisfactory because planning has been inadequate and insufficient time has been given to teaching, co-ordinating and monitoring it. Staffing problems have also impeded the subject's introduction.

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	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	2
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	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
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).